

NEWENT TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Newent Town Council Extraordinary meeting held on Monday 2nd November 2015 at the Market House, Newent at 7.30 pm.

Present : Cllr Mr E Wood [Mayor] Cllr D Blick [Deputy Mayor]
 Cllr Mr R Beard; Cllr Mr J Celino; Cllr Mrs P Celino
 Cllr Mrs J Davies; Cllr Mrs K Draper; Cllr Mrs M Duncan
 Cllr Mr E Heathfield; Cllr Mrs C Howell; Cllr Mrs S
 Marchovecchio; Cllr Mr C Taylor; Cllr Mrs M Serle

1. Apologies. None

2. To give consideration to Council Office accommodation.

Cllr Wood opened the meeting with a determination that discussions surrounding this subject would proceed so that finalisation can be reached for this project to move forward without any further delays. He added that Cllr Mr Blick has prepared a proposition in favour of a new build and he will bring forward a further consideration to be discussed that the Cemetery Lodge be renovated/upgraded for the use of office accommodation for the staff.

3. Cllr Blick proposition read as follows :

3.1. NTC opt to build a new office on the library site using the guidelines set out by Martin Davidson [G.A.P.T. November 2014] using a Design and Build company to act as project manager.

3.2. If the Council approve 3.1. above, take the necessary steps required to sell the Cemetery Lodge, with planning permission, as a residential dwelling. Cllr Mrs K Draper seconded this proposal.

Cllr Mr J Celino said up to date and correct financial outlay figures should be made available for this option before it can proceed as figures projected, referred to in the Davidson report, was set 18 months ago.

Cllr Mr D Blick replied that in his many years being part of the decision making process of the Council various options for office accommodation have fallen by the wayside due to the Council hesitating with drawn out discussions and meetings that lead nowhere. He suggested that for ease of discussion a 10% increase to costing figures for the project should be considered. He emphasised that it is time that staff accommodation reflect what Newent and its residents deserve and can be proud of, not just in the short term but well into the future.

Cllr Mrs Howley questioned the actual price of the Cemetery Lodge reflected as between £125,000 - £150,00 as set out in the Davidson report. She felt that should a new build go to public consultation she wishes to be totally re-assured that all avenues have been explored and all prices thoroughly checked.

Cllr Mrs Celino fears that additional costs such as alarms, carpeting, alarms, fixtures and

fittings plus tarring of the car park will raise the cost for a new build exorbitantly.

Cllr Beard explained that Mr Davidson is a respected member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and his report reflects the best option to be a new build on the library car park grounds.

Cllr Mrs Davies pointed out that larger premises will be required to accommodate the increase in the number of Council staff.

Cllr Mrs Duncan commented that the Davidson report clearly states that a new build will be the best option.

Cllr Heathfield spoke eloquently in favour of this option [new build] pointing out the size of the renovated lodge will be too small; it being too remote from the centre of Newent to serve its residents adequately; it being not financially viable to continue paying rent, to retain as many parking spaces as possible for residents wanting to visit the Town Council, however, he conceded that the flooding issue should be fully addressed.

Cllr Mr Beard pointed out that works loans can be considered similar to the one obtained for the new cemetery extension. He continued that property prices in Malvern and in the Newent area have not risen much, perhaps 10%, in the last year as experienced by Gooch Estate and other agents. He said this project has been bandied around for more than 18 months, a lot of work, time and effort has gone into it so far and it is time that decisions are made in the best interest for the future of Newent. Repairs to the Cemetery Lodge will be pricey as special materials will be required.

Cllr Mrs Serle said that although she is a relatively new Councillor she feels that the current premises at the Newent Community centre is adequate.

Cllr MR Wood called everyone by name asking how they would like to cast their vote :

In favour of a new build :

Cllr Mr D Blick; Cllr Mr R Beard; Cllr Mr E Heathfield; Cllr Mrs M Duncan; Cllr Mrs J Davies; Cllr Mrs K Draper.

Against a new build :

Cllr Mr J Celino; Cllr Mrs P Celino; Cllr Mr C Thomas; Cllr S Marchovecchio; Cllr Mrs M Shere; Cllr Mr E Wood.

Abstention : Cllr Mrs C Howley.

Total of : 6 for and 6 against with one abstention.

Cllr Wood called everyone by name asking how they would like to cast their vote

In favour of refurbishment/renovations to Cemetery Lodge :

Cllr Mr E Wood; Cllr Mrs P Celino; Cllr Mr J Celino; Cllr C Thomas; Cllr Mrs S Marchovecchio.

Against refurbishments/renovations to cemetery Lodge

Cllr Mr E Heathfield; Cllr Mrs M Duncan; Cllr Mrs J Davies; Cllr Mr R Beard; Cllr Mrs K Draper; Cllr Mr D Blick

Abstentions : Cllr Mrs C Howley and Cllr Mrs M Serle

Total of 5 for and 6 against with two abstentions.

Cllr Mr Wood indicated his disappointment that this meeting could not reach a more definitive decision. The meeting was declared closed and concluded at 8pm.

Minutes prepared by Mrs J Grassom