

# HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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**MINUTES** of the **Extraordinary Full Council Meeting** held on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at 7.00pm in the Corn Exchange Complex, Hungerford.

**Present:** Cllrs Crane, Chicken, Knight, Colloff, Wilson, Hudson, Small, Bumbieris, Farrell, Brookman.

Also present: Geoff Adams, Adviser and John Garvey, Newbury Weekly News and approx. 15 members of the public.

- 1. Apologies for absence.** Cllrs Winser and Benneyworth
- 2. Declarations of interest.** Cllr Knight – member of Friends of Hungerford Library
- 3. Discuss and propose response to West Berkshire Council's Consultation on Budget Proposals 2016-2017.**

Phase 2 will be announced by WBC on 24<sup>th</sup> March at a special meeting held after the consultation. The Children's Centre services cover 160 sq. miles including Lambourn and Welford. The Centre helps over 1000 children and families particularly relating to issues with depression and isolation. An element of the 2% levy reserved for adult social care should be used to help Children's Centre. Daphne, Governor of Children's Centre thanked Cllr Crane and the Clerk for their visit to the Nursery. Suzanne Taylor oversees both the Nursery and the Children's Centre. The budget is £108k for the Childrens Centre. Suzanne is willing to make savings but needs to keep it in Hungerford. The Centre takes referrals but is open for everyone with children and babies. Another meeting at the Nursery is planned for this Thursday. Problems are exacerbated with the loss of bus passes on Handy Bus and cuts to rural transport.

Library Service – Will cuts will save £730k or £690K? This is unclear. A business plan is needed but no financial info is available from WBC yet. Financial data required to assess options was to be provided shortly by WBC as promised by D/Cllr Hilary Cole at the earlier meeting today in Newbury. There are timing issues as no dates are available for closure or staff redundancies. HTC precept for next financial year is already fixed so there is no budget.

Full support for the Children Centre to continue in Hungerford was indicated by a show of hands. WBC have suggested moving the Centre to Victoria Park.

Buses – The latest information is that the 90 →Lambourn is to be withdrawn. The 3→Newbury will be untouched. The H1 is partly subsidised by HTC. For phase 2 the outcome of the buses is unclear. The Mayor advised the need to look at operating costs across counties. Why are there 6 local authorities? WBC have a statutory obligation to provide school transport for a distance of 3 miles plus.

CHAIN is taking on costs of the Handibus so saving £13k for WBC. In addition, CHAIN will lose a possible £3500 in loss of use of bus passes and will have to increase charges to users.

What can the community do to keep our library open? A draft consultation response has been put together by the Mayor. Options suggested include: Further reduction in opening hours • Increased volunteer help

under the supervision of professional Librarians • Financial contributions from HTC; Town & Manor or other external sponsors • A parking supplement on the Church Street car park directed to Library funds • Formation of a Community Interest Company • Long term Lease to HTC at Peppercorn rent • A dedicated new Charity

It was noted that Hungerford is the only library that receives an income from rent. District Cllrs supported the library at the last meeting but in the press they are supporting the cuts. Cllr Hewer will not advise if he is for or against.

Cllr Crane would like to submit the consultation response ahead of 1<sup>st</sup> March WBC meeting. it was thought a lease is the most likely way forward. With no library the title Rural Service Centre could be lost. Friends of Hungerford Library will support but not take on the running of the library. A public enquiry in Wirral resulted in the SOS overturning the decision to close a library as the statutory duty was not being met.

Cllr Knight has put some options together one of which is to find 20% to run and keep all libraries open – Newbury Library costs are very high.

Cllr Crane proposed support for ‘Friends of Hungerford’ and the Children’s Centre. HTC will keep everyone informed of progress.

Cllr Small advised that the proposed closure by West Berkshire Council of 8 out of 9 public libraries in West Berkshire would probably be a breach of the Libraries Act 1964. Although Gordon Lundie is understood to have stated that by keeping Newbury Library open the Council will be fulfilling their statutory duty under the Act, the meeting was advised that a successful challenge had been made against Wirral Council. It was agreed that the Friends of Hungerford Library and the Council will both make enquiries about this.

Groups from all libraries could work together

**Action:** Cllr Hudson proposed to support the Consultation Response produced by Cllr Crane and this will be submitted by tomorrow lunchtime, seconded by Cllr Brookman, all in favour.

4. **Discuss and propose a contribution to the GWR Communities fund to enable improvements to station.** Cllr Crane proposed in principle to agree £1k, if WBC source the £4k elsewhere, seconded by Cllr Hudson, all in favour.

**Meeting closed at 8pm**