



**MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023 AT THE FOLK HALL, 95 HIGH STREET,  
PORTISHEAD, BS20 6PR**

This was a hybrid meeting to enable community participation

**Members present:**

Councillor Patricia Sterndale (Chairman)	Councillor Paul Gardner (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Ben Aldridge	Councillor Bob Bull
Councillor Bob Cartwright	Councillor Paul Churchill
Councillor Janet Davey	Councillor Simon Faulkner
Councillor Nicola Holland	Councillor Sue Mason
Councillor Tanya Slatter	Councillor Tim Snaden
Councillor Roger Whitfield	

**Members online:**

None

**Officers present:**

Wendy Coulter - Town Clerk (Taking the minutes, IT & Cameras)  
Rachel Johnson – Responsible Financial Officer (Online)

**Others present:**

Mr Paul Maltby  
Mr Ken Smith  
Mrs Janet Probert  
Mr David Thrush

**Others present online:**

Mrs Lesley Cottrell  
Ms Lisa Screen

**TC22.328 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Alan George.

**TC22.329 Declaration of Councillors' interests and requests for dispensations:**

To declare any interests relating to the business of the meeting and receive any dispensation requests from the Clerk (Localism Act 2011 s29-34)

The following declarations of interest was made:

- Councillor Ben Aldridge – Item 4 (Lake Grounds Wheels Park) – Pecuniary - Director of WASP & Chairman
- Councillor Tanya Slatter – Item 4 (Lake Grounds Wheels Park) – Pecuniary - Director of WASP
- Councillor Paul Gardner – Item 4 (Lake Grounds Wheels Park) – Personal – Councillor representative with Wheels Park.

### **TC22.330 Chairman’s update report**

A verbal update report was received from Councillor P Sterndale on the following matters:

- Lake Grounds Wheels Park – the building is well under way. There have already been many expressions of thanks to everyone who contributed to bringing this about, which I fully support. I am sure it will bring much pleasure to many people for many years to come.
- Slade Road Play Area – The official opening took place on 3 March 2023. It was obvious from the number of children and adults who were there that it will clearly be a huge success. A special thank you to Tim for proof testing the slide and to everyone who worked on this project. It has received praise on social media from a huge number of people and quite a few from outside Portishead who have written to me and others to ask about the design, where we got it from and could they copy it, which is all very gratifying.
- Meeting with PCC – The Councillors from Portishead Town Council had a long and productive meeting, with Mark Shelford and the Chief Inspector for North Somerset, Adam McLaughlin plus 3 more colleagues from the local police force. We asked for the meeting for an increased police presence in Portishead and to seek ways of tackling increased cases of anti-social behaviour. Portishead are getting another dedicated PCSO and the services of another Police Officer. We were told that the actual levels in crime in Portishead have decreased. However, we do have a larger number of incidents of Anti-Social behaviour than other towns in North Somerset. The emphasis to us to pass on the advice that you should always report a crime, even if it appears no action is being taken. That is how they know what is going on and what crimes are being committed. Public Harm Offences will always be given a priority, rather than monetary value of the crime, which might explain why they do not always attend when you expect them to.

### **TC22.331 Public Participation**

*The notes below are a precis of statements/questions. They are not recorded word for word.*

**Mrs J Probets** – Portishead Resident

I'm here representing Portishead Senior Forum - I am asking about the Folk Hall, owned by the Town not the councillors, whose walls and floor space are being taken over by the Heritage Centre with things supposedly of interest, but to who? Following a meeting with Paddy Sterndale and the town Clerk we ascertained that the hall is not open to the public unless you hire it, so what purpose does this memorabilia have?

If you have an ambition between you all to open a museum in Portishead then go and find somewhere suitable this hall is not yours to give. You should be concentrating on strategies to make the hall more attractive to would be hirers not on Vanity projects. Are the Heritage Centre being charged for the use of the Folk Hall as the rest of us are. Is a very large OUTDOOR Railway Halt Box now taking up a corner of the hall being charged for storage and why is it there?

Who gave permission for it?

Do you make decisions that are not minuted.

Was permission given indefinitely for the Heritage Centre to use the end of the hall for the walls to be covered with papers maps and pictures and for storage of large outdoor objects.

Now I see that we have a dedication plaque linked to this.

What is going on? There should be just one thing remembered in that 1869 hall it is The Folk Hall - don't meddle - respect the history. Are councillors indulging themselves and abusing their position making decisions for personal projects that they have interests in? From a hirers point of view the hall looks cluttered and feels like we are hiring a museum not an Empty Hall.

Once we turn the seating to face the long wall, our usual layout, we have no screen and have to supply our own whereas once we could use the blank wall (no such thing exists in the hall now) - can you supply a screen for hirers using this layout, then our audience will not be struggling on the ends of rows to see what's going on against the glare from the laminated maps. Our screen is surrounded by all the clutter on the walls if you are hiring an empty hall then the very least it should be is empty.

As with a lot of other organisations we have been badly hit by the 50% increase in costs - then there is the caretaker not being replaced - expecting hirers to do a Caretakers job - cameras in use while we use the hall. It's not logical or fair to take away so much from the hirers and then charge them for doing the jobs themselves. We have hired the Folk Hall for 15 years plus, these charges and conditions are new, handed out with no discussion and I know from talking to other organisations that you have upset and lost custom and yet Paddy tells me that the halls are practically fully booked. The extra hire costs mean you will be bringing in 50% more takings which added together with the savings on Caretakers wages means the hall must now be cash rich - what are the plans for the extra money being generated.

If this is not the case, then what are you hiding. In a published analysis of Halls for Hire in Portishead it says there are 101 Clubs and Organisations running, of these 11 use the Town Councils three halls - Folk Hall (6) Radcliffe Bay (3) North Weston (2). That's around 10% of the available business - a new Sales incentive maybe?

Having now decided at the Forum we can no longer afford to hire rooms for our Book Club, Music Club and our Monthly Committee meetings we have to ask - What are you doing for the Senior Citizens of Portishead I see from your online write ups that quite a few of you are keen to promote things for the youth of Portishead but not one of you says anything about the Seniors it is left to the likes of clubs like ours to do what we can for the people who have given so much in their years in this town to be then treated badly by the very council that should be giving back to them at this stage of their lives. If

you are still here after the May elections will any of you do anything to help or will you continue to penalise the clubs for doing what we can whilst doing nothing yourselves. When can I expect answers to the questions I've asked tonight?

The Chairman asked for a copy of the questions asked and confirmed that a response would be given shortly.

Cllr T Slatter responded that the Town Council has been doing the following for older members of the community; Covid response and support; Bus issues – support; Worked with NSC for increased dropped kerbs on Esplanade and safer paths around the lake; Warm Spaces; Tea and tech; Grants to NDCT & CANS amongst others; Menopause events; Worried about Winter event; Vita Minds Chronic Pain support (hosted by PTC); Youth centre grant – 2 sessions per week, and one trip per month for seniors; Hub support – signposting to services.

**Mr M Johnston** - Gordano Civic Society

For decades this public space was a large expanse of dated area with very little visual stimulation. Now thanks to the inspiration of Cllr J Davey and local late resident and historian Sandy Tebbit and others, we have this. An attractive tableau and time-line celebrating an informed story of Portishead. A town I am sure we are all proud of and are pleased to call home. This hall has always been known as the Folk Hall and will remain so. Although the Gordano Civic Society has always had a wish for a heritage centre, we have no intention of renaming this building or referring to it as such. Yes there will be artifacts on display, for example the large map dating from the 1880's, previously used for reference for local housebuilding works by Carey's the Builders. This map was in quite a state when donated to us and was professionally restored by our society. The society will also house reference documents and other materials here available for public view and research. Hopefully these will be housed in the recently constructed cupboard, just round the corner. In conclusion, I would trust that any user group, using this hall would not be prevented or compromised from making use of this space and will hopefully, whilst here, be appreciating and enjoying the visuals and the added value of this display. Thank you.

**Mr D Thrush** – Portishead Senior Forum

A lot of what I was going to say has been said by previous speakers. We are concerned that this hall appears to be slipping away slowly from being viable as we would wish to use it. The Senior Forum is a group between 60 to 70, mostly elderly people and we work hard to provide them with something interesting to listen to, a cup of tea, biscuit, chat to friends and it works. It's been working for over 20 years. It would be very sad if the changes that are creeping in on this hall were to make that an impossibility to continue.

It is not always apparent that the Councillors are being totally transparent about what your plans are and I would like to ask on behalf of the Forum to ask any one of you to give us a chat and a full run-down on how you see the future of this hall.

I know that there is an audio loop in the hall. However, there is only one small sign, it is not well publicised. It may well be helpful to people with hearing loss, can we have a few more signs so that people know the hearing loop is here.

The Chairman responded that the Council would certainly be able to provide additional hearing loop signage and that a Councillor would be happy to come and talk to the Senior Forum.

**Mrs Lesley Cottrell - Portishead Resident (Online)**

Didn't hear what Cllr Slatter said regarding the large object in the hall prior to 2019, didn't hear what it was?

It was clarified that it was the small railway shed.

Mrs Cottrell confirmed that it had not been in the hall before May 2019.

Asked the Town Council about the lack of a Post Office in Portishead, with reference to delegating the matter to the local MP.

No idea on how much work has been done. It is possible to have a community Post Office. There is a very well known charity that supports volunteers who want to open a community post office and they don't charge anything and I just wondered if the Town Council had explored that route?

The Chairman responded that it was something that the Town Council were aware of. The difficulty is premises .

Mrs Cottrell also asked, was everything that was in McColls, to do with the Post Office, has that been returned to the Post Office?

Cllr R Whitfield responded that it was his understanding that all the equipment belonged to that post office and was taken out by whoever it was that owned that post office and it is definitely not available for reuse.

Mrs Cottrell responded that she felt it was really something that the Town Council ought to be exploring vigorously because it is ridiculous that Portishead residents have to go out of town to use basic post office services. Many people use the post office for banking services. There are lots of people of all ages who use the post office, I hope that the Town Council will pursue this vigorously and report back as soon as possible rather than saying that you are going to leave it to the local MP.

The Chairman responded that she agreed that it was disgraceful that Portishead did not have a Post Office. The Town Council would do its best but it did not have a lot of power or control over what happened with the Post Office.

**Mr P Maltby – Portishead Resident**

Just wished to remind the Council of a post that they put on social media on 17 March 2018. It was titled, Portishead Independents. You might have seen it in other places, but it is worth sharing again. This is how an independent Town Council runs Council meetings. Some key differences, most of the Councillors sit with the public. You couldn't tell who was who until there was a vote. The public are actively encouraged to join in the debate. Our current Council will tell you that this is impossible and that they are bound by Standing Orders and procedures. Don't believe them Portishead, we can and we will do better. It is signed by the team. Is that going to happen in this term of office?

Cllr N Holland replied that as someone who sat with you before and during the current administration, I think that the general public have had far more input and we have allowed discussion and debate during meetings, not just during public participation than was ever allowed before. Anyone who speaks now, we listen, that's what we're about, listening.

Mr Maltby responded that he would have to agree to disagree because that was not his impression. Normally there was no one in the public gallery.

Cllr T Slatter also added that the Town Council also holds large events such as parking issues, the bus meetings, Neighbourhood Plan Consultations and various consultations where we have invited people to come along. That is where we've had discussions where we have sat down with Councillors and residents. We have done an awful lot of public engagement which was never done before.

**Mr K Smith** – Portishead Resident

Made the comment that Councillors should listen to the public. Do not understand why the Town Council still continues to allow people to attend online. The Town Council should return to proper meetings. It would be good to see the district councillors attend the meetings and the town councillors scrutinising their reports. It is important to do it in person. You are not being seen by the people you are representing. This is the most important meeting that you hold. I hope you encourage people to come down to the hall. The Chairman responded that there were 2 district councillor present at the meeting and they would provide the Town Council with a verbal report.

**Mr S Rees** – Portishead Resident

I appreciate that there is an ongoing police enquiry regarding the death at the marina and there is also a coroner's case to be held so I am limited to what I can ask and you are limited to what you can answer. But I have 2 questions. Who is the owner of the footpath, who maintains it? Who has the final say as to whether there should be railings there. I have had numerous answers.

Cllr P Gardner answered that the landowner on that side is Persimmon Homes.

The Parish Wharf side is owned by North Somerset Council.

Mr Rees asked whether that means that North Somerset has the final say on whether or not barriers should be erected?

Cllr B Aldridge explained that he works in Health and Safety and he explained that there were a number of processes that would now have to take place. The coroner would be looking at whether a risk assessment has been carried out, has it been updated and when the last incident happened, was the risk assessment also reviewed at that time. All the landowners would be asked the same questions and asked to provide evidence. Once the information is gathered, they will look to see whether anything can or cannot be done for safety.

Mr Rees said that his second question was when was the last risk assessment carried out?

Cllr B Aldridge explained that he could not answer that question as it was information that would be with the landowners. Cllr Aldridge further offered to meet with Mr Rees and go through the processes with him as he was a Health and Safety professional and may be able to help with questions to ask of North Somerset.

### **TC22.332 Cost of Living Emergency Funds**

Members noted that there is approximately £10,000 remaining in the current Grant Budget 2022/2023 to provide funding for a Community Support Fund.

It was noted that the funding for Community Support fund 2023/2024 could not be released until 1st April 2023.

It was acknowledge that the Town Council must comply with its own Financial Regulations and other specific legal implications.

The Legal and Policy implications are as follows:

Section 137 and 137A of Local Government Act 1972 Transparency Act 2015 – Part 2.2, 42 Portishead Town Council Financial Regulations 1.14.3

(Note: Funding can only be awarded to not-for-profit organisations and cannot be awarded to individuals).

Councillor R Bull proposed that Council approve the recommendation from the Community Matters Committee of 23 January 2023; to Vire (move funds from one budget to another) the remaining funds of approximately £10,000 from the Grants Budget 2022/2023 to be

released to provide funds to assist with relief from cost-of-living crisis for Portishead Residents and to note that a Working Group consisting of Councillors Aldridge, Davey and Churchill, supported by the Wellbeing Coordinator and Town Clerk has been set up by the Community Matters Committee to approve the release of funding. This was seconded by Councillor N Holland.

A vote was taken which was unanimous in favour.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the recommendation from the Community Matters Committee of 23 January 2023 to Vire the remaining funds of approximately £10,000 from the Grants Budget 2022/2023 to be released to provide funds to assist with relief from cost-of-living crisis for Portishead Residents be approved and it was noted that a Working Group consisting of Councillors Aldridge, Davey and Churchill, supported by the Wellbeing Coordinator and Town Clerk has been set up by the Community Matters Committee to approve the release of funding.**

**TC22.333 Cost of Living Emergency Funds 2023/2024**

Members noted that at a previous Council meeting it was agreed within the Budget 2023/2024 to set up a Cost of Living Emergency Fund.

Members were requested to approve the method and process for the application of funding and the approval process.

The legal implications were noted:

Section 137 and 137A of Local Government Act 1972 Transparency Act 2015 – Part 2.2, 42 Portishead Town Council Financial Regulations 1.14.3

(Note: Funding can only be awarded to not-for-profit organisations and cannot be awarded to individuals).

It was noted that any reference to individuals would be removed from the Guidance Notes and Application Form.

It was proposed by Councillor B Aldridge and seconded by Councillor J Davey that the method and process for the application of funding and the approval process for the Cost of Living Emergency Funds 2023/2024 be adopted and approved by full Council.

A vote was taken which was unanimous in favour.

**RESOLVED: that the method and process for the application of funding and the approval process for the Cost of Living Emergency Funds 2023/2024 be adopted and approved.**

**TC22.334 North Somerset Councillors' reports**

*Councillor Nicola Holland reported that the new play park at Slade Road had been opened and that she'd assisted with the opening. Most of the work had been done by the Project Officer at the Town Council. A dedication plaque had been installed at the Golf Course. Continuing to lobby North Somerset Council to remove Slade Road area from the housing allocation.*

*Wyndham Way – the minimum number of flats would be built.*

*Councillor Tim Snaden reported that he had been working on a number of boundary disputes. Working on getting the drains along Harbour Road sorted out.*

*Amazon Alexa had been given to disabled residents to tell them who was calling.*

*Adult Services were looking for staff.*

### **TC22.335 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was proposed by Councillor S Faulkner and seconded by Councillor R Whitfield that the Minutes of the previous Ordinary Council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

It was noted that a name on the minutes had been corrected for the record minutes.

A vote was taken: 12 for, 1 Abstention. The motion was carried.

**RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the previous Ordinary Council meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

### **TC22.336 Finance**

Members were requested:

- i) To receive and approve the list of payments totalling £120,196 made in December 2022 (3 papers)
- ii) To receive and approve the list of payments totalling £64,124 made in January 2023 (3 papers)
- iii) To receive, approve and sign the Bank reconciliation statements for January 2023 (4 papers)
- iv) To receive and consider the summary and detailed Income & Expenditure statements for January 2023 (2 papers)
- v) To receive and approve the Internal Audit Interim report considered at Staff & Finance (15 Dec 22) (1 Paper)

It was proposed by Councillor P Gardener and seconded by Councillor S Faulkner that the list of payments, bank reconciliation, income and expenditure statements and the Internal Audit Interim Report be approved.

A vote was taken which was unanimous in favour.

**RESOLVED: that the list of payments, bank reconciliation, income and expenditure statements and the Internal Audit Interim Report be approved.**

### **TC22.337 Financial Regulations**

Members noted that the government has increased the £25,000 threshold for Contracts Finder to £30,000 from 21 December 2022. Therefore the Town Council Financial Regulations need to be amended to say contracts over £25,000 plus VAT (rather than £25,000 including VAT) are required to go out to tender.

It was proposed by Councillor T Slatter and seconded by Councillor N Holland that the Financial Regulations be amended:

11.2 Where the Council intends to procure or award a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract as defined by the Public Works Contracts Regulations 2015 ("the Regulations") which is valued at £25,000 (*plus VAT*) or more, the Council shall comply with the relevant requirements of the Regulations.

A vote was taken which was unanimous in favour.

**RESOLVED: that the Financial Regulations be amended:**

**11.2 Where the Council intends to procure or award a public supply contract, public service contract or public works contract as defined by the Public Works Contracts Regulations 2015 ("the Regulations") which is valued at £25,000 (*plus VAT*) or more, the Council shall comply with the relevant requirements of the Regulations.**



**TC22.338 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the date of the next extraordinary Town Council meeting is Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7.30pm.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.05pm.

Signed: *P. Sterndale*

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Chairman of Portishead Town Council