

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL,
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD,
ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD MARCH 2010,
STARTING AT 8.10 P.M.

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs P A Spencer, Chairman

Councillors:

G P Balaam	R G Kybird
R F W Brame	T J Lamb
M P Brindle	D G Mortimer
Mrs M P Chapman-Allen	A Paines
S H Chapman-Allen	B J Skull
J A Harding	M G Spencer
T J Jermy	S N H Wright

In attendance (for Item 483/09):

Mr David Laurence, Principal of Easton College
Mr Tim Edmunds, Norfolk County Council
Mr Chris Hay, Norfolk County Council

479/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None made.

480/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received on behalf of Councillor Mrs P P Quadling.

481/09 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

In the published agenda, the Town Clerk had drawn members' attention to the possibility at this point of the meeting of agreeing to exclude the press and public for any or all of the three remaining agenda items.

Members were aware that a press representative was present.

After some discussion, it was:

RESOLVED that, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and in conformity with the Council's Standing Orders 75 and 76, the press and public be excluded on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

That said, the representative of the press was assured that some form of statement would be released following the meeting, relating to items 482/09 and 483/09 below.

482/09

RESCISSION OF RESOLUTION

In an agenda paper, the Town Clerk had set out the background to this item, which had resulted from his receipt of requests from seven members for a Special Resolution to be put before the Council with the aim of rescinding the decision taken at the previous Special Meeting held on 17th February 2010 under agenda item 426/09.

He had reported his receipt of requests at the subsequent Council meeting on 24th February and it had been agreed then to convene a Special Meeting the following week.

Without further ado, there was majority support (9 votes for, 5 against and 1 abstention) for putting the Special Resolution to a recorded vote. This resulted in the following:

RESOLVED that, by a vote of 10 votes for and 5 votes against, the Resolution agreed on 17th February 2010 under minute 426/09 (**see below*) be rescinded with immediate effect, with a view to further discussion then taking place regarding the Thetford Academy (including Thetford Forum) Project.

Those voting for the above Resolution:

Councillor G P Balaam
Councillor R F W Brame
Councillor M P Brindle
Councillor Mrs M P Chapman-Allen
Councillor S H Chapman-Allen
Councillor T J Jermy
Councillor R G Kybird
Councillor A Paines
Councillor M G Spencer
Councillor Mrs P A Spencer

Those voting against the above Resolution:

Councillor J A Harding
Councillor T J Lamb
Councillor D G Mortimer
Councillor B J Skull
Councillor S N H Wright

** Resolution 426/09 read as follows:*

“RESOLVED that the incorporation of a public hall within an educational facility would not be the best means of meeting the needs of the townspeople.”

483/09

THETFORD ACADEMY (INCLUDING THE FORUM)

Having agreed the Resolution under the previous item, members agreed to discuss further with those in attendance the meeting various aspects of the Academy/Forum Project.

Key points made in that discussion were:

- As the Charles Burrell High School would be losing its hall and the Rosemary Musker High School facility was simply inadequate, some form of hall would have to be included in the Forum concept, whether or not the Town Council decided to make a financial commitment. However, without a financial contribution from the Town Council towards the provision of a true civic venue, what would result would be an inferior facility, meeting only basic Academy requirements.
- Before being in a position to make any form of binding commitment, the Town Council needed to see detailed plans, indicating in clear, unambiguous design terms the different structures that would result, depending on which approach it chose to adopt.
- Mr Lawrence's view was that the Academy management must run any venue that might be provided.
- The letter received by the Principal of Easton College from the Minister of State for Schools and Learners could possibly have been better worded. In reference to the proposed Forum site, the Minister had written: "*if...that site proves unviable, the proposal should revert to the existing sites*". The Town Clerk's view was that this statement could be interpreted as implicit acknowledgement of the viability of a two-site venture. Those in attendance did not agree.

One question that could not be readily answered by those attending was the following: what would happen to any operating surplus generated by a successfully run civic venue?

It was eventually agreed that all that could result that evening was a general expression of continued support for release to the press and the wider audience.

RESOLVED that the following statement be released:

"Thetford Town Council continues to support the Academy and awaits further details resulting from the feasibility phase."

484/09

CARNEGIE ROOM ROOF REPAIR

The Town Clerk and Town Manager presented the meeting with a further update. This resulted in the following two decisions:

Resolution 1

RESOLVED that the 'Opt to Tax' application to HM Revenue & Customs would be in respect of the Carnegie Room and Guildhall, given that, under 2008 legislation, the Guildhall Complex had to be treated as a single entity (owing to the link at first floor level).

Resolution 2

RESOLVED that the Finance & General Purposes Committee, under delegated powers, be authorised to agree the terms, under which the preferred contractor would be appointed.

Chairman