

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
WELWYN PARISH COUNCIL
HELD ON TUESDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2008 AT
THE PARISH CENTRE LOCKLEYS DRIVE WELWYN
WHICH COMMENCED AT 7.45PM**

PRESENT: Councillor J Roper (Chairman) and Cllrs M Benson, J Blackburn, S Butler, I Colpitts, H Hughes, L McLusky, P Neville, L Page and I Skidmore.

IN ATTENDANCE: R Findlay (Clerk to the Council) and J Lewis (Office Administrator)

APOLOGIES: All Councillors were present

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

2008/15 OPENING OF MEETING:
The Chairman welcomed all present and opened the meeting.

2008/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None

2008/17 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 22ND JANUARY 2008.

RESOLVED: The Minutes were a true and accurate record. The Minutes were then duly signed by the Chairman.

2008/18 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY 22ND JANUARY 2008.

Minute no. 2008/13 The Clerk reported that the meeting originally arranged with Grant Shapps MP had been cancelled and that she was waiting for him to advise her of an alternative date for a meeting.

2008/19 ANNUAL RETURN FOR 2006/2007- EXTERNAL AUDITOR

The Clerk reported that Lubbock Fine, the Council's External Auditor, had issued their report for the 2006/2007 Financial Year.

External auditor's report

Except for the matters reported below on the basis of our review, in our opinion the information contained in the annual return is in accordance with the Audit Commission's requirements and no matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

1. In the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2007, the Box 8 figure is incorrect and should be £142,722.

***RFO response:** This has now been amended.*

2. In the Notice of Appointment of Date for the Exercise of Electors' Rights we noted that the notice period was not 14 days and the inspection period was not 20 working days, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, as amended. In addition it was noted that the date on which Electors' could contact the Auditor was the last day of the inspection period, whereas it should have been one working day after its completion.

***RFO response:** This was due to the Auditors change of date for the Annual Return to be sent to them.*

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we wish to draw to the attention of the Council:

1 During the course of our review we noted that the internal auditor certified Section 4 of the Annual Return but did not prepare a separate report on the work carried out. We would recommend, given

the size of the council, that the Internal Auditor prepares a detailed report describing the work performed, issues noted and conclusions.

RFO response: *This was noted and is to be explained to the Internal Auditor.*

2. The Council's fidelity guarantee insurance cover is considered to be low in view of the levels of income and bank account balances. Based upon the closing bank balances and the level of the annual precept, the level of fidelity guarantee insurance cover should have been approximately £220,000.

RFO response: *This was already in process, to increase this to £260,000.000.
Due to the time it took the Insurers to process the application it was not able to be shown in the Council's Accounts when the Annual Return was submitted for audit.*

3. We have been informed by the Council and reviewed documentation indicating that the landlord of a property that the Council occupies has instigated a rent review which is being backdated 3 years. The Council is still in negotiation in relation to this matter and the financial impact on the Council is not yet fully settled but is estimated by the Council to be in the region of £90,000. The Council hopes to negotiate payment of the agreed liability for this rent over a number of years.

RFO response: *The Council will be able to respond and update the auditor on the progress.*

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY – RESOLVED, the Council accepts the External Auditor's report for the 2006/2007 Financial Year.

2008/20 APPOINTMENT OF NEW EXTERNAL AUDITOR.

The Clerk reported that the Audit Commission had appointed 'BDO Stoy Hayward' as the Council's External Auditor for the 2007/2008 Financial Year.

2008/21 FINESSE CONSULTATION.

The Clerk reported that a consultation document issued by Finesse Leisure for their management of various leisure facilities throughout Welwyn Hatfield Borough had been circulated and that the Borough Council had asked for responses by 14th March 2008.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk respond to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council that under Objective 4 of the Finesse Leisure consultation document, Welwyn Parish Council ask that Welwyn be properly involved and consulted in future on any facilities that Finesse manage within the Parish of Welwyn..

2008/22 ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY.

The Clerk reported that this meeting will be held on Thursday 22nd May 2008 at the Civic Centre. She had produced a draft agenda and was intending to invite a representative from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and other guest speakers to address the meeting. She also reported that she would be producing an Annual Report in booklet and asked Committee Chairmen to provide an input.

She also reported that she intended to allow display stands to be erected around the Main Hall for the duration of the meeting and that she would be contacting hirers of the Council's facilities in due course: allocation of the display stands would be on a "first come, first served" basis and priority given to those who did not have a stand at least years Annual Assembly.

The Clerk reported that the meeting would be publicised a notice in the press, on the Council's notice-boards and by flyers.

2008/23 FEBRUARY REPORTS OF COMMITTEES & WORKING PARTIES.

Planning Committee. Cllr Hukin, Chairman of the Committee, presented a report of the meeting held on 5th February 2008 and answered questions.

Finance Committee. Cllr Skidmore, Chairman of the Committee, presented a report of the meeting held on 12th February 2008 and answered questions.

The Chairman asked that Council approve expenditure for the month of January 2008 totalling **£21,578.50**

Resolved. The Council accepted the expenditure of **£21,578.50**

Leisure Committee. Cllr Blackburn, Chairman of the Committee, presented reports of meetings held on 29th January 2008 and 19th February 2008 and answered questions.

2008/24 PROPOSAL TO FULL COUNCIL.

The Clerk proposed that the following proposal be accepted by the Council and included in the Council's Standing Orders.

"That the Policy & Resources Committee be authorised to undertake negotiations with the Borough Council over the future of the Civic Centre and that any provisional agreements reached be reported to Full Council for approval."

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

2008/25 ADDITION TO STANDING ORDERS

The Clerk proposed that the following proposal should be included in the Policy & Resources, Terms of Reference, at Section 'C'

"(c) Subject to Council approval, to negotiate on behalf of the Council.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

EXEMPT BUSINESS.

Under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following item on the Agenda, the Chairman at this point excluded the public and accredited representatives of newspapers on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

2008/26 CIVIC CENTRE UPDATE.

The Clerk presented a report to the Council details of which appear in a Confidential Minute.

8.40pm: At this juncture it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to enable to Councillors to study the report.

Standing Orders were reinstated at **9.00pm.**

Resolved, the Council accepted the report as an accurate record.

It was asked that congratulations be given to all who had worked on the satisfactory resolution of this matter be minuted.

The Chairman then, on behalf of the Council thanked the Clerk for her hard work and the Council gave her a round of applause.

2008/27 CLOSURE OF MEETING.

The Chairman thanked all present and declared the meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Signed:.....Chairman, Welwyn Parish Council

Dated: 25th March 2008.