

WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 1 APRIL 2021

PRESENT: Councillors: Carl Powling (Mayor)
John Akker
Julie Baker
Peter Banks
David Bragg
Robert Jenkins
Sylvia Wargent
Sophie Weaver
Chris Wood

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: Petra Palfreyman
Borough Councillor: John Jowers
Patricia Moore

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE CALL (CORONAVIRUS ACT Part 2020 1 Section 78 Regulations 2 – 17)

21/059 TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Borough Councillor Robert Davidson.

21/060 TO RECORD DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Akker declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 21/063 as a member of Stop 350 and Mersea Island Society.

21/061 PUBLIC SESSION

3 members of the public.

Further concerns have been raised about Cross Lane, including drug dealing and car/tanker access. New signage is being requested from North Essex Parking Partnership/Essex County Council.

A member of the public raised concerns about drug taking in the park and at the Glebe. More policing on the island would be welcomed. It has been noted that Seaview Avenue is a drug drop off point.

21/062 REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

Borough Councillor John Jowers

Borough Councillor Jowers advised he would be able to assist with the signage for Cross Lane as Essex County Council are getting £¾ M from Local Highway Panel.

£8,000 is being spent on renewing the Strood signs.

There are discussions with Highways about putting in a pedestrian crossing at the Brierley Paddocks development. Also, some consideration to widening Dawes Lane and putting in a central white line.

A mini roundabout has been suggested at the Strood to control speed.

Borough Councillor Jowers will speak to Jane Gardner about the drug problems.

Essex has the lowest rate for COVID-19 being in the 30's per 100,000. £4.5 M will be paid to the voluntary sector and £½ M to the EALC and £1M to Essex Community Foundation.

Councillor Kevin Bentley has £15M for potholes. These gangs work in groups of 6 to 8 and have all had to isolate if they show or contract COVID-19 and this has caused some delays. £1M will go towards green initiatives. Mersea Avenue will be repaired. The Colchester Rapid Transport Scheme – Garden Community Application by May £100M. A12 widening and access from coastal areas is being looked at as all routes lead to same points and have to cross Appleford Bridge or go via Feering. A double roundabout at Rivenhall will be considered for access to the A12.

Beach Road and Grove Avenue will be getting new streetlights with LED bulbs as sodium bulbs are no longer available.

Borough Councillor Patricia Moore

The Licensing Committee has asked Borough Councillor Moore to set up a Caravan Forum which is hoped will be productive. Representatives from East and West Mersea Councils will be asked to contribute to the quarterly meetings. Colchester Borough Council have promised there will be a caravan policy.

62 clear recycling bags will be distributed per household shortly as well as blue bags for textile recycling on blue weeks. Bottles and tins now need to be separated.

Councillor Mike Lilley (Colchester Borough Council NEPP representative) has been made aware there are 39 signs on one stretch of road and some are a dangerous height for children.

Karen Syrett stated that she is satisfied there is not a problem with people being residents on caravan sites.

21/063 PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

(a) 21 0643

Permission in Principle application for the construction of 1x dwelling.
Amenity land off, 7 Woodstock, West Mersea – Mr C Norman

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend refusal in respect of this application, on the grounds of overdevelopment and inappropriate access.

(b) 21 0625

Demolition of existing porch and conservatory and construction of a single storey rear extension, first floor side extension and addition of pitched roof to garage and open porch area.
15 St Peters Road, West Mersea – Mr Dawson

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend consent be granted in respect of this application.

(c) 21 0670

Extensions on top of dwelling. Application for prior approval of a proposed enlargement of a dwelling house by construction of additional storey.
5 The Square, Coast Road, West Mersea – Mr H Cock

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend consent be granted in respect of this application.

(d) 21 0780

Consultation by BT: proposed removal of public telephone box.
Junction Victory Road/Coast Road, West Mersea – Mr R Thompson

This Council has no comment to make.

(e) 21 0717

Change of Use of outbuilding to additional residential accommodation.
Bocking Hall, 35 East Mersea Road, West Mersea – Mr & Mrs Marr

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend consent be granted in respect of this application.

(f) 21 0718

Listed Building application: Change of Use of outbuilding to additional residential accommodation.
Bocking Hall, 35 East Mersea Road, West Mersea – Mr & Mrs Marr

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend consent be granted in respect of this application.

(g) 19 2269

Advertisement Consent. Free standing advance sign for the Glebe Recreation Ground (amended drawings received).
Glebe Recreation Ground, Colchester Road, West Mersea – Mrs P Palfreyman

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend consent be granted in respect of this application.

(h) 21 0772

Proposed erection of additional floor above existing double garage to create a home office space and a WC. Proposed new external stairs for access to new first floor. All proposed materials to match the existing.
20 Firs Chase, West Mersea – Mr S Bland

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend consent be granted in respect of this application.

21/064 NOTIFICATION OF PLANNING DECISIONS RECEIVED

Applications passed

(a) 21 1048

Use of the site for the stationing of 57no. static caravans in lieu of 117no. caravan pitches and associated landscaping and access works. New Arboricultural Impact Assessment report (AIA), new AIA plans, new Ecological Assessment report and revised Flood report.
Mersea Caravan Centre, Waldegraves Farm Holiday Park, Waldegraves Lane, West Mersea – Agent, Mrs F Bradley

WMTC Recommendation:

We wish to supplement previous comments made on 29 June 2020.

The Inspector for the emerging Local Plan has come to a conclusion on Section 1 and the CBC will be considering in a matter of weeks to proceed to Section 2. Policy SS12C will be a subject for the Inspection, containing “Development proposals at caravan parks on Mersea Island, including change of use, intensification of an existing use, or change in activities on site.....”

For the reason given it is believed that this should be dealt with accordingly and that the proper course would be in our view to reject the application.

On the application itself, it provides for a very significant reduction in the number of touring pitches in West Mersea. It would be in our view be: -

- A) contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan which has just finished its Regulation 14 consultation period.
- B) seriously conflict with the increasing demand for touring sites, would harm the local tourist industry and have significant local impact because tourers would then seek to use residential roads and car parks for overnight stays (more details of the demand on touring sites given in the attachment).
- C) provide for second homes that would further increase the pressure on local services.

On the latter point, any new pitches would have utility services provided as any dwelling and would be able to be lived in for the year. There being also no community charge payment involved for any of services. To maintain a touring site with the existing numbers would provide none on these detriments.

This applies particularly for a touring season that excluded the winter months that could then provide the opportunity for use by genuine visitors.

Various aspects of the application are not clear, and attention has been drawn to these by others particularly to disposal of sewage and foul water.

Please see the attachment which relates to demand for touring caravan sites. This, in our opinion, will have been further heightened because of the demand for UK and local tourism because of the pandemic. This article from "Out and About Live" December 2020 states:

"Data on new motorhome and campervan registrations from the industry body, the National Caravan Council, show that registrations in July were 71% higher than in July last year and in August they were 40% higher than in the same month last year. Comment also made "that leisure vehicles are seen as safer, distanced by design option."

WMTC comment: The meeting resolved to record its disappointment that approval had been given. Amongst the reasons it was felt detrimental to have a reduction of touring caravan sites.

(b) 21 0099

Construction of 2 storey side and 2 storey rear extension.
26 St Peters Road, West Mersea – Mrs J Holmes

WMTC Recommendation:

Following discussion this Council has no comment to make.

(c) 20 1847

Proposed demolition and replacement of existing buildings with detached single storey private dwelling (revised).
15 Rainbow Road, West Mersea – Mr M Thiel

WMTC Recommendation:

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend refusal on the grounds of overdevelopment of the site and not addressing the light industrial use of the site.

(d) 20 2673

Refurbishment of entire building including reconstruction of dilapidated extensions, new porch, new rear extension to form restaurant and bar with 6no. hotel rooms.
White Hart Hotel, 1 High Street, West Mersea – Mr B Lord

WMTC Recommendation:

Following discussion it was agreed to recommend consent be granted in respect of this application, with a condition that the footpath is widened in line with accessibility standards.

(e) 21 0356

Single storey infill dining/living extension, single storey study extension.
2 Woodstock, West Mersea – Mr M O'Neill

(f) 21 0265

Rear extension and replacement of existing conservatory.
4 Brierley Avenue, West Mersea – Mr A & Mrs N Stevens

Applications withdrawn

(a) 20 2765

Application to vary condition 3 following grant of planning permission 14 4585. The caravans/chalets shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and shall only be occupied between 1st March and 31st January the following year.

West Mersea Holiday Park, Seaview Holiday Park, Seaview Avenue, West Mersea – Park Holidays UK Ltd

(b) 20 2766

Application to vary condition 3 following grant of planning permission 14 4591. The caravans/chalets shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and shall only be occupied between 1st March and 31st January the following year.

West Mersea Holiday Park, Seaview Holiday Park, Seaview Avenue, West Mersea – Park Holidays UK Ltd

(c) 20 2767

Application to vary condition 2 following grant of planning permission 13 0327 to allow the touring caravans and tents to be stationed from 15th March in any one year until 14th January the following year.

West Mersea Holiday Park, Seaview Holiday Park, Seaview Avenue, West Mersea – Park Holidays UK Ltd

Appeal notification

(a) 09 7635

Seaview Holiday Park, Seaview Avenue, West Mersea – Mr C Ling

21/065 TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING OF 18 FEBRUARY 2021 - MATTERS ARISING

It was PROPOSED by Councillor Jenkins, SECONDED by Councillor Bragg that the MINUTES of the meeting held on 18 February 2021, be CONFIRMED. ALL IN FAVOUR.

Matters arising:

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

21/066 TO CONFIRM MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING OF 11 MARCH 2021 - MATTERS ARISING

It was PROPOSED by Councillor Bragg, SECONDED by Councillor Banks that the MINUTES of the meeting held on 11 March 2021, be CONFIRMED. ALL IN FAVOUR.

Matters arising:

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

21/067 TO DISCUSS AND CONFIRM THE RENEWAL OF THE SKIPPERS CONTRACT FOR GRASS CUTTING COSTING £19,000 (BUDGET FIGURE)

Following discussion it was agreed to engage Skippers Ground Maintenance for the coming year for the grass cutting contract.

Proposed: Councillor Jenkins, Seconded: Councillor Weaver. ALL IN FAVOUR.

21/068 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF A LITTER PICKER

The Clerk advised that a Litter Picker had now been appointed and will start on 1 April 2021, working 6 hours per week. Dates, times and routes are flexible according to needs. This is a 6 month appointment and will be reviewed to decide whether to continue it throughout the winter.

21/069 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF A TOWN CLERK

The Clerk advised that the second interviews took place on 1 April 2021 from a short list of three. The Clerk reported that a local lady has been appointed and further details will be provided once she had told her current employer and family. A provisional starting date of 4 May 2021 has been agreed with the current clerk agreeing to a handover as required.

21/070 TO DISCUSS THE PURCHASE OF A WHITE LINING MACHINE AND APPROVE COSTS OF £624 + VAT AND PAINT COSTING £596 + VAT

Following discussion it was agreed to purchase a new white lining machine for pitch marking. The new machines sprays the paint which will make it last longer and will not require application every week. It also has a larger tank which will save some time as it will not need refilling as often.

Proposed: Councillor Banks, Seconded: Councillor Wood. ALL IN FAVOUR.

21/071 TO CONSIDER THE COUNCIL FUNDING POLICE OVERTIME FOR ADDITIONAL HIGH VISIBILITY PATROLS IN WEST MERSEA TO ENGAGE AND ENFORCE ANY ASB, CRIME, SPEEDING AND IF AGREED, THE FUNDS TO BE ALLOCATED

Following discussion it was agreed that £5,000 (approx. 34 shifts/3 hours/2 police officers) could be spent. Councillor Jenkins will discuss this further with Neighbourhood Watch and agree how to make it a benefit for West Mersea and manage the budget.

Proposed: Councillor Powling, Seconded: Councillor Akker. Councillor Bragg abstained. ALL IN FAVOUR.

21/072 TO REVIEW AND CONSIDER ANY AMENDMENTS NEEDED TO WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL DOCUMENTS AND POLICIES

- Documents & Records Policy
- Publication Scheme
- Reserves Policy

Following discussion, it was agreed to confirm the policies for the coming year. A small amendment will be made to the Reserves Policy to state that they are the minimum level the Council should retain.

21/073 TO CONSIDER THE DONATION OF A DEFIBRILLATOR AND IF AGREED A LOCATION AND ANY COSTS

Following discussion it was agreed that the donated defibrillator could be located at the Coast Road toilets and the Council would pay associated installation costs of up to £250. Service and maintenance costs will be met by the sponsor.

Proposed: Councillor Powling, Seconded: Councillor Bragg. ALL IN FAVOUR.

21/074 MAYOR'S NOTES

The talking solar bin in Seaview Avenue car park has been installed. This comes with a phone app which shows how full it is and what the battery life is and holds up to 8 times more rubbish. They cost between £3,500 and £4,000 each and Colchester Borough Council are also looking in to getting some installed.

The Meals Service will end on 9 April and a huge thanks was offered to all the volunteers including Paul Button and the Mersea Outdoors Team and for the support given by Simon Walsh and Essex County Council.

There being no other business, the public meeting closed at 8.55pm.