



Minutes of the proceedings of the **CHILTON TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING** held at
Hutton House, Chilton at 6pm on Monday 20th January 2025

Present: -- Chair - Cllr. S. Sutherland (Mayor)

Cllrs: - D. Bright, E. Bruce, D. English, P. Herbert & S. Reece

Livin Housing Representatives- Andy Coulthard and Paul Proud- left the meeting at 6.21pm

Town Clerk – Joanne Dickinson

1. **Apologies for Absence** –Cllr J. Houlihan and Cllr P. Malpas
2. **Declarations of Interest-** None
3. **Member Dispensation –** None

Exclusion of press and public- none present

4. **Consider if the council will agree to a request from Livin Housing to take over the leases of garages and allotments located in Chilton-**The Clerk had circulated a report to Members prior to the meeting.

Andy and Paul provided Members with the following background and key information-

- a. Garage nests which are the physical brick garages – these are not included as part of the transfer.
- b. Due to costs that Livin Housing had to spend increasing the energy efficiency of their housing to at least a band c then the programme of works to the garages is behind by 3 years. This programme of works will start in the next financial year.
- c. The garages need investment, many need to be cleared as contributing to ASB in the locality.
- d. Livin has very limited resources to go out and develop the garages and considered their options which is to ask local Town/Parish Councils if they would like to take over the leases. Fishburn Parish Council has agreed to take some over and Ferryhill and Spennymoor Town Council are in the process of looking into it.
- e. Transfer would be for a nominal amount of £1.
- f. Andy provided an overview of the numbers of vacant plots on each site and will forward to Town Clerk. Approx £1500 income on the current number rented which will need to be offset against grounds maintenance costs.
- g. Livin will carry out grounds maintenance and carry out some groundworks prior to transferring them over to the council.
- h. Livin planned to grass over the sites as they became vacant and when this was carried out Livin received negative feedback on this option.
- i. The land could not be sold for housing. Some of the land could be kept for garages. Other areas could be utilised for green space for biodiversity options.
- j. There would be an option of the garage land being used as a car parking space that is rented out rather than a garage being erected. Open to conversations around what the land can be used for but not housing.
- k. Gardens currently let are not classed as allotment land and they don't have the same restrictions as an allotment.
- l. A Member asked if Livin would remove a derelict building. Paul advised that they have been around the area and any garages in a poor state have been given notice to improve or vacate the garage.

- m. Within the licence agreement there is a requirement for the garages to be maintained by the tenant. Livin advised they had not been checking the garages and that some are in a poor state.
- n. Boundary fences- who is responsible for the maintenance of them. Paul and Andy were not aware of any issues with the boundary fences but advised they are all different types of fencing which is provided by the tenant. This would need to be reviewed as Paul was unsure of the fencing around the gardens.
- o. Ongoing maintenance may be access roads made of gravel etc that are kept in a reasonable condition.
- p. The tenancies are on an annual basis. Livin will arrange for the tenants to pay Livin for the financial year 25/26 and then if the transfer is agreed then the amount will be prorated back to the council depending on when the transfers take place.
- q. There is a current termination clause of 1 month to give notice to tenants. Livin would write to tenants well in advance to let them know what is happening.
- r. If the transfer is agreed then Livin and the council would work together to publicise that the transfer was taking place such as a joint press release with The Chapter etc.

Andy and Paul left the meeting at 6.21pm

The following salient points were highlighted by Members-

- i. The council would need to ensure that inspections take place prior to the transfer.
- ii. There would be an additional cost to the annual grounds maintenance contract which will need to be considered against the income received. The transfer should be cost neutral.
- iii. Concern that inappropriate materials may be stored and that any hazardous materials are removed prior to any transfer.
- iv. The transfer terms and conditions to include that Livin should inspect each garage and they would need to sign to say that they would be liable for any costs to remove materials if they had not inspected them properly.
- v. The gardens are mostly currently well maintained.
- vi. The full terms and conditions, background to who has put covenants on the land and what the covenants are would need to be reviewed prior to any transfer.
- vii. There would be a cost of having to ensure there is an access road to the council allotments/Joe's Field (£8600) if the land was taken on by anyone else.
- viii. There could be an opportunity for council storage as capacity is at 50% currently.
- ix. If the garages aren't let then they could be flattened and grassed over.
- x. Local group litter pick in that area already. Allotment tenants currently cut the grass in that area.
- xi. Currently isn't any option to build on it but situation may change.
- xii. Locked garages would need to be inspected prior to a transfer.

RESOLVED- Cllr Sutherland proposed the council agree to the transfer subject to the aforementioned points being actioned prior to the transfer taking place. Seconded by Cllr Reece. 5 for and 1 abstention.

Members agreed to add the following agenda item for discussion due to the time sensitivity of the request.

The following agenda item for discussion at the next Town Council Meeting.

Agenda item 5 – Consider a request for the council to commit to take on a commitment to pay for the collections/emptying and maintenance of 4 dog bins recommended by the Junior Town Council.

County Councillor Cairns is allocating £1,300.00 for the purchase of the dog waste bins as part of the children's project from her Neighbourhood Budget. As well as the cost of the bins the clean and green team would also need a commuted sum, for a 5year period, to pay for the collections/emptying and maintenance of the bins as well as also something in writing to say if they were vandalised they would not be bearing the cost of replacement. The cost will be £561.00 per year current rate and £2810.00 total for the five-year period.

Members discussed this request and that the Junior Town Council have been informed that the project was going forward. Funding projects going forward should ensure that ongoing costs should be factored in and not just the capital outlay.

RESOLVED- Cllr Reece proposed that the council agree to the requests from Clean and Green to the ongoing costs for the 4 bins over 5 years. Seconded by Cllr Bruce. 5 for and 1 against.

Town Clerk to look into the budget cost centre the payment can be taken from in 25/26 such as Open Spaces/Allotments and include in future budget planning.

Meeting closed at 6.41pm

Cllr S. Sutherland
Mayor of Chilton Town Council
11th February 2025