

**CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH PARISH COUNCIL**

**EXTRAORDINARY LEISURE & RECREATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING**

Minutes of the meeting held at the Pinetrees Community Centre  
at 7pm on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Present** Cllr M Lucas (Chair)  
Cllr J Ballman  
Cllr R Ballman  
Cllr J Yeowell  
Cllr S Exell  
Cllr P Exell  
Cllr D Patey

**Officers** A Briggs (Estates Manager)  
A Reeves (Parish Clerk)  
A Cripps (Libraries Manager)

**Public** C Newport (Citizens Advice Bureau)

**Zoom:** Cllr M Beale  
Cllr T Araujo

Meeting started at 7.02pm.

**LR013** **Apologies**  
Cllr Will Stone

**LR014** **Declarations of Interest & Applications for Dispensation**  
Cllr J Ballman declared a non-pecuniary interest in HBUF and the RSPB.

**LR015** **CAB Provision at the Pinetrees Community Centre**  
Claire Newport the Chief Executive of the CAB provided a verbal update to supplement the written report issued.

Quarter one this year has received 292 separate clients from North Central with 1274 different challenges which highlights those clients who are coming with multiple issues. On average residents arrive with three challenges each.

Main issues remain benefits and tax credit issues which make up a third of enquiries. Housing, utilities and employment, a particular concern is utility bill arrears and as we are currently in the summer months we can expect this to increase as we head towards winter.

Moving forward, Claire highlighted a wish for the CAB to utilise the library spaces to deliver CAB services in North Central, initially via video link but then using video, phones and face to face confidential spaces.

Claire advised there is external capital funding to install CAB equipment in libraries to support the service post pandemic rather than providing services from the CAB offices in Pinetrees which has become unaffordable, even with existing Parish funding support.

The Chair thanked Claire for the verbal update and moved to Councillors questions.

Councillor Ray Ballman asked Claire whether the CAB needed the offices at the Pinetrees Community Centre. Claire responded by saying that they cannot afford to pay any rent or rates but would use like to use library shared spaces where possible, as an alternative.

Cllr Ray Ballman also added that not everyone has internet access, Claire responded that computers would be made available at libraries for this occurrence.

The Libraries Manager advised that opening hours of libraries may impede access times and we would need to work together to find suitable times where confidentiality can be assured.

Cllr Ray Ballman concurred with the Libraries Managers point, that Libraries are not confidential spaces and that if finance wasn't an issue, would the CAB want to provide an increased offer. The CAB advised that even if physical space was available at a reduced rate, there isn't the resource to staff it adequately.

Cllr Ray Ballman asked if reducing to one office would work. Claire responded that irrespective of space, staff remain the biggest cost, not rent and that one office could work on a pro-rata basis. For context, Claire advised that to staff a session twice a week, the cost would be £15,000 per annum.

The Clerk ran through the recommendation to consider requesting the Finance & General Purposes Committee an unallocated Capital expense of £11,000 (Pending two further quotations) to complete the office conversion works as described. The Clerk also reaffirmed the alternate suggestions to retain an existing presence.

Cllr J Ballman advised that he felt the decision was being taken without due care and consideration and through the prism of the pandemic. Cllr J Ballman felt that more time was needed to consider each option in detail as the issues raised by Claire are complex.

Cllr J Ballman advised that work is being done to support CAB from SBC and this is currently being finalised, the Parish Council should wait until this review is complete before making decisions in isolation.

Cllr J Ballman also challenged the need for office space, citing the success of home working over the last fifteen months. Cllr J Ballman disagreed that providing more office space was necessary and could be wasteful of areas which could provide greater community benefit and/or a commercial rent.

Cllr J Ballman requested a delay in reaching a final decision, so that a working group could be established to analyse the costings and the points the Library Manager and Cllr R Ballman have raised on confidentiality.

Cllr S Exell responded that she felt the opportunity to examine more options had passed.

Cllr S Exell advised that the five additional options proposed by Cllr J Ballman at the last meeting were not forwarded to the Clerk or Councillors in time. Cllr S Exell felt that this extraordinary meeting, combined with the associated report, the previous reports, the usage summaries and the CAB Chief Executives update; appraises Councillors sufficiently to decide on the matter.

Cllr R Ballman expressed disappointment that after fifteen years there will no longer be a physical presence in Pinehurst. Cllr D Patey responded that there will be a physical presence as one CAB office is proposed to be retained, rather than three.

Cllr D Patey went on to say that residents do have the option of a bus trip to Sanford House which will remain open.

Cllr M Lucas summarised that there will be a CAB presence on site, that hybrid can be maintained and that libraries are made available an adequate provision could be maintained, pending resolving issues of confidentiality.

Cllr J Ballman noted that this is a single option report and felt it an insulting recommendation to the residents of Pinehurst. Cllr J Ballman asked that JMH be considered as a staff base and challenged why this was not included in the report.

Cllr S Exell responded in that using JMH was not an option, in part due to its poor transport links, lack of parking and other logistical issues. Cllr S Exell noted this is the third time the item has been discussed and other site options have already been explored.

Cllr S Exell noted that the debate on the location of the Parish offices has occurred on multiple occasions.

Cllr P Exell noted a point of order that Cllr J Ballman was being disruptive contrary to Standing Orders.

The Chair reminded Councillors to debate one at a time, when invited to do so by the Chair.

Cllr J Ballman says that the report fails to consider other alternative ways of working. Cllr J Ballman felt members of the estates team may be better suited to office space in Southbrook depot rather than in a community centre.

Cllr J Ballman pressed the point that failing to consider the novation of online working and goes back to a dated way of running an office. Cllr J Ballman reiterated the need for a working group to look at whether Officers even need an office and could work entirely from home. Cllr J Ballman also claimed that £20,000 of lost income will occur if this recommendation is accepted.

Cllr D Patey questioned the definition of ‘success’ in that the Council have experienced challenges over managing some staff.

Cllr S Exell asked the Clerk whether £20,000 of lost income is correct, is this recirculated support from the Parish Council.

The Clerk responded that the rental opportunities for the current CAB space and upstairs offices would combined bring £18,000 per annum at commercial rates. We would however displace both the Officers, Estates Team and CAB completely from this option.

The Clerk also advised that in terms of managing staff, human connections and in person support of staff is important to maintain good working relationships.

The Clerk also advised that SMASH appear to have vacated their space and are still working effectively, the Clerk warned that this could be a sign of the times, in that there is no longer a commercial demand for offices in the same way as the past.

**RESOLVED:** To accept the Capital expense request of £11,000 (Pending two further quotations) to complete the office conversion works as described and retain one CAB office.

Cllr R Ballman abstained, Cllr J Ballman objected.

The meeting closed at 7.46pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Chair of the Leisure & Recreation Committee