

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING HELD AT THE
PADDOCKS, LONG ROAD, CANVEY ISLAND
THURSDAY 25TH MARCH 2010 AT 7.30 PM.**

PRESENT:

Cllrs N Harvey (Chair), J Liddiard, (Vice Chairman), D Anderson, B Dixie, P Greig and N Pontius D Anderson.

ALSO PRESENT:

Dr R Spink MP, J Rickards, J Burrige – Clerk, 54 members of the public

Apologies were received from Cllrs J Anderson, D Blackwell, and R Howard, all of who were attending a meeting at Castle Point Borough Council.
Cllr R Bishop was on annual leave

Cllr Harvey opened the meeting by stating that the Town Council had appointed a Working Group to meet with councillors from Castle Point Borough Council to deal with the Tidal Pool and that a Health & Safety report had been commissioned and was awaited. He then invited questions from the floor.

Councillors were asked whether they had seen the HSE report and what it covered. Could councillors tell the audience about the new regulations?

Cllr Harvey confirmed that he had seen a copy of the Blue Book and that he was trying to get a full copy in time for the meeting with CPBC.

One member of the audience had brought examples of the metal that had been protruding from the concrete and asked, "if CPBC really was concerned about children's safety", as they stated, why has nothing had been done to remove these hazard for over three years?

Now a working Party has been appointed will they now meet with Cabinet members from CPBC, and quotations be sought for the necessary repairs?

Cllr Harvey confirmed that the Town Council was in the process obtaining quotes, and that a schedule of repairs will form part of the report from the Health & Safety consultants.

Members of the audience expressed concern that Cllr Howard had not been appointed as a member of the CPBC Working group. They wanted this decision by CPBC to be reconsidered for the sake of transparency.

A member of the public asked why the CPBC members should all be Cabinet members. It would be more democratic if CPBC was represented by three ordinary Councillors. How could residents feel confident that any decision would be fair or just?

Cllr Dixie pointed out that the Town Council had no influence on CPBC's choice.

Councillors were asked whether, if it came to the point where CITC were in a position to take over the pool, the agreement of CPBC was needed.

Cllr Harvey confirmed that this would be the case.

A member of the audience stated that islanders wanted a guarantee that something would be sorted out. They were full of respect for the Town Council but expressed concern that CITC would be unable to influence any decision by CPBC.

Cllr Liddiard said that she believed that the Borough had chosen Cabinet members as it was the Cabinet which had decided to demolish the pool.

Cllr Greig asked which Councillors residents would wish to see appointed to the Borough's team.

A member of the public said that they had met a member from CPBC that morning who believed that the pool was 5 feet deep.

Cllr Harvey confirmed that a site meeting would be arranged to inspect the site.

Councillors were asked whether they were also Borough Councillors and, if so, why they were not aware of what was going on.

It was explained that the Borough made use of the Cabinet system where 9 members of the Council took all executive decisions and all ordinary Councillors were, essentially, kept in the dark. Cllr Dixie said that he personally would like to see a return to the old days of an Urban District Council on Canvey.

A resident urged everyone to consider the bigger picture. The river was being dredged and ever-larger ships would be using the tideway. He said that wash from these vessels would prove a danger to pool users.

Councillors assured him that as the pool was tidal and was only used on a rising or falling tide, or at low tide, the larger ships would not pose any greater danger than those currently passing the island.

Dr Spink said that some 32 million yard of spoil was being dredged. There had been an inquiry and he had presented 25 pages of evidence. He did not think that the authority appreciated the long term effects of the dredging.

On the Cabinet system of governing, Dr Spink stated that he believed it was a bad system which was failing in many boroughs. Non-Cabinet members were denied information. If 5% of residents in the Borough petitioned for a change to the Cabinet system, the authority would be obliged to review this.

The Conservative Candidate, Rebecca Harris, agreed with Dr Spink, saying that the Cabinet system allowed Council officers too much influence and control over Councillors.

A resident suggested that if funding was raised independently then surely CPBC could not interfere. On the evening news there had been an item that the Government were committing money to "restoring seaside places".

Dr Spink replied that he had already put in a bid for money for the island.

A member of the audience said that if there was funding that was available to the Town Council which was not available at Borough level, then surely CPBC must take this into consideration

Cllr Harvey said that the Working Group would not let the fact that the Borough were putting forward a team of Cabinet members intimidate them. They were meeting them as fellow Councillors.

Dr Spink said that he had been making enquiries and that he spoken with Robin Squire. He thought that funding was a distinct possibility.

A regular user of the beach pointed out that the pool was a free facility and that this was an important point to remember. Another resident informed the meeting that every spring deprived children from Inner London were brought to Canvey for a day out and that they loved the pool and the beach. Locals did all they could to make the children's trip memorable and every effort was made to ensure that the children had some special treats during their visit.

Cllr Greig pointed out that the pool was extremely popular during the summer. Waterside would be closed for renovation during the school holidays and there would be increased demand for the pool.

It was suggested that a Society of Friends of the Pool should be formed as this would give an authority to those seeking to keep the pool open. Solicitors are currently looking at this option.

It was agreed that the closure of the pool would have a significant knock-on effect. This would lead to visitors deciding to go to Southend or another resort instead and the effect of this would be the slow deterioration of the area and the closure of local businesses.

Cllr Harvey assured the meeting that the Town Council was going into this process with eyes wide open. He asked residents to support the Town Council and to give Councillors a chance.

The audience applauded a statement that the Town Councillors were seen as honest and hard working individuals who were doing their best for the community

There being no other points raised, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.00 pm.

Chairman

7th March 2011