



EVESHAM TOWN COUNCIL



MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF EVESHAM TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 3RD JULY 2023
IN EVESHAM TOWN HALL AT 6:30PM

PRESENT: Councillor: Alan Booth (Mayor)
Councillors: Sarah Schaathun (Deputy Mayor), Sue Amor, Stan Brotherton, John Campbell-Muir, John Clatworthy, Mark Goodge, Marion Griffiths, Julie Haines, Tim Haines, Bill Kimberley, Celia Kimberley, Ann Lyon, Robbie Raphael, Peter Scurfield and Chrissy Smith

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mrs Jo Adams, Town Clerk

ALSO PRESENT: Approximately 35 members of the public

42. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Julie Tucker, Nigel Deacon, Heather Kelleher, Emma Nishigaki, Callum Gailey and Terri Gailey.

43. Declarations of pecuniary or other interest

Cllrs Dyke and Lyon declared Other Disclosable Interests in item 3 on the agenda.

44. Motion to discuss complaints received

A video had been sent to councillors showing a councillor of Evesham Town Council using profane language and expressing xenophobic and ableist views. The video was circulating on social media and the council had received many complaints.

The content of the video had the potential to harm the reputation of the council and councillors of Evesham Town Council. It was therefore considered necessary to take swift action to protect the council's reputation and to distance it from the opinions and content expressed in the video.

Cllr Schaathun proposed that the council release a press release distancing the council from the comments made in the video and to confirm its support for Ukrainian refugees, including those living in the Evesham community. She read out the press release. Cllr Campbell-Muir requested an amendment to include the council's support for people with learning difficulties, who had also been demeaned in the video. Cllr Schaathun amended her proposal to include this and Cllr Campbell-Muir duly seconded the proposal. Cllr Julie Haines proposed an amendment to add to the press release that the video was made at a time before Cllr Nishigaki was a councillor and the video was made for private and therapeutic purposes and not made for public consumption, and had entered the public

domain illegally by phone hacking. Cllr Julie Haines amendment was seconded by Cllr Tim Haines.

A vote was taken on Cllr Haines' amendment which was lost.

A vote was taken on Cllr Schaathun's proposal which was carried. The agreed press release is attached to these minutes.

Cllr Goodge proposed that a complaint on Cllr Nishigaki's conduct be made to the Monitoring Officer at Wychavon District Council. Seconded by Cllr Dyke and agreed.

Cllr Goodge noted that it was normal practice for councillors under investigation to be asked to voluntarily step down from their committee and working group roles while an investigation into their conduct was in progress. However, Cllr Nishigaki was not present to offer to voluntarily step down from her committee and working group roles. Cllr Goodge proposed that Cllr Nishigaki's committee and working group memberships be withdrawn for the civic year and replacements be appointed. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Clatworthy.

Cllr Julie Haines proposed an amendment that Cllr Nishigaki be suspended from her committee and working group memberships until the investigation into her conduct was complete. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Scurfield.

A vote was taken on Cllr Haines' amendment which was lost.

A vote was taken on Cllr Goodge's proposal which was carried.

During the meeting, Cllr Dyke read out a statement which he requested be attached to the minutes.

The meeting was closed at 7.40pm.

Public Questions

Many people were present in the public gallery expressing anger at the slurs and language contained in the video.

A parishioner noted her regret at having to attend the meeting after the positivity of the town awards over the weekend. She stated that she had been contacted by the sender of the video who has confirmed that the video had been posted onto a Facebook group of 150 people on the 14th June, not before the election. She said that Cllr Nishigaki should apologise and resign (it was noted that this was beyond the powers of the town council).

Cllr Alan Booth
Mayor

Press Statement

Evesham Town Council is aware of a video circulating on social media in which an Evesham Town Councillor, Cllr Emma Nishigaki, is seen using profane language and expressing xenophobic and ableist views.

The council is dismayed at the content of this video and wishes to distance itself most strongly from its content.

Evesham Town Council confirms its full support for all Ukrainian refugees, especially those living in our local community and for people with learning difficulties.

Cllr Nishigaki has said that the video was made before she joined the council but we accept that this in no way excuses its content, and the council would like to apologise unreservedly for the hurt that it has caused in our community.

Mr Mayor,

I would like to make a statement. I would like to publicly show my support for the town clerk. When she started with us, she came from a much smaller council, and she certainly hit the road running. She has had to deal with many issues outside her comfort zone, including managing a much larger workforce and a much larger council of councillors. Supervising outside staff, graveyards, gardens, the Almonry staff, and a bid for £2.6 million pounds to save the Almonry building. Bookings for the town hall, our caretaker staff, dealing with the many public enquiries. Of course, she has staff to help with many of the council functions, however when she joined, only last August, she had to contend with staff shortages, most days. Even now two members of staff are still away. I recall one day when she was the only one in the office. She has dealt with the death of Queen Elizabeth and the coronation of King Charles. She deals with Remembrance Sunday, four statutory committees, a working group, umpteen agendas, minutes, end of year accounts, with everything in place, and it all has to be perfect. That is the law. She does all this in good grace and even humour, occasionally. Ladies and gentlemen, I could go on further.

Mr Mayor, councillors, ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely hope Jo Adams stays with Evesham Town Council for many years to come and this is the very last time she has to contend with anything like this.

Thank you.