MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF
THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH
HELD AT SWANSPPOOL HOUSE, WELLINGBOROUGH
ON TUESDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 2014


Officers present: Mr J T Campbell, Chief Executive, Mrs B Lawrence, Head of Resources, Miss J Thomas, Interim Head of Planning and Local Development, Miss S Lyons, Solicitor/Monitoring Officer, District Law, Mrs G Chapman, Principal Community Support Officer, Mrs P Lawton, Principal Democratic Services Manager, Mrs P Whitworth, Democratic Services Officer, Mrs E Robinson, Democratic Services Support Officer, Mr G Betts, Mayor’s Sergeant and Mrs C A Mundy, Democratic Services Officer.

The Mayor’s chaplain said prayers and remembered the mothers of the Mayoress, Mrs Bass and Councillor T Allebone following their recent deaths.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ainge, Allebone, Beirne, Gough, Partridge-Underwood, Warwick and Watts.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made.

3. QUESTIONS/PETITIONS/REQUESTS TO SPEAK FROM THE PUBLIC

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained how the meeting would proceed. He informed council that a petition of more than 10,000 signatures had been received from the Save Glamis Hall For All Committee and that 11 requests to address the meeting had been received.

The wording of the petition was as follows:

“We, the residents of Wellingborough and surrounding areas, petition Wellingborough Borough Council to keep Glamis Hall open until at least November 2015 and in the interim period, work with the community to enable the day centre to continue in its present form either in the existing building or in a new building in the immediate vicinity.

“There is no other day care facility for the elderly in Wellingborough and for many of the 180 elderly people who attend the day centre it is their only
opportunity to socialise. It provides an excellent service including transport to/from the centre, bathing, podiatry, hair dressing and a social atmosphere for some of our most vulnerable people. The building also provides recreation bookings and sports changing rooms in the evenings and at weekends.

We would like the Resources Committee to work with representatives of the users of Glamis Hall to form a Joint Action Plan to save the services it provides for the future.”

The following members of the public addressed the meeting:

Heather Saunders, Graham Campbell, Paul Lord, Diana Clayton, Betty Ashton, Vivian Ampadu, Jillian Powell, Anthony Page, Dr Christopher Ellis, Richard Garvie and Audrey Russell.

They informed the committee of the reasons why they considered Glamis Hall should remain open, that the decision needed to be overturned to restore public faith in the council, and so that users could continue to attend. The speakers’ key points are summarised below:

- **Illegal decision** - it was stated that the decision made to close Glamis Hall was illegal, because the council’s constitution at 3.2.01(d) had not been complied with. Campaigners had obtained 10,000 signatures on their petition after the decision to close the building was made in June 2014, which they believed proved that Glamis Hall was of great public interest and should have been heard by full council. It was asserted that if the decision was not reversed a judicial review would go ahead.

- **Consultation process** - it was considered that the required consultation process had not been carried out. It was also stated that the discussions with users of the day centre had contravened the Market Research Society’s code of conduct (B14) for social, medical and government consultation, and had caused undue distress to the users and their families.

- **Alternatives** – it was stated that no viable alternatives had been offered for the provision of the service by the council. It was considered that the tender process for the outsourcing of the services within Glamis Hall in 2011 had been unsatisfactory, with a view to the Resources Committee making the decision to close the building purely to save money.

- **Funding** – speakers considered that the building had been neglected for many years; early in the 2014-15 financial year there had been capital funding of £400,000 for the provision of day care services for the elderly, so it was argued this money could have been used to refurbish and reconfigure the hall. Refurbishment was one of the options set out in the 2012 feasibility study.
• **The proposal** - the Save Glamis Hall For All Committee was proposing that a community organisation be set up to take over the management of the building on the understanding that the council transferred the building and land to the new organisation, and that part funding for the rebuilding/refurbishment be provided on a sliding scale over a three year period, followed by the provision of a modest grant over the longer term. The new organisation would work with the council for the good of the community and it was considered that this would prove that the elected members had listened to the electorate of the borough.

• **Demographics** – a speaker provided the following information: the 2011 census indicated that 17,490 in the borough were over 65 which equated to 23% of the population, and this was expected to increase by 30% in the next few years. According to the Department of Communities and Local Government, some estates in the borough were in the top ten deprived areas in England and there were 3,849 people in the borough who considered themselves to have poor health. He stated that at least ten people per week were referred to Glamis Hall and there were over 5,000 unpaid carers in the borough providing under 20 hours of care per week, so Glamis Hall was an essential form of respite for these carers because it enabled them to work. The financial cost of providing care at Glamis for all users was £237,000 per annum compared to home care at £275,000 per annum, or residential care at £20,428 per resident per annum, both considerably more expensive. He argued that keeping Glamis Hall open would therefore be better value for money than the alternatives.

• **Benefits of the day care service** – speakers outlined the benefits of this service which enabled the elderly to receive support whilst remaining in their own home. It gave them: independence; the opportunity for social interaction and experience of various activities; the sharing of a hot meal with friends; and the ability to have a bath conducted with dignity. It was stated that one of the worst things for the elderly was the feeling of social isolation and lack of freedom of choice which this service could redress.

• **Personal experiences** - speakers made reference to their own experiences or the personal experience of a family member attending Glamis Hall. Particular praise was extended to staff for the excellent care they provided that went above and beyond their duty. The provision of social interaction and stimulation, a healthy well-balanced three course meal, exercise, bathing facilities, hairdressing, podiatry and friendship was invaluable to the wellbeing of users. The facilities were not just available for the elderly, but also for younger users who had experienced sudden unexpected ill health. Without a day centre like this it was felt that users would feel vulnerable, lonely and isolated from the world. The hall was also used for other community activities including parties, christenings and social gatherings for all ages.
- **Health care** – a GP stated that surgeries were already over-stretched and there was concern that the closure of the hall would affect the general wellbeing and health of the users. A number of users had individual care plans in place which encouraged time away from their homes to attend the hall for social interaction, a hot nutritious meal and personal care. The service was also essential for carers, giving some much needed respite. Without this service it was felt that the vulnerable in the borough would suffer.

- **Other users of the hall** – the main hall was also used by a local church on Sundays and sometimes on other days. Sports groups such as football clubs used the changing facilities, and a badminton club had used the hall on a Friday evening for over 27 years. It was stated that it would be difficult to find a suitable alternative venue for these activities.

- **Upgrade of building** - it was considered that the building could be modernised and made into a building that the council could be proud of.

- **Respect for the elderly** - speakers told the council that the way in which the users had been informed of the closure caused undue stress because a period of six months was insufficient to find alternative suitable care, being too much of an upheaval for some users to comprehend.

The Mayor thanked the speakers for their comments and asked the leader to present the report.

4. **GLAMIS HALL**

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Head of Resources to council following the receipt of the petition from the Save Glamis Hall For All Committee.

The report detailed the background of how the decision had been made by the Resources Committee on 25 June 2014 to close Glamis Hall from 1 January 2015 with a follow up report due to be made to the Resources Committee on 16 September 2014.

Following this decision there had been a great deal of interest in the future of Glamis Hall and its services and a petition had been presented to the council.

The leader reminded council that the condition of the building had not changed and neither had the medium term financial outlook.

Following receipt of additional information the leader formally proposed that the decision to close Glamis Hall be referred back to Resources Committee on 16 September 2014. This was seconded by Councillor Graves.
The Mayor opened the debate to members.

A lengthy debate ensued.

Reference was made to the importance of the facility for the community and how it had changed over the years from purely a day centre for refreshments and social gatherings to a day care centre dealing with the more complex health issues of the elderly, such as dementia. The building was not regarded as suitable for this sort of care. For over two years work had been ongoing to find an alternative venue for the service, but this had proved to be very difficult.

Councillor Henley, as a member of the Resources Committee, considered that although the decision to close Glamis Hall had not been taken lightly, more information had come to light since the decision had been taken. He proposed an amendment to the proposal contained within in the report at 4.3 as follows:

“Rescind the decision to close Glamis Hall and invite Resources Committee to further consider the future of all services and buildings involved”. This was seconded by Councillor Elliott.

Councillors Elliott, Maguire, Blackwell and Scarborough all spoke, giving their support to this amendment. They also referred to the bundle of documents that had been delivered by the Save Glamis Hall For All Committee to members’ home addresses. The bundle included the feasibility study carried out in 2012 which indicated that the building was in a poor state but it was considered that some work could be carried out to refurbish the hall to make it suitable for all users as the day centre was an essential part of the lives of the users, acting as a point of contact for the vulnerable in society.

As the county council had a statutory duty for the general welfare of the elderly, members commented that it needed to ensure that the needs of the elderly were assessed and met with financial contributions. It was also considered that the health and wellbeing of other users such as the football clubs, social users and community cohesion should be taken into account.

The members supporting the amendment all considered that the documentation received from the Save Glamis Hall For All Committee regarding the future of the service could be a positive way forward. They suggested that, if this was developed, it could secure the future of the services currently provided. They felt that other discretionary services, such as The Castle and leisure services had been provided in a similar way, so working together cohesively would be a good way forward.

Councillor Hawkes commented on the debate but did not consider that this option adhered with the request in the petition. He considered that the hall and services should be kept open until November 2015 and that the council needed to work with the community to move this forward as a joint enterprise.
Councillor Henley and six other councillors requested a recorded vote under clause 4.1.16(d) of the constitution ahead of the vote on the amendment being taken. The following votes were cast on the amendment put by Councillor Henley:

For: Councillors Blackwell, Dholakia, Elliott, Emerson, Henley, Higgins, Maguire, Pursglove and Scarborough (9).

Against: Councillors Bailey, Bell, Carr, Graves, Griffiths, Harrington, Hollyman, L Lawman, G Lawman, Morrall, M Patel, Raymond, Timms, Ward, M Waters and V Waters (16).

Abstained: Councillors Hawkes, B Patel and Simmons (3).

RESOLVED that the motion be declared lost with 9 votes in favour, 16 votes against and 3 abstentions.

The debate continued.

Councillor L Lawman spoke regarding the condition of the building and the expert advice that had been received. She referred to the feasibility study which had indicated that extensive refurbishment would be required at a considerable cost.

She suggested an amendment to the proposal in the report at 4.2 as follows:

“Refer back the decision to close Glamis Hall to Resources Committee on 16 September or to the next following Resources meeting”. This did not find a seconder.

Councillor Hawkes proposed an amendment to the proposal in the report at 4.2 as follows:

“Refer back the decision to close Glamis Hall to Resources Committee on 16 September with directions to the committee that the council wishes Glamis Hall and the facilities provided to remain open until at least November 2015; and that council directs the Resources Committee to establish regular meetings of a joint working party at intervals of not more than six weeks and to work with representatives of the users of Glamis Hall to use their joint best endeavours to formulate a joint action plan and to save the hall and all the services it provides for the future; and that the joint working party shall have regard to all the points in the document of Save Glamis Hall For All distributed to all councillors and that any proposals for the future of Glamis Hall and any services provided should be considered and determined by full council.”

This was seconded by Councillor Scarborough.

Councillor Henley and six other councillors requested a recorded vote under clause 4.1.16(d) of the constitution ahead of the vote on the amendment being taken. The following votes were cast on the amendment put by Councillor Hawkes:
For: Councillors Blackwell, Dholakia, Elliott, Emerson, Hawkes, Henley, Higgins, Maguire, Pursglove, Scarborough and V Waters (11).

Against: Councillors Bell, Carr, Graves, Griffiths, Hollyman, L Lawman, G Lawman, Morrall, M Patel, Raymond, Simmons, Timms, Ward and M Waters (14).

Abstained: Councillors Bailey, Harrington and B Patel (3).

RESOLVED that the motion be declared lost with 11 votes in favour, 14 votes against and 3 abstentions.

(Councillor Griffiths left the meeting and did not return.)

The debate continued with a number of members raising their concern over the reduction in grant funding from the county council who they considered had a duty of care for the elderly, and who should now be dealing directly with individuals to ensure they had proper care packages in place to suit their needs.

Members also reiterated the concern that the building was no longer fit for purpose and that the Glamis Hall Working Party had been working for over two years to find a solution to the problem. The building and its services had been put out to tender and two organisations had shown interest, but decided not to proceed as the building was not suitable and the overheads significant. They stated there were also other day care facilities available in Wellingborough that users could attend. Concern was also expressed that, should the refurbishment work take place, the users would have to relocate to another venue for a period of time because the building was in a poor state and was not suitable in its current state for the needs of some of the users, and in particular those who suffered with dementia.

Council was also reminded that the role of officers was to provide reports, containing sufficient information for members to make decisions; whilst the expert advice of officers was valued, the final decision was made by members.

Councillor Bell confirmed that the deadline for producing reports for the Resources Committee on 16 September would be met, and that any decisions in relation to the future of Glamis Hall and its services would be a recommendation to council due to be held on 7 October 2014.

Councillor Bailey proposed that the proposition by Councillor Bell now be put to the meeting. This did not find a seconder and the debate continued.

Councillor Hawkes asked for an update on the position with the impending judicial review.

Miss Lyons, Solicitor/Monitoring Officer confirmed that the council was taking legal advice and that it would not be appropriate to discuss this in public as it
was subject to legal privilege, but that no formal proceedings had yet been taken.

The debate concluded and Councillor Bell asked that the proposal be put which was to refer the decision to close Glamis Hall back to Resources Committee on 16 September.

Councillor Bell and a number of councillors requested a recorded vote under clause 4.1.16(d) of the constitution ahead of the vote on the motion being taken. The following votes were cast:


Against: Councillors Elliott and Maguire (2).

The motion was declared carried with 25 votes in favour and two against.

RESOLVED that the decision to close Glamis Hall be referred back to the Resources Committee on 16 September 2014.

On closing the meeting the Mayor thanked everyone for attending the meeting and confirmed that the Resources Committee would convene at 7pm on 16 September 2014.

Mayor

The meeting closed at 9.25pm.