

Confidential Minutes from Middleham Town Council Meeting 21 June 2023, Item 11, Closed discussion

Present

Cllr H Byford (Chair) HB

Cllr S Mashford (Deputy Chair) SM

Cllr L Skelton LS

Cllr D Palethorpe DP

The current situation and proposals from Racing Welfare (RW), namely their preference to purchase the building and land or to rent the same on a peppercorn rent for 999 years, were discussed.

Councillors were unanimous in viewing a long lease for a peppercorn rent as being unacceptable as it would amount to giving away a community asset. Ideas for how best to approach this in order to balance the need for a community centre and facility and the interests of the community now and in the future. This is at a time when the need for affordable housing has never been greater.

Cllr Byford pointed out that the Council cannot, by law and governance, hold large amounts of money in reserves unless it is intended for a specific purpose and within a reasonable timeframe. So if the property is sold, there must be a plan for the use of the money for the benefit of the community. The possibility of building a new, smaller village hall etc was discussed but no available or suitable plot of land could be identified.

Cllr Watson suggested it may be better to sell the building and land to REW or whoever, with a covenant to ensure continuing community access and facilities within the building. He wondered if it would be possible for MTC to use the receipts to purchase units within the RW/Broadacres accommodation proposed for the field alongside the Key Centre. Councillors saw this as a potentially very positive outcome that would be seen by the community as a good use of the funds raised, whilst retaining a community access to as much of the existing building as is needed.

However, Cllrs were unclear as to what can be achieved and how we are permitted in law to act.

Resolved:

That Council seek legal advice on a set of questions to be put forward by councillors. This meeting to be arranged by Cllr Watson and attended by all councillors who wish to be there.

Date:

Signed: