

MINUTES

At a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee on MS TEAMS on Tuesday 3rd November 2020

Present: Councillors: Bates, Brice (Vice-Chair), Bridges, Cavill, Fuller, Halik, Hoar, King (Substitute for Drewett), Palmen (Chair) & Whiffen.

In attendance: Cllr Kirk, Cllr Piazza, Wiltshire Cllr Trigg.

Officers: Mr L Allan (Town Clerk/RFO), Mrs A Quick (Minutes), Mrs J Weimar (Head of Resources & Venues).

Public: 3

Press: 3

3190 **APOLOGIES**

RESOLVED to approve apologies from Cllr Drewett (substituted by Cllr King).

3191 **MINUTES**

a. **RESOLVED** to approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st September 2020.

b. *There were no questions.*

3192 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest not already included on the Register.

3193 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

Cllr Palmen wished Cllr Drewett all the best with his recovery.

3194 **OPEN FORUM**

The committee considered questions from the public.

Mr. Mitchell referenced the minutes on the multi-storey car park. In return for historical developments in Trowbridge, such as the development of Castle Place which encroached into Trowbridge Park, it was believed then that 100 years free parking would be made available.

Mr. G Baker (Nub News) asked if live feed would be allowed for these meetings? Cllr Palmen responded that there would be no problem with this but it is proposed to amend Standing Orders regarding what may be done with any recordings made.

Mr. Jubbie stated it would be controlling freedom of speech if Standing Orders are brought in to limit use of recordings. Cllr Palmen stated it wouldn't be a law therefore may not be enforceable.

Mr. Jubbie stated legal action can be taken by the public if they are upset by any recordings, photos etc. It was asked if any precedent had been set in other councils? Cllr Palmen explained that there are examples of this in other councils but this will be discussed at the agenda point.

Mr. Allen asked if the new Standing Order will apply to Councillors? Cllr Palmen believes yes this would include Councillors. The Town Clerk advised that yes it would include everyone.

Mr. G Baker stated that Trowbridge Nub News would only be streaming live meetings, not using or editing recordings.

3195 **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Town Clerk ran through the P&R Report and in particular.

1.1 CGR – Decision was taken by WC on 9th September. From 1st April 2021 the new town boundary will include all of the new Drynham division and all of the new Park division, transferring areas from North Bradley.

1.2 Coronavirus Emergency – Further restrictions will be applied from Thursday morning. TTC is working with other groups in the town. Cllr Piazza thanked Cllr Oldrieve and Officers for the Covid emergency meeting which was successful and productive.

Initial

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2.1.1 Grants - Deadline for applications was extended to September. Applications will be discussed formally at next P&R. Cllr Piazza asked when grants would be issued? Town Clerk confirmed normally it would be in July but this year it will be left until January before we made the decisions at committee.

2.1.2 Annual Accounts – Annual Accounts are still with the auditor which should be complete by the end of November. No members of the public asked to see the accounts for the last 5 years.

2.1.6 Financial Impact of Coronavirus – Employees will remain on Furlough this month with new restrictions. Cllr Piazza is concerned about the lack of Council Tax payments due to job losses. Town Clerk confirmed WC will confirm any Council Tax Base reduction tomorrow which will be taken into account in the budget. These figures will be circulated tomorrow. Cllr Kirk asked if we have any reserves to cover any reduction in Council Tax payments? Town Clerk confirmed reserves are lower than they should be but we would have some available if required to prevent cutting services. Cllr Fuller stated we have received our full precept for this year. Cllr Hoar asked if raising the precept was to increase the reserve for future expected commitments? Town Clerk confirmed yes this is correct, we added £40k into the general reserve and have already allocated £20k of this at half year and have added £60k to additional reserves for additional assets and services from WC. We have a plan to increase our reserves up to 3 months of revenue expenditure. Including to allow for taking on assets and services from WC which will cost an additional £500k per year.

2.2 Human Resources – We are seeking to recruit 2 x part time groundsmen, interviewing next week in accordance with restrictions (i.e. online interviews). Cllr Kirk asked if our commercial activity contracts need to be amended in terms of flexible working, pension contributions etc? Town Clerk stated that there haven't been any decisions made about taking on staff from contractors. Cllr Palmen highlighted that 3rd party contractors still have to make pension payments. Town Clerk confirmed that TTC & WC both currently contract out services. When transferred to TTC the decision can be made if we want to continue contracting out services or take these on in-house, depending on flexibility, costs etc. Cllr Kirk is concerned about the difference in pension contribution. Town Clerk stated that Id-Verde haven't made us aware of their pension contribution.

3.1.1 Museum – We have made some savings on capital items which we now realise are not required. The current estimate is that the museum will open March/April 2021. Cllr Kirk asked if museum staff will be fully utilised if museum is not opening until spring? Town Clerk confirmed staff and volunteers are very busy unpacking items. Restrictions on volunteers and staff separating into 2 groups has extended the tasks.

4.2 Sports Pitches Projects – Not much progress on Doric Park, still no confirmation on planning. Cllr Fuller asked about the Rugby Club AGM. Town Clerk confirmed that they are having some difficulty arranging a virtual AGM but are working to resolve this.

WC haven't been able to progress with Paxcroft Mead Cricket Club.

5.1 Calendar of meetings – Calendar invites have been issued up to June 2021, due to continue on MS TEAMS.

6 Town Development – Additional maps have been included in the report. Cllr King asked about the Capita Building at Manvers House. Town Clerk confirmed the application has been increased from 18 flats to 27 flats and 27 car parking spaces.

Site Allocation Plan – Elm Grove access into the site from the south is required. Cllr Piazza asked about the master plan involving the development of a community hub. What are the plans for the pitch itself? Town Clerk confirmed that WC want TTC to take it over and it will then be up to the council how they want to use it.

We are working with North Bradley and some representative from TTC need to be available to meet with them to discuss plans. There is a proposal to extend the burial ground which N. Bradley are willing to take management of. There is a derelict barn which potentially could be converted.

WC is currently reviewing its core strategy which is likely to undergo consultation in January. WC responded to the planning white paper.

7 Trowbridge Partnerships - Cllr Trigg is now Chair of Trowbridge Future. Rosemary Macdonald is the new Chair of Trowbridge Town Hall Trust. Cllr King asked when we will know about the Future High Streets Fund? Cllr Palmen stated we are waiting for further information from the Government.

8.1.7 Service Delegation & Asset Transfer – We expect that WC will want to discuss this with TTC in the future.

Cllr Brice asked about the Primary Care Centre. Town Clerk stated we are still waiting for a planning update.

3196 COVID PANDEMIC (Report Item 1.2 and APPENDIX C)

The committee considered the report of the review into the council's response during lockdown.

Cllr Halik stated it is good, thorough report but was concerned that we were going to repeat what was done before. It is evident that the 2 points made should be addressed immediately which seems to have been dealt with. Cllr Whiffen asked for his name to be put forward to assist in the 2nd lockdown, collecting prescriptions etc. Cllr Brice asked if any voluntary organisations are available? Town Clerk stated we are in communication with Trowbridge Future. Furloughed staff will be allowed to volunteer for this group as they are not allowed to volunteer for TTC according to HMRC rules.

RESOLVED: That the committee notes the report and approves the actions suggested.

3197 PUBLIC TOILETS

The committee considered the report and Recommendation.

The Town Clerk stated that the previous resolution indicated we would take action in 2021. Planning ahead is required to provide a specification which can be circulated to contractors for assessment.

Cllr Kirk asked if there is a figure in mind for building these toilets or do we need a full survey to determine this? Cllr Palmen stated we need a survey to investigate this accurately.

RESOLVED: That the council allocates £1950 from reserves to commission Healthmatic to undertake a survey, to issue designs and the specification for the construction of Public Toilets with the allocated area at The Civic Centre as approved at the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting on 1st September 2020 which can then be used to obtain quotations for the work from builders following the council's procurement processes.

3198 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS (Report Item 2.1.3 and APPENDIX A)

The committee considered the Summary Management Accounts 2020/2021 Quarter 2 and the detailed committee accounts.

Overall £46,896 better than budget at the half year point, which we hope to be similar at end of year.

Cllr Halik asked if we can have the total amount that we received as furlough payments? Town Clerk agreed that we can report this separately on a monthly breakdown, Juliet will arrange this.

RESOLVED: That the committee notes the report.

3199 BUDGET 2021/2022 (Report Item 2.1.5 and APPENDIX B)

The committee considered the draft budget for the committee areas of responsibility for 2021/2022.

Democratic – First budget is showing a slight increase of £320k. There is a pension contribution reduction as it goes down by 1% next year, with a further reduction the following year.

Grants – potentially some slightly higher figures in due to impact of Covid on the community.

Resources - There is a small saving on the current year's budget due to a reduction in stationery costs. Online committee meetings have improved this.

CIL – The same figure as this year’s budget (£65,500). Possibly optimistic if developments do not occur at the same rate. Cllr Halik asked how many house this is based on? Town Clerk suggested it would equate to approx.. 150 houses. Based on current applications we are looking at approx. 300 houses per year in future which will increase our CIL to over £100,000 per annum. Cllr Halik asked what is the % salary increase we have budgeted for against what the Government have proposed? Town Clerk confirmed it is 1% which might be optimistic. Juliet will provide this information. [Later confirmed current figures are based on 2%.]

RESOLVED: The Committee approves the draft budget which will be adjusted prior to further consideration at the January meeting.

3200 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

RESOLVED to approve the payments and receipts since the last meeting:

	<u>Payments</u>	<u>Receipts</u>
August	333,171.88	127,411.35
September	560,699.35	1,019,085.63 (includes precept)

3201 **STANDING ORDERS**

The committee reviewed and approved revised Standing Orders;

a. Recording Of Meetings –

A7.8 A person may not edit the film, recording or photographs in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being photographed, recorded or filmed.

Town Clerk highlighted that this new Standing Order only relates to recordings of proceedings of the council, not other activities. UK Parliamentary rules were stated for comparison. A discussion was held between Councillors, members of the public and press.

Cllr Kirk questioned that you can’t determine how much of a clip someone is allowed to publish.

Cllr Hoar highlighted that context is key to ensure Councillors are held to account.

Mr. Jubbie highlighted that online content is already present to ridicule politicians out of context. There is no right to prevent freedom of speech therefore is not enforceable.

Mr. Allen has been following this on social media and believes it has been blown out of proportion and what is proposed is reasonable. Cllr Palmen stated it done by other Councils, including Wiltshire Council. Cllr Fuller welcomes this inclusion.

Cllr Piazza suggested we make the same statement that WC make stating those making any recordings are responsible for their actions.

Mr. G Baker stated that Nub News is only requesting that they are allowed to live stream. The only way to control this is to request that cutting of recordings is not allowed. Cllr Hoar doesn’t understand why anyone would have a problem with this as any member of the public would want to see a factual representation of council meetings.

Mr Cave (The Broadcast Check) has live streamed many council meetings and he asked for any examples of videos which have directly misinterpreted council proceedings. Cllr Palmen stated that Mr Cave can make a complaint about Cllrs if he feels this is necessary.

b. Motions requiring notice - A9.1 *Except as provided by these Standing Orders, no motion may be moved unless the business to which it relates has been put on the Agenda by the Proper Officer or the mover has given notice in writing of its terms and has delivered the notice to the Proper Officer at least seven clear days before the next meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting, a Saturday, a Sunday, a day of the Christmas break, a day of the Easter break or of a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.*

c. Code of Conduct - A25.2 *If the Proper Officer receives a complaint that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the council’s code of conduct the Proper Officer will refer the complaint to the Monitoring Officer of Wiltshire Council.*

A25.4 If the Proper Officer considers that there are staff, employment and legal issues related to the complaint then, in addition to reporting the complaint to the Monitoring Officer, the Proper Officer will, subject to standing order A18 above, include a report of the matter on the agenda for the first available full council meeting.

Cllr Cavill asked whether WC Monitoring Officer have ever found in favour of the complainant?

Cllr Palmen can find this out. Cllr Kirk stated that the Proper Officer can only be referred to the Mayor, is there an alternative to this? Councillors can be referred to the monitoring officer.

Town Clerk stated that the situation is the same as in business in that there is a maximum seniority level for complaints e.g. Board of Directors.

Cllr Piazza asked whether it is necessary to state complaints on agendas? Town Clerk stated yes as it would need to be discussed by the council or committee with full transparency if required. Cllr Palmen believes the Standing Order modifications would help to protect staff if there are any serious issues. Cllr Kirk agreed that it is sensible if complaints go straight to the monitoring officer. His only concern is if there is a problem with the administration you only have the Mayor to turn to, as there have been issues with members of staff posting inappropriate content online.

RESOLVED: That the committee recommends to Council that the changes to Standing Orders are approved.

A recorded vote was taken which was carried unanimously.

3202 MEDIA RELEASES

- a) Poppy sales in the Shires.
- b) Supporting the community during 2nd Covid lockdown.

Town Clerk stated that it is not recommended that the Council posts its own meetings online and that the minutes are the only official record.

3203 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5th January 2021 on Microsoft MS TEAMS.

The Meeting closed at 21.12

Signature.....Dated.....