

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

In light of the on-going Coronavirus emergency and the associated government restrictions on social distancing, the meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council scheduled for Tuesday 21st April 2020 did not take place.

At a meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council on 17th March (in anticipation of restrictions relating to social distancing) the Town Council agreed to delegate (temporarily) many of its functions to officers of the Council (in consultation with members of a 'virtual emergency committee'). Town Council minute 0467/1920 refers.

In order to maintain some credible levels of transparency, a would-be agenda in line with scheduled (but cancelled) Town Council meetings was circulated and published.

The would-be agenda included standard reports and recommendations, albeit in the knowledge that many of the decisions would be made under delegated powers.

The purpose of the would-be agenda included:

- Advising councillors and members of the public of those matters that might normally be discussed or noted at a Council meeting;
- Allowing all councillors an opportunity to provide comment to officers and pose questions that provide an opportunity for scrutiny.

Many councillors provided comment in response to the 'Would-be' Agenda and these have been taken in to consideration when producing this document.

The following is a set of 'Would-be Minutes' that have no legal weight but are intended to inform councillors and the public.

**'Would-Be Minutes'
of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council
scheduled (but not held) for 21st April 2020**

Present:

Nil

WBM/0001 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - N/A**

WBM/0002 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - N/A**

WBM/0003 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – N/A**

WBM/0004 **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The authority to approve Town Council minutes has not been delegated to officers. The matter will be deferred until the Council is able to meet again.

WBM/0005 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME – Nil**

WBM/0006 **FINANCE**

i) Accounts Paid – March 2020

Members received notification of items which had been paid in accordance with Financial Regulation 5.5.

Payments amounting to £53,617.51 approved by the Town Clerk under delegated powers (see appendix A of would-be agenda)

ii) Cashbooks 1, 2 & 3

Copies of Cashbooks 1, 2 & 3 had been made available to all members on the website. No adverse comments notified to the RFO by Wed 22nd April.

iii) Budget Report

A Budget Summary report including Earmarked Reserves had been made available to all members on the website.

A number of comments were received from members about the suitability of the report.

- At the beginning of the financial year with no meaningful transactions having taken place and the end of year close down of accounts having not been signed off there was little value in having the report.
- Use of Capital Receipts might be considered for Street Lighting LED upgrade project instead of the general reserve.
(Clerk's Note: the transactions to pay the invoices were in the previous financial year, which has now been closed albeit not signed off).

iv) Balance Sheet

Copies of the Balance sheet as at 31st March 2020 (£515,184) had been made available to all members on the website.

v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

Copies of the bank reconciliation statements as at 31st March 2020 had been made available to all members on the website. No adverse comments notified to the RFO by Wed 22nd April.

Original copies of bank statements and reconciliations will be available as usual for those 2 councillors who would authorise cheques in April.

vi) Receipts and Payments Summary

Copies of the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 31st March 2020 had been made available to all members on the website. No adverse comments notified to the RFO by Wed 22nd April.

vii) Accounts for Payment

Copies of a list of payments for approval had been made available to all members on the website. No adverse comments notified to the RFO by Wed 22nd April.

Payments amounting to £26,022.78 approved by the Town Clerk under delegated powers (see Appendix G of would-be agenda).

WBM/0007 **Community Action – Coronavirus**

A report from the PA to the Town Clerk had been circulated to all members via e-mail summarising actions taken by and services being offered by local community groups, in response to the Coronavirus emergency and Town Council action/support.

WBM/0008 **Town Council Services**

A summary report from the Outdoors and Property Manager regarding the management and operations of Council Services which have been affected as a result of the Coronavirus emergency had been made available to all members on the website. The report contained the following recommendations:

- To approve the closure of Severn Park Car Park as part of the national lockdown and in line with any subsequent Government advice during the period of the Coronavirus emergency (authority delegated to P&G manager)
- To approve the closure of Castle Grounds as part of the national lockdown and in line with any subsequent Government advice during the period of the Coronavirus emergency (authority delegated to P&G manager)

- To approve the closure of all play and exercise equipment as part of the national lockdown and in line with any subsequent Government advice during the period of the Coronavirus emergency (authority delegated to P&G manager)
- To approve the 6 week hire of a compressor and jackhammer at £100 per week + VAT to a total of £600 + VAT
- To approve the purchase of 2 new sets of grave boards up to £2,600 + VAT

Some members commented on working on changes to working patterns and appropriate opportunity for staff to be off work / take holiday, in particular for those staff that had transferred to a 4 days on 4 days off shift pattern. Further detail on the current working arrangements for staff was circulated to demonstrate that the arrangements had been made in full discussion with the affected staff and the situation remained under constant review.

WBM/0009 Town Council Hire Facilities

A report from the Outdoor, Property and Booking Administrator had been made available to all members on the website which provided the Council with an update on the properties that it routinely opens / hires out and the impact the Coronavirus emergency has had on their operation.

(Clerk's Note: The RFO has applied for £500 worth of grant funding from Shropshire Council's small grant fund for Bridgnorth Community Hall).

WBM/0010 Town Council Procedures

A report regarding changes to Town Council procedures as a result of the new Coronavirus Bill had been made available to all members on the website with the following recommendations:

- i) To make every reasonable effort (despite having the option to roll over current appointments) to elect the Mayor in May of 2020 (which might simply be a single item agenda "To Elect the Town Mayor");
- ii) To trial virtual meetings with the virtual emergency committee over the coming weeks;
- iii) To defer the approving of the Annual Governance and Accounting Statements for a short period.

(Clerk's Note: There were a number of comments received from members and a suitable solution would need some further consideration – the emergency committee would be consulted before a decision is made.)

WBM/0011 **Potential Financial Impact on the Town Council – Coronavirus**

A 'light-touch' initial report on likely financial implications of the current Coronavirus emergency had been made available to all members on the website.

A number of members had offered comments – the ongoing situation will be closely monitored by the RFO

WBM/0012 **SALC**

The minutes of the Bridgnorth and Shifnal Area Committee Meeting held on 16th January 2020 had been made available to all members on the website

WBM/0013 **Town Council Fees – Revised**

A report to retrospectively approve a revised set of fees for the Town Council from 1st April 2020 had been made available to all members on the website.

Changes included the reversal of the proposed increase in interment fees for Bridgnorth residents and the reversal of the proposed increase in market pitch rent.

No adverse comments notified to the Town Clerk by Wed 22nd April.

The revised fees are approved by the Town Clerk under delegated powers. (see Appendix M of would-be agenda).

WBM/0014 **Local Economic Growth Strategy**

A report from the Town Clerk and a copy of a draft Local Economic Growth Strategy for Bridgnorth, prepared by Shropshire Council had been made available to all members on the website.

Recommendations in the report included:

- i) To form a working group comprising councillors: Clive Dyson, David Cooper, Edward Marshall and Ron Whittle.
- ii) To approve Terms of Reference for a Working Group to respond to the Local Economic Growth Strategy Draft document for Bridgnorth.
- iii) To:
 - a. Authorise the Town Clerk to submit an agreed response [provided by the Working Group]

Or

- b. [Where there are differences of opinion between members of the Working Group] To authorise the Town Clerk to produce a response that is mindful of previous discussions or decisions on related matters.

A number of members had commented and while most were content with the general nature of the recommendations some had asked for wider membership of the working group.

Decision: A working Group be formed as per the Terms Of Reference issued under Appendix N of the would-be agenda) by the Town Clerk under delegated powers and that working group to comprise initially Cllrs: Clive Dyson, David Cooper, Edward Marshall and Ron Whittle, with the opportunity to join being available to any councillor.

WBM/0015 Local Plan Review Timetable and Impact of Covid-19

Correspondence had been made available to all members on the website advising that: Shropshire Council has decided to pause decision making on the Local Plan Review process for two months. The intention is therefore that a decision on the pre-submission version (Regulation 19) of the Local Plan will be taken by Cabinet in July (not May as previously agreed).

WBM/0016 Schedule for Signing Payroll and Payment of Accounts

A proposed schedule for signing payroll and payment of accounts had been made available to all members on the website.

It was acknowledged that at present, this might not be able to be followed due to the current situation with regard to Covid-19. Every reasonable effort will be made to rotate regularly the signing of payroll and payment schedules, some flexibility will be needed.