

BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held in the Annexe, College House
on Tuesday 17th March 2020 at 7.15pm**

(Draft until signed at a subsequent meeting)

Present:

Councillors:

R Whittle (in the Chair)
C Baines
S Barlow
J Buckley
D Cooper
G Davies
C Dyson
K Hurst-Knight
E Marshall
K Sawbridge
C Walden

In Attendance:

L Jakeman, Town Clerk
R Williams, Responsible Financial Officer
A Kendrick, PA to the Town Clerk

0449/1920 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Members noted the apologies as listed below:

Councillors:

R Fox – Social distancing
H Howell – Social distancing
E Lynch - Social distancing
S Stevens – Social distancing
C Whittle – Social distancing

0450/1920 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

0451/1920 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Question from Mr Richards of St Leonards Close: What is the Council doing about its debtors (a matter to be discussed in confidential session)?

Town Council response provided by the Mayor and the Clerk: The agenda item reports to the Council on the current debtors to the Council and what action is being taken by officers, members can comment on courses of action being undertaken (whether they are satisfactory or not). There will always likely be some debtors (generally but not exclusively late payments) and reporting them to Council on a monthly basis is considered to be helpful. The internal auditor had recently visited the Council and in his covering correspondence he said "Generally internal controls are operating effectively at the Town Council, and controls over income are good with the reporting to council regarding overdue debts representing best practice."

0452/1920 **MINUTES**

- i) Members noted receipt of the draft minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 3rd March 2020.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Meeting of Bridgnorth Town Council held on Tuesday 3rd March 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

0453/1920 **DIARY OF THE MAYOR AND MAYORESS**

Members noted that the Mayor and Mayoress had attended the following events since the last Town Council meeting:

- 20/2. Johnson Design Partnership art event
- 22/2. Bewdley Mayor's Quiz Night
- 26/2. Highley School assembly "inspiration talk"
- 27/2. Philip Dunne MP tour of flooding.
- 27/2. Civic Society AGM
- 28/2. Appearance on ITN News
- 6/3. Supper Club with Philip Dunne MP
- 10/3. Probus Club Annual Ladies Lunch
- 14/3. Mayor's Charity Ball

0454/1920 **MEMBERS QUESTION TIME**

Nil

0455/1920 **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

- i) Planning Committee – minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2020

RESOLVED: to receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 2nd March 2020 and noted the resolutions contained therein.

0456/1920 **FINANCE**

- i) Accounts Paid – February 2020

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

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £103,708.04 be retrospectively approved for payment.

- ii) Cashbooks 1, 2 & 3

Members noted receipt of Cashbooks 1, 2 & 3.

- iii) Budget Report

Members noted the Budget Summary report, including Earmarked Reserves.

- iv) Balance Sheet

Members noted the balance sheet as at 29th February 2020 (£579,642).

- v) Town Council Bank Reconciliation Statements

Members noted the bank reconciliation statements as at 29th February 2020.

- vi) Receipts and Payments Summary

Members noted the in-year receipts and payments summary as at 29th February 2020.

- vii) Accounts for Payment

Members noted receipt of a list of payments for approval.

RESOLVED: that the accounts amounting to £15,000.17 be approved for payment.

0457/1920 **INTERNAL AUDIT**

RESOLVED: To note the recommendations of the Internal Auditor following the 2nd interim visit and ‘the follow’ up comments provided by the Town Clerk and/or RFO.

0458/1920 **DOCUMENT RETENTION AND DISPOSAL POLICY**

RESOLVED: to adopt the Document Retention and Disposal Policy (subject to including a reference to grant funding documentation)

0459/1920 **STAFF AND COUNCILLORS PRIVACY NOTICE**

RESOLVED: to approve the Staff and Councillors Privacy Notice.

0460/1920 **GRANT FUNDING BID – SEVERN PARK SLIPWAY**

Members noted that a grant funding bid had been made by the PA to the Town Clerk to the Severn Trent Community Fund for improvements to the slipway in Severn Park.

0461/1920 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

RESOLVED:

To acknowledge the contribution of the Climate Change Advisory Group in documenting the activity of the Council and making recommendations that seek to reduce the Town Council’s carbon footprint.

To acknowledge that the Town Council has already and previously implemented change that has contributed to reducing/ offsetting carbon omissions.

To acknowledge that there is much scope to reduce the Council’s carbon footprint and for the Town Council to continue its efforts and review the matter in 12 months’ time.

0462/1920 **WAIVE FEES FOR HIRE OF SPACE UNDER THE TOWN HALL**

RESOLVED: to waive any Town Hall fees associated with the Lions walk and marathon on Monday 25th May.

0463/1920 **ARTS TRAIL WORKING GROUP**

- i) Members received the notes of a meeting held on 10th February 2020.
- ii) Members received the notes of a meeting held on 9th March 2020 and a verbal report from Councillor J Buckley which included the planned provision of a further statue in the Castle Grounds (*subject to approval from Historic England*).

0464/1920 **VE DAY GRANT FUNDING**

Members received an update on the recipients of the VE Day Grant funding, previously agreed at the Town Council meeting held on 19th November 2019. Members noted that any remaining funds would be made available for groups to re-bid for. In light of the national emergency regarding the Coronavirus–COVID-19 members suggested that the events were now unlikely to go ahead.

0465/1920 **REVIEW OF BUDGET EXPENDITURE**

Members noted the report from the RFO (the current spend stands at £894,379 with a budget of £949,085; Variance £54,706. It is estimated that the net spend for March 2020 will be £50,000). All assumptions do not take into account any financial consequences of the corona virus emergency.

Members noted that the expenditure overspends in the nominal ledgers for both the Arts Trail and Bus Shelters was offset by matching increases in income for both items.

0466/1920 **BRIDGNORTH COMMUNITY HALL**

Members noted the minutes of meeting of the Management Committee held on Monday 2nd March 2020 and consider any recommendations

RESOLVED: (*acting in its Capacity as Sole Trustee to the Charity*): **that the Annual Accounts of the Bridgnorth Community Hall for FY ending 31 July 2019 and thereafter be in the format of receipt and payments (as recommended by the internal auditor).**

0467/1920 **CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

Members noted that the Town Clerk, the Responsible Financial Officer and the Outdoor & Properties Manager had met with the Mayor on the morning of Monday 16th March to discuss the impact on and the potential measures to be taken by the Town Council on in relation to the rapidly changing corona virus emergency. A copy of the notes of that meeting (Initial Response Meeting) had been circulated to members on the morning of the meeting and copies were also tabled at the meeting.

Members further considered a scheme of delegation (to officers of the Council). The aim of the document was to delegate a large number of tasks and decision making process that might normally be approved by Town Council in order that non-essential meetings might be cancelled (or where there are insufficient councillors being able to attend meetings to make lawful decisions) but with the core business of the Council being able to be transacted.

In respect of the notes of the Initial Response Meeting, members were of the view that most of the actions/ potential outcomes were reasonable including:

- The cancellation of all committee meetings (and most likely Full Council meetings until further notice).
- That planning responses could be made in line with the suggestion discussed at the Town Council meeting all held on 18th February 2020 (circulated with that agenda).
- The Carnival planned for June should be cancelled.
- Civic Sunday (scheduled for 17th May 2020) be postponed to a date as yet to be undecided.
- Some unplanned expenditure on additional IT / mobile phones might be necessary to support working from home.

In addition members felt that the Town Council should be directly or indirectly involved with self-help and volunteer groups. More so to provide some assurances to the public that groups that were being set up had some oversight or legitimacy (deter/ identify scams).

Members noted that dialogue had already started with council officers and volunteer group leaders.

RESOLVED:

- i) **To adopt the document “Delegated Powers Authorised in Response to the Covid-19 Outbreak in the UK” with the document (and the authorisations) being valid until no later than 23rd June 2020.**
- ii) **To create a new budget line ‘Civil Emergency – Covid-19’ of £5,000 WEF 1 April 2020 to finance expenditure that might not have occurred without the Covid-19 emergency or to support other budgets that might be under resourced as a consequence of the emergency**
- iii) **To create a virtual committee of 6 councillors whose opinions should be sought (*when using non-standard delegated powers*) via email comprising Councillors: S Barlow, J Buckley, D Cooper, K Hurst-Knight, K Sawbridge, C Walden.**
- iv) **To waive the right for members to receive agenda in hard copy.**

- v) **To support the actions/ potential outcomes of the Initial Response Meeting (held on 16th March)**

(Clerk's Note; Councillor Buckley left the meeting)

0468/1920 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

RESOLVED in terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, **RESOLVED** that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

0469/1920 **TOWN COUNCIL DEBTORS**

Members considered a report from the Responsible Finance Officer.

RESOLVED: to note a debtors report and approve the actions being undertaken to address unpaid invoices due to the Town Council.

0470/1920 **STAFFING MATTERS**

RESOLVED: to adopt the recommendations in the report from the Job Description Working Group (notes of a meeting held on 6th March 2020).