

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

20 MARCH 2020 AT 1930 HOURS

Present: Councillors A Dodwell
 T Morris
 C Palmer
 G Perham
 D Bowater (Chair)
 K Cursons
 J M Freeman
 F Kharawala (Vice Chair)
 S Jones
 V Harvey
 S Hemmings
 S Owen
 A Gray
 R Goodchild
 D Scott
 J Silverstone

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
 S Sandiford (Head of Democratic and Central
 Services/Deputy Town Clerk)
 Ian Haynes, (Head of Grounds and
 Environmental Services)

Members of the Public: 0

86 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors R Berry, C Chambers, P Snelling and B Spurr.

87 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests, and the nature of those interests, that they might have in any of the items under consideration at the meeting.

It was noted that all Members had an interest in the agenda item Council Operations.

88 QUESTIONS

(a) No questions had been received from members of the public.

(b) No questions had been received from Councillors.

89 TOWN COUNCIL OPERATIONS

Council received a verbal update in respect of the measures taken within the last four days as a result of the Government guidelines introduced on Monday, 16 March.

In response to queries raised at the Annual Parish Meeting, the Town Council had taken a role in the establishment of a Leighton-Linslade COVID-19 Task Force, developed from a Leighton-Linslade Helpers group set up on social media by two local volunteers and now with hundreds of members. Group representatives had now met twice and activity was being directed through the Central Bedfordshire emergency response team in line with their emergency protocols. This would ensure structure, a cohesive approach and protect all involved.

Whilst a Central Bedfordshire response was under development, local volunteers were taking the lead in providing emergency food parcels to those in need. ID cards and t-shirts had been ordered. It was proposed that one of the Town Council premises be used for dry temporary storage. Local businesses were being encouraged to support the community through the introduction of home delivery services. It had been suggested that the bandstand be used for open air church services with appropriate social distancing in place. Town Council vehicle insurance had been amended.

Overall, it was felt that a positive response had been given to the community within a very short space of time. In a constantly changing situation, Central Bedfordshire emergency teams would provide direction and act as a triage service for both helpers and those in need of help. Whilst information was being widely shared online, it was recognised that there was an urgent need to reach out further and it was hoped that a flyer could shortly be delivered to as many households as possible.

Council expressed huge thanks to all those involved and in particular the volunteers who had been instrumental in setting up the community response group.

Discussion took place regarding the importance of communications. It was noted that the well-meaning actions had been largely community driven and had taken place at breakneck speed since Monday. With a number of staff now home working and normal Town Council operations turned upside down within the space of a few days, this had proven difficult but it was agreed that new communications mechanisms would be put in place to keep the Council informed.

Discussion took place about the measures introduced by Government to address COVID-19 and the importance of recognising and adhering to these as far as possible was stressed.

Council had received a report in advance of the meeting regarding proposed changes to Town Council operations in the face of new pandemic measures. It was noted that very little time had been available to devise recommendations and

that the situation had changed further in the two days since the report had been issued. A number of amendments were proposed and discussed.

A vote took place on the proposed changes to operations and it was noted that further changes were likely. It was likely that most resources would be diverted to reacting to the current crisis rather than any other scheduled/planned tasks/projects for the foreseeable future.

RESOLVED to endorse the following steps in respect of Town Council operations:

1	Planning	To expand the existing scheme of delegation temporarily to delegate authority to the Town Clerk to respond to all planning applications on behalf of the Council, following circulation by email of proposed responses and agreement by email from at least 3 members of the Planning & Transport Committee (who must not all come from the same political Group).
2	Meetings	To cancel all meetings scheduled until 30 June 2020, unless Government restrictions are lifted prior to that date. A decision to be taken on 29 June by the Town Clerk, Leader of the Council and Leader of the main opposition Group regarding meetings beyond that date. "Virtual" meetings will be given consideration if the Government enables this and the appropriate technology can be put in place.
3	Mayor	Should legislation allow and should meetings not resume by 18 May 2020, Cllr F Kharawala to be elected Town Mayor as from 18 May and that she need only make her declaration to the Town Clerk. The post of Deputy Mayor be left vacant until meetings resume. All Committees to be re-appointed with their current composition and all Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs be re-elected. Any changes to Committee memberships that are needed before Council meetings are resumed can be made, in writing, by the Leader of the appropriate political Group, to the Town Clerk.
4	Staffing	Staff who are able to work at home will be supported to do so. Where measures affect workload for individuals, consideration will be given to whether employees can be asked to undertake different tasks during this period.
5	Market	A temporary fee structure should be implemented from 23 March 2020 that allows for a reduction of 100% to all Traders who attend and 100% to those who are unable to attend due to self-isolation, sickness or unavailability of stock. This to be reviewed on a monthly basis. Any Government

		advice on attendance at street markets must be adhered to by all Traders.
6	Payments	Proposed payments lists to be emailed to designated councillors for email rather than signature approval. Payments by bank transfer rather than cheque as much as possible.
7	Venue hire	To seek approval from members of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee via email of proposed amendments to existing policy to ensure hirers of our facilities are supported during this crisis.
8	Grounds maintenance	Best endeavours will be made to maintain current regimes but this will be highly dependent upon availability of staffing, volunteers and any supply chain issues arising from the current crisis.
9	Community Grants	To be agreed by a majority of the members of the Policy and Finance Committee on a recommendation circulated by email. Such recommendation/s to be agreed by the Town Clerk (or nominated officer) and the Chair of the Grants & Awards Sub-Committee.
10	TACTIC	Drop-in service, Additional Needs group, Easter playscheme, schoolwork and satellite projects suspended until further notice. Consideration is being given to how specialist services can be provided, for example telephone counselling/support.
11	Income	Council notes that in light of measures, income will be negatively impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The impact on the revenue budget will be reported to Council at least quarterly.
12	Venues	To endorse that one facility be used for dry storage and two used for public health services if necessary. Insurance implications to be reviewed.
13	Community Events	Business Networking Event: postponed from 22 April until 9 September 2020 VE Day celebrations: postponed from 8 May until 15 August 2020 – alternative options for 8 May being explored such as “broadcasting” bagpiper/Town Crier via social media Big Lunch: postpone from 7 June until 16 August 2020 Linslade Canal Festival: no change for now but intention to cancel rather than postpone if necessary Music in the Park: due to start 7 June; review each concert in turn 5 weeks in advance

RESOLVED that in respect of the COVID-19 community response:

- (i) the Town Council records support for its resources being used to support the work of the Leighton-Linslade COVID-19 Task Force as directed by Central Bedfordshire Council emergency services.**
- (ii) The Town Council supports, in principle, the use of the Community Safety earmarked reserve for expenditure related to the COVID-19 community response.**

With the cancellation of all scheduled meetings until the end of June if not longer, Council was asked to consider emergency delegation of authority to ensure that decisions could continue to be made.

RESOLVED to endorse the following proposed emergency delegation to the Town Clerk (or a senior Officer in the absence of the Town Clerk):

That with the exception of:

- a) matters which the law states cannot be delegated and are reserved for full Council, and b) any employment matters requiring the involvement of a Committee:**

Any decision requiring Committee or full Council approval, where it is not possible to convene a lawful meeting, is hereby delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with a number of Councillors equal to the quorum for a meeting of the body concerned. This includes approval of any expenditure outside existing delegations.

Where practicable, the Councillors to be consulted shall include the Chair and Vice Chair of the body concerned. The Councillors consulted must not all be members of the same Group.

In the event that any Chairs or Vice Chairs are incapacitated during the operational period, then they should nominate a substitute for the period they are incapacitated and notify the Town Clerk accordingly.

The above emergency delegation authority to come into effect immediately following the Council meeting held on 20 March 2020 and to remain in effect until rescinded at a subsequent meeting of the Council.

A formal vote of thanks to all staff was proposed and agreed.

90 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded on the grounds of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. The public and press to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of detailed discussion regarding staffing matters.

91 STAFFING MATTERS

Council received and considered two reports regarding staffing matters.

The first report was in respect of organisational change.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the report.**
- (ii) To endorse the completion of the Town Council's organisational change process for those affected by creating two new posts of: Grounds and Environmental Services Pavilions Supervisor/Handyman (SCP 24-28) and Grounds and Environmental Services Groundsperson (SCP 17-21), taking effect from 1 April 2020.**

The second report was in respect of Central and Democratic Services staffing.

RESOLVED to endorse that:

- (iii) The fixed term contract for maternity leave cover for the Senior Administration Officer for 25 hours/week until November 2020 be amended to full time hours from 1 April 2020 until 31 December 2020.**
- (iv) The cost of the amendments be partially met by utilising salary budget arising from the recent organisational change, earmarked for venue promotion and community facilitating, with the remainder met from 2019/20 revenue budget underspend for professional fees and insurance.**
- (v) Any underspend of professional fees and insurance budgets in 2019/20 be transferred to the Professional Fees earmarked reserve at year end, with the shortfall resulting from the proposed arrangements to be met from this earmarked reserve.**
- (vi) Proposed arrangements from 1 January 2021 to be reviewed at the October meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee (if possible), in order for the appropriate budget recommendations to be put forward for the 2021/22 salary budget.**

It was noted that recruitment for the maternity leave cover of the Administration Officer might be delayed as a result of changes to workload arising from the COVID-19 crisis.

The meeting closed 2015 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 2020.

Chair

TBC

DRAFT