

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

(Held using Zoom video conferencing)

Monday 18 May 2020 at 7.30 pm

ATTENDED:

Councillors G Stevens – Town Mayor
A Armytage
S Cloughton
W Conian
P de Hoest
P Fisher
R Freedman
M Hardinge
J Jones
T Porter
N Taylor

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mrs J Mason, Town Clerk
A D Noakes, Town Clerk Designate

There were no members of the public present. Members of the public had the opportunity to join the meeting via Zoom.

OPENING MATTERS AND GOVERNANCE

FC 56/20 Election of Town Mayor

Cllr R Freedman proposed, and Cllr N Taylor seconded that Cllr G Stevens be nominated as Town Mayor.

There being no further nominations, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** that Cllr Stevens be elected as Town Mayor for the Council year 2020/21.

FC 57/20 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr G Stevens signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and a copy was countersigned and dated by the Town Clerk as Proper Officer. Cllr G Stevens thanked councillors for their support over the previous year and was very pleased to be able to welcome Tony Noakes, to his first meeting and wished him well in his new position as Town Clerk.

FC 58/20 Mayoral Engagements 2019/20

Cllr G Stevens mentioned his attendance at the VE Day 75 commemoration at St Peters Church on 8 May 2020. He laid a wreath on behalf of the Berkhamsted Community and the Town Council. The list of Mayoral Engagements in 2019/20 **were noted**.

FC 59/20 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G Corry and Cllr N Woolner. Cllr A Peeler and Cllr P White did not attend the meeting.

FC 60/20 Election of Deputy Town Mayor

Cllr G Stevens proposed and Cllr S Claughton seconded that Cllr G Corry be nominated as Deputy Town Mayor.

There being no further nominations, it was unanimously **RESOLVED** that Cllr Corry be elected as Deputy Town Mayor for the Council year 2020/21.

FC 61/20 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

FC 62/20 Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct for Members of the Town Council was duly re-adopted.

FC 63/20 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

Standing Orders and all attachments as amended at Full Council on 16 March 2020 were re-adopted.

COMMITTEES, WORKING PARTIES/GROUPS, OUTSIDE BODIES

FC 64/20 Standing Committee Membership:

It was **agreed** to appoint the following as members of standing committees for 2020/21:

i Finance and Policy Committee

Councillors: P de Hoest
R Freedman
J Jones
G Stevens
N Taylor
P White
N Woolner

Substitutes: A Peeler
S Claughton
T Porter
M Hardinge

ii **Town Planning Committee**

Councillors: A Armytage
G Corry
P de Hoest
P Fisher
J Jones
G Stevens
P White

Substitutes: R Freedman
M Hardinge
N Woolner

iii **Transport and Environment Committee**

Councillors: S Cloughton
W Conian
P Fisher
M Hardinge
A Peeler
T Porter
N Taylor

Substitutes: A Armytage
P de Hoest
R Freedman
N Woolner

(Standing Committees will each elect a Chair and Deputy Chair for the year at their next meetings.)

FC 65/20 Membership of Working Parties and Groups

It was **agreed** to appoint the following as members of working parties and groups for the year 2020/21:

i **Allotment Management Team - Reports to Full Council**

Councillors: P de Hoest
G Stevens
N Woolner
+ Allotment Representatives

ii **CLIMATE EMERGENCY STEERING GROUP - Reports to T & E**

Councillors: W Conian
P de Hoest
R Freedman
N Taylor
P White
N Woolner
+ Representatives

ENERGY WORKING GROUP - Reports to T & E (via Climate Steering Group)

Councillors: A Peeler
P de Hoest
P Fisher
R Freedman
+ Representatives

TRAVEL WORKING GROUP- Reports to T & E (via Climate Steering Group)

Councillors: W Conian
N Taylor
P White
N Woolner
+ Representatives

HABITATS WORKING GROUP- Reports to T & E (via Climate Steering Group)

Councillors: W Conian
M Hardinge
T Porter
+ Representatives

iii **BUS WORKING GROUP- Reports to T&E**

Councillors: W Conian
M Hardinge
N Taylor
+ Representatives

iv **Canal and Riverside Partnership – Reports to Full Council**

Councillors: R Freedman
N Taylor
+ Representatives

v **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE - Reports to T & E
LEVY WORKING GROUP**

Councillors: A Armytage
W Conian
G Stevens
N Taylor
P White
+ Representatives

vi **EVENTS COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP - Reports to T & E**

Councillors: To be decided as required

vii **FESTIVAL OF LIGHT COMMITTEE - Reports to F & P**

- Councillors: M Hardinge
G Stevens
+ Representatives
- viii **LAGELY MEADOW YOUTH AND COMMUNITY - Reports to F & P CENTRE SUB-COMMITTEE:**
- Councillors: M Hardinge
G Stevens
N Woolner
+ Representatives
- ix **LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP - Reports to TP**
- Councillors: A Armytage
M Hardinge
G Stevens
N Taylor
+ Representatives
- x **PARKING PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT FORUM - Reports to T & E**
- Councillors: S Cloughton
W Conian
P de Hoest
J Jones
G Stevens
+ Representatives
- xi **PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP- Reports to T & E**
- Councillors: G Stevens
N Woolner
+ Representatives
- xii **SPORTS CENTRE WORKING GROUP- Reports to TP**
- Councillors: A Armytage
P de Hoest
G Stevens
P White
N Woolner
+ Representatives
- xiii **SUPPORT SERVICES- Reports to F & P**
- Councillors: A Armytage
W Conian
P de Hoest
G Stevens
N Taylor
+ Representatives

FC 66/20 Chair of the Allotment Management Team

Cllr G Stevens was elected the Chair of the Allotment Management Team.

FC 67/20 TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND JOINT COMMITTEES 2020-2021

Ashridge Estate Committee	Councillor: N Taylor
Berkhamsted Market Fund	Councillor: G Corry
Berkhamsted Chamber of Commerce	Councillor: G Stevens
Berkhamsted Parochial Charities	Councillors: G Corry J Jones (Ms Barbara Newton) (C Talbot-Ponsonby)
Berkhamsted Youth Town Council	Councillor: N Woolner
Bourne and Salter Educational Foundations	Councillors: G Corry (Mrs S Johnson)
Dacorum Environmental Forum	Councillors: P de Hoest G Stevens
Friends of St Peter's, Berkhamsted	(P Matthews)
Graham Green Birthplace Trust	Councillor: S Cloughton
Northchurch United Charities	Councillors: R Freedman J Jones (C Talbot-Ponsonby)
Swan Project Trustee	Councillor: N Woolner
Town Hall Trust	(Mr Richard Case)

FC 68/20 Meeting Dates

The dates of meetings of the Town Council for 2020/21 were confirmed and now appear on the website.

Cllr R Freeman asked if there would be an opportunity to plan another annual meeting later this year, to include public participation and the cancelled climate emergency presentations. Following a discussion concluded that this would be challenging to plan and organise with the current and future restrictions on social distancing and gatherings. Cllr G Stevens suggested that if conditions were less constrained later in the year, the Town Council could plan *for* a further 'Market Stall' event during a Market Day because the date previously arranged, 16 May, had been cancelled. No decision was agreed at this stage.

FC 69/20 Minutes of previous Meetings

The minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 30 March 2020 were approved.

The Town Clerk gave an update on the Covid-19 grants awarded to date:

£1400 – Age UK Dacorum
£1000 – CAD
£500 – South East Crafts for Causes
Plus, PPE donations to Open Door

FC 70/20 Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

STANDING COMMITTEES

FC 71/20 To receive and adopt the minutes of the: Finance and Policy Committee

There were no minutes to adopt.

Cllr R Freeman raised a general point about the challenges faced by local businesses during the current Covid-19 crisis. Councillors agreed to keep close to the issue by listening to concerns raised by the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses. Cllr W Conian mentioned a local survey would help build this view and had already sent details to Councillors for consideration. This would be discussed and agreed as appropriate at a future meeting.

Action Cllr W Conian/Town Clerk

FC 72/20 Town Planning Committee

Cllr G Stevens went through the headlines of the Town Planning Committee's held on the 14 April 2020 and 11 May 2020.

The Council **ratified** the resolution set out in minute TP55/20(i) regarding Cllr A Peeler's attendance at meetings. Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires a member to attend at least one meeting of Council, committee or a sub-committee within a six-month consecutive period, in order to avoid being disqualified as a Councillor. It had been resolved that the six-month requirement be waived in respect of Cllr Peeler for a further three months.

A discussion took place about the potential to introduce social distancing measures for pedestrians using the High Street and possibly Lower Kings Road. The Borough Council had advised Cllr G Stevens that the County Council were making plans but Berkhamsted was not a candidate for Phase 1 changes. Cllr Conian reported on a recent telephone conversation and e-mail exchange between Mr Rupert Thacker and Cllr W Conian. E-mails had been sent to Councillors that afternoon from the Town Clerk and Cllr W Conian on the subject. It had **been agreed** to utilise the emergency decision making powers agreed at Full Council on 30 March 2020 to progress matters in view of the urgency of the need for an early indicative response to Mr Thacker. Therefore, a decision was made to send a letter to Mr Thacker by COP Friday 22 May 2020. The letter would highlight our interest in offering options and working with HCC to introduce measures for social distancing in Berkhamsted. The draft would be circulated to councillors.

Action Town Clerk

FC 73/20 Transport & Environment Committee

Meeting on 20 April 2020 was cancelled due to Covid -19 crisis

FC 74/20 Allotment Management Team Meeting

Meeting on 27 April 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19 crisis

WORKING GROUPS

To **receive and adopt** notes from the:

FC 75/20 Not applicable

FINANCIAL MATTERS

FC 76/20 Year End Arrangement

The following were **noted**:

- (i) This year liaison with DCK Accounting Solutions to prepare the annual accounts and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) is being undertaken remotely. Progress is being made.
- (ii) The final internal audit inspection for the year will also be undertaken remotely and Auditing Solutions have been asked to clarify the arrangements.

In response to an enquiry by Cllr P de Hoest about the requirement to undertake a review of the effectiveness of internal audit, Mrs Mason advised that such reviews were required every three years or following the appointment of a new internal auditor. The last review had taken place on 2017 so one was required this year. The internal audit deadline had been extended and a review would take place after the completion of this year's internal audit.

Action Town Clerk (Designate)

- (iii) In view of the uncertainty two Full Council dates have been allocated for the approval of the AGAR. The first is Monday 20 July 2020 and a second contingency date of 10 August has been set.
- (iv) 31 August 2020 – Latest date for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to arrive with External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn.
- (v) Pending completion of the year end processes the receipts and payment schedules for February, March and April were **noted**. These had been sent separately to Cllr Stevens for scrutiny and he had no comments to report.

FC 77/20 Review of Internal Control

The Statement of Internal Control dated 6 May 2020 **was adopted**.

FC 78/20 Changes to NatWest Bank Mandate *and other institutions*

- (i) The addition of the new Town Clerk to the signatories of the NatWest Bank Mandate and all Berkhamsted Town Council Account Mandates **was approved** (Santander; Cambridge Building Society; Shawbrook Bank and Saffron Building Society).
- (ii) The Town Clerk **was authorised** to make the necessary arrangements with the new signatory to complete the appropriate sections of the mandates and to deal with the bank, as necessary. It was **agreed** Mrs J Mason will continue to be a signatory during the interim period after the 31 May 2020. This greatly improves the Town Council's ability to ensure creditors are settled quickly, during the current period of business disruption.

FC 79/20 To **RESOLVE** that under Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting, because it is likely that publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business or for other special reasons stated in the resolution, arising from the nature of the business or proceedings.

FC 80/20 Insurance Renewal 2020/21

The renewal of the Town Council's insurance policy with Hiscox and Motor Insurance with MS Amlin on 1 June 2020, was **noted and endorsed**.

FC 81/20 Civic Centre Lease

It was **noted** that the four-year lease finished in January 2020.

The Council **approved** the Town Clerk (Designate) to engage with DBC to begin discussions on the new Civic Centre lease, to gain more certainty on our BTC tenancy.

FC 82/20 Update on Recruitment of Allotment & Finance Officer

A verbal update was given by the Town Clerk (Designate). There are suitable candidates to take to a first stage interview next week (27 May 2020). Possible recruitment by late June/early July. We will only start the successful candidate when we have better access to the Civic Centre.

FC 83/20 Town Clerk/Town Clerk (designate) Handover Update

Following **discussion and agreement** with the Support Services Group, Cllr G Stevens informed the council about the retention arrangements of Mrs J Mason for a period up to 3 months from 1 June 2020. This would include 2 working days a week, to be invoiced as a contractor. The Town Council **supported** these proposals.

FC 84/20 Incremental progression Mrs J Mason, Town Clerk

- (i) It was **noted that** 1 April was Mrs J Mason's incremental date. Following discussion between Cllr G Stevens and Cllr A Armytage it had been agreed that progression of one incremental point should be awarded.
- (ii) The Council **ratified** this decision. With effect from 1 April 2020 Mrs Mason will progress from LC3 37 to LC3 38.

FC 85/20 BTC staff return to work at the Civic Centre options

The briefing paper on the BTC staff return to work at the Civic Centre was **noted and supported** by Council. Cllr G Stevens asked about the challenges with social distancing in the Civic Centre's facilities eg narrow corridors and other tenant use of the facilities. The Town Clerk (Designate) acknowledged this and he is liaising with the Landlord to address.

Action Town Clerk (Designate)

FC 86/20 Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

Minutes approved at remote meeting on

Signed

Date