

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Monday 2 September 2019 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors G Stevens – Town Mayor
G Corry – Deputy Town Mayor
A Armytage
W Conian
P de Hoest
P Fisher
R Freedman
M Hardinge
J Jones
A Peeler
T Porter
N Taylor
P White
N Woolner

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mrs J Mason, Town Clerk

There were no members of the public present

OPENING MATTERS

FC 84/19 To receive **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Claughton.

FC 85/19 To receive **declarations of interest** regarding items on the agenda

None.

FC 86/19 **Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2019 **were approved** as a correct record and were duly signed as such by the Town Mayor.

FC 87/19 **Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present.

FC 88/19 Town Mayor's Communications

- (i) NALC Newsletter re Annual conference 28/29 October 2019
In response to a query from Cllr W Conian, the Town Clerk undertook to ask NALC for more precise detail of the topics to be covered by speakers. **Action Town Clerk**
- (ii) HAPTC Bulletin August 7th
- (iii) NALC Chief Executive's Newsletter
- (iv) NALC newsletter – NALC opens nominations to its Larger Councils Committee
- (v) Visit Herts | Business Barometer Newsletter
- (vi) NALC Newsletter – new ICO Guidelines
- (vii) Herts Valleys CCG Annual General Meeting – Thursday 12 September 2019, 5.30 pm at Little Hay Golf Club, Bovingdon.

STANDING AND OTHER COMMITTEES

To **receive and adopt** the minutes of the following:

FC 89/19 Finance and Policy Committee

Held on: 29 July 2019

- (i) Health and Safety Policy – The Town Council **ratified** the Health and Safety Policy adopted at the 29 July meeting;
- (ii) To **receive** a brief update on the Christmas lighting scheme for 2019

The Town Clerk **reported** that the group nominated at Full Council on 10 June to review the proposals to date and decide whether to progress all or some of those proposals (FC 82/19 refers), had met on 5 and 8 August. They had agreed on two styles of lighting column mounted Christmas lights (motifs) to be installed alternately along the High Street. Baubles, together with additional gold string lighting, would be installed on the tree which would have a picket fence surround. The column infrastructure would be upgraded and replaced as necessary to enable safe operation of the lights and the installation of timers rather than having 24 hour operation of the lights. The cost of the new motifs and the infrastructure changes would be spread over three years. The annual Festival of Light cost for 2019 -20 would fall within the budget agreed on 10 June.

The Town Clerk had placed the order for the above with Sparkx whose staff were liaising with Herts County Council regarding the work to the lighting column infrastructure. Additionally, she had submitted the licence application for the installation of the motifs and tree lights to HCC street lighting team before the revised deadline (end of August).

The group had also **agreed to defer consideration** of other possible extensions to the lighting scheme pending a public engagement exercise, to include business representatives and others. This would be undertaken with a view to implementing any proposals arising, from 2020 and onwards. In this respect reference was made to the Events Group in Tring. The Town Clerk will raise the proposal with the Festival of Light group. She will **prepare a paper making recommendations** for the F & P Committee later in the year so that discussion can commence well in advance of deadlines for 2020. **Action Town Clerk**

- (iii) The minutes of the 29 July 2019 meeting of F & P Committee were received and adopted.

FC 90/19 Town Planning Committee

Held on: 24 June 2019
15 July 2019
5 August 2019
27 August 2019

Cllr G Stevens, Town Mayor, in his role as Chair of the Town Planning Committee, referred to items of particular interest arising from the minutes. In addition to considering specific planning applications, presentations had been received from developers. At the 15 July meetings representatives of the Audley Group had spoken to the committee about their hope to develop an Audley Retirement Village on a 9.75 acre site between London Road and Bank Mill Lane. On 27 August a further presentation had been received on behalf of Crest Nicolson who hope to develop land adjacent to Blegberry Gardens off Shootersway. This would depend on the outcome of DBC's Local Plan consultation process. It was noted that Crest Nicolson had referred to the introduction of a bus service to support the development. It was agreed that such proposals should be borne in mind during Community Bus Working Group discussions as necessary. **Action Community Bus Working Group**

At the same meeting the committee had agreed a response to DBC's draft parking standards planning document. Cllr Stevens thanked Cllr P White for his contribution to those discussions and added that the focus on improved facilities for bicycles reflected s9 of the National Planning Policy Framework "Promoting Sustainable Transport".

The minutes were **received and adopted**.

FC 91/19 Transport and Environment Committee

Held on 17 June 2019
19 August 2019

Cllr W Conian, Chair of the Transport and Environment Committee, referring to the 19 August minutes, confirmed that the Climate Change Steering Group working group terms of reference stated a minimum of three councillor members on each group (TE 64/19 refers) and this was reflected in the Terms of Reference to be discussed at FC 92/19 below. She reported that the meeting

with HCC and Ringway representatives on 14 August to discuss the traffic lights at the junction of the High Street/Kings Road and Lower Kings Road had been very constructive and HCC staff would be very pleased to engage on wider issues and to send a representative to meetings of the Travel Working Group (TE 57/19 refers).

FC 92/19 Climate Change Steering Group - Working Group Terms of reference

- (i) Following a discussion the Council **ratified** the draft terms of reference for the three working groups (Travel; Energy and Habitats) that will report to T & E through the Climate Change Steering Group. This was subject to amendments confirming that the groups will make recommendations to T & E together with reference to a review mechanism and other minor alterations to layout. The Town Mayor emphasised the role of working groups in making recommendations to the parent committee for decisions by that committee or further discussion at F & P or Full Council.

The Town Clerk will make the changes proposed, consult with Cllr Conian, and circulate the final versions.

Action Town Clerk

- (ii) To **agree** the budget provision proposed for these groups

The budget provision set out in footnotes to the terms of reference and the approval mechanism **was agreed**.

FC 93/19 Allotments

- (i) The Council **received and adopted** the minutes of the Allotment Management Team meeting held on 8 July 2019;
- (ii) It was **noted** that AMT recommends that there should be no increase in allotment charges in September 2019. Changes to the charges would be considered for the allotment year commencing September 2020.

YOUTH MATTERS

FC 94/19 Youth Town Council and Swan Youth Project

To **receive** a verbal update on any matters as appropriate

Cllr N Woolner reported that she had attended her first meeting as a trustee of the Swan Youth Project (SYP). Over the summer there had been a programme of enjoyable events including activities at the Skate Park and a trip to Brighton. The drop-in centre would be reopening during term time from 3 – 6 pm for everyone between the ages of 11 and 18 from Berkhamsted and the surrounding area. Progress was being made with the appointment of a new manager who would have particular responsibility for fundraising and grant applications. Youth worker advertising continued having gone less smoothly, however, one youth worker with a musical background had been appointed and would be a great asset especially in the sound room. The annual fund raising Duck Race was scheduled for 14 September 2019 from 2:00 - 5:00 pm

adjacent to the Rising Sun. Posters are displayed around the town. Cllr Woolner also advised that she hoped to facilitate the involvement of Berkhamsted School students, undertaking their bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award, with SYP activities. In conclusion, she reminded councillors that SYP was looking for volunteer trustees with expertise in marketing, communications and HR.

Following a discussion it was confirmed that there had been no recent meetings of the Youth Town Council and following the departure of some members for university it would be necessary to recruit new members. Thanking Cllr Woolner for her informative update, Cllr Stevens also confirmed that it was hoped to invite some of the SYP trustees to an informal meeting to discuss future financing for this important service to the town.

Action Cllr G Stevens/Cllr N Woolner/Deputy Town Clerk

POLICY MATTERS

FC 95/19 Engagement with the Community Strategy (Cllr P de Hoest)

- (i) Following discussion at F & P on 29 July 2019, the Council **considered** proposals set out in a paper prepared by Cllr P de Hoest forming attachment 1 to the agenda to the meeting. Introducing the paper Cllr de Hoest reminded councillors of the changing communications landscape and the need to use and develop new tools to ensure that the Town Council was able to optimise its ability to communicate, lobby and facilitate improvements to services within the town. Such actions would help the Council to make better informed decisions and underpin the Town Council's democratic legitimacy. The key proposals for future action are set out below:

Priority areas for the plan to address within the next 6 months are to:

- (i) Research and develop an on-line community centre.
 - (ii) Introduce Councillor "surgeries" by way of using periodic market stalls.
 - (iii) Introduce social media communications proportionate to a Town Council of our size and recognising resource constraints.
 - (iv) Develop a mechanism for handling popular surveys via an open or closed contact list.
 - (v) Provide Councillor correspondence and media training.
 - (vi) Provide staff training in use of social media and communications tools.
 - (vii) Agree a review mechanism for the strategy.
- (ii) During discussion a number of points were raised. Although councillors were generally very supportive and thanked Cllr de Hoest for his work, concerns were raised about managing expectations, resourcing and the need to look at other social media in addition to Facebook as the latter perhaps tended to be used by an older demographic group.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposals and recommendations contained in the paper be agreed. A copy of the paper and detail of the resolution is attached to these minutes for ease of reference.

FC 96/19 Newsletter

(i) The Council **discussed and agreed** a timetable for the preparation of the next edition of Update, the newsletter of Berkhamsted Town Council. It was noted that the budget included funding for two newsletters in the current financial year and it was agreed that the first should be **published and distributed in October**. Reference was also made to the possibility of a General Election and it was agreed that the timing would be reassessed if appropriate should that become an eventuality. Whatever the outcome of such discussions it would be necessary to issue the newsletter well in advance of the Festival of Light. The second edition would be planned for distribution in advance of the Annual Town Meeting which is scheduled for Thursday 19 March 2020.

(ii) To **consider and agree** the method of distribution

Following a discussion it was **agreed** to continue with distribution to individual premises/households supplemented with use of websites, copies by e-mail to community and other groups and organisations together with copies in the library and other public buildings.

(iii) To **nominate** a small group of councillors to act with the Town Clerk as the editorial team.

It was **agreed** that the group should comprise of Cllr S Cloughton, Cllr N Woolner, Cllr G Stevens, Cllr A Armytage and the Town Clerk. Individual councillors should advise the group of any content they would wish to be considered for inclusion together with draft copy. As a starting point it was proposed that such copy should have a 250 word limit. Cllr N Taylor also kindly offered to act as photographer, subject to discussions and suitable notice in advance.

Action: All

FC 97/19 Recycling bin provision (Cllr P de Hoest)

(i) Introducing this item Cllr P de Hoest drew councillors attention to the paucity of recycling bin provision in the town, especially in the area around the High Street. Reference was made to an initiative by Cllr R Freedman which had led to DBC installing a new recycling bin at Canal Fields. The problem of contamination of recyclable items leading to the bins contents having to be put to landfill was also referred to and the need to educate residents on the proper use of such bins was acknowledged. Following further discussion it was **noted and agreed** that in order to improve recycling and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, there is an urgent need for improved recycling bin provision in the Town;

(ii) The Council then **considered** a proposal by Cllr de Hoest that an eye catching fish design bin also be installed, which a local engineering firm has agreed to produce and donate to the Town. Such a design would increase awareness of the need for recycling whilst emphasising the damage that plastics and other unrecycled waste can cause to the environment and aquatic life. During discussion reference was made to

the fact that the High Street itself is somewhat overburdened with street furniture and other obstructions which are a nuisance to disabled residents and those with buggies and small children. Other suitable locations for bins of both type were considered including the route to and from the new multi storey car park. The canal path would be raised with the Canal and River Trust via the Canal and river Partnership and details of the town council's main contact at the railway station would be passed to Cllr Freedman and Cllr de Hoest. It would also be useful to include the Town Warden in further discussion regarding the logistics of the project.

Action Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Warden/Cllr de Hoest

- (iii) It was then **RESOLVED** that the Town Council should work with DBC in order to increase recycling bin provision in the shopping area and Cllr P de Hoest was **authorised** to liaise with the appropriate officers regarding the installation of further standard bins and the fish bin.

Action Cllr P de Hoest

FC 98/19 Berkhamsted Parochial Charities

The Council **ratified** the appointment of Ms B Newton as a Town Council nominated Trustee.

Action Town Clerk

FC 99/19 Budget 2020-21

- (i) Councillors and committee chairs were reminded that budget preparation for 2020-21 will commence in the autumn;
- (ii) It was **agreed** that each committee should review requirements for the year and also consider the preparation of a three year plan;
- (iii) It was **noted** that budget recommendations will then be discussed at F & P for agreement at Full Council in January.

Action Committee Chairs

FC 100/19 It was **RESOLVED** 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 101/19 **Support Services Group Meeting 9 August 2019**

- (i) Finance and Allotment Officer Vacancy – The Town Clerk gave an **update** on progress with readvertising the vacancy. The job description had been revised and was far more precise now that the new finance package was about to be installed and the uncertainty regarding the outcome of the May elections was no longer an issue. The finance aspects of the job had reverted to the fore in the job title. In April/May the job had been advertised at 16 hours per week and a proposed increase of contractual hours to 20 hours **was approved**. This change was because the new finance package would be in situ once a successful

candidate was appointed and that person would also be required to undertake the inputting currently being undertaken by DCK Accounting Solutions.

- (ii) The Council **confirmed** the mandate given to Support Services Group at Full Council on 15 April 2019. That is, Support Group Members and the Town Clerk have delegated authority to interview, select and appoint the post holder. Any such appointment would be ratified at Full Council (a short extraordinary meeting may be called for this purpose). Advertising would be as per the previous process and **Cllr Freedman undertook** to provide details for the AAT website where the post could possibly be advertised. It was further noted that the additional advertising costs had not been included in the year's budget and would be taken from reserves. The post will be advertised the week commencing 9 September 2019 and the closing date will be 30 September 2019 with interviews scheduled for Wednesday 9 October 2019.

Cllr R Freedman
Action Town Clerk/Support Services Group

- (iii) To discuss other issues arising and to **agree** appropriate action

Cllr G Stevens advised that the Town Clerk had resigned and her notice period had started on 1 September 2019. She would, however, be working an extended period of notice and her last day of employment would be 31 March 2020. The aim was to start the recruitment process as soon as possible and to place advertisements during the first full week in October. The intention would be to provide the new Finance and Allotment Officer with a suitable induction period with the current Town Clerk and to enable a meaningful hand over period following the appointment of a new postholder. It was **RESOLVED** that all arrangements necessary to advertise for, interview and appoint to the position of Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, which would be a full time position, should be undertaken by the Support Services Group. Progress will be reported to F & P and Full Council as necessary.

Action Town Clerk/Support Services Group

FC 102/19

Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 9. 40 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....

Engagement with the Community Strategy

Motion

Council notes:

- (i) That social and technological changes in the Berkhamsted community over time have resulted in people now consuming information and communicating in a more diverse range of ways.
- (ii) That there are significant policy challenges in the coming years including addressing the Climate Emergency and other environmental concerns and also responding to the new Local Plan.

Council **resolves** that one of its primary duties is to represent interests of the local community in its decision making and therefore, in order to maintain its legitimacy, it requires robust consultation mechanisms to ensure that it understands the needs and views of our community. In turn Council also needs to have clear and diverse information channels so as to keep the community as fully informed as possible on developments taking place and the impact that these may have for local people.

Council **agrees** that currently it lacks adequate visibility and recognition from within the community. There is insufficient interaction between the council, residents, business and other interest groups which thereby undermines local democracy, inhibits a local community feel and diminishes the role that BTC can play within this community.

In response, Council **resolves** that it can be more inclusive through more proactive use of social media tools, developing consultation techniques and ensuring that councillors are more visible in the community.

Council **agrees** with the Engagement with the Community Strategy prepared by Cllr Paul de Hoest and requests that the Town Clerk, in conjunction with Councillors, develops a plan for implementation of the actions contained therein.

Council **resolves** that the priority areas for the plan to address within the next 6 months are to:

- (i) Research and develop an on-line community centre.
- (ii) Introduce Councillor "surgeries" by way of using periodic market stalls.
- (iii) Introduce social media communications proportionate to a Town Council of our size and recognising resource constraints.
- (iv) Develop a mechanism for handling popular surveys via an open or closed contact list.
- (v) Provide Councillor correspondence and media training.
- (vi) Provide staff training in use of social media and communications tools.
- (vii) Agree a review mechanism for the strategy.