

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Members of

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

(Held via Remote Meeting Technology)

Monday 30 March 2020 at 7.30 pm

ATTENDED:

Councillors G Stevens – Town Mayor
S Cloughton
P de Hoest
P Fisher
R Freedman
M Hardinge
T Porter
N Taylor
P White
N Woolner

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mrs J Mason, Town Clerk

There were no members of the public present. In view of the current restrictions in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic members of the public had not had the opportunity to attend an actual meeting, however, as set out on the agenda, comments had been invited in advance.

OPENING MATTERS

FC 35/20 To receive **Apologies for non-participation**

Apologies were received from Cllr A Armytage, Cllr W Conian, Cllr G Corry, Cllr J Jones and Cllr A Peeler.

FC 36/20 To **receive declarations of interest** regarding items on the agenda

Cllr R Freedman declared a personal interest in item FC 49/20 Climate Emergency Website.

FC 37/20 **Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 16 March 2020**

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 16 March 2020 (previously circulated) were received and approved in principle. These will be signed at a Full Council meeting once meetings in person are permitted.

FC 38/20 Public Participation

Not applicable.

FC 39/20 Town Mayor's Communications

The following items had been received:

- (i) E-mail update dated 25 February 2020 from Richard Case, Town Council nominated trustee on the Town Hall Trust;
- (ii) HAPTC Health, Wellbeing and Environment Conference scheduled to be held at Harpenden on 20 March 2020;
- (iii) HAPTC e-mail dated 27 February 2020 seeking support to help the campaign for the Local Electricity Bill (see item FC50/20 below);
- (iv) Woodland Trust Newsletter Prepare for Tree Charter Day 2020
- (v) NALC Newsletter – Help NALC in its research on dementia.
- (vi) Chair Berkhamsted Citizens' 5 March e-mail invitation to Ravens Lane Bridge Opening Thursday 12th March at 5pm - at the 'town' side of the bridge;
- (vii) Latest News & Information from Sunnyside Rural Trust;
- (viii) E-mail enclosing from chair, Berkhamsted Castle Trust, enclosing letter confirming the agreement with English Heritage for the Trust's Local Management of Berkhamsted Castle;
- (ix) Notification from British Legion that VE day events are cancelled for the time being.

STANDING AND OTHER COMMITTEES

Items of particular interest discussed at the meetings set out below were commented on following which all minutes were **received and adopted**:

FC 40/20 Finance and Policy Committee

Held on 16 March 2020

Received and adopted.

FC 41/20 Town Planning Committee

Held on 20 January 2020
10 February 2020
2 March 2020
23 March 2020

Received and adopted.

FC 42/20 Transport and Environment Committee

(i) Held on 17 February 2020

Received and adopted.

(ii) Arising from minute TE 16/20 Councillors **authorised** a payment of £10,000 from CIL funds as the Town Council's contribution to improvements to the roadways and pavements as part of the wider Station Road improvements project. Hertfordshire County Councillor Ian Reay will be advised.

Action Town Clerk

FC 43/20 Allotment Management Team

Held on 27 January 2020

Received and adopted.

FC 44/20 Canal & River Partnership

Held on 26 February 2020

Received and adopted.

It was **noted that** the meeting had been very well attended and extremely constructive, boding well for future partnership working and success in the achievement of jointly agreed projects. The Town Council representatives on the group are Cllr N Taylor (who is the Chair) and Cllr R Freedman (Vice Chair). Cllrs G Stevens and W Conian had also attended. It was clear from those who had attended that there is a great impetus to move things forward and this will result in interesting and rewarding outcomes. It was suggested that other councillors may wish to be involved and they should therefore advise the Chair of the group and the Deputy Town Clerk of their interest.

Action All Councillors and Deputy Town Clerk

CORONAVIRUS

FC 45/20 Arrangements for meetings and Town Council administration and decision making during the COVID-19/Coronavirus Emergency

The arrangements were discussed thoroughly. It was then **RESOLVED** that for the period during which emergency measures are in place to limit the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the following procedures are to be implemented:

- (i) A de minimis approach will be taken in the preparation of the agenda for Full Council, Standing Committees and Working Parties (if meetings go ahead);
- (ii) Such meeting will be conducted via e-mail or through remote meeting technology. It was noted that the anticipated government regulations for remote meetings are awaited and advice has been received from NALC regarding meetings;

- (iii) No face to face meetings are to be scheduled;
- (iv) Agenda will be posted on notice boards (if possible) and the website. Each agenda will invite members of the public to e-mail comments to the office for circulation to all councillors in advance of the meeting;
- (v) Minutes will be prepared on the basis of councillor e-mail comments or remote discussions;
- (vi) As per FP 18/20 (ii) arrangements are in place for staff home working as necessary. A new laptop has been ordered. In the light of advice given by the Prime Minister on 23 March 2020, the majority of working will be from home;
- (vii) The Town Clerk will liaise with signatories to ensure that payments are made and is authorised by the Town Council to set up, if possible, payments by direct debit. During cheque signing PPE and social distancing will be employed;
- (viii) Matters that require urgent decision and action will be discussed by the Town Clerk with the Town Mayor and Cllr A Armytage. Following such discussions, the appropriate and agreed action will be taken. All Councillors will be advised by e-mail;
- (ix) Councillors **noted** that an indication had been given that the deadline for the submissions of the AGAR and accounts would be extended. However, the relevant regulations had still to be enacted. The External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn made the following statement in an e-mail to town and parish clerks dated 24 March:
*"...our instructions for the completion of the 2019/20 AGAR will not be issued until such time as there is more clarity over the implications for smaller authorities.
 We are in close contact with SAAA and the National Audit Office (NAO) who in turn are in close contact with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)..."*
- (x) At the time of setting the agenda advice from NALC, HAPTC and HM Government is coming through on a daily basis. Therefore, it is proposed that these measures be reviewed on receipt of future advice and any changes proposed agreed by the Town Clerk, the Town Mayor, Cllr A Armytage and circulated to councillors.

**FP 46/20 Support for Local Initiatives during coronavirus crisis.
 Berkhamsted Community Volunteering - Open Door; AgeUK Dacorum,
 Berkhamsted District Chamber of Commerce and local Facebook group**

- (i) It was **noted** that in the last week the Town Clerk has been in discussion with AgeUK Dacorum about the partnership planning that has been taking place to enable volunteers to work together to provide low level needs for people, not just the elderly, affected by self-isolation. Work is still in its early days, but the group is beginning to merge together with members from Open Door, the Berkhamsted Community Facebook Group, Age UK Dacorum and BDCC. A number of people are volunteering but all have to go through a DBS check. A lot of food has been delivered to Open Door for the food bank and the teams are deliberating over what should go into a package. There is also been very good cross communication and people identified who will be allocated a qualified volunteer. There is still a lot of work to be done and a number of unknowns remain, most critically, the total number who will require help;

- (ii) The following is an estimate of costs prepared by the group:

| Items | £ |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gloves, PPE, sanitisers ad cleaning | 1,000 |
| DBS applications | 2,300 assuming 100 needed |
| ID Cards and badges | 500 |
| Freezer for Food Bank at Open Door | 500 |
| Printing Stationery and IT | 1,000 |
| Insurance | 700 |
| Storage containers | 300 |
| Incidental Expenses | 700 |
| Total | 7,000 |
| Contingency 20% | 1,400 |
| Overall Total | 8,400 |

- (iii) It was **noted** that Cllr Ian Reay (HCC) has already indicated that he would be willing to contribute £7,000 from his locality budget;
- (iv) Following a discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council should fund the 20% contingency to be made available as soon as possible (£1,400);
- (v) Councillors then **considered the motion** that the Town Council should, in addition, create a budget of £3,600 that the group can ask to draw from in the future as the situation regarding demand crystallises. Request for funding from this budget would be approved by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Town Mayor and Cllr A Armytage.

Cllr P White put forward an amendment to the above motion and proposed that the Town Council should also create an additional £15,000 budget, to be funded from its reserves, as a provision to support the foodbank project. The funds shall be to fill any short-fall between donations received and demand from local residents, i.e. shall be used to purchase essential food items when donations are insufficient. The funds could be released upon approval by the F&P Committee or Full Council subject to receipt of an operational plan, including potential demand and proposals to meet it, safeguarding procedures and financial oversight procedures. The budget should be released in tranches, as decided by the F & P Committee or Full Council.

During discussion Councillors were very supportive of offering help and the above proposals were carefully considered. The types of foodbank service available were discussed. The organisers had advised the Town Clerk that the criteria for foodbanks generally is that they supply people who cannot afford food. However, there will be older and vulnerable people who do not meet this criteria who will increasingly run out of cash and food. The food bank referred to in (i) and (ii) is to be used for emergencies when a client is unable to access food or daily essentials. This will provide food to ensure older and vulnerable people are not left

without food. In parallel a volunteer shopper service is being set up. Councillors also expressed support for earmarking additional funds that could then be requested by community support groups during the crisis, for various activities including food bank provision.

Following a vote (8 for with one abstention) the following was **RESOLVED:**

- As already resolved under FC 46/20 (iv) above the Town Council should fund the 20% contingency to be made available as soon as possible (£1,400) to the local volunteering group via Age UK Dacorum;
- As set out in FC 46/20 (v) the Town Council should, in addition, create a budget of £3,600 that the group, via Age UK Dacorum, can ask to draw from in the future as the situation regarding demand and services crystallises. Request for funding from this budget would be approved by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Town Mayor and Cllr A Armytage.
- As a **separate initiative** to the above, a £15,000 earmarked reserves fund will be created. Funding from this reserve could be made available to volunteering organisations, groups or charities serving the people of Berkhamsted to mitigate the impact of the the current crisis (including its aftermath). £15,000 is the total amount and would cover a number of separate applications. Such applications should be made to the Town Clerk and should include details of the service (s) offered, safeguarding measures, other funding applied for, project plan and financial controls. On receipt of an application the Town Clerk would contact all members of the F&P Committee for consideration and authorisation of such applications.

Action Town Clerk/Cllrs A Armytage and G Stevens/ F & P Members

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

FC 47/20 Proposal for electric vehicle charging points in St Johns Well Lane Car Park: recommendation to Dacorum Borough Council (GS)

Councillors had **reviewed** the papers attached to the agenda and, in the light of these, **RESOLVED** that the Town Council should write to the Leader of DBC (copying the Project Officer) requesting that the Borough considers installing a number of charging points of at least 7kW in St Johns Well Lane Car Park.

Action Town Clerk

FC 48/20 Berkhamsted Town Council Statement on Sustainable Travel (WC)

Councillors **received, considered and adopted** the draft Statement on Sustainable Travel which had been attached to the agenda.

FC 49/20 Climate Emergency Website (P de H)

A background briefing paper had been attached to the agenda. The Town Council was asked to consider the following motion for resolution. Each item was discussed and **RESOLVED** together with agreed consequential actions, as indicated in italics.

Motion

- (i) This Council agrees to establish a bespoke Climate Emergency Web presence for BTC. **RESOLVED**.
- (ii) This Council agrees to brand the CE web pages (and other forms of communication – eg documentation) as “Climate Action Berkhamsted” (see logo examples in the Annex) which emphasises the local nature of the site as well as a sense of purpose. **RESOLVED**.
- (iii) This Council agrees to the proposal to approach a local web developer to firm up a proposal to deliver an initial prototype site at a capped maximum cost (to be confirmed). The Council also agrees to approach 2commune to discuss the practicalities of attaching these CE web pages to the existing web site and potentially invite them to make a proposal. **RESOLVED**. *Cllr R Freedman will also put forward the name of further provider(s) who might be contacted.*
- (iv) This Council agrees to set up a small group of councillors plus the Town Clerk to oversee development of the proposals with a view to reporting back on the various options, timescales and costs and implementation. This group will also consider on-going maintenance and moderation protocols. **RESOLVED**. *Cllrs W Conlan and Cllr P de Hoest will be the core members of the group with the Town Clerk. They will seek expert advice as necessary. Cllr Taylor will be available on a limited basis, providing strategic expertise. The working group will develop proposals for the website and present them to the Town Council for further consideration and finalisation of the brief to be issued to potential providers. This should also include the need to cost ongoing maintenance and development. The group would also make a proposal regarding the logo and ensure that the Town Council maintained the copyright or enduring right to utilise. Cllr M Hardinge kindly offered to design a logo should any problems be encountered.*

FC 50/20 Support for the campaign for the Local Electricity Bill (P de H)

Cllr P de Hoest outlined the background briefing paper that had been attached to the agenda. The Town Council then considered the following motion for resolution:

Berkhamsted Town Council:

(i) **notes** that the Local Electricity Bill

- aims to address the current situation, whereby the very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,

- if made law, would make these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation which empower local businesses, local communities and councils to sell locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and
 - would result in revenues received by councils or community organisations that set up local renewable electricity companies could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;
- (ii) Following a discussion councillors **RESOLVED** to support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by a cross-party group of 115 MPs during the 2017-19 Parliamentary session; and
- (iii) further **RESOLVED** to write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.

Action Town Clerk

FC 51/20 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. Although no members of the public were present, anyone recording the proceedings was required to stop so doing.

FC 52/20 Happy Days Rent – Youth Centre

In view of recent discussions with the Town Clerk and the owners of Happy days it was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) With effect from 1 April 2020 the Town Council will grant Happy Days pre-school a rent holiday until such time as they can resume classes. (The pre-school will not be asking parents for a retainer and although they do have a small number of pupil's whose parents are key workers these children will either be cared for at home or at other establishments);
- (ii) With effect from 1 April the property will revert to the Town Council for this interim period;
- (iii) The Town Clerk is authorised to advise Happy Days of the above and to confirm the arrangements in writing to Happy Days. Dacorum Borough Council will also be advised.

FC 53/20 Parking Spaces Adjacent to Youth Centre

- (i) It was **noted** that from 2013 to 2017 the Town Council licensed the NHS Trust to use a number of the parking spaces at the Youth Centre. This arrangement ceased when the NHS facilities diminished at Gossoms End. As councillors are aware, Herts Valley NHS CCG is now keen to resume a similar arrangement and a meeting was held on site last autumn (Cllr G Stevens, Cllr N Woolner and the Town Clerk with CCG representatives). The reason the spaces are required is to provide staff parking for the merged doctor's surgeries that will be moving into the Gossoms End building later in the year or in 2021 depending on circumstances:
- (ii) Councillors **authorised** the Town Clerk to make all the necessary arrangements and to agree a new licence and fee with the CCG, in consultation with Cllrs Stevens and Woolner;
- (iii) It was **noted** that the CCG understand that such arrangements could be short term depending on the outcome of DBC's proposals to build a new sports centre.

FC 54/20 Support Services Group

The Town Clerk left the meeting at this point.

Councillors **agreed** arrangements regarding the Town Clerk's working hours to be effective from 1 February 2020 until her leaving date (31 May 2020). From 1 February her working week will be 35 hours.

The Town Clerk re-joined the meeting.

FC 55/20 Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 9.36 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....