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Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council held on Thursday 23rd January 2020 at 6.30pm

Present:

Councillor Baker (Mayor)
Councillor B Blanchard-Cooper
Councillor C Blanchard-Cooper
Councillor Buckland
Councillor Chace
Councillor Long
Councillor Molloy
Councillor Northeast
Councillor Price
Councillor Rhodes
Councillor Tandy
Councillor Turner
Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ

2019/2020

55. Evacuation Procedures

The Mayor outlined the evacuation procedures.

56. Filming of Council Meetings, Use of Social Media and Mobile Phones

The procedures were noted.

57. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillor Seex and Squires.

58. Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or personal and/or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the Agenda. The standing declarations were noted.

Councillor Baker declared a pecuniary interest in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, Section 106 in respect of Agenda Item, 11.2, Full Council Budget Report 2020/21. Councillor Baker stated that whilst she would remain in the meeting for this item, she would not participate in any vote that directly related to the setting of the precept.

59. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2019 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

60. Town Mayor's Report and Urgent Items

Addressing the Council for first time since Christmas, the Mayor expressed her deep dismay over remarks that Councillor Dr Walsh had made about her personal financial situation. These comments had caused a good deal of upset for her and her family and she criticised him for his lack of understanding of the many people who had found themselves in a similar situation. As a Councillor representing a deprived ward, she stated that there was no shame about being in debt and invited Councillor Dr Walsh to publicly retract his comments. Councillor Dr Walsh did not comment other than stating that this was a District Council matter. The Mayor again called upon Councillor Dr Walsh to retract his comments to which he did not respond.

61. Public Forum

There were six Members of the Public present.

- 61.1** Ms Penn addressed the Council on a number of points as a member of the Littlehampton Society. Referring to the survey undertaken by the District Council of Town Centre Traders, she asked whether this would be released. She also invited Members to read the results of a survey that had been undertaken by the Society asking for residents' views on priorities for the Town Centre. Mrs Penn also reported that she had raised concerns with the District Council about problems with the display of material relating to the launch of their Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document and asked for assistance in getting the display moved to a more prominent position.
- 61.2** The Town Clerk had enquired of the District Council whether the survey of town traders could be released to the public. He had been told that this was not possible as traders regarded the information they had given as commercially sensitive. He would circulate the Littlehampton Society's survey to Members when received. As a District Councillor, Councillor Dr Walsh

agreed to take forward the comments regarding the public exhibition relating to the District Council's Design Guide.

- 61.3** Mr Page reported on a number of matters. He was pleased to note that sufficient funds had been raised for a Blue Plaque to remember Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop which would be placed on Amber House. He continued to explore other famous daughters of the Town as part of his research into the suffragette movement. Reporting details of other potential names, and that several roads in the new North Littlehampton development would be named after suffragettes, he hoped that the Council would support any future initiatives to commemorate their contribution to the suffrage movement. Finally, he reported positive action by the Authorities to address antisocial behaviour in the area where he lived. The Mayor thanked Mr Page for his report.
- 61.4** Ms Crosley addressed the Council regarding several points. Firstly, speaking about the Town Centre Regeneration proposals, Ms Crosley questioned proposals to resurface the town centre. She reported that similar resurfacing work in Bognor Regis town centre had not been successful in particular with regard to discolouring and sought the support of the Town Council in resisting this part of the plans. Acknowledging that there was some scepticism around this aspect of the proposed public realm improvement scheme and how it would be implemented, these points were noted.
- 61.5** Regarding the Town Council's Capital Programme, Ms Crosey raised three points. Firstly, she questioned the refocussing of resources away from a community centre in the Town. In her view this was a much-needed resource which would make the Town Centre safer. Secondly, she sought clarification regarding the Council's intentions in respect of the Windmill and St Martins carpark. Finally, noting the inclusion of water refill stations in the council's plans, she reported that the Littlehampton Society had undertaken research which indicated that whilst there might be some interest in installing them on the High Street, costs were an issue.
- 61.6** It was noted that the review of the Town Council's priorities had highlighted that delivering a community centre in the Town was not a reasonable expectation within this timeframe. It was further clarified that the installation of water refill stations were intended for the seafront and that the inclusion of the Windmill and St Martins Car Park as separate potential projects reflected the Council's wish to see improvements in both areas and its willingness to explore options further with the District Council should the opportunity arise during this Council.

62. Correspondence or Issues in Respect of the District or County Council

There were none.

63. Reports of Committees- (Non-Exempt)

63.1. Recommendations from Committees

Council considered a report (previously circulated) which drew together the recommendations from the last cycle of Committee meetings that needed to be approved by Council. There were two recommendations from the Policy and Finance Committee.

63.1.1. Council and Committee Dates 2020/2021

Council was asked to approve the draft calendar of Committee and Council Meetings for 2020 and 2021 (previously circulated). It was **Resolved** that:

The Committee and Council meeting calendars for 2020 and 2021 be approved.

63.1.2. Mayors Discretionary Fund

Council was asked to approve a change in wording on the Mayors Discretionary Fund criteria. The Town Clerk provided clarification regarding the funding for the scheme which was allocated annually by the Council in its Budget. It was agreed that paragraph (viii) be amended accordingly to state that "The maximum amount the Mayor may allocate from the Discretionary Fund in one year will be decided by Full Council in its Budget." It was therefore **Resolved** that:

Subject to the clarification as set out in Minute 63.1.2 above, the Mayors Discretionary Fund Criteria be approved.

63.2. Committee Minutes (Non-Exempt)

63.2.1 Policy and Finance

Council received the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2019 (previously circulated) with no matters arising.

Councillor Tandy declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following matter as the Secretary and Treasurer of the Keystone Centre.

63.2.2 Community Resources

Council received the Minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2019 (previously circulated). Regarding Minute 44.7, the Keystone Centre, Councillor Tandy expressed his frustration at the lack of progress with the

project. It was noted that following a protracted delay the project was back to the revised schedule for delivery.

63.2.3 Regarding Minute 44.6, Service Funding Agreements, it was reported that Mr Richard Cooper, the Treasurer of the Littlehampton Bonfire Society was standing down. Mr Cooper had served the Society in this role for many years and Members wished to formally acknowledge his invaluable contribution to the Society. It was also noted that the Town Council could appoint a representative on the Society's Management Committee. This role had fallen to the Assistant Town Clerk in recent times and Councillor B Blanchard-Cooper indicated his willingness to fill this role. There being no other nominations it was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1) Councillor B Blanchard-Cooper be appointed as the Town Council's nominated representative on the Littlehampton Bonfire Society Management Committee.**
- 2) The Council send a letter of thanks to Mr Richard Cooper.**

63.2.4 Regarding Minute 44.4.2, VE/VJ Day Commemorations, Councillor Northeast was disappointed that nothing was planned in the community to commemorate these events. He questioned the rationale for this decision and emphasised that this would be the last chance to thank the few remaining veterans. In response the Chair of the Committee assured Members that the matter had been fully discussed and that the final plans for Armed Forces Day would be agreed at the February meeting of the Committee. Councillor Buckland also indicated that he wished to make a statement/ ask a question on this matter. The Mayor referred to Councillor Buckland by a moniker she alleged he used on social media rather than by his name. She repeated this and Councillor Buckland withdrew his request to speak on the matter.

63.2.5. Planning and Transportation

Council received the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2019 and 6th January 2020 (previously circulated) with no matters arising.

63.2.6. Property and Personnel

Council received the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December 2019 (previously circulated) with no matters arising.

64. Officer's Reports

64.1. Approval of Absence from Meetings Under Section 85, Local Government Act 1972

Council considered a report from the Town Clerk (previously circulated) recommending that Councillor Squires be granted an exemption under S.85 of the Local Government Act 1972 to be absent from meetings of the Council up to and including Friday 26th June 2020. It was noted that whilst Councillor Squires remained active as a Councillor, he was unable to attend meetings due to serious ill health. Members wished Councillor Squires a speedy recovery and it was **Resolved** that:

An exemption be given under S.85 of the Local Government Act 1972 for Councillor Squires to be absent from meetings of the Council up to and including Friday 26th June 2020.

64.2. Merit Awards

64.2.1 The Council had before it a report (previously circulated) which set out options to enable the public to make nominations for the Town Merit Awards as proposed in the Council's new priorities. In addition, Council was also asked to agree the Membership of the Panel which made the final award decisions. Currently, only Councillors could make nominations and the options for consideration proposed either expanding on that with Councillors using their own networks to seek public nominations or using the Council's communications resources (Progress, Facebook, Website, Press Releases, Notice Boards). In both cases it was proposed that nominations would be sent to the Town Clerk for consideration by the Panel.

64.2.2 Members proceeded to consider the options in more detail and the discussion focussed on how to keep the process as open and accessible as possible without compromising the confidentiality of the process or exposing potential nominees to controversy. It was observed that social media was a powerful tool which if used properly could open the process to a wider demographic. Members welcomed enabling the public to make nominations and considered that the use of social media needed to be tightly controlled, in a prescribed format and with a clear set of guidelines. Regarding the composition of the Panel, Members considered membership should comprise one Councillor from each political group including the Mayor, or Deputy Mayor if the Mayor was not available, who would also Chair the Panel. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1) **Nominations for the Town Merit Awards be opened to the public using the Councils communications resources and effective controls put in place to regulate the use of social media and protect nominees.**
- 2) **The Panel be Chaired by the Mayor, or Deputy Mayor if the Mayor was not available, and include one Councillor from each political group.**

65. Finance

65.1. Capital Programme Funding 2020/21 & Projected Funding 2021/22 and 2022/23

The Council had before it a report (previously circulated) which explained funding for the range of major capital projects and smaller location-specific initiatives identified as priorities by the Council. The Capital Programme identified the sources of funding and timescales for delivery in the context of the budget setting process. An important feature of the Programme was the introduction of revenue budgets for the new community centres in Wick and North Littlehampton which aimed to provide support while they were established. It was however noted that the refocussing of new major capital projects from a Community Centre in the Town to other areas would not preclude consideration of a Town Centre facility should there be an opportunity in the future. Additional funding would be required to deliver on this. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

The Capital Programme Funding for 2020/21 and the projected funding for 2021/22, 2022/23 be approved.

65.2. Full Council Budget Report 2020/21 & Projected Budgets 2021/22 and 2022/23

- 65.2.1** The Council had before it a report (previously circulated) which set out the proposed Council Budget for 2020/21 and Projected Budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 (previously circulated). The Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee was pleased to present the proposed Council Budget for 2020/21 which aimed to support the continuance of the ongoing work from the last Council and provide the funds to enable this Council's priorities to be delivered. This would be achieved by limiting the increase in Council Tax, whilst looking to use wherever possible earmarked reserves and, through the

introduction of the Capital Programme, utilise the funds received from the sale of land at Worthing Road a few years ago.

65.2.2 The main areas of proposed expenditure ranged from major capital projects such as the new Keystone youth facility to smaller location-specific initiatives that had been identified as priorities by the Council. These included a new playground at Rosemead Park, significant investment in the Town Centre regeneration and further joint work with the District Council on Town Centre events, wardens and a Town Centre Plan. The Budget also incorporated a number of environmental initiatives reflecting the growing public awareness of these issues. These would see improvements to the way the Town Council managed its allotments and tree planting and wildflower beds on the Fitzalan Road extension in the new North Littlehampton estate. Looking forward, the projected budgets reflected the longer-term objectives of the Council. Where possible these included the Windmill Theatre, St Martins Car Park and a wide range of leisure ideas that the Council wished to explore.

65.2.3 In conclusion, he stated that the level of precept proposed for 2020/21 represented a 4% increase (£4.86p per annum) for a Band D Council Taxpayer and would, through prudent planning, deliver very good value for the Town. He thanked the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer for their assistance and fellow Councillors for their support throughout the process and commended the draft Full Council Budget for 2020/21 and Projected Budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 to Members for approval.

65.2.4 Members proceeded to consider the proposals in more detail. Councillor Tandy commended the Council on the open and collegiate process that had been adopted in preparing the Budget. Emphasising the importance of ensuring that the Town Council maintained a presence in Wick and that the area was promoted, he stated that it would be a shame if the Project 82 building was lost and that the Council should continue to support historically popular events such as Wick Week. It was noted that the Town Council was in discussion with representatives of the Wick Information Centre and Wick Village Traders to maintain support for the area. Overall, it was considered that the Budget reflected the right direction for the Town, and it was **Resolved** that:

- 1) **The budget for 2020/21, setting a Precept of £1,279,268 be approved.**
- 2) **The projected budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 be noted.**
- 3) **The level of the General Reserves as set out in paragraphs 3.10 and 3.11 of the report be approved.**

- 4) **The existing procedure for authorising Council expenditure, in accordance with the Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial**

Regulations, and as set out in Section 4.1 of the report be approved.

- 5) The current list of Direct Debits, attached as Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.
- 6) The existing procedure for authorising Council expenditure to a value not exceeding £200 on the Imprest Account, in accordance with the Town Council's Financial Regulations and as set out in Section 4.3 of the report be approved.
- 7) Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to spend Earmarked Reserves (EMR) up to the amounts included in the approved EMRs, subject to the requirements of the Town Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation and as set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report.
- 8) Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to spend external Grant monies as outlined in the grant application and as set out in paragraph 4.5 of the report.

66. Reports of Representatives on Outside Bodies

66.1. Littlehampton Shopmobility

As the Town Council's representative on the Littlehampton Shopmobility Committee, Councillor Turner informed Members that she had attended a meeting that day where the Charity had learnt that their Service Funding Agreement would not be renewed. The Charity were reported to be very disappointed and would be lodging an appeal seeking reconsideration of this decision. It was noted that this would be considered by the Community Resources Committee.

67. Exempt Business

There were none.

The meeting closed at 7:52pm

TOWN MAYOR