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Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 21st December 2020 at 5.30pm

Present:

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

2020/2021

This meeting is available to view using the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9WuN1x5nI0>

63. Virtual Meeting Protocol and Use of Mobile Devices

The Mayor welcomed Members, the press, officers, and members of the public to the meeting and explained how the meeting would be conducted.

64. Apologies

There were none.

65. 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, and no further declarations were made.

66. Urgent Items

There were none.

67. Public Forum

In accordance with the Remote Meetings Protocol introduced by the Town Council, members of the public who wished to address the Council or any of its Committees during a remote meeting should have emailed their representations one clear working day before the meeting. There were none.

68. Officer's Reports

68.1. Town Centre Regeneration Officer (TCRO) Post

68.1.1. Council had before it the Job Description and draft Action Plan (previously circulated) setting out the key objectives for this post. This was in response to the questions raised by Members at the Council meeting in November regarding the proposal to extend this role for further year. Following further discussions with the District Council, the Action Plan had been drafted setting out in more detail the key areas of work, activities and outcomes relating to the post which had also been shared informally with Members. This included enhanced communications such as monthly updates and attendance of the TCRO at meetings of the Policy and Finance Committee. Council was asked to endorse the Action Plan and approve extending the post for a further year.

68.1.2. Members proceeded to review the Job Description and draft Action Plan. Discussion focussed on the Action Plan and in particular the tasks supporting the delivery of the Public Realm Project Programme. There was a strong view that the Plan should be more focussed on coordinating work to reinvigorate the Town Centre and support businesses as they adjust to the changes in consumer behaviour and the post pandemic trading environment. It was considered that in order to be effective, far more resource needed to be directed towards making the TCRO role more accessible and developing stronger relationships with traders and other key stakeholders such as the police and Town Councillors. Reflecting on the role further, whilst it was acknowledged that the effective implementation of the Public Realm Project required support, Members considered that it would be more beneficial if a dedicated Town Centre Manager function were put in place. Therefore, extending the existing TCRO role for a further year was not considered viable.

68.1.2. Members proceed to discuss the support that the Town Centre would need in the future. It was considered that a new model for delivering support for the Town Centre was needed that had the flexibility to both respond to and take advantage of the changes in the retail sector and was sustainable in the long term. It was however acknowledged that this required careful planning and

could happen at the same time that Public Realm improvement works were expected to start in the High Street. These were expected to deliver significant changes to the High Street and were also a priority. It was therefore proposed that a six-month extension would be more practical and allow time to formulate an action plan and develop a model more aligned to the aspirations of the Town Council. This proposal was put to the vote and supported.

68.1.3. In supporting a six-month extension Members judged that a timeframe for discussions with the District Council needed to be set. It was also considered that a future Action Plan should be more prescriptive in terms of reporting to the Town Council and engagement with Ward Members. It was also observed that there was no budget provision to support this move and that there was considerable uncertainty surrounding the availability of developer contributions in the future. Members believed that the post could be funded for circa £20, 000 per annum and that the post could access and manage the funds for Town Centre events. It was therefore **Resolved**:

- 1) **That expenditure of £10,000 from Earmarked Reserves to fund the Town Council's contribution to the six-month extension of the Littlehampton TCRO post for 2021 to 2022 be approved and**
- 2) **To enter urgent discussions with the District Council, with a deadline of 31st July 2021, as to how future Town Centre work will be coordinated and delivered.**

69. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 6.58pm.

TOWN MAYOR