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Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council held on Thursday 21st January 2021 at 6.30pm

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=LXAech-mpGY>

70. 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.

71. Apologies

There were no apologies.

72. 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.

73. Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings held on 19th November 2020 and 21st December 2020 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a true record and it was noted that arrangements would be made for these to be signed at a later date.

74. Town Mayor's Report and Urgent Items

The Mayors Report (copy attached to the Minutes) had been circulated to Members before the meeting for information. The Mayor was pleased to report that he was able to attend a socially distanced carol concert. Regarding the current National situation, he thanked residents for their patience as the vaccine programme was being rolled out for the Town.

75. Public Forum

75.1. 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 was one.

75.2. Mr Chester asked:

Members may have witnessed two statements from the Leader of Arun Council at its meeting on 13th January.

The first informed us that Arun would not be seeking to close Pier Road to through traffic this summer but that an application may be forthcoming from the Town Council to do so? Where in the budget is the money to enable this to be done properly this year and at what meeting will this decision be made? Second, the Leader of Arun informed us that spades would be going in the ground to deliver the public realm project in Littlehampton this March? What sense is there in committing such a large sum of money to a community wardens experiment to run for precisely the same length of time the town centre is to be dug up?

We are promised the public realm scheme will deliver increased private sector investment into the Town in the form of the long list of vacant commercial properties and sites available. Surely at its completion a relaunch for the Town is the opportunity for new events and wardens if required - in the interim every effort should be focused on presenting the visioned 'finished project' to potential investors not using up scarce funds in this way.

75.3. Response:

The Mayor thanked Mr Chester for his questions and comments. The position with regard to Pier Road is unclear and further clarification was being sought

from the District Council. The Town Council had made no provision to deliver this proposal as to date the District Council were taking this forward, with the Town Council supporting by potentially co-ordinating some entertainment in the vicinity. If this scheme went ahead the entertainment aspect will be discussed during the next Committee cycle.

Regarding the Public Realm, it is anticipated that there would be a launch event and associated marketing and promotion. This is not linked to the Community Warden scheme, which is aimed at the whole town. However, one key area would be the Town centre where the problems of shoplifting, anti-social behaviour and breaches of the Public Space Protection Order would be important issues to combat to aid local businesses post lockdown. For information, the interviews for the Community Warden posts were next week.

- 74.4. In his capacity as Leader of Arun District Council, Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ reported that the District Council had not yet taken a view on the potential closure of Pier road but were open to working with the Town Council on a proposal for the area. He therefore invited the Town Council to seek views and liaise with the District Council on the matter.

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

There were none.

77. Reports of Committees- (Non-Exempt)

77.1. 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 three recommendations for Council to consider:

77.1.1. Planning and Transportation Draft Budget 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2024

It was noted that this recommendation formed part of the budget proposals which would be considered later in the meeting.

77.1.2. 82 Wick Street

Council was asked to approve the recommendation to declare these premises surplus to requirements and delegate authority to the Town Clerk to engage the District Valuer and progress the sale. It was noted that the acceptance of an offer below the District Valuer's valuation would be brought back to

Council, but that the Property and Personnel Committee would otherwise oversee the sale. Concerns were expressed regarding the timing of any potential disposal of these premises and the assumption that the building could no longer be used. Highlighting the County Councils proposals to reduce Youth Service provision further, it was suggested that the building still had a place in the community. Members were reminded that there was no apparent demand to bring the building back in to use and that facilities would be coming forward in the shape of the project to replace the Keystone Centre in Wick and the new Community Centre planned for the North Littlehampton development.

Regarding the estimated cost of work required to bring the building back into use, it was noted that these were obtained from professional Contractors and that the proceeds of the sale of the Dairy site had been used to help fund the construction of Southfields Jubilee Centre.

Members proceeded to a recorded vote:

For: Councillor Blanchard-Cooper, Councillor Chace, Councillor Long, Councillor Molloy, Councillor Price, Councillor Rhodes, Councillor Seex, Councillor Turner, Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ

Against: Councillor Buckland, Councillor Northeast, Councillor Tandy,

With nine votes to three, it was therefore **Resolved** that:

The premises at 82 Wick Street be declared surplus to requirements and authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to engage the District Valuer and progress the sale of the premises.

77.1.3. Committee Meeting Dates 2021 and 2022

Council was asked to approve the draft Committee and Council meetings for 2021 and 2022 as well as proposals for the Annual Town Meeting and Merit Awards 2021. These had been considered at the December Policy and Finance Committee meeting, the Calendars having been drafted, taking into consideration other local authority meetings and the anticipated local government and PCC elections postponed from 2020. The 2020 Annual Town Meeting had been postponed and it was now likely that the ongoing restrictions on public gatherings would prevent this meeting from taking place before the end of May 2021. It was noted that this was the latest date that the Annual Town Meeting could be held under the current legislation. Members wished to recognise and celebrate the contribution of Key Workers in the community during the pandemic and it was suggested that an additional event

outside of the meeting calendar and in the Autumn be organised. Changes to the December Committee cycle were discussed but having considered the budget setting process, further changes were not deemed practical. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The draft calendar of Committee and Council meetings for 2021 and 2022 be approved.**
- 2. The proposals for the Annual Town Meeting and Merit Awards 2021 be approved.**

77.2. Committee Minutes (Non-Exempt)

77.2.1 Policy and Finance

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ left the meeting at 7:11pm due to technical issues and returned at 7:14pm.

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st December 2020 (previously circulated) and regarding Minute 34.3, Community Wardens, Members wished to have a better understanding on how the scheme had operated elsewhere and the scope of powers envisaged for the Wardens in Littlehampton. It was noted that the Wardens would be deployed to address issues of greatest need in the Parish and that details of the Horsham scheme would be circulated to Councillor Seex.

77.2.2 Community Resources

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2020 (previously circulated). Regarding Visitor Maps, the Committee had decided to postpone the progression of this scheme and it was noted that Members would have the opportunity to review the Councils Priorities in the next meeting cycle.

77.2.3 Planning and Transportation

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meetings held on 7th December 2020 and 4th January 2021 (previously circulated) with no matters arising.

77.2.4 Property and Personnel

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meetings held on 14th December 2020 (previously circulated) with no matters arising.

77.2.5 Community Centre Sub-Committee

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2020 (previously circulated). The view was expressed that it was disappointing that the design concept might have to change. It was emphasised that any changes would be driven by the primary use of the building as envisaged. Regarding the outdoor facilities, boundary fencing at

the site had been raised with Councillors and this would be examined by the Sub-Committee at the next meeting. It was noted that the outcome of the Sub-Committees review, and their recommendations would be presented to an extraordinary meeting of the Council in February.

78. Officer's Reports

78.1. Standing Order/ Urgent Action

Council received and noted the urgent action (previously circulated) regarding the appointment of Councillor Tandy to the Property and Personnel Committee. It was **Resolved** that:

The Urgent Action be noted.

78.2. Littlehampton Harbour Advisory Body

The Town Council had been invited to nominate a representative on this body. Councillor Buckland had expressed an interest in fulfilling this role and there being no other nominations, it was therefore **Resolved** that:

Councillor Buckland be nominated as the Town Councils representative on the Littlehampton Harbour Advisory Body.

79. Notice of Motion

Councillor Seex addressed Council regarding a Notice of Motion which proposed that all expenditure over £10,000 would require signoff by Full Council. In proposing this change to the Town Councils procedures, she explained that her aim was to introduce the opportunity for all Councillors to scrutinise decisions to ensure the best outcomes for residents. Members proceeded to debate the proposal in more detail and discussion focused on the extent to which this new rule would apply to new expenditure and the potential impact on the Councils decision making process. Councillor Seex explained that her intention in proposing this change was not to stop the business of the Council but to highlight new unbudgeted expenditure and avoid the unplanned exceptions. She was therefore not seeking to include general expenditure required in the daily running of the Council but to highlight earlier the financial implications of new initiatives. Whilst there was some support for this proposal, there was also concern that this could cause some disruption to business. It was also considered that the implications of introducing such a rule would require more detailed examination in terms of

the impact on the Town Councils Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

The matter be referred to the Governance & Audit Committee to consider the implications and make recommendations to Full Council.

80. Finance

80.1. Capital Programme Funding 2021 to 2022 & Projected Funding 2022 to 2024

Council received a report (previously circulated) which explained the Capital programme and financial implications of the Council Priorities as part of the budget setting process. Members were pleased to note the progress of projects such as Rosemead Play Area and the Keystone Centre. It was noted that the announcement of the contractor appointed for the Public Realm Improvement Works would shortly be made. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The Capital programme Funding for 2021 to 2022 and the projected funding for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 be approved.**
- 2. The £77,000 funding for the new Keystone Centre be met from the Capital Receipts Reserve, instead of the Loan Capital EMR be approved.**

80.2. Full Council Budget Report 2021 to 2022 and Projected Budgets 2022 to 2024

80.2.1. The Council had before it a report (previously circulated) which set out the proposed Council Budget for 2021 to 2022 and Projected Budgets for 2022 to 2024. The Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee was pleased to present the proposed Council Budget for 2021 to 2022 which had been put together against the backdrop of the pandemic, which had impacted the finances of all local councils however large or small. This meant that the budgeted income had been significantly cut back including Bank Interest (50% reduction), Manor House room hire and ancillaries (more than 50%) and SJC room hire (by a third.) The real impact would depend on how long current restrictions remained. In 2020 and 2021 these losses of income were largely offset by the cancelling of much of the events programme. This Budget envisaged a full programme of events for the year.

80.2.2. The Budget also provided the financial package to support the new capital project, namely the new Keystone Centre and the forthcoming North

Littlehampton Community Centre. The Budget also incorporated another tranche of revenue funding for both facilities to support them when they initially opened. Most of the other changes looked to address probable inflationary increases that would arise from new contracts. These included the floral and Christmas lights contracts which were extended for one year in 2020.

- 80.2.3.** Public Sector salaries for all but National Health Service employees were likely to be held next year other than a £250 increase for those earning less than £24,000 per year. The Budget also incorporated provision for the previously agreed six month posts for the three apprentices. Members also congratulated all three on achieving distinctions in their courses. Without doubt the Council would also look to become involved in the community. Provision for this could be identified when the Councils priorities were reviewed over the next Committee cycle.
- 80.2.4.** On a positive note, the expected decrease in the Council tax base had not materialised and the new tax base had added £7,000 which reduced the take from reserves for next year. He thanked all members of the Council and staff for their work in taking this difficult Budget through its many stages.
- 80.2.5.** There was broad support for the budget however Members were also conscious of the impact that even a small increase in Council tax could have on residents at this difficult time. Acknowledging that the Town Council's Priorities would be reviewed in the next Committee cycle, Members were urged to consider possible adaptations to support areas of immediate need. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. The budget for 2021 to 2022 setting a Precept of £1,311,681 be approved.**
- 2. The projected budgets for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 be noted.**
- 3. The level of the General Reserves be approved.**
- 4. The existing procedure, as per Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, of authorising of Council Expenditure be approved.**
- 5. The current list of Direct Debits, as set out in Appendix 3 as attached to the report be approved.**
- 6. The existing procedure, as per Financial Regulations, of authorising expenditure to a value not exceeding £200 on the Imprest Account be approved.**
- 7. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to spend Earmarked Reserves (EMR) up to the amounts included in the approved EMR,**

subject to the requirements of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation.

- 8. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to spend external Grant monies as outlined in the grant application.**

80.3. External Auditor Certificate and Report 2019 to 2020

Council received the External Auditor Certificate and Report (previously circulated). The Town Clerk was pleased to report that for the second year running there was no findings and Members thanked the Finance Team for their hard work. It was **Resolved** that:

The External Auditor certificate and report for the 2019 to 2020 accounts be noted.

81. Reports of Representatives on Outside Bodies

81.1. Littlehampton Shopmobility

As the Town Council's representative on the Littlehampton Shopmobility Committee, Councillor Turner commended June Caffyn for the continued operation of the service and the piece in the Littlehampton Gazette profiling the service.

81.2. Littlehampton Sportsfield Management Committee

As the Town Council's representative on the Littlehampton Sports Management Committee, Councillor Blanchard-Cooper informed Members that the Committee continued to maintain the grounds, ensuring they remained accessible during the Pandemic and in line with restrictions. He also invited Members for a tour of the Sports Hall when circumstances allowed.

81.3. Littlehampton Bonfire Society

As the Town Council's representative on the Littlehampton Bonfire Society, Councillor Blanchard-Cooper informed Members that the group were working hard to hold an event this year but were dependent on regulations relating to public gatherings changing. An AGM would be held soon, and the Society hoped to return with a good, safe event later this year.

82. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 8:23pm

TOWN MAYOR

Mayoral Events attended between 25th November 2020 – 21 January 2021

	Date	Organisation	Activities at Event	Venue
37	25/11/2020	LTC	Planting a tree to commemorate Tony Squires	LTC
38	12/12/2020	LOCA	Fairy on Stilts	High Street
39	19/12/2020	MAYORAL CHARITIES	Santa's Grotto	NMC
40	20/12/2020	LITTLEHAMPTON BAPTIST CHURCH	Carols in the Car Park	Littlehampton Baptist Church Car Park
41	21/12/2020	LTC	Reindeer Competition Winner Photo & Prize Giving	Outside Bah Humbug
42	22/12/2020	LTC/ADC	Love local prize draw live video	LTC
43	23/12/2020	LTC/ADC	Xmas Shop Window Winner photo and trophy presentation	Outside Jones Hairdresser

** Deputy Mayor Attended Event

***** Mayor & Deputy Mayor Attended Event