

**Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council as an Advisory Group
held on Thursday 24th June 2021 at 6.30pm**

Present:

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

2021 to 2022

This meeting is available to view using the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86RkOXCTMqQ>

1. 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.

2. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillors Baker and Tilbrook.

3. Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary, personal, 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.

4. Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual meeting held on 29th April 2021 (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.

5. Town Mayor's Report and Urgent Items

5.1. Town Mayor's Report

The Mayor's Report (copy attached to the Minutes) had been circulated to Members before the meeting for information. The Mayor was delighted to report that she had been able to resume visits to community groups and local businesses and that she appreciated the welcome she had received from the community.

6. 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 was one.

6.1. Mr Chester asked:

"How have members of the Town Council managed to get it into a position where it has gone from contributing £20,000 per annum towards the Arun Littlehampton Regeneration Officer post to now creating a new post all together costed at between £30, 000 and £70,000 per annum for which there is no budget. In addition, if the community warden experiment is successful the Town Council would face further expenditure of at least £100,000 per annum to continue it, also unbudgeted. Combined this would either see the Town Council increase its precept 10 to 15% or make swinging cuts elsewhere. Both, entirely unacceptable. If the Council votes to lumber the taxpayer with such enormous liabilities, there needs to be a Parish Poll to let residents decide".

6.2. In response:

On behalf of the Council the Town Clerk thanked Mr Chester for his representation. Regarding the Town Centre Manager post, Members had wished to see a different service however, he was sure that Council would take into consideration Mr Chester's representation when they came to consider the Report later in the Meeting. He also added that the Community Wardens were a pilot scheme which would only be extended through partnership with other parish councils.

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

7.1. Changes to County Local Committees (CLCs) and Joint Area Committees (JACs)

- 7.1.1.** The County Council had advised that the June and July Area Committee meetings would be replaced with informal locality sessions for county councillor induction. It was also noted that the County Council would be considering future arrangements at their Governance Committee on 28th June 2021 which could see these meetings replaced with informal local area forums on a district or borough area basis to be trialled for one year.
- 7.1.2.** This decision was lamented and any move to make them larger was considered a retrograde step. Members viewed the Area Committees in particular as valued forums because they provided much needed local focus. It was felt that this would be diluted if the move to the CLC model on a district or borough area basis went ahead especially in respect of matters relating to highways and crime. In addition, there was concern that the continued reliance on virtual meetings could inadvertently prevent those residents who were uncomfortable with technology from participating in the meetings. Clarity was also sought as to a timeframe for returning to face to face meetings. It was therefore considered prudent that an urgent representation be sent to the County Council expressing these concerns. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

In accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to write to the County Council setting out Members concerns.

8. Reports of Advisory Groups – Non-Exempt

8.1. Recommendations from Advisory Groups

Council considered a report that was previously circulated which drew together the recommendations from the last cycle of Committee meetings that needed to be approved by Council of which there were three.

8.1.1. Policy and Finance Advisory Group: Minute 7.1. Flag Flying Guidance

The Government had issued new guidance on the flying of the Union Flag from United Kingdom Government buildings in March and was encouraging all local authorities in England to fly the Union Flag more frequently on their principal buildings. It was **RESOLVED** that:

In accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to:

Update the Town Council's Guidelines on Flag Flying allowing the Union flag to be flown at the Manor House all year round unless another flag was being flown.

8.1.2. Policy and Finance Advisory Group: Minute 7.6. Accessibility

Policy Recommendation

On the recommendation of the Community Resources and Policy and Finance Advisory Groups, Council was invited to approve adopting an accessibility policy. This was unanimously supported, and it was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

In accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to adopt and implement the policy that Littlehampton Town Council supports the provision of access to all facilities in the Town for people of all abilities.

8.1.3. Community Resources Advisory Group: Minute 7.2.4. Museum Forward Plan

Following the completion of the Collection Documentation Project Council was recommended to adopt the Museum Forward Plan 2021 to 2026. Recognising the dedication of the Museum Team and investment made by the Council in the Project, the Forward Plan was acknowledged as the foundation for the Museum Service going forward. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

In accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to adopt and implement the Museum Forward Plan 2021 to 2026.

8.2. Advisory Group Minutes (Non-Exempt)

8.2.1. Policy and Finance

Council received the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 2021 (previously circulated). Regarding Minute 7.4, the Community Wardens Scheme, Members were reminded that this was a pilot scheme which would be evaluated after 18 months and only extended through partnership with other parish councils. With reference to Minute 7.5, the Town Centre Manager role, it was noted that the estimated costs were based on research of similar posts in other local authorities and that Council would be considering a full report and how to proceed later in the meeting.

8.2.2. Community Resources

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2021 which were previously circulated with no matters arising.

8.2.3. Planning and Transportation

Councillor Tandy declared a personal interest in the following item as an employee of the Littlehampton Academy which was impacted by the construction of the Fitzalan Link Road.

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th March 2021 (previously circulated). Regarding Minute 121.1, the Fitzalan Link Road, it was considered that the response of the local Highways Authority to the request for a 30mph speed limit failed to recognise the road safety needs of the new school planned in the vicinity. In view of the strength of feeling on the matter, Members wished to pursue a review of the speed limit and it was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The matter be referred to the Planning and Transportation Advisory Group to progress.

8.2.4. Planning and Transportation

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meetings held on 26th April and 24th May 2021 (previously circulated) with no matters arising.

8.2.5. Property and Personnel

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

9. Officer's Reports

9.1. Appointment of Committees and Representatives on Outside Bodies

The Advisory Group had before it a report (previously circulated) which set out the breakdown of Committee places and vacancies for outside bodies following the by-elections in May and considering the preferences of the incoming Councillors in the Brookfield, River and Wickbourne wards. A further review had also resulted in Councillor Tilbrook coming off the Community Resources Advisory Group and Councillor Chace coming off the Planning and Transportation Advisory Group. There were no changes to the representatives on outside bodies and Members were content with the revised Committee memberships. In accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, it was therefore **RESOLVED** that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to:

- 1. Appoint representatives to the Committees as set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report.**
- 2. Appoint representatives to outside bodies as set out in Appendix 2 attached to this report.**

9.2. Town Centre Manager

9.2.1. Council received a report updating Members on the discussions that had taken place regarding the anticipated role of the Town Centre Manager – previously circulated. The Town Clerk also provided clarification regarding funding, and it was noted that the costs to the Town Council of extending the current role until the end of September

2021 of £10,000 would be met from earmarked reserves – EMR Public Conveniences Refurbishment. A further £10,000 was also available, met from the Bus EMR, to contribute to the potential costs should the post be extended to March 2022. There was no budget provision beyond this as alternative arrangements were yet to be decided. The report also highlighted the possibility of the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations 2006 regulations being a factor in any future appointment and that it may therefore be necessary to obtain legal advice and convene a meeting of the Property and Personnel Advisory Group to consider the implications. Regardless, the final decision on the shape of the role would rest with Full Council. Members were therefore invited to consider and provide direction on the emerging proposals from the Policy and Finance Advisory Group following their meeting on 14th June 2021.

9.2.2. Reviewing the discussion to date, it was observed that there was a huge disparity in the expectations of this role ranging from purely administrative to something much more strategic. The role was viewed as a priority for the Council and Members were keen to work in partnership with traders and key stakeholders in the Town to deliver a sustainable future for the Town Centre. It was therefore considered that the role should be pitched somewhere in the middle of this range. It was however also acknowledged that it would still require someone with considerable experience and that a clear strategy for the role to respond to was essential. In this respect it was considered important that the Town Centre Strategy needed to be in place as this would help define the role and key performance indicators. It was noted that a draft strategy document was expected to be circulated to members imminently.

9.2.3. Observing that that the costs of the role could be significant, Members discussed how these might be incorporated in the budgets for future years. In terms of future funding, the post was not thought likely to attract grants, sponsorship, or partnership funding unless it met very strict criteria or developer funding became available. Council would therefore be limited to raising the precept or finding savings elsewhere in the Budget to fund the post. It was suggested that the role did not need to be full time and recommended that the feasibility of a parttime role be explored as part of the ongoing research. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

- a. Council's observations as set out in Minutes 9.2.2. and 9.2.3. above be noted and the Policy and Finance Advisory Group progress this work and report back to an extraordinary meeting of Council as soon as possible.**
- b. The Property and Personnel Advisory Group consider, if necessary, the Human Resources implications of the Policy and Finance Advisory Group's proposals and report to Council accordingly.**

- c. **In accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to secure TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006) advice when a clear view of the role became available.**
- d. **Whilst there was no Budget for the role at present, to note that costs at this stage, although unknown, could be between £30,000 to £70,000 per annum, including on-costs, dependant on the role approved.**

9.3. Meeting Schedule for June, July and August 2021

A copy of the meeting schedule through to the end of August had been circulated for Members to note. Following the delay to the Government Road Map, restrictions on socialising remained and it would therefore be necessary to continue remote meetings throughout the summer. This would also impact the Annual Town Meeting which would also now be held in a remote format with a reduced agenda but still allowing residents to raise local issues. The meeting schedule would continue to be reviewed when the guidance was updated. It was **Resolved** that:

The meeting schedule for June, July and August 2021 be noted.

10. Audit and Annual Return 2020 to 2021

10.1. Annual Governance Statement for 2020 to 2021 (Section 1 of the Annual Return)

Members had before them a report, previously circulated, seeking approval of Section 1 the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. In accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, the Advisory Group Recommended to Council that it resolves that:

- a. **To the best of its knowledge and belief, with respect to the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March 2021, it has complied with all 8 items.**
- b. **The Mayor, as Chairman of the Council, and the Clerk be authorised to sign Section 1 of the 2020 to 2021 Annual Return on behalf of the Council.**

10.2. Statement of Accounts – Annual Return 2020 to 2021 (Section 2 of the Annual Return)

Council received a report, previously circulated, which sought approval of the 2019 to 2020 Accounting Statement. Members commended the Responsible Financial Officer and the Finance Team for their hard work. Recalling that the Responsible Financial Officer would be leaving the Council at the end of August to become Town Clerk at Lewes Town Council, Members expressed their thanks for her support and wished her well in her now role. Members considered that the Annual Statement of Accounts was an accurate reflection

of the Town Council's finances. Therefore, in accordance with the decision made by Full Council on 29th April 2021, the Advisory Group Recommended to Council that it resolves that:

- a. **The Annual Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021 be approved.**
- b. **The Mayor, as Chairman of the Council, be authorised to sign Section 2 of the 2020 to 2021 Annual Governance and Accountability Return on behalf of the Council.**

11. Reports of Representatives on Outside Bodies

There were none.

12. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7.39pm.

TOWN MAYOR