



MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL 19 JANUARY 2021

PRESENT

Councillor: R Williams (In the Chair)

Councillor: (Mrs) K Barber
A Bishop
(Mrs) J Bishop
G Evans
N Gardiner
(Miss) J Murphy
P Newton-Smith
G Olley
(Mrs) M Penny
K Saunders
K Smith
(Mrs) L Vardy
S Weisinger
S Wolfensohn

IN ATTENDANCE

Five Members of the Public and one Member of the press

APOLOGIES

56. None.



Highworth is a Fair Trade Town



Twinned with Wassenberg



Twinned with Pontorson

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

57. None.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

58. None.

CORRESPONDENCE

59. a. An email has been received from a resident expressing concern about the difficulty of avoiding close contact with people in the High Street on Saturday mornings in view of Covid-19. He asks that Highworth Town Council (HTC) arrange for the High Street to be closed to traffic at this time to give more room for people to keep a distance, and notes that most of the traffic using the High Street did not stop but drove through.

The Acting Clerk is to contact Swindon Borough Council (SBC) to investigate the option to be discussed at a future Meeting.

b. An email from Voluntary Action Swindon has been received. It is looking to set up a forum for young people in the Swindon area to connect with each other and develop, and where issues can be raised, and policy makers and politicians engaged. HTC has been asked for a contact to discuss how this Council currently engages with young people.

Councillor (Mrs) L Vardy is to be the contact with Voluntary Action Swindon and is to liaise with Councillors (Mrs) J Bishop and S Wolfensohn.

c. An email received from a resident to let the Town Council know how pleased he is that the Tommy has been repaired so quickly and efficiently and to say 'well done'.

d. An email has been received from the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) Office with a Presentation that has been circulated to Councillors. The PCC Office has requested that it be made available on the HTC website and Facebook Page.

Councillors approved the request to publish the presentation on the Highworth Town Council Website and Facebook Page.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

60. **RESOLVED THAT THE MINUTES FOR THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2020 BE ADOPTED** (The Minutes were duly adopted and are to be signed).

The Acting Clerk is to enquire of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) whether non-members of Committees are permitted to participate in Committee Meetings.

MATTERS ARISING

61. Covered within the Agenda.

POLICIES

62. Resolved by Councillor N Gardiner and Seconded by Councillor G Olley to adopt the Use of the Podium and Market Square Policy with the wording 'in warmer months' to be removed, Councillors unanimously agreed.

The Policies Committee is to discuss with Councillor (Mrs) M Penny concerns with the Tree Policy and amend as necessary. This is to be a future Agenda item.

OLD BRITISH SCHOOL

63. The Old British School building (previously Vorda Playgroup) and site is up for sale. Councillors debated the option of purchasing the building and agreed it was not something they would like to pursue at this time.

FULL INTERNAL AUDIT

64. The Acting Clerk contacted NALC as requested, with reference to an internal audit, this is not a service that it currently offers. An email reply was received from the local Association with other options, which was sent to all Councillors prior to this Meeting.

Councillor S Weisinger reported Chris Hackett formerly of Grant Thornton and now employed by this Councils Internal Auditors, Auditing Solutions Ltd., could carry out the internal audit at a cost of £534.00 per day including VAT and likely to take 2-3 days.

Councillor K Smith reviewed the options supplied by the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) as well as others e.g. International Standards 9001, although thorough were extremely expensive. The Local Government Resource Centre offers a Local Governance Health Check Service covering; Constitutional, Operational, Financial, Risk Management, Community Interaction and Human Resources.

Councillors, S Weisinger and K Smith are to submit the information they have so far to the office for further enquires to be made, including quotations and examples of work. The options and the scope of the audit are to be reviewed at a future Meeting.

DAMAGE TO 'TOMMY' ON THE PODIUM

65. To prevent further damage to the Tommy it was removed and taken to local company Ridgeway Structures to assess the damage and provide a quote for repairs. The repairs were carried out free of charge and the Tommy has now been re-erected on the Podium. Ridgeway Structures advised a support bracket would be required to prevent this from happening again. A quote is to be obtained.

A letter of gratitude is to be sent to John Kay of Ridgeway Structures on behalf of the Council and a post on the HTC Facebook Page.

DOVECOTE

66. It was reported to the Council that the land where the dovecote was sited belongs to Swindon Borough Council (SBC). Councillor K Smith reported that no money has been promised to the

group of residents interested in replacing it. He will advise the group to obtain the relevant permission from SBC. This will not be brought back to a future Meeting unless requested.

STANDING ORDERS AND CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING

67. The Chairman invited all Councillors to take up the Code of Conduct training being offered by SBC on Thursday 4 February 2021, 6:00pm-8:00pm. The Acting Clerk is to re-circulate the information.

More details of Standing Orders training is to be circulated to Councillors once the method and platform of training has been agreed.

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

68. a. Councillor N Gardiner: The safety of St Michaels Avenue is to be an Agenda item on Environment & Leisure Meeting.
- b. Councillor (Mrs) M Penny: SBC is planning to plant blossom trees in memory of COVID victims, Councillor (Mrs) M Penny asked if Highworth Town Council would consider being involved. This is to be an Agenda item on Environment & Leisure Meeting.
- c. Councillor S Wolfensohn: The Acting Town Clerk and the Chairman are to look at future Meetings and how the length of Meetings can be reduced.

RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC AND PRESS FROM AGENDA ITEM 14

69. Resolved by Councillor N Gardiner and Seconded by Councillor G Olley to exclude the Public and Press from Agenda item 14 on the grounds of avoiding disclosure of personal information. Councillors unanimously agreed.

STAFFING COMMITTEE UPDATE

70. a. A draft application pack for a new Town Clerk has been produced and was presented to the Staffing Committee yesterday. Once the agreed amendments have been made the document will be circulated to Councillors and put as a future Agenda item to be approved.
- b. Quotations for support in the recruitment process have been sought and will be presented to Full Council when they have all been received.
- c. A letter from the former Town Clerk, was read to Councillors. The Council has acted on the advice from NALC solicitors. The Acting Town Clerk is to draft a letter of response, to be sent to Councillors for prior approval.
- d. Resolved by Councillor (Mrs) M Penny and Seconded by Councillor (Mrs) L Vardy that a letter is to be written to the Secretary of State to request a dispensation to make a Gratuity Payment. This was a named vote. Councillors unanimously agreed.
- e. The Acting Town Clerk is to provide a list of roles and responsibilities of Councillors and Town Clerk, referencing Arnold Baker.

f. The option of splitting the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) roles is to be an Agenda item on Environment & Leisure Meeting.

The Meeting closed at 10:12pm

Action Points: -

- The Acting Clerk is to contact Swindon Borough Council (SBC) to investigate options for the High Street, to be discussed at a future Meeting.
- Councillor (Mrs) L Vardy is to be the contact with Voluntary Action Swindon and is to liaise with Councillors (Mrs) J Bishop and S Wolfensohn.
- The PCC presentation is to be published on the Highworth Town Council Website and Facebook Page.
- Confirmation is to be sought from NALC whether non-members of Committees are permitted to participate in Committee Meetings.
- The Use of the Podium and Market Square Policy is to be amended, prior to publication.
- The Policies Committee is to discuss with Councillor (Mrs) M Penny concerns with the Tree Policy and amend it as necessary. This is to be a future Agenda item.
- Councillors, S Weisinger and K Smith are to obtain costings and request examples of work and agree the scope of the audit. The information is to be submitted to the office to be circulated to all Councillors. The options are to be reviewed at a future Meeting.
- A letter of gratitude is to be sent to John Kay of Ridgeway Structures on behalf of the Council and a post on the HTC Facebook Page.
- More details of Standing Orders training is to be circulated to Councillors once the method and platform of training has been agreed.
- The safety of St Michaels Avenue is to be an Agenda item on the next Environment & Leisure Meeting.
- The planting of Blossom trees in memory of COVID victims is to be an Agenda item on the next Environment & Leisure Meeting
- The Acting Town Clerk and the Chairman are to look at future Meetings and how the length of Meetings can be reduced.
- The draft application pack for a new Town Clerk is to be a future Agenda item.
- The Acting Town Clerk is to draft a response to the former Town Clerk, to be sent to Councillors for prior approval.

- A letter is to be written to the Secretary of State requesting dispensation to make a Gratuity Payment.
- The Acting Town Clerk is to provide a list of roles and responsibilities of Councillors and Town Clerk, referencing Arnold Baker.
- The option of splitting the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) roles is to be an Agenda item on the next Environment & Leisure Meeting.

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