



## STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL

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Dear Councillor, you are hereby summoned to attend:

**AN EXTRA MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL, ON WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020,  
AT 7.00PM, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE, STOTFOLD**

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### AGENDA

**1. Disclosure of Members Interests on matters contained in this agenda**

To receive from Members any disclosures of personal or prejudicial interests on matters contained in the agenda. Members are reminded that if at any time during the meeting they feel they have an interest in an item being discussed, they should declare it at that point.

**2. To receive apologies for absence from Town Council Members**

**3. Oral questions from Electors**

In light of the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, members of the public may wish to follow the Government's request to practice social distancing, particularly if you are unwell and vulnerable to infection. If a member of the public wishes to attend this meeting, please be assured that your seating will be distanced, and we will have hand sanitiser available for your use prior and after the meeting. Up to 3 members of the public will be given 3 minutes each to speak, after giving notice of their wish to do so to the Town Clerk prior to the meeting. Order of speakers will be in order of notification to the Clerk.

**4. Emergency delegation of authority – Local Government Act 1972 s101**

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK, to approve delegated authority to the Clerk, in consultation with the chairman and vice-chairman to take any actions necessary, with associated expenditure, to protect the interests of the community and ensure council business continuity during the period of the pandemic coronavirus, informed by consultation with the members of the council. The delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation, i.e. approval of annual accounts.

Further, the Clerk may submit planning application responses where majority agreement can be reached by committee members using telephone or email. For the duration of this emergency delegation of authority, residents are invited to send comments on any application in a timely manner to the Town Clerk, who will distribute them to the committee members for their information. Residents are reminded always to submit their comments directly to Central Bedfordshire Council, the Local Planning Authority, during the consultation period.

**5. Suspension of council meetings**

To suspend all meetings of the council and its committees during the period of the outbreak, until such time that the Government reduces its risk level and we are advised that it is safe to return to holding meetings in person. The Government is fast-tracking a bill through the system to provide legislation removing the requirement to hold meetings in person. The Clerk is exploring 'virtual' meeting options.

## **6. Payment of salaries during emergency period**

For information – office staff are employed on the NJC ‘Green Book’ terms, which means that they will receive full pay if working from home or self-isolating. If they become sick, their contract requires them to be paid at 6 months full pay, then 6 months half pay, then statutory sick pay. All other staff are not employed on the NJC contract, but in the example of closed hall facilities, they will continue to receive their full pay (base rate), but if become sick, they will receive statutory sick pay – new emergency legislation means this will come into force from day 1, rather than day 4 of a sick period.

## **7. Council expenditure**

To give delegated authority to the Clerk to make regular payments, known irregular/one-off payments that have already been agreed by council/committee, i.e. one-off purchases, payments to maintain council’s functions and emergency payments (as per agenda item 4). A monthly list of income and expenditure will continue to be provided to members, as per usual council meetings.

## **8. Cancellation of events**

To consider cancellation of forthcoming events, suggested to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 and then reviewed by members with a majority agreement thereon, should meetings have not recommenced by that time. Events falling within this period:

- Big Tidy Up – 16<sup>th</sup> May – British Spring Clean has now cancelled all events associated with the national Clean
- VE Day 75 exhibition – 9<sup>th</sup> May
- Mill event 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> May has now been cancelled
- Councillor Surgery – would have been 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> May at Mill event
- Annual Town Dinner – already cancelled

## **9. Closure of facilities**

### **a) Memorial Hall & Greenacre Centre**

To approve executive action taken by the Clerk, in consultation with the Buildings Management Committee Chairman to close the Greenacre Centre and Memorial Hall, on health and safety grounds and due to staff shortage caused by the emergency situation. Initial closure period 21<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020, to be reviewed.

### **b) Public toilets**

To consider closing the public toilets on the High Street. The Handyman cleans these facilities daily, however the current outbreak requires a more thorough daily clean to remove risk of infection through surface touch. We have also had reports that toilet rolls have been stolen.

### **c) Hitchin Road Recreation Ground Changing Rooms**

This facility is no longer being used, as the FA has suspended all grass roots football. As such, the facility has received a thorough clean and is closed for the foreseeable future.

## **10. Continuation of council services**

### **a) Cemetery**

Although we do not have a duty to provide Cemetery facilities, the risk to those visiting the facility is considered low, subject to individuals following Government guidelines. In terms of interments during the outbreak period, enabling interments to continue is felt necessary, and discussions have been held with local funeral directors on how administration of this will work in practice to ensure smooth operation.

### **b) Council offices**

The office staff have now implemented the ‘working from home’ step, where possible. X2 additional laptops have been purchased to add to the Clerk’s work laptop. Keyholder mobile phones have been retrieved and reissued to office staff.

- c) Grounds maintenance and grass cutting, litter picking of our public open spaces and weekly visual play equipment inspections will continue.
- d) Allotments will still be available to all tenants. The Government's advice is to ensure that you maintain some form of exercise whilst socially isolating, and working an allotment is encouraged.

#### **11. Statutory requirements**

There are certain statutory requirements which must still be followed during this emergency period – approval of accounts and annual return, and to hold our Annual Council Meeting at which the Chairman, Vice-Chairman will be elected, and committee membership set.

The Government is currently looking to extend the period by which the accounts and annual return are agreed, from 30<sup>th</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> September, however the office is continuing with its planned schedule of a year-end shutdown (i.e. completing financial year on accounts system) with assistance of RBS (council's accounting software provider) on 13<sup>th</sup> May, external audit through our usual auditor shortly after, to be ready for council's approval when able and within whichever deadline is determined.

With regard to the Annual Council meeting, this must still be held, however the Government is looking to allow this meeting to not be held in person but 'virtually'. The Clerk is exploring options and will report to members nearer the time.

#### **12. Committee year end budget and reserves review – Town Strategy and Establishment**

To receive a budget update and reserves status for the Town Strategy and Establishment Committees and take any necessary action before the end of the financial year (council voting, not committee).

#### **13. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

- i) To consider and approve the drafted Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference
- ii) To elect a Chairman for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – members are Councillors Steve Buck, Humphrey Pickering, Brian Collier, John Talbot (note, Vice-Chairman will be a member of the public)
- iii) To approve a budget to enable the Steering Group to commence early stage work on engaging with the public. Suggested £5,000 – funds from Town Strategy Projects EMR (note, the Steering Group will report to council, not Town Strategy Committee)

#### **14. Support for elderly and vulnerable in Stotfold**

A support group for our elderly and vulnerable residents has been set up, and a meeting was held Tuesday evening. Key organisations and groups in the town have been considering how they might help and include the Town Council (Mayor in attendance), Good Neighbour Group, Need Project, Salvation Army, and was organised by Churches Together. The Mayor to update members on the meeting.

Members are asked to consider an emergency grant application from Churches Together to enable a Covid-19 volunteer group to be set up. They wish to purchase items such as mobile phones, other set up costs and perhaps food items for those urgently in need. Detail on the application will be provided at the meeting.

#### **15. Keeping councillors updated**

The Clerk will provide monthly, or more frequent if required, updates on any executive action taken, or information that may be information to members.

#### **16. Questions or suggestions from Members**

Members are invited to make suggestions to the Clerk, i.e. ideas for virtual meeting, or ask questions or seek clarification on any item.

**17. Questions from electors on items arising from this evening's meeting**

*KA Elliott-Turner*

**Mrs K Elliott-Turner  
Town Clerk**

20<sup>th</sup> March 2020

To: All Stotfold Town Councillors, Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Members, representative of the press and electorates of Stotfold