

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2ND SEPTEMBER 2020, AT 7PM

Committee Members present:

A Cooper - Chairman, S Buck, Mrs A Clarey, B Collier, Mrs M Cooper, S Dhaliwal, S Hayes, Mrs J Hyde, D Matthews, H Pickering, B Saunders (& CBC), J Talbot

Also present:

Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner, Assistant Clerk – Ms C Jenkins and Central Beds Councillor S Dixon

81/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Bundock, C Phelps, G Russell, and Central Beds Councillor N Harris.

82/20 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA

Nothing to declare. Members were 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.

83/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

None present.

84/20 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Correspondence

- Bedfordshire Bugle – September 2020 edition

85/20 COUNCIL MINUTES

To note and sign as a correct record, the minutes of a meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 17th June 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on Wednesday 17th June 2020 be taken as read and confirmed and signed as a correct record.

86/20 EXEMPTION FROM REGULATIONS – LGA 1972 S85

Members considered a request from Councillor Mrs Bundock for an 'exemption for failure to attend a meeting for any reason, prior to the expiry of the six-month period'. According to the above regulation, council is to record and approve the reason for an apology when given, but in practice minuting the actual reason is not usually done – this is for security reasons, i.e. when someone is away from their home on holiday. Proper practice is now to note the apology, as we already do, and if someone has a reason as to why they haven't attended for the last six months, or if they know they won't be able to attend a meeting in the forthcoming six months, then that reason is to be given and approved by council.

RESOLVED that the reason given by Councillor Mrs Bundock for not attending any meeting in the six months prior, and for a further six month period, unless we return to meeting face to face within that time, is accepted.

87/20 LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY DEAL & WORKING FROM HOME ALLOWANCE

The Unions and National Joint Council have now agreed the pay deal for 2020. The agreement, which is backdated to 1st April 2020, is for a 2.75% increase. Staff employed under NJC contracts are x5 office staff. The updated pay scales have now been provided by NALC and will be applied from the next pay period.

Council noted the 2.75% pay increase, backdated to 1st April 2020.

Members considered paying the x5 office staff the working from home allowance for the period working from home due to coronavirus from 23rd March 2020. Working from home continues on a part time basis (from 3rd August). From 23rd March 2020 to 5th April 2020 ~ £4 per week per relevant staff member, from 6th April 2020 onwards ~ £6 per week per relevant staff member.

RESOLVED that council will pay the working from home allowance to the x5 office staff members.

88/20 CORONAVIRUS – FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Due to current legislation regarding social distancing and gatherings of people, the Clerk proposed that forthcoming events are cancelled or amended as follows:

Christmas Lights Switch On

Cancel – it is suggested that the Christmas lights around the town still come on at a determined date/time, and this is published, but an event outside and inside the Greenacre Centre is not held this year due to being unable to control the number of people who might attend and maintaining social distancing requirements.

Remembrance Sunday

Amend - following discussions with the Royal British Legion and the Vicar, together with compliance with current legislation, it is suggested that a scaled-down version of Remembrance Sunday may have to be held, or the ceremony cancelled.

It was agreed that the usual Christmas Lights Switch On event at the Greenacre Centre does not go ahead, but that subject to budget available, Christmas lights are still provided around the town, with a switch on date/time published. The Christmas Lights Committee will meet in the coming month to discuss a lighting proposal for this year. With regard to Remembrance Sunday, it is very unlikely that an event will be held this year in the same way as in previous years. Key representatives may be able to obtain a wreath or an alternative (as there is currently a supply issue) to lay at the war memorial, but not as part of an organised event. Discussions are ongoing with the Royal British Legion and St Mary's Church Vicar.

89/20 PLANNING APPLICATION - CB/20/02310/OUT LAND EAST OF NORTON ROAD, STOTFOLD

Members considered making a response to the above Outline application for development of up to 70 residential units. Deadline for returning comments 7th September 2020.

RESOLVED that we object to this application. The proposed development falls within the Important Countryside Gap 7 Land South of Stotfold, leading into Letchworth, as referred to in Internal Consultation Memo 716344. We share the concerns of the Planning Officer that this proposal would lead to the coalescence of Stotfold and Letchworth Garden City. The proposal is against the Mid Beds District Council Core Strategy and the emerging Central Beds Council Local Plan Policy SP7. In para 2.7, page 6 of the planning design and access statement, the applicant states that there is unlikely to be any archaeology on this site, however there has been archaeology discovered on other developments in close proximity to this site. The archaeology Internal Consultation Memo 580984 objects to this application because there is nothing referred to in the application documents to indicate that an archaeology survey will be carried out. We strongly feel that this site does require a full archaeological survey. If this application is agreed by Central Beds Council, or by an Inspector at an appeal, one of the memos regarding S106 allocations includes the sum of £62,720 for Saxon Pool & Leisure Centre. We object to this allocation because this leisure centre is very difficult for anyone to get to from Stotfold if they don't have a car, and by bus is a very convoluted process. We query why this S106 allocation has not been directed to the more local Pendleton Centre, which is more likely to be used by people from Stotfold.

90/20 MHCLG'S PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WHITE PAPER AUGUST 2020 CONSULTATION

Members considered making a response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's consultation on the Planning For the Future White Paper. A copy of the paper was provided for members, together with summary proposals and questions extracted from the document. These should be read in conjunction with the full paper.

It was agreed that a separate extra ordinary meeting will be scheduled to consider a response to the consultation. Deadline is 29th October 2020.

91/20 REPORTS

a) Central Beds Council Ward Member Report

Councillor S Dixon -

Since the declaration of the lockdown, CBC has had to adapt quickly to the new challenges faced from the pandemic. The voluntary sector and the council have worked extremely well across the authority to step up to that challenge. The Need Project has been universally praised for the exceptional work they have undertaken, as have a variety of more formal bodies and a plethora of much smaller organisations. Thousands of support packages have been assembled and distributed to those who suffered the most over the last few months. While none of us know for sure what the future holds, we can be sure that need will continue for a good while longer, albeit at thankfully a lower level of demand. CBC continues to work with those voluntary sector partners.

And amongst all the mayhem we have had to endure, CBC has had to continue with 'business as usual' wherever possible. The closure of Priory House to most staff and members led to an immediate immersion in the new medium of mass virtual meetings. One full council meeting has been held with some 75 people involved and hundreds more smaller meetings have become the new normal. The office at Chicksands is now being use to coordinate the supply of food parcels and the distribution of PPE for CBC care homes and the like.

Despite the circumstances, officers have adapted extremely well to the situation, many of whom have had to take on temporary roles to assist with the management of the outbreak and its implications on the way of life in Central Beds.

A lot of consideration has been given as to what the future may hold post Covid. Some 40% of residents used to commute out of the authority, but what the future holds needs consideration on the impact of our communities. The Local Plan is closing in on the last round of consultation and we are aware of approaches from house builders about variations to property designs to accommodate more home working. The upsurge in walking and cycling however has been tremendous and aligns well with the upcoming Sustainability Plan. However, we are conscious that any 'new normal' needs planning for or we will rapidly slide back to the way we were.

Throughout the pandemic, activities such as the planning of the future provision of adult social care, schools for the future, highways maintenance, etc... have had to continue. With the schools due back any day, we have had to plan carefully for the likely impact on accessibility to them. This has led to all manner of accelerated maintenance of access routes and consideration of the likely vehicle movements. It is particularly pleasing to have had it confirmed that the planned opening of Pix Brook Academy has been maintained.

Government emergency powers in such areas as the "Emergency Active Travel Fund" have been used across the authority in various ways. The closure to vehicles in the high Street in Leighton Lindslade has allowed the historic market to continue and support the social distancing required. Pop up cycle lanes in Dunstable and Biggleswade are more high profile signs of the momentum to keep things moving as best as possible.

Thankfully the cases of Covid-19 in the area have been relatively low, but as we have seen recently, a re-appearance of the symptoms can be felt very suddenly if the advice on social distancing aren't followed. In addition to that advise, we are all reminded to wear a face cover in certain circumstances and wash your hands regularly.

As he stated himself when announcing his decision to retire, Richard Carr would be unlikely to have ever picked a good time to do so. Since its formation, Richard has been the authority's only substantive Chief Executive. During that time, CBC has evolved into an extremely settled and fiscally sound authority. He has given the requisite 6 months notice and the task of finding his replacement is well underway.

Muriel Scott, Joint Director of Public Health is also leaving, but will remain in post for another few months.

It is hoped we will start to see a return to greater normality in September and while we may not get to meet as before, let's hope we can continue to support residents in need and see a return to a degree of normality for all.

It seems that where there are increases in Covid-19 cases, it is amongst the under 40s. It is important to note that you are still vulnerable to the virus whether you are in your 40s or 80s, and we must all still take this very seriously.

b) Member and Nominated Representatives on Outside Bodies

St Mary's Church of England Academy – Community Governor, Councillor Mrs A Clarey

- St Mary's has kept both parents and the wider community aware of school news through the parent mail system, updates on the website and in Stotfold News.
- As a governor I joined the headteacher, a deputy and a year head in interviews for a teaching post. After six hours on Zoom and four candidates later a new teacher was appointed.
- As well as welcoming eight bubbles of Foundation, children of key workers and those in Year 1, the school managed to offer time and space to all other pupils prior to the end of term.
- Year 4 pupils enjoyed a 'new look' leavers event which gave them an opportunity to meet up with friends and to say goodbye to St Mary's.
- Fund raising efforts in conjunction with the SMSA totalled £6600. Many charities have benefitted over the past academic year.
- Detailed plans in line with Government guidelines have been produced prior to welcoming all pupils back on September 7th.

c) Town Plan Implementation Group (IG)
Chairman – Councillor Mrs A Clarey

- Group have not met formally since 3rd March 2020.
- Green Wheel update: Virtual meeting (Zoom) took place on Friday 31st July 2020. Minutes will be available at Recreation, Public Lands and Lighting meeting.
- Information of note: It had been hoped that the Bedfordshire Walking Festival, including the Three Wheel Challenge (Biggleswade, Sandy, Stotfold) would go ahead this year. However, the major events have now been cancelled, but it is possible to join 'Pop up' walks being organised around Central Bedfordshire – (Access on website / Bedfordshire Walking Festival link to Bedfordshire Ramblers – 'Go Pop' in September. All events have to be pre-booked).
- SGNG update
Steering group have met virtually and more recently socially distanced in gardens avoiding the rain wherever possible.
Since the March lockdown we have completed:
399 prescriptions and deliveries
24 transports to doctors
22 transports to hospitals
14 social transports with clients
11 befriending visits
+ over 4000 phone calls (210 original clients x 3 weeks = 4830)
25 other activities

495 jobs in total for 161 clients, 15 active volunteers
328 clients total (210 original + 118 since COVID)
41 volunteers in total

(Figures as at 30.08.20)

- Shopping has been done by Stotfold Churches Together.
- We are looking forward to resuming the Chair Based Exercise classes on 2nd October.

Members noted the good work carried out by all three organisations to help our community during the pandemic period – The Need Project, Stotfold Good Neighbour Group and the volunteer group set up by Churches Together. Individual residents have also been very good and active, helping out fellow residents.

92/20 ACCOUNTS

- a) Members considered the Expenditure Report for July, August and September 2020 and the income received during June, July and August 2020 in the Income Report.

RESOLVED that all payments on the Expenditure Report are approved and are to be paid, and the Income Report be noted.

- b) Members reviewed the bank balances as at end August 2020.

RESOLVED that the bank balances as at end August 2020 be noted.

The Clerk advised members that the second half Precept payment for this year has now been received.

93/20 CEMETERY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - 18TH MARCH 2020

Members of the Cemetery Management Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 18th March 2020 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

94/20 CEMETERY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING – 12TH AUGUST 2020

Members of the Cemetery Management Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 12th August 2020 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

95/20 BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 18TH MARCH 2020

Members of the Buildings Management Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 18th March 2020 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

96/20 BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 19TH AUGUST 2020

Members of the Buildings Management Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 19th August 2020 are a correct record. Recommendation minute 26/20 will be considered under a confidential agenda item later in the meeting. The minutes were noted by council.

97/20 RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE - 26TH AUGUST 2020

Members of the Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 26th August 2020 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

98/20 PLANNING COMMITTEE – COMMENTS MADE UNDER DELEGATED POWER

Members noted the comments made on planning applications received, under delegated powers as per Standing Orders, by the Clerk and Chairman of the Planning Committee in the absence of a committee meeting, together with Decision Notice reports. Reports previously circulated to members.

99/20 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS ON ITEMS ARISING FROM THE MEETING

There were none present.

100/20 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY

The Chairman asked the Clerk for an update on our halls reopening, mobile phones and keyholders. Our two hireable halls are reopening this coming Monday. The four keyholders are lined up and ready to go as per their rota. They have been given appropriate PPE – washable face masks, disposable gloves and hand sanitisers are provided in each building. Keyholders have been asked to wipe-down touch surfaces between each hirer. In terms of phones, the pay as you go mobiles used by four office staff members were, prior to lockdown, the keyholder phones. In the course of their work, the office staff had to have a significant amount of top-ups on the mobiles which has become costly and not considered cost effective to continue using pay as you go for this volume of calls. The Clerk has asked the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to agree under Covid-19 delegated powers to set up x4 mobile phone contracts for new handsets with EE for four office staff to enable them to continue to work from home. When we return to full-time office working, these contract mobile phones will then go to the keyholders to replace the pay as you go phones

101/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Under section 1.3 of Standing Orders, the Chairman proposed that the press and public are temporarily excluded for the following two agenda items, whilst matters pertaining to staff issues and confidential financial and contractual matters are discussed and that they be instructed to withdraw from the meeting for the following two agenda items only. **Agreed by members**

102/20 BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 19TH AUGUST 2020 – CONFIDENTIAL RECOMMENDATION

Members considered the recommendation in minute 26/20 as follows:
That formal discussions and investigations will continue in regard to the future of this committee's assets in regard to the confidential report.

The recommendation in minute 26/20 was **RESOLVED**

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 7.53pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: