

# MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 2021, AT 7.00PM

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## 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, C Phelps, H Pickering, G Russell, B Saunders (& CBC Cllr), J Talbot

## Also present:

Mrs K Elliott-Turner – Town Clerk and Central Beds Council Ward Member S Dixon

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As a mark of respect of his personal efforts in supporting the NHS and raising the moral of the country, a minutes silence was held in honour of Captain Sir Tom Moore who had recently passed away.

### **16/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence, all members were present.

### **17/21 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.

### **18/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES**

None present.

### **19/21 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION**

#### **Clerk's Report**

- 1) For information, Central Beds Council's consultation on special schools and SEND provision starts today and runs until 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021. This is part of the Schools for Future programme, and includes proposals for Special Schools, Additional Resource Provision and Mainstream Schools. An item will be included on a future agenda to consider making a response to this consultation
- 2) For information, Central Beds Council advise that following publication of notice of councillor vacancy, no request for election has been received, and therefore we are permitted to advertise a casual vacancy. This vacancy will be advertised, with a view to considering any co-option applications at the April Council meeting.

#### **Correspondence**

A letter has been received from the Chairman of Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils to advise that Louise Ashmore will be standing down as County Officer, after 20 years' service to BATPC. A letter will be sent from this council to wish her a happy retirement and to thank her for her support, advice and training provided to our members over the years.

## 20/21 COUNCIL MINUTES

Members were asked to note and sign as a correct record, the minutes of the council meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021. An amendment will be made to minute 8/21 to read 'Fix My Street', rather than 'My Street'.

**RESOLVED** that the amended minutes of the council meeting held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be taken as read and confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## 21/21 INTERNAL AUDITOR 2021/2022

Members considered approving the continuation of Julie Betts as the council's Internal Auditor for financial year 2021/2022.

**RESOLVED** that Julie Betts is approved as our Internal Auditor for the 2021/2022 financial year.

## 22/21 CORONAVIRUS ACT 2020, S78 – REMOTE MEETINGS PROVISION

From Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Councils (BATPC):

The above act and subsequent regulations enabled meetings of parish and town councils and parish meetings to be held remotely, before 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The requirement for the council to hold an annual meeting in May, and to elect a new Chairman were disapplied for the year 2020-2021. Once councils could meet remotely, some chose to hold an annual meeting (later in the year) and to elect a new Chairman. There is no reason to suppose the requirement will be disapplied for 2021-2022.

NALC's statement on the current situation is:

### ***Extending the remote meeting regulations***

*The government is not currently planning to extend the remote meeting regulations beyond 7 May 2021. Along with other local government bodies, NALC is continuing to press for this extension. We are also preparing guidance for local councils on preparing for and managing the return to physical meetings in May and beyond.*

BATPC has already written to the six MPs serving Bedfordshire to ask for their support in extending the remote meetings regulations. We cannot know as yet how things will be from 7 May 2021 onwards. In-person meetings may be possible, and I know many councils long for that day. However, should lockdown still apply in some form, how would councils transact all necessary business, some of which cannot be delegated to officers, if they could not meet?

If your council could lobby your MP on this matter, this would add further weight to the argument. In the meantime, it may be prudent to consider holding the council's Annual Meeting on either 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> May when you already have the assurance that you could do so remotely should it be necessary.

Members were reminded that the Annual Parish Meeting (meeting of electors) should be held between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June. It may also be prudent to hold this meeting before 7<sup>th</sup> May this year, when it may be held remotely if necessary. Stotfold Town Council's scheduled Annual Council Meeting (annual

statutory council meeting) falls on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021, and so is not affected by this issue. Members considered supporting BATPC, NALC and all town and parish councils by lobbying our MP to ask for an extension to the remote meetings regulations to ensure that council business can continue unaffected.

**RESOLVED** that this council supports BATPC and NALC in their request for an extension to the remote meetings regulations and will lobby our MP accordingly.

### 23/21 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2021 – CHANGE IN DATE

As noted in the previous agenda item, guidance is awaited from NALC and the government as to whether the current legislation permitting remote meetings to be held is to be extended. It is considered that even if the current lockdown is lifted by May 7<sup>th</sup> 2021 (when the Coronavirus 2020 legislation expires), some sort of tier system may still remain, and vaccinations of the population will not be completed by that date.

The Local Government Act 1972 Part 3 requires that an annual parish (or town) meeting takes place between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> June each year. Stotfold usually holds its Annual Town Meeting on the Thursday after the March Council meeting, although this can be held at any time between the March and June dates.

Members considered giving the Clerk authority to set a suitable date for this year's Annual Town Meeting, recommended to be held virtually before 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021, ensuring sufficient time is available to fully promote a virtual event – therefore unlikely to be held in March this year.

**RESOLVED** that this year's Annual Town Meeting will be held remotely, and the Clerk is to set a suitable date before 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

### 24/21 LONDON LUTON AIRPORT/NATS CONSULTATION – ARRIVALS AIRSPACE CHANGE PROPOSAL

Members considered a proposed response from a working group to the London Luton Airport/NATS consultation on proposed changes to arrivals airspace serving London Luton Airport.

A query was raised over the response to question 7 about the time of day for changeover between the two routes from the hold to the runway in use, and why early morning had been proposed. A proposal was put to amend this question response to mid-morning, which was **passed**.

**RESOLVED** that the amended (as above) response to the London Luton Airport/NATS consultation is approved and returned by the deadline.

### 25/21 REPORTS

#### a) Central Beds Council Ward Member Report

##### Councillor S Dixon

Covid-19 – the new cases for the 7 days to 31<sup>st</sup> January showed the Ward numbers are now down to 23. He continues to push for a breakdown of these numbers to at least settlement level, rather than Ward, but the NHS will not provide this level whilst there is no concern in terms of patterns emerging. There is a lag to the records of around two weeks, so where we

were very high in terms of numbers two weeks ago, we are likely to see an increase in hospitalisations very shortly. Unfortunately we are also seeing an increase in the number of outbreaks in care homes. The latest vaccination centre opens tomorrow morning at Priory House, Chicksands. Across the Bedford, Luton & Milton Keynes (BLMK) Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), in the top four priority cohorts (by age or priority profession) there were 135,000 vaccinations to administer, and they have now vaccinated 80% of that number. There will also soon be announcements about test centres for our area, the first being in Dunstable. Everyone is still urged to continue to follow the Government's instruction 'Hands, Face, Space'.

With regard to holding meetings, he advised that he cannot support going away from virtual meetings until he is confident that all of the country has been vaccinated sufficiently. He would support virtual meetings or hybrid meetings after the expiry of the current legislation on 7<sup>th</sup> May.

The elections around the country scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> May will still go ahead, with a few Parish Council elections, some Neighbourhood Plan referendums and the Police & Crime Commissioner Elections taking place in Central Bedfordshire. The Electoral Services team are currently temporarily based in Stotfold. Brian Dunleavy, Democratic Services Manager advises that the provisions in place for in-person voting on 6<sup>th</sup> May ensure that people will be safe and secure when going into a polling station. If anybody feels they prefer a postal vote, they still have time to request one.

The Central Beds Council budget has now gone through Executive, and will go to full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February, chaired by Councillor B Saunders.

As the Town Council has decided not to take part in the current round of the tree planting scheme, he encouraged participation in the next round, stating that it is never too early to start discussions about possible locations and projects. The first application has been awarded to TEASEL and ACORN.

Councillor Brian Saunders (Ward Member) reminded members of the community safety drop-in sessions being offered. The Clerk has circulated information on these.

b) Member and Nominated Representatives on Outside Bodies

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

- St Mary's are open and working on site with children of key and critical workers. There are 94 pupils on this register and 68 to 72 attending regularly. Remote learning is organised alongside this. The school has recently received a number of laptops as part of the Government scheme. Drop-in sessions have been organised for parents and carers where help and advice is needed.

- As a Governor, I attended a virtual standards meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January, looking at pupil progress and attainment, reviewed the school development plan, updated policies as per the review schedule, and discussed governance training opportunities.
  - The Reverend Bill Britt produced a virtual Candle-mass ceremony yesterday, which is available to view on the school website.
- c) Town Plan Implementation Group – Councillor Mrs Anne Clarey
- The Green Wheel Stakeholders group are still waiting for Cliff Andrews to set up a meeting, but there is no further information to report on that.
  - Stotfold Good Neighbour Group – covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 until today, volunteers have carried out 144 activities, including 70 collections and deliveries from clients to the pharmacy, 34 clients taken to hospitals, clinics and doctors surgeries, 30 clients taken to vaccination centres, 13 new clients have been referred to the group by Larksfield Surgery and the pharmacy as Covid isolated clients. Two of the 10 drivers have an early vaccination following a request to the Larksfield manager for all ten, as all but one are in their 70s and therefore in the most vulnerable group. As a group they are very grateful to AJB Fencing who have mended a client’s fence free of charge. Lastly, they have successfully secured the grant from the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field to enable a defibrillator to be situated at the Memorial Hall (Nov 2020 Buildings Committee meeting)

## 26/21 ACCOUNTS

- a) Members considered the Expenditure Report for February 2021 and the income received during January 2021 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 considered the monthly committee budget report and bank balances as at end January 2021.

**RESOLVED** that the monthly committee budget reports and bank balances for month end January 2021 are noted.

## 27/21 RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE – 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021

Members of the Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

## 28/21 PLANNING COMMITTEE – 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021

Members of the Planning Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

**29/21 PLANNING COMMITTEE – 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021**

Members of the Planning Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

**30/21 CEMETERY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021**

Members of the Cemetery Management Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

**31/21 BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 20<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021**

Members of the Buildings Management Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

**32/21 ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE – 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021**

Members of the Establishment Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

**33/21 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS ON ITEMS ARISING FROM THE MEETING**

None present.

**34/21 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY**

Members were previously provided with recent crime statistics and a query was raised as to why we are not provided with information on solve rates. This is something we have been unable to obtain for some time. An item will be included on the next agenda to consider asking the Police to provide crime statistics on crimes reported, and also crimes solved.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 7.44pm

**MINUTES APPROVED (date):**

**SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN:**