

# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020, AT 7PM VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING PLATFORM

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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), J Talbot

## Also present:

Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner, Assistant Clerk – Ms C Jenkins

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The Chairman welcomed all those present and advised that although this meeting is being held in a new format, by virtual means, this is a formal meeting and will be held using the agenda that the Clerk has published. As with meetings held in the Council Chamber, members of the public will be given the opportunity to speak during public participation but will not be permitted to speak at other times, unless invited to do so by the Chairman. The Clerk has the ability to mute or remove anyone who does cause a nuisance. Members were reminded that they should speak one at a time and will be muted until they use the 'hand-wave' button and raise a virtual hand to indicate a wish to speak, or wave a hand in front of the face to catch the Chairman and Clerk's attention. As this is a new way of working, the Chairman asked for patience from all involved.

## **59/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs Bundock, and Central Beds Councillor S Dixon.

## **60/20 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.

## **61/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES**

None present.

## **62/20 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION**

### Correspondence

- Youth Participation Officer activity update
- Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan – new evidence
- Queen's Award for Voluntary Service
- Central Bedfordshire Council Community Safety Team – virtual drop-in for Town & Parish Councillors
- Chief Executive Officer of Central Beds Council, Richard Carr, letter to advise his retirement

- Local Government Association – consultation on Model Member Code of Conduct

A letter will be sent to Richard Carr, Chief Executive of Central Beds Council congratulating him on his forthcoming retirement.

### **63/20 ANNUAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

Part 2 Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meeting) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) permit the council to hold any meeting as such hour and on such days and to alter the frequency, move or cancel such meetings as they may determine. Also, any appointments that would normally be made at an annual meeting of the council, i.e. election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, may be deferred and roles continue until the next annual meeting of the authority (May 2021), unless the council decides to elect at an earlier meeting.

Members considered whether to hold the next Annual Town Council Meeting in May 2021, with the positions of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, committee membership, representative on outside bodies and member representatives serving council remaining unchanged, or to hold that meeting at an earlier time – either virtually or when next meeting face to face.

**RESOLVED** that the postponed May 2020 Annual Town Council meeting will be held at the next opportunity to meet face to face, and before May 2021.

### **64/20 EMERGENCY DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**

Due to the speed of progression of the pandemic, and resulting lockdown period, council was unable to proceed with its planned extra council meeting to consider Coronavirus related matters.

#### **a) Approve temporary delegated authority**

Members considered temporary delegated authority to the Clerk (under Local Government Act 1972 s101 and “the 2020 Regulations”), together 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 members of the council where appropriate. Such delegation is above that already available to the Clerk, contained in Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation, i.e. approval of annual accounts. Period of temporary delegated authority to continue until such time that council determines, or period of pandemic ends.

**RESOLVED** that temporary delegated authority, above that already available to the Clerk, is given to the Clerk, together with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, as detailed above.

b) **Approve decisions taken under urgent executive action**

Members considered executive action taken by the Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman, as per Delegated Decisions Reports No. 1 (24<sup>th</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020), No. 2 (3<sup>rd</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020), No. 3 (2<sup>nd</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020). Delegated decisions do not include any actions taken following Government instruction.

**RESOLVED** that decisions taken under urgent executive action by the Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman as per Delegated Decisions Reports No. 1, 2 and 3 are approved.

**65/20 CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RISK ASSESSMENT**

NALC “During the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government decided on what could remain open or closed. As the situation moves into a new phase, there will likely be no national position, and the increasing emphasis is placed on individuals or organisations to make decisions. For local councils, the decision to reopen facilities such as play equipment, community halls or sports facilities, or to return to office working will need to be made case-by-case, and part of that decision making process will be how to assess and manage risk”. As at the time of this meeting, the Government’s National Risk Level is at HIGH, and Bedford Borough is recording the highest level of Coronavirus cases in East Anglia.

Members considered a COVID-19 Risk Assessment with suggested controls to be brought into place as per relevant stage and/or assessed risk, together with a draft Lone Working Policy, where staff members may be required to work in the office on their own.

**RESOLVED** that the draft Coronavirus (COVID-19) Risk Assessment for the Council is approved, and that the draft Lone Working Policy is also approved.

**66/20 CORONAVIRUS – RE-OPENING OF PUBLIC TOILETS**

In a recent update to Government instruction, public toilets may now be re-opened. This should follow a risk assessment and plan for increased cleaning levels. After discussion and assessing the risks, members considered if the public toilets in Brook Street car park should be re-opened at this time.

**RESOLVED** that due to the risks associated with possible multiple numbers of users to the facility, and the amount and frequency of cleaning required, the public toilets remain closed at this time. This is to be reviewed as felt necessary.

**67/20 COUNCIL MINUTES**

To note and sign as a correct record, the minutes of a meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 be taken as read and confirmed and signed as a correct record.

#### **68/20 2019/2020 ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT**

A copy of the Internal Auditor's report on the internal audit carried out on year-end figures 2019/2020, together with the Annual Internal Audit Report of the 2019/2020 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3 was previously circulated to members.

**RESOLVED** that the Internal Auditor's report and the Annual Internal Audit Report of the 2019/2020 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3 are noted.

#### **69/20 2019/2020 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (SECTION 1)**

Members were asked to confirm and approve the statements on the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) of the 2019/2020 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3. The Clerk, being Responsible Financial Officer, and Chairman are to sign once approved by Council.

**RESOLVED** that the statements on the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) of the 2019/2020 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3 are approved.

#### **70/20 2019/2020 ACCOUNTING STATEMENT (SECTION 2)**

Members were asked to confirm and approve the Accounting Statement (Section 2) of the 2019/2020 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) Part 3. The Clerk, being Responsible Financial Officer, and Chairman are to sign once approved by Council. Clarification was given on two sets of restated figures – in last financial year's figures (2018/2019), costs for contract cleaning was included in staff costs in error. This has been corrected and therefore restated on the 2019/2020 AGAR.

**RESOLVED** that the Accounting Statements (Section 2) of the 2019/2020 Annual Governance & Accountability Return Part 3 are approved.

#### **71/20 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP**

Members considered the following:

- a) To approve the draft Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference, previously circulated.

**RESOLVED** that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference are approved.

- b) To elect a Chairman for the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group – members are Councillors S Buck, H Pickering, B Collier, J Talbot (note, Vice-Chairman will be a member of the public, and public members will be sought after first meeting of councillor Group membership).

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Buck is elected Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

- c) To approve a budget to enable the Steering Group to commence early stage work on engaging with the public.

**RESOLVED** that the sum of £5,000 is designated to Neighbourhood Plan work – funds from Town Strategy Committee budget and Earmarked Reserves. Note, although funds are being provided by this Committee, the Steering Group will report to council, not Town Strategy Committee.

## **72/20 SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE – CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL CONSULTATION**

Members considered the revised plan for schools in Shefford, Stotfold and surrounding villages, and whether council wishes to make comment. Consultation closes 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Central Beds Council's Schools For The Future consultation page is available online.

Members were urged to make comment on the consultation, as individuals, not as councillors.

## **73/20 REPORTS**

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

Central Beds Councillor Saunders gave the following report:

- Referred to the increase in Coronavirus numbers in Bedford, and that the reason why is not currently clear
- In terms of Coronavirus figures for Central Beds, there have been 714 cases out of 288,000 residents, with 231 deaths. The latest information shows that for Stotfold, Fairfield and Astwick, there have been 5 deaths from the virus
- At a recent Executive meeting, each Ward Member has been given another £1,000, which is not matched money, but can be used for any group of people or situations regarding Coronavirus in each Ward. This is on top of the Councillor grants already designated for this year, into next, of £2,000 each. Hopefully in July, the community grant scheme should start up again, which has currently been put on hold due to staff shortages.
- During the Coronavirus pandemic period, 85 schools have been open in Central Beds.

### **b) Member and nominated representatives on outside bodies**

St Mary's Academy Community Governor, Councillor Mrs Clarey gave the following report:

- Since 20<sup>th</sup> March, St Mary's remained open for the children of parents working for the NHS, in front line services and those who are recognised to require special help. St Mary's has continued to work over the Easter holiday and the May half term.
- Teachers have provided work set on a weekly basis which includes a range of tasks, web links to suitable Apps and online activities.
- Class chat using Zoom video call has been successful and teachers have been able to contact via Class Dojo.
- Fun activities have taken place. On 1<sup>st</sup> April, a 'Silly Sock and Hat' day encouraged families to post photographs. This was in support of Autism Awareness Week and Brain Tumour Research.

- The school kitchen has been busy producing a midday meal for those on the premises and organising food parcels for the families who normally receive free school meals.
- A weekly newsletter has been sent via the usual Parentmail system.
- I attended a virtual meeting held for Governors and a staff meeting with 39 participants. These are new challenges.
- Since the announcement to re-open schools more widely, St Mary's have devised a plan to make this happen and small numbers of pupils have been welcomed back to Reception and Year 1.

Etonbury Academy Community Governor, Councillor Phelps gave the following report:

- Since our last Full Council Meeting a report regarding the school's Ofsted Inspection in February. The report is an excellent one, with Etonbury being graded Good in every area. I would like to propose that we send congratulations to Ian Evason, Principal, and his team.
- During the school closure period a small number of children of Key Workers have attended every day. Online Learning for all pupils has continued throughout.
- From 1st June 42 Key Worker children have been joined by Year 6 pupils. Numbers of Year 6 pupils has been around 70, about 40%.
- Preparations are in place to bring in Year 10 students from 15th June, between 10.00 am and 1.00 pm, with no break or lunchtime, in a range of subjects.
- I chaired a virtual Governors Finance Committee meeting on 1st June, where the current budget situation and issues around Admissions were discussed, along with Covid 19 updates.
- In spite of the partial school closure Year 9 students have completed their GCSE Options process and are concentrating their home learning in their chosen subjects.
- Careers advice is continuing online.
- In case it does not arise elsewhere, can I draw councillors' attention to a further Central Bedfordshire consultation regarding Schools for the Future for our area.

A letter of congratulations will be sent from the council to the Head and staff of St Mary's Academy for their excellent Ofsted Inspection in February.

c) Town Plan Implementation Group (IG)

Chairman of the IG, Councillor Mrs Clarey, gave the following updates from minutes of their last meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020:

- Green Wheel: Plans are still going ahead for Stotfold to be involved in the Bedfordshire Walking Festival on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> September. More information will be available after the proposed meeting of the group on 10<sup>th</sup> July.
- Stotfold Good Neighbour Group (SGNG): Annual report sent to volunteers as we were unable to hold an AGM in May – provided to

members for information. It was noted that in the last 13 weeks, the SGNG have completed 300 jobs for the local community. It was also noted that of the 41 SGNG volunteers, 14 are active as the rest are in the vulnerable group themselves.

- d) Other reports, not included on the agenda  
Councillor Pickering advised that Dr Radford retired today after 30 years' service. There is an article about him in Larksfield News, available on Facebook and by email. The Town Council has sent him a letter of congratulations on his retirement and thanks for his work for the community.

#### **74/20 ACCOUNTS**

- a) Members considered the Expenditure Report for April, May and June 2020 and the income received during March, April and May 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 May 2020.

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

Councillor Hayes advised that he has been carrying out further work on tidying up our utility suppliers and charges, and in January electricity for the Greenacre Centre was overcharged by £4,500 and this is being refunded to the Council. Thanks were given to Councillor Hayes for his work.

#### **75/20 RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE MEETING 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020**

Members of the Recreation Grounds, Public Lands & Lighting Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

The Chairman of the committee wished to record thanks to the Handyman and the Landscape/Grass Cutting Contractor for keeping the town and the cemetery tidy during the lockdown period.

#### **76/20 PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020**

Members of the Planning Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 are a correct record. There were no recommendations from the committee. The minutes were noted by council.

#### **77/20 PLANNING COMMITTEE – COMMENTS MADE UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

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. Both reports previously circulated to members.

#### **78/20 ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 27<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020**

Members of the Establishment Committee confirmed that the minutes of their meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020 are a correct record.

Council considered recommendations of the committee as follows:

Councillor Hayes declared an interest in Application 6, as his wife is the safeguarding officer for St Mary's Parish Church and Churches Together – the applicant.

Minute 12/20 – Grant applications

**Recommended** that the following grants are awarded:

Application 1 - £200 to Autism Awareness. Purpose: to financially support family support group, Loads of Autistic Fun (LOAF)

Application 2 - £1,400 to Finding Me – Living Well Despite Cancer C.I.C. (Community Interest Company). Purpose: ongoing project to continually provide retreats, therapies, workshops and talks for anyone affected by cancer. Funding would be enough for 2 retreats and several workshops.

Application 3 - £500 to The Need Project. Purpose: people within the community who are in financial difficulties for a variety of reasons, are helped to provide for themselves and their families during this period. the grant will support the important work in carrying out the collection and distribution of the items required.

Application 4 – Country Days Ltd, amount requested £1,000. The grant request is declined, as Stotfold already has a registered nature reserve which already provides such activities to our residents. It was noted that the nature reserve referred to in their application is not a registered Bedfordshire nature reserve, and that its location seems to better serve the north of the county, rather than the Stotfold area.

Application 5 – £1,000 to Magpas Air Ambulance. Purpose: to provide a broad spectrum of drugs and equipment, not always carried out by standard land ambulance, to enable them to provide emergency medical care.

Application 6 - £1,500 to Churches Together Stotfold. Executive action taken by the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council (and this Committee) in approving an emergency grant for the following purposes: formation of a support group for residents of Stotfold during the Coronavirus pandemic. Help with shopping and other needs for self-isolating residents. Newly formed group will be called 'Churches Together in Stotfold Covid 19 Support Group'. Grant will cover administrative costs, insurance, telephone and a float to cover shopping costs which will be reimbursed by the resident

Minute 13/20 – Virtual Meetings Policy

**Recommended** that the amended draft Virtual Meetings Policy document is approved

Members were advised that minutes of the Buildings and Cemetery Committee meetings had been omitted from the agenda in error, and so will be included on the agenda for the next council meeting.

**79/20 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTORS ON ITEMS ARISING FROM THE MEETING**

None present.

**80/20 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY**

The Clerk wished to record her thanks to the office staff who are all still working as best we can, working from home in difficult times.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 7.54pm

**MINUTES APPROVED (date):**  
**SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN:**