

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 27<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2020**

This meeting was conducted remotely in accordance with the provisions of the 2020 Coronavirus Regulations

**PRESENT:**

Councillors Sarah Boad (Chairman), Janet Alty, Alan Boad, Will Bryce, Mubarik Chowdry, Judith Clarke, Bill Gifford, Louisa Radice and Susan Rasmussen.

Also present were Councillors Jennifer McAllister and Amanda Stevens. Councillor N. Wilkins joined the meeting for discussion of Minute 95 and onward.

Officers: Robert Nash, Katherine Geddes and Anne Goodey

**85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Alan Boad and Councillor Bill Gifford declared non pecuniary interests in the following Agenda items as Members of Warwick District Council:-

Railway Bridges – Pigeon control measures

Town Council election re-charges

**87. PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no Members of the public present.

**88. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the last meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**89. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**RAILWAY BRIDGES – PIGEON CONTROL MEASURES**

The Town Clerk reported that Network Rail which is responsible for the rail infrastructure had now confirmed the existence of a legal agreement with Warwick District Council to provide suitable deterrent measures beneath the railway bridge crossing Lower Avenue. The Town Clerk had discussed this matter with an Officer at Warwick District Council and the existence of a legal agreement between both parties had been acknowledged.

The Committee noted that work undertaken beneath this bridge had in the past been unsatisfactory resulting in birds becoming trapped and distressed. It was unanimously agreed that the completion of measures to prevent pigeons nesting should be undertaken in good time prior to the Commencement of the Coventry city of Culture and Commonwealth Games in 2021 and 2022.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the report is noted; and

- (ii) that Councillors Boad and Gifford are provided with contact details to ensure that this matter is raised with the relevant Officer at Warwick District Council.

## **90. CONVENING COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Consideration was given to a Report, (Report No. 6), regarding measures set out in the Coronavirus Act, 2020 and subsequent Regulations in relation to local authority meetings.

The Committee was advised of the principal changes to statute that inter alia provided for local authorities to conduct meetings remotely via the internet and to suspend the Annual Town Council meeting which traditionally is held in the month of May. Councils were now able to determine whether to suspend the appointment of the Chairman, allowing the existing incumbent to continue in Office, if necessary until May, 2021. The position in relation to the Annual Town Assembly was confused as this had been excluded from the Regulations notwithstanding that the Government had determined that large public meetings should not be conducted face to face until otherwise advised.

Following discussion of the options available to the Council it was unanimously

### **RESOLVED**

- (i) that the Annual Parish Assembly, scheduled originally for the 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, is held on an alternative date later in the year, subject to relaxation of the current prohibitions on public meetings.
- (ii) that the Annual Town Council meeting is held on 16<sup>th</sup> May by means of remote attendance;
- (iii) for the duration of the restrictions on public meetings, all meetings of the Town Council are conducted via video link;
- (iv) the decision in relation to remote meetings to be reviewed by the Council on a regular basis; and
- (v) notification of all Council meetings continues to be made through the Council's website.

## **91. CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

Discussion took place on the issues arising from the Town Council's perspective during the current Coronavirus Pandemic.

It was noted that social media was being used extensively to share information about the availability of services. The Town Council could assist this process by making use of its social media pages to exchange information from other agencies and service providers. Members of Council were also encouraged to share relevant information via their own social media pages where applicable.

**RESOLVED** that the Council's social media pages are used to share information of relevance to the public.

## **92. PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Democratic Support Officer reminded the Committee of arrangements currently in place for determining responses to Planning applications. Since commencement of social distancing, two planning Committees had been

cancelled and business transacted by exchange of email responses with Members. This procedure involved circulation of the schedule of applications a week before the meeting availing the Committee Members with the opportunity to identify applications that were of concern and subject to potential objection. These applications were subsequently included within a further schedule with Officer recommended reasons for refusal. This formed the basis of an agreed response by the Committee to the District Council.

In view of the agreed use of a video link for future meetings of the Council it was proposed that the next meeting of the Planning Committee to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> May is held by this means. The compilation of suggested responses from Members was considered helpful to the management of a meeting and would therefore continue to be circulated.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is noted and that future meetings of the Planning Committee are conducted remotely utilising video link until such time as the Council determines otherwise.

*Councillor Alan Boad had declared a non-pecuniary interest and refrained from participation in the above discussion.*

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Alan Boad briefly outlined arrangements for determining planning applications during the current pandemic by the Planning Authority. At present applications were being determined under delegated powers by the Head of Planning and the Chair of the Planning Committee, unless the application was a departure from the Local Plan or a complex matter. Arrangements were being made to introduce remote meetings for the Planning Committee over the coming weeks, initially to deal with matters under delegated powers but later moving to a full Agenda for all applications. It was hoped that access could be provided for Parish and Town Council representatives to allow for representations to be made direct to the Committee. Further analysis of the means to allow public participation was being undertaken but this was a more complex issue in view of the security and time management concerns.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is noted.

### **93. COMMUNITY GRANTS**

The Committee noted that the Council Community Grant Fund was currently open for applications. The fund had been increased to £55,000 in 2020/21.

Discussion ensued as to the promotion of the fund, the initial closing date for applications being 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2020. The use of social media was emphasised as an effective means of publishing the availability of funding. In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the Cultural and Community Committee had recently reviewed the application criteria to enable applications from groups dealing with social isolation. There was presently no provision to consider applicants that could not supply accounting records for a period of two years.

**RESOLVED** that the availability of funding through the Community Grant Fund is promoted through the Council's social media and via Warwickshire CAVA.

#### **94. COUNCIL ELECTIONS – MAY 2019**

Consideration was given to the recharge of expenses incurred in respect of the combined local government elections held on 2<sup>nd</sup> May and the Lillington by-election held on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2019.

There appeared to be a disparity in terms of the costs associated with the Lillington by-election and the election held in the same Town Council Ward at the full elections in May. It could be expected that as both elections were undertaken as combined polls, the costs should be broadly similar. However there was a difference in the recharged costs of £4762 between the two elections.

**RESOLVED** that the District Council is asked to explain the reasons for the disparity in costs of the two elections for the Lillington Ward held in 2019.

#### **95. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK**

The Town Clerk reported that twelve applications had been received for the Post of Town Clerk. Arising from the current Coronavirus restrictions, adhering to the original timetable for appointment had not been possible in view of the prohibition on face to face meetings.

Members of the Staffing Committee had been circulated copies of all applications and a meeting of the Committee would be arranged to consider the preparation of a short list of applicants and the options for making a recommended appointment to the Council. The Committee would also need to consider, in the light of the number of applications received, whether the vacancy should be re-advertised.

The Council's Consultant had suggested the option of initially interviewing a selected number of candidates via video link. The Committee did not consider this a particularly advantageous option and preferred that all interviews and assessment for this Post to be conducted on a face to face basis.

A member raised the question of protecting the Council's position since the Town Clerk had not tendered his notice. The Town Clerk confirmed that a letter confirming his intention to resign would be sent to the Chairman at the earliest opportunity as soon as the recruitment process had been recommenced.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is noted and a further update is provided to the Council following the meeting of the Staffing Committee.

#### **96. ACCOUNTS**

Consideration was given to a schedule of payments arising since the last meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the schedule of payments is approved, with the exception of payment to Warwick District Council of £ £13,432.56 in respect of the Lillington By-election, payment to be withheld pending a satisfactory explanation of the variance in election costs.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.50 pm.