

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors Susan Rasmussen (Chair), Janet Alty, Alan Boad, Sarah Boad, Julija Boulton, David Brunson, Will Bryce, Mubarik Chowdry, Bill Gifford, Jennifer McAllister, Jade McGhee, Louisa Radice, Amanda Stevens and Nick Wilkins.

Officer: Town Clerk.

39. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllrs J Clarke and N Atwal.

Resolved to accept the apologies from Cllr J Clarke,

Resolved to accept the apologies from Cllr N Atwal

40. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr S Boad declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Warwickshire County Council.

Cllr B Gifford declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council DC.

Cllr D Brunson declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of and chair of the board of Warwick District Mobility

Cllr A Boad declared non-pecuniary interests in items 6 and 7 as a member of Warwick District Council.

Cllr J Boulton declared a non-pecuniary interest as a former member of the board of Warwick District Mobility.

Cllr N Wilkins declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the board of Warwick District Mobility.

41. **PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no representations from members of the public.

42. **COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR FORUM**

Cllr S Boad noted that Warwickshire County Council had taken the decision to close Marle Hall, the County Council's residential facility for outdoor education activities

Cllr Gifford noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan and that discussions regarding possible 20 miles per hour limits / zones were also taking place.

Cllr A Boad noted that the South Warwickshire Local Plan was moving forward, following the recent consultation and call for sites. Warwick and Stratford District Councils are merging their officer teams, which will happen irrespective of the final decision on whether the two Councils are fully merged. Planning permission for a tree house in Victoria park has been granted, which is part of play equipment upgrades.

43. UPDATES FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON EXTERNAL BODIES

The Council considered report No. 5 which provided updates from representatives on external bodies.

WALC - Cllr S Boad noted that the WALC annual conference would take place virtually on 22nd and 23rd October and was focussed on climate change.

Shopmobility - Cllr Brunson and Mr Andy Gotts spoke about Shopmobility (Warwick District Mobility Ltd) and updated the Town Council on its operations during the Covid pandemic. Shopmobility had inevitably been closed for periods during the pandemic but was now up and running and almost back to the same levels of activity/business as before the pandemic.

A number of comments were made including:

Cllrs were encouraged to promote the Shopmobility service and the opportunity to become a trustee to relevant contacts.

Commonwealth Games representatives had been asked to liaise with Shopmobility.

Action – Town Clerk to contact WDC Commonwealth Games Programme Manager ref liaison with Shopmobility.

Shopmobility was commended on the service it provides, along with the Royal Priors Shopping Centre for its support.

Warks pension fund – it was noted that the pension fund had revised its 'beliefs', which have become greener and more responsible.

Creative quarter – things are gathering pace. Challenges re construction skills and costs are concerning. The loss of the auditorium in the church is disappointing. Better names for Court Street Car Park site are being sought. Plans for a bridge are being considered.

Future High Streets Fund – WDC has published a cabinet report relating to management of town centre projects. This will be considered further in due course.

Twinning – no visits have been possible due to the Pandemic. Future will depend on covid / people's confidence to travel and receive visitors. Twinning committee have worked hard to maintain relationships including through virtual meetings.

Resolved

i) That Council notes the updates provided.

ii) That Council specifically notes the update from Warwick District Mobility Ltd.

44. SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE COUNCIL CONSULTATION

The Town Council considered report No. 7 in relation to the consultation on the proposal to merge Warwick and Stratford District Councils.

It was noted that WALC had arranged a meeting of Town and parish Councils with senior representatives of the town district councils on 30th September. Information had been circulated to Town Council members.

Resolved that the Town Council responds to the consultation, making the following points:

Recognise the financial and operational challenges being faced by the existing District Councils and the potential implications for service delivery.

Acknowledge that there may be benefits of a new Council operating at a larger (South Warwickshire) scale, but emphasise the need to maintain local dialogue and capacity to engage at the local level, including a local presence of senior staff.

Welcome the recognition of the importance of engaging with town and parish councils, both in the lead up to any new Council being created and subsequently.

Request that capacity to deliver events and projects in Leamington Spa is considered carefully and maintained.

Request that the implications of a potential reduction in the number of District Councillors is considered carefully, including through dialogue with town and parish councils.

Request that local governance and decision making processes are considered, to support partnership working and engagement of local organisations and communities.

Welcome further dialogue to explore the opportunities for services to be passed down to the Town Council, subject to adequate funding being made available.

45. RIVERSIDE HOUSE DEVELOPMENT BRIEF CONSULTATION

The Town Council considered a report in relation to the consultation on the proposed Riverside House development brief.

The following comments were made / noted:

The draft development brief is stronger in many aspects than previous proposals for the site, including affordable housing and carbon standards.

WDC has its own housing company and could maintain some control over the development and thus achieve higher standards.

Noted that the proposal to dispose of Riverside House is planned, irrespective of the proposed merger of Warwick and Stratford District Councils. It is not fit for purpose or financially sustainable.

Resolved that the town council responds to the consultation stating that it welcomes and supports the draft Development Brief for Riverside House as it stands.

46. REVIEW OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The Town Council considered report No. 8 and a number of comments were made.

It was noted that the delegation arrangements had largely worked well and the consideration of planning matters through virtual meetings was an effective approach. Although the return of face to face meetings was welcomed, the use of virtual meetings was a useful tool where policy and procedures enabled them.

It was felt that the 6 month rule could be dealt with via individual cases rather than a dispensation in relation to virtual meetings.

Resolved

- i) That the Town Council notes the information contained in this report.
- ii) That the Town Council approves the delegated authorities identified in Appendix A.
- iii) That these arrangements are reviewed in January 2022 or the earliest practicable time thereafter.

47. EXTERNAL AUDIT

The Town Council considered report No 09 in relation to the External Audit and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return. No issues had been raised by the external auditor.

Resolved that the Council notes the outcome of the external review of the Council's Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended March 2021.

48. MINUTES OF COUNCIL AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Council

Resolved that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 22nd July are confirmed as a correct record.

Policy and Resources Committee

Resolved that the Minutes of the meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 7th July are received and noted.

Planning

Resolved that the Minutes of the Planning meeting held on 1st July, 21st July and 12th August 2021 are received and noted.

49. PAYMENTS

It was noted that a revised invoice for the costs associated with the Lillington By-election in 2019 had been received.

