

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA  
HELD ON 9<sup>th</sup> MARCH, 2020 AT THE TOWN HALL, PARADE, LEAMINGTON SPA**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Bill Gifford, (Chairman), Janet Alty, Alan Boad, Sarah Boad, Julija Boulton, David Brunson, Will Bryce, Mubarik Chowdry, Judith Clarke, Amy Evans, Jennifer McAllister, Louisa Radice, Susan Rasmussen, Amanda Stevens and Nick Wilkins.

86. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Navdeep Atwal.

87. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were made in relation to items identified for discussion at the Meeting:

Councillor Boulton declared a pecuniary interest in item 11 (Local Electricity Bill) by virtue of her employment by a network provider.

Councillors Alan Boad, Gifford and Evans declared personal interests in item 4 (Warwick District Creative Framework) by virtue of being members of Warwick District Council).

88. **PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no members of the public present.

89. **PRESENTATIONS**

(i) **South Warwickshire Citizens Advice**

The Chairman welcomed Yvonne Hunter (Chair) and Jeremy Vanes (Chief Executive Officer) of South Warwickshire Citizens Advice (SWCA) to the meeting.

The Council was initially advised of the constitution of the Charity South Warwickshire Citizens Advice, its scope and basis of operation whereby the communities of both Warwick District and Stratford on Avon were provided with access to multi-faceted advice services. A number of key initiatives had been supported in recent years aimed at ensuring that clients were assisted at an early stage so that the impact of financial problems were minimised. SWCA had been particularly active with support for benefit claimants following the introduction of Universal Credit, an aspect that was expected to feature even more prominently in the 2019/20 analysis. The Council noted that in Leamington during 2018/19 SWCA had achieved notable success across a number of indicators including:-

- 1281 Clients assisted
- 6245 issues addressed
- £413,500 income gained for client

The multi-faceted nature of services offered was evidenced in the training now being provided for staff in dealing with awareness of mental health issues including suicide.

The Council was thanked for its continuing support and assured that all the funding that it provided to SWCA was spent on the service in Leamington Spa.

In answer to questions, Mr Vanes confirmed that the case load within Leamington Spa was a significant proportion of the workload upon the organisation. Whilst costs associated with office occupancy in Leamington were high, these were on a par with those at Stratford. He also confirmed that in relation to questions about settled status in the UK there was now appropriate links to the relevant agencies within the SWCA website.

The Council was invited to contact SWCA to arrange a tour of its offices to enable Members to see first- hand the advice base available.

The Chairman thanked both representatives who then left the meeting.

(ii) WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL CREATIVE FRAMEWORK

David Guilding, Arts Manager, Warwick District Council, was welcomed to the Meeting.

David provided the Council with a short presentation on the draft Creative Framework being developed by Warwick District Council following a period of engagement over six months with creative organisations in the District. The aim of the Framework was to establish a collective vision for creative communities to coalesce around and provide participative ways for them to shape and influence how the sector is defined in the future. The Framework had been give added impetus by the recent work undertaken by the Council's development partner to establish a creative quarter in Leamington Spa and by the opportunities arising from the Coventry City of Culture and Commonwealth Games in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

David outlined the value of the creative industries to the District economy and the vibrant nature of the many arts and creative groups in Leamington Spa. It was intended to harness the contribution of all these groups in order to fulfil the potential of the sector. Through engagement with the sector, the Framework had identified five strategic themes:-

- Engagement
- Voice
- Pathfinding
- Place making
- Innovation

These themes would be translated into individual actions that were intended to deliver the objectives of the Framework.

David emphasised that delivery of the Framework objectives would be achieved through a Compact of all partners including representatives from across the creative sector, business, universities, local authorities, voluntary sector and CWLEP. The Town Council therefore had a role to play in helping drive this process forward.

In answer to questions from Members, he confirmed that whilst the Framework was intended for the 5 year period to 2025, it was important that the action plan was developed within the next 6 months. A member noted the distinction between commercial providers and the not for profit sector and felt that the Framework should more clearly reflect this difference. David confirmed that the balance within the Compact of partners would be reflective of the distinctly different approaches of the public and private sectors. In relation to the funding contribution of the CWLEP, he explained that close contact was maintained with the Partnership and its participation in the Compact would sustain this and ensure that the importance of the creative sector economically remained centre stage. The potential for location of Television Companies to the area was not specifically mentioned in the Framework but this had been the subject of analysis by consultants and the potential was recognised though likely to be minimal in the case of this District.

The potential role of the Town Hall as a place for creative business was raised in response to a request from Mr Guilding. Members indicated their support for continued public access to the building and welcomed the introduction of alternatives to office use, possibly provided for under the umbrella of a Charitable Trust.

David was then thanked by the Chairman and left the meeting.

90. **COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR FORUM**

Councillor Alan Boad advised that Warwick District Council had now formally launched its Climate Change Action Plan. This proposed a range of measures that would require additional expenditure by the District Council and an increase in the Council Tax above that permitted by the Government. As a result a referendum would determine whether the proposed budgetary increase was permissible. Councillor Boad briefly outlined some of the measures proposed in the Action Plan indicating that initially the focus would be on reducing the energy consumption and carbon output from Council owned property, including Council housing.

Councillor Sarah Boad reported on the recent meeting of Warwickshire County Council had agreed a 3.99% increase in Council Tax with 2% being ring fenced for adult social care. The Council had also agreed its new Corporate Plan for the period 2020-2025 setting aside £4 million to address the challenge of climate change over the period.

**RESOLVED** that the Reports are noted.

91. **COMMUNITY FORUMS**

(i) **Town Centre Safer Neighbourhoods Forum - 4<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

Councillor Clarke reported that the Forum had recently met within a revised format. The Forum had considered the response of the Community Policing team to the ongoing problems associated with County Lines drugs. An awareness raising seminar was held on 2nd March at the Royal Spa Centre to provide an opportunity to understand the issues of cuckooing and child and adult exploitation. The District Council was also introducing a trial arrangement for donations to help overcome the problem of street begging. This would consist of mobile donation units at various retail and publicly accessible points around the Town. These units provided for smart card donations to a central account to which all Charities working with the homeless could apply for financial assistance.

(ii) **North Leamington Community Forum – 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

Councillor Sarah Boad reported that the Forum had considered the following matters:

- Leamington Neighbourhood Plan – progress report
- The Prevent Strategy: Challenging terrorism in all forms
- Hate Crime: Understanding hate crime in its many forms and how to tackle it

The Forum had also considered applications to the Grant Fund and had awarded all of the remaining funding for the current financial year.

92. **LEAMINGTON CHAMBER OF TRADE**

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No. 7) prepared by Councillor Clarke following her attendance at a recent meeting of the Chamber of Trade.

The Council acknowledged that the business community and town centres in general were experiencing very challenging circumstances. It was emphasised how important it was to continue to offer Leamington as an attractive destination and this could be assisted through initiatives such as the Future High Streets Fund. The Town Clerk referred to a reference in the Report to a meeting he had attended hosted by the District Council with a representative of “Clean up Britain” at which it had been suggested that enforcement of litter regulations could be outsourced to a private contractor. The proposal had been unanimously rejected by all those present.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is noted and Councillor Clarke thanked for its composition and attendance at the meeting.

93. **CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Council was presented with an interim report on progress of the work undertaken by the Climate Change Task and Finish Group in relation to the development of a Climate Change Action Plan.

Councillor Alty, Chair of the Task and Finish Group outlined the key stages of progress and action points from the Plan that had been agreed to date. It was hoped that one further meeting would be necessary which was scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> April. This would allow the Group to take account of any emerging decisions from the District Council Action Plan recently announced.

**RESOLVED** that the progress in relation to the Action Plan is noted and the Group commended for their work.

94. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No.9) relating to the Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Clerk advised that following the completion of the consultation period under Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, the Plan was now being considered by the Council's Planning Adviser prior to submission to the appointed Examiner. The Council was reminded that the original timetable anticipated that the Referendum on the Plan could take place to coincide with the election for the Police and Crime Commissioner to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2020. However, the District Council had now agreed to conduct its own Referendum on the same date to obtain approval for an increase in Council Tax associated with the costs of implementing its Climate Change agenda. This represented a significant threat to a successful "yes" vote on the Neighbourhood Plan and the Council was asked to reconsider the options for delaying the Referendum.

The Clerk emphasised that the Town Council could not become involved in active campaigning for a "yes" vote though individual Council Members were permitted to do so provided that they did not use Council resources.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that a Referendum on the Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan is deferred until September 2020;
- (ii) to allocate any surplus funding granted to the Council under the Neighbourhood Planning Programme to an information campaign to raise awareness of the Plan and the Referendum; and
- (iii) to request the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to consider supporting a "yes" campaign, subject to resources, including funding, being sourced independently of the Town Council.

95. **APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No.10) concerning the appointment process for the Post of Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

The Council was advised of the recommendations of the Staffing Committee which had considered the grading of the Post and the appointment process.

Following further discussion, it was

**RESOLVED**

(i) that the Post of Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer is advertised with effect from 16th March for a period of 4 weeks, based on the current grade;

(ii) that the recommended Job Description and Person Specification is approved for the selection and appointment process;

(iii) that the vacancy is advertised via the internet and social media, where applicable, with the following:

- Job Centre Plus
- West Midlands Jobs Ltd
- Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils
- Town Council website
- Society of Local Council Clerks

(iv) that Local Council Consultancy is appointed to provide support to the Appointment Panel in connection with the shortlisting, interview and assessment of candidates;

(v) that an Appointment Panel comprising 4 Councillors (2 Liberal Democrat, 1 Labour and 1 Green) is constituted;

(vi) that no relocation expenses are offered; and

(vii) that the Post is re-designated as Casual Car User for the purposes of reimbursing expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of the duties.

96. **LOCAL ELECTRICITY BILL**

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No.11) in which the Council was asked to consider its support for the campaign to enable local generators of electricity to become local suppliers and to sell their energy to local communities. This provision

was contained within a local Electricity Bill promoted by the not for profit group “Power for People” which in the last session of Parliament had received the support of over 100 Members of Parliament.

**RESOLVED** that

(i) this Council notes that the Local Electricity Bill:-

- aims to address the current situation, whereby the very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
- if made law, would make these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier’s operation which empower local businesses, local communities and Councils to sell locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and
- would result in revenues received by councils or community organisations that set up local renewable electricity companies could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;

(ii) that the Council accordingly supports the Local Electricity Bill, supported by a cross-party group of 115 MPs during the 2017-19 Parliamentary session; and

(iii) writes to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, expressing its support.

*Note: In accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct, Councillor Boulton, declared a pecuniary interest in the above item as an employee of a national network provide, left the meeting and took no part in the discussion or voting.*

97. **ASSESSMENT OF CORPORATE RISK**

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No.12) enabling the Council to conduct a periodic review of arrangements to manage risks arising from its activities and internal processes.

Reference was made to the merging Coronavirus outbreak which posed threats to the continuity of Council business. It was noted that in many aspects Council business and meetings was regulated by statute and clear advice from Government would be needed in order to determine a revised course of action. The Council had established an Urgent Matters Committee that had delegated authority to deal with business under emergency situations.

**RESOLVED** the Council is recommended to approve the methodology for review of the risks faced by the Council and the measures for controlling them set out at Appendix 1 to the Report.

98. **MINUTES OF COUNCIL AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

(i) **Planning Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meetings of the Planning Committee held on 7th and 23rd January and 13th February, 2020 (Reports Nos.13 (a) and 13 (b) 13 (c)) are received.

(ii) **Cultural and Community Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cultural and Community Committee held on 16th January 2020 (Report No.13 (d)). are received.

(iii) **Policy and Resources Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 6th January and 3rd February 2020 (Reports no 13 (e) and 13 (f)) are received.

(iv) **Council**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 13th January 2020 Report (13 (g)) are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

99. **ACCOUNTS**

A schedule of accounts arising for payment since the date of the last meeting had been circulated.

**RESOLVED** that the schedule of payments in the sum of £ £17,596.35 is approved for payment.

100. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be excluded from the Meeting and they are instructed to withdraw.

101. **CHRISTMAS LIGHTING CONTRACT**

Consideration was given to a confidential report concerning additional costs incurred following the extension of the Christmas lighting contract during 2019. This had



resulted in the retention of redundant lighting for a short period which had given rise to some additional storage costs.

**RESOLVED** that the sum of £1540 is approved as a one-off contribution to the cost of storage associated with the Christmas Lighting contract during 2019.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.25 pm

Signed .....  
(Chairman)

Date.....