

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2019 AT THE TOWN HALL, LEAMINGTON SPA**

Present :- Councillors: Janet Alty, Sarah Boad, Alan Boad, Will Bryce, Mubarik Chowdry, Judith Clarke, Jennifer McAllister, Louisa Radice and Susan Rasmussen.

(Councillor McAllister was attending as a substitute for Councillor W. Gifford).

Three Members of the public were present.

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Sarah Boad is appointed Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for 2019/20. A further nomination that Councillor Janet Alty is appointed Chair of the Committee was proposed and seconded and, on being put to the vote, the amendment to the original proposal was lost.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Sarah Boad is appointed Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the year 2019/20.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Mubarik Chowdry is appointed Vice-Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee for 2019/20. A further nomination that Councillor Janet Alty is appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee was proposed and seconded and, on being put to the vote, the amendment to the original proposal was lost.

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Mubarik Chowdry is appointed Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the year 2019/20.

3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Bill Gifford.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations were made in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct:-

Councillor Sarah Boad declared a non-pecuniary interest in the discussion with representatives of Stagecoach regarding Bus Services in view of her membership of Warwickshire County Council.

Councillor Alan Boad declared a non-pecuniary interest in Business Rates Rebate as a member of Warwick District Council.

5. **BUS SERVICES**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Phil Medicott, Managing Director and Mr P, Stringer of Stagecoach to the meeting. Following changes to Bus Services in Leamington Spa/ Warwick early in 2019, the Committee had asked that representatives of Stagecoach attend a future meeting arranged after the Council elections.

Mr Medicott outlined the basis on which Bus Services were delivered in Warwickshire explaining that over 90% were operated on a commercial basis without subsidy. The Company received redirected Central Government funding through the fuel rebate scheme and funding for carrying concessionary fare passengers. It collaborated with Warwickshire County Council in relation to seeking financial support for new vehicles which would be of benefit in reducing carbon emissions.

The Town Council had received complaints from local residents at St Mary's Road following the decision in 2018 to reroute the No 67 service along this road. The Committee raised questions in relation to the Company's engagement and consultation with residents to which Mr Medicott indicated that Stagecoach had complied with its statutory obligation to give 90 days' notice of such changes and inform the County Council. He emphasised that the changes to this and other services, were always undertaken to ensure delivery of a reliable and efficient service which would benefit passengers and comply with its legal obligations.

Concerns were expressed by Members of the Committee in relation to the impact on elderly residents living in the region of Cromer Road and Pound Lane following the rerouting of the service No 68. An alternative subsidised service had been introduced but this ran very infrequently and had affected the independence of many elderly residents who depended on the previous service. The Committee was advised that the Company was engaged in operating commercial services and, in devising its routes, sought to achieve a balance between delivering a reliable service and a profitable one. All services were subject to regular reviews with the next taking place in January 2020.

In terms of the reliability of the fleet of vehicles and the impact they have on the environment, Mr Medicott confirmed that the Company had joined with Warwickshire County Council and Volvo in submitting a bid for funding for electrically powered vehicles to the Department of Transport. The Company was also investing in new vehicles with 17 new buses to be introduced to Leamington routes this year and further upgrades to existing vehicles taking place. Drivers were also instructed on the need to avoid excessive idling of vehicles when stationary.

The Committee was advised that the Company had reduced fares across many areas of Leamington and, in response to requests, had introduced a weekly study rider to benefit students. It was suggested that Members might wish to visit the Stagecoach Depot to familiarise themselves with operational issues. It was agreed that arrangements would be co-ordinated through the Town Clerk

Mr Medicott and Mr Stringer were thanked for their attendance and both left the meeting.

6. **LILLINGTON ENTRY SIGNAGE**

Mr Taulbut was invited by the Chairman to introduce this item which had been initially referred for consideration by this Committee at the Council meeting on 23rd May. A Report (Report No 7) setting out the options for new signage on the highway at various points at Lillington was considered.

The Committee was advised that two different styles of sign were proposed, the simpler format being appropriate for those locations in close proximity to the existing Leamington signage. A total of 4 locations was initially suggested, the estimated cost of which was £500 for the signs with a further £2,000 for the erection. The final cost would be influenced by the response of the Highway Authority and any requirements it might have in relation to the placement of the signage. Lillington Local History Society was prepared to assist with the task of raising funding contributions from external sources.

In order for the project to proceed it was necessary for the Town Council to use the powers open to it under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and seek the permission of the County Council to provide the signs.

Reference was made to the frequent changes to the local government boundaries in recent years which could in future have implications for the locations in which signs were erected. It was suggested that the ecclesiastical boundary of Lillington might represent a more stable basis on which to consider locating entry signs.

Following further discussion, it was

**RESOLVED**

(i) that the Town Council supports in principle the provision of entry signage at Lillington, using its powers under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984; and

(ii) that a detailed proposal is drawn up with Lillington Local History Society for consideration by Warwickshire County Council.

7. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on 15th April, 2019, are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

8. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

(i) **RAILWAY BRIDGES – PIGEON CONTROL MEASURES**

The Town Clerk reported that Network Rail had now commenced the process of installing protective mesh over public footpaths beneath the bridge at High Street and Clemens Street. This work would be confined to mitigating the nuisance over the public footpaths. Councillor Alty undertook to raise with Network Rail the problem of pigeons nesting on the bridge abutments.

With regard to the footways beneath the Railway Bridge at Lower Avenue, Network Rail had indicated that this was subject to an agreement with Warwick District Council and the matter was therefore within that Authority's jurisdiction. This had been referred to the District Council which was investigating further.

**RESOLVED** that Network Rail is thanked for its response and that the situation in relation to the bridge at Lower Avenue is kept under review.

(ii) **FORMER BT TELEPHONE KIOSK – CLARENDON AVENUE**

The Town Clerk reported that following discussions with Friends of Christchurch Gardens, a proposal had been put forward that the Kiosk be used for the display of artwork by local school children. The project would need to be preceded by the complete renovation of the Kiosk which had been subject to vandalism. A site meeting between the Town Clerk and a Contractor had been arranged to discuss renovation of the Kiosk.

The Committee was reminded that the Council had previously considered a multitude of options for the alternative use of this facility which was a listed feature within the Conservation Area.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is noted and that progress is reported to future meetings of the Committee.

9. **POST OFFICE CLOSURE – 32 BATH STREET**

The Committee was advised that the Branch Post Office at 32 Bath Street had been closed temporarily on 23<sup>rd</sup> May. A reply to an inquiry made by the Town Council was read in which the Post Office apologised for the necessity to close the Branch without prior notification. The Council would be further advised of the arrangements proposed for continuation of services, either in this or another Branch location, in due course.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is noted and the position kept under review.

10. **BUSINESS RATES REBATE**

Town Clerk reported that he had received email correspondence from Goodman Nash Ltd proposing assistance in recovery of Business Rates in respect of the Council's accommodation at the Town Hall. This comprised separate offices on the

first and second floor of the building which were presently subject to separate business rate assessments. It had been suggested to the Town Council that arising from changes in business rate regulations, the Town Council was now eligible to reclaim over payment in business rates up to the period March 2021.

The Committee noted that participation in a contract with Goodman Nash required payment of a commission from any refund obtained through adjustment of the rate liability.

**RESOLVED** that in the first instance investigation of the business rate review process is undertaken by the Town Clerk and a report is submitted to the next meeting.

11. **TOWN COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

Consideration was given to the Council's previously agreed objectives, as set out in Report No.12 A. It was noted that the objectives had not been reviewed since 2015 and that this would best be facilitated by Group discussion initially.

**RESOLVED** that a review of the Council Objectives 2015/16 is deferred to the next meeting to await discussion by the respective Groups.

12. **CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY STATEMENT**

Consideration was given to a motion proposed by Councillor Alty, (Report 12 B), seeking to commit the Town Council to supporting the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change declaration in relation to a series of actions to address the impact of change to the Climate.

It was agreed that the motion contained issues of vital importance for all sections of Society but that many of the actions were outside the Town Council's sphere of influence. It was therefore important to focus on the actions that the Town Council could actually deliver.

**RESOLVED**

(1) Leamington Town Council accepts the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's conclusion that global warming above 1.5°C greatly increases climate change risks such as extreme weather, spreading of diseases, species extinction and extreme poverty in Africa and Asia; and that "ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities can support the implementation of ambitious actions implied by limiting global warming to 1.5°C".

This Council declares a 'Climate Emergency' because of the significant and urgent action needed; consequently, Royal Leamington Spa Town Council will

instigate all of the actions that it is able to take with the aim of producing a relevant plan of action within 6 months; and

(2) that a task and finish group is established to develop proposals for consideration and approval by December 2019.

13. **PUBLIC WATER FOUNTAINS**

Councillor Alty referred to the work currently being undertaken by many public authorities in the UK to provide water fountains in public places where people can refill drinking water dispensers. This was a major step forward in helping to eliminate the use of single use plastic bottles. In many areas this was being assisted by the water supply authority providing capital assistance but it did not appear to be the case in the Severn Trent Water area.

Several members referred to the high costs and on- going management issues associated with public drinking fountains. There was also a scheme currently in place in Leamington involving participation of some cafes and restaurants in the “free refill” campaign. It was generally considered that expanding this scheme to as wide a network of retail premises as possible could be a productive way of dealing with this matter.

**RESOLVED**

(i) that the option of expanding the current free water refill scheme in Leamington Spa is explored with BID Leamington Ltd;

(ii) that members of Council individually assess the availability of retailers in their Wards that are willing to participate in a refill scheme. .

14. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Consideration was given to a Report (Report 14) summarising progress in relation to the RLS Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Clerk reported that the Draft Plan had been launched for consultation over an 8 week period commencing 17<sup>th</sup> June and copies were now available via the Neighbourhood Plan website. The Consultation would be extensively promoted through the Press, social media and any respondents to earlier consultation would be contacted directly. Hard copies of the Plan would be available at the Town Hall and local libraries. All Councillors representing Leamington electoral Wards had been notified by email of the consultation process and sent a link to the Draft Plan.

In answer to a question, the Town Clerk confirmed that the Plan would be reviewed and if necessary revised in response to the consultation before being submitted to Warwick District Council before being subject to a further consultation prior to examination by a Planning Inspector. It was hope to put the Plan to referendum by February 2020.

The Chair suggested that it would be beneficial to the newly elected Members of Council to be offered the opportunity to attend a briefing on the Neighbourhood Plan.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is received and that a briefing session is arranged for Members of Council.

15. **ACCOUNTS**

Consideration was given to a schedule of accounts arising for payment since the last meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the schedule of accounts in the sum of £36,031.40, including expenditure of £21,069 under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, is approved.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.25 pm.