

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA
HELD ON 4TH JUNE 2020

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

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

There were two members of the public present.

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Navdeep Atwal and Julija Boulton.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:-

Councillor Alan Boad declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Minutes of the Planning Committee in view of his role as Chairman of the Warwick District Council Planning Committee

Councillor Bill Gifford declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Notice of Motion as a Member of Warwickshire County Council and Warwick District Council.

14. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no representations from the public.

15. COUNCILLOR ATWAL

The Council was advised that Councillor Atwal was presently detained in India and unable to travel to the UK as a result of restrictions on international travel arising from the Coronavirus pandemic. She had last attended a meeting of the Council on 13th January, 2020 and continuation of her membership of the Council required at least one attendance in a consecutive six month period, unless the Council resolved to accept her explanation for absence.

RESOLVED that, in accordance Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Atwal's inability to travel is accepted as a valid reason for her absence from Meetings of this Council.

16. COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR FORUM

Councillor Sarah Boad advised that the main focus for Warwickshire County Council over the past weeks had been managing the response to the Covid-19 crisis. As the rate of infection was now beginning to decline, Officers were making preparations to re-open various aspects of County Council services such as libraries, civic amenity sites and country parks. The Registration Service had been especially hard hit with no births registered since the 23rd March. It was hoped that the service would resume in the very near future. The County Council was continuing to reinforce the message about social distancing and this was now being publicised via social media, since it was a particularly effective way of reaching a young audience.

Councillor Gifford referred to the Consultation by Warwickshire County Council on proposals for prioritising pedestrian movements on the Parade that would be considered later in the meeting. In addition he mentioned the proposals currently

subject to consultation by Warwick District Council in relation to the future use of Newbold Comyn. Comments were invited by the District Council until the end of June.

In answer to a question from the Chair, Councillor Sarah Boad advised that Warwickshire was one of several authorities chosen as a pilot for the track and trace process across the West Midlands but that this was in its infancy at present.

Councillor Alan Boad updated the Council on the District Council management of the Planning process indicating that the majority of applications continued to be dealt with under delegated powers with those applications that were contrary to the Local Plan or of significant impact being brought before a meeting of the Planning Committee which continued to be held remotely. It was the Council's objective to move toward face to face meetings as soon as it was safe to do so.

RESOLVED that the Report is noted.

17. **ANNUAL ACCOUNTING AND GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Town Clerk reported that as a result of the limitations faced by public authorities the timetable for completion of the Annual Governance and Accounting Statement had been extended to allow public inspection to take place from 1st September 2020. This had enabled an extension in the period for completion of the Council's accounts which would now be reported, after completion of the Internal Audit, to the meeting on the July, 2020.

RESOLVED that the Report is noted.

18. **APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No 7) in which appointments to outside bodies and internal working groups were recommended.

Following consideration of the Report, it was **RESOLVED** that appointments are made to outside bodies and working parties as follows:-

Outside Body	Organising Body	No of seats	Proposed Appointment
Christmas Lights Event Working Group	Warwick District Council	2	Cllr S. Rasmussen Cllr A. Stevens
Guru Nanak Dev Trust	Guru Nanak Dev Trust/Town Council	5	Cllr J Alty Cllr N. Atwal Cllr M. Chowdry Cllr W. Gifford (The Mayor is an ex-officio Member)
Warwickshire Association of Local Councils - County Committee	Warwickshire Association of Local Councils	1	Representative until November 2020 – Councillor Sarah Boad
Warwick District Shopmobility Ltd	Warwick District Mobility Ltd	2	Councillor D. Brunson Cllr N. Wilkins
Leamington International Twinning Society- Executive Committee	Leamington International Twinning Society	1	Cllr A. Stevens
Leamington Chamber of Trade	Chamber of Trade	1	Cllr J. Clarke

Outside Body	Organising Body	No of seats	Proposed Appointment
Warwickshire Pension Fund – Annual General Meeting	Warwickshire County Council	1	(currently being attended by Officers)
Town Council Working Groups			
Blue Plaques	Royal Leamington Spa Town Council	1	Cllr J. McAllister
Communications	Royal Leamington Spa Town Council	4	Cllr N. Atwal Cllr D. Brunson Cllr W. Bryce Cllr M. Chowdry
Leamington in Bloom	Royal Leamington Spa Town Council	1	Cllr A. Stevens
Accommodation	Royal Leamington Spa Town Council	3	Cllr J. Clarke Cllr S. Boad Cllr N. Wilkins

19. STREET NAMING PROPOSALS

The Town Clerk reported that Warwick District Council was seeking approval for the naming of two new developments on land off Lime Avenue, Lillington. The developer has proposed Manor Farm Close and Lime View Gardens which respected local connections to this land. Following discussion of possible alternatives it was

RESOLVED that Manor Farm Close and Lime View Gardens are approved as names for new development on land off Lime Avenue.

20. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Council was advised that the consultation on the Regulation 16 Draft of the Neighbourhood Plan had been concluded on the 17th February and sent to the appointed Examiner, Mr Matheson. The examiner's final report had been received on 30th March with final modifications to the Plan before submitting it to referendum. These modifications were minor in nature and in the main confined to the amalgamation of some policies in the interests of clarity. All the nominations of protected green space had been accepted. The modifications had now been absorbed into the final version of the Plan which would shortly be available on the Council and Neighbourhood Plan websites.

The Council noted that because of the current prohibition on all forms of election, the Neighbourhood Plan referendum could not now proceed before May 2020, though in the meantime it could be taken into account in determining planning applications.

RESOLVED that the Report is noted.

21. CORONAVIRUS – CONTINUITY OF COUNCIL FUNCTIONS AND OPERATIONS

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No 10) regarding various aspects of the Council's response to the current Coronavirus pandemic.

The Report highlighted a number of issues arising from the migrating of staff and meetings to working remotely following the introduction of the Coronavirus limitations. The Town Clerk particularly emphasised the following areas for discussion:-

- The opportunities for continuing to allow access to meetings via the internet after face to face meetings are once again permitted

- The viability and security of the Council's IT support systems to deliver enhanced remote working
- The extent to which working from home for employees should be considered

There was a consensus that the accessibility afforded to the general public by the introduction of virtual meetings had been a welcome step though this was reliant on internet accessibility which varied dependent on location. The current volatility of the market in terms of the different platforms available to deliver meetings remotely was evidenced by a member as a reason for delaying any long-term decision. However, the need to commence a review taking account of all the emerging factors was considered important and a report setting out options for further consideration was proposed by Councillor Sarah Boad. On being seconded by Councillor Wilkins it was

RESOLVED that a Report is made to the Policy and Resources Committee to be held on 9TH July on the options for continuation of remote working and virtual meetings of the Town Council.

22. NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Sarah Boad referred to the work undertaken by Warwickshire County Council in conjunction with other partners to introduce measures to re-allocate road space within Leamington Town Centre. The Council had been circulated with proposals and maps indicating a number of options for re-prioritising footways and roads, principal among which were the following:-

Option A – Single way pedestrian traffic and one way vehicular traffic in Southerly direction along the Parade.

Option B – Full pedestrian access with no vehicular movements along Parade-Warwick Street and Regent Street closed to through traffic

Option C- Full pedestrian access with no vehicular movements along Parade-Warwick Street and Regent Street open to through traffic

Councillor Sarah Boad referred to the importance of ensuring that the Town Centre was a safe and accessible place for members of the public to return to once the current restrictions on movement were lifted. This was especially important to ensure that local business was able to manage a sustained recovery, whilst allowing members of the public to benefit from the healthy environment arising from improvements to air quality in the Town Centre. The re-prioritising of vehicle movements also offered a good opportunity to facilitate continued access for cyclists and the encouragement of less polluting forms of public transport. The proposals set out in Option B by the County Council represented the best means of achieving these objectives. Councillor Boad referred to the motion set out on the Agenda which had now been amended following discussion with other group leaders and moved its acceptance.

Councillor Alty indicated that following discussion with Councillor Boad she wished to propose a further amendment that placed emphasis on promoting the "modal shifts" which would include greater emphasis on walking and making walking a pleasant experience. This amendment was accepted by the mover of the motion and included in the substantive motion.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried nem con.

RESOLVED that this Council notes that:

1. since the lockdown started there has been a considerable drop in traffic and a noticeable improvement in air quality across the whole town, with the PM10 measure down by over 80%.

2. to assist in the safe easing of the lockdown the Government has announced funding to improve walking and cycling provision in town centres;
3. non-essential shops will start to re-open from June 15th and this will create a need for space to allow for socially distanced queuing on the pavements.

This Council welcomes the work of Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council, in responding to Government guidelines with its plans to:

1. introduce temporary measures, as a matter of urgency, to create the space necessary to maintain social distancing and to ensure that there are safe spaces for shoppers to queue outside town centre shops.
 2. ensure that any attempt to create 'social distancing' on the pavements will enhance rather than impede those who are to be encouraged to walk into town and enhance the walking experience.
 3. encourage people to walk and cycle by the creation of safe spaces and an increased provision for secure cycle parking.
 4. ensure those arriving by car can easily access the town centre and to encourage park and stroll.
 5. encourage modal shift by improving the bus service and ensuring that the buses are pollution free and covering the whole town so that those who use them can still access the town centre. The move to electric and hydrogen buses should also be accelerated
- These measures are entirely congruent with many key objectives in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Royal Leamington Spa; we therefore support Option B, from the schemes submitted to us by Warwickshire County Council, as the starting point to best meet those objectives. Royal Leamington Spa Town Council notes that these proposals will be widely consulted on and we welcome this as part of an on-going process.

This Council would also encourage the County Council and its partners to:

- investigate any future opportunities available to extend the town centre 20mph speed limit.
- bring forward proposals for a comprehensive cycle network which would facilitate safe active travel across the town, including linkage to K2L and the new cycle networks being brought forward as part of the Section 106 funding attracted by the new developments to the south of the town centre.

23. MINUTES OF COUNCIL AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

(i) Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meetings of the Planning Committee held on 5TH March and 7th May, 2020 are received.

(ii) Cultural and Community Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cultural and Community Committee held on 19th March 2020 are received.

(iii) Policy and Resources Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 2nd March and 27th April 2020 are received.

(iv) Council

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 16th May 2020 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

24. ACCOUNTS

Consideration was given to a schedule of invoices and other payments arising since the last meeting. A copy of the schedule is attached to the signed Minutes.

RESOLVED that the schedule of payments in the sum of ££37,988.99, including £6500 under Section 137 of the Local Government Act, are approved.

25. 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.

26. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

Consideration was given to the confidential Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 6th May, 2020.

The Town Clerk advised on the current position in relation to implementing arrangements for the interview of short-listed candidates.

RESOLVED that

- (i) a meeting of the Staffing Committee is convened to agree on measures to conclude the appointment process for the Town Clerk as a matter of priority; and
- (ii) the Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 6th May are received.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.07 pm.