

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 10<sup>th</sup> JUNE , 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.

Officers: Robert Nash, and Katherine Geddes

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed by Councillor Gifford, seconded by Councillor Chowdry, that Councillor Sarah Boad is elected Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the year to May 2021. There being no further nominations, it was

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Sarah Boad is elected Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the year to May 2021

**2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed by Councillor Sarah Boad, seconded by Councillor Alty, that Councillor Mubarik Chowdry is elected Vice-Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee for the year to May 2021. There being no further nominations, it was

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Mubarik Chowdry is elected Vice-Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee for the year to May 2021.

**3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of non- pecuniary interest were made by members of the Committee:-

<b>Name</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
Councillor Alan Boad	Newbold Comyn Master Plan	Member of Warwick District Council
	Re-allocation of Road Space in Response to Covid-19	Member of Warwick District Council
Councillor Sarah Boad	Re-allocation of Road Space in Response to Covid-19	Member of Warwickshire County Council

Name	Item	Nature of Interest
Councillor Bill Gifford	Newbold Comyn Master Plan	Member of Warwick District Council
	Re-allocation of Road Space in Response to Covid-19	Member of Warwickshire County Council

**5. PUBLIC FORUM**

The meeting was attended by Mr R. Verso, who had submitted a written statement for consideration by the Committee, in relation to the consultation by Warwick District Council on measures to introduce alternative uses to Newbold Comyn. It was agreed that these representations would be considered together with the relevant Agenda item at the appropriate time in the meeting.

**6. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the last meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**7. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**RAILWAY BRIDGES – PIGEON CONTROL MEASURES**

The Town Clerk reported since the last meeting he had received confirmation from the Asset Management Officer at Warwick District Council that the question of management measures to prevent pigeons nesting under the Lower Avenue bridge would be investigated shortly. This matter had been delayed by the Coronavirus crisis.

It was noted that as a result of the award of funding by the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, significant improvements would be made to the area around Leamington Railway Station and that this might act as a catalyst to improving the pedestrian area beneath the Railway bridge. Councillor Alan Boad agreed to raise the delay in resolving this matter at a meeting of Group Leaders of Warwick District Council.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is received.

**8. NEWBOLD COMYN MASTER PLAN**

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No. 8) regarding the consultation undertaken on behalf of Warwick District Council in relation to the re-purposing of Newbold Comyn following the closure of the Golf Course.

A local resident, Mr Verso, had submitted representations on behalf of local residents and these had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting and were considered. Mr Verso made a statement prior to discussion of this item in which he emphasised the importance of keeping the Comyn as a local park for residents of the Town and the District, rather than introducing developments that substantially exceed what is necessary for the enjoyment of the area and which would have a detrimental environmental impact.

The Town Council had initially considered the principle of re-purposing elements of Newbold Comyn at a meeting in November 2019 and had supported options that will protect and enhance the use of the site as a place to appreciate biodiversity, wildlife and other activities associated with a unique natural environment.

It was noted that Newbold Comyn was a unique resource that principally attracted use by residents of the Town and the wider District. The site represented an area where activities such as walking and the appreciation of a natural environment were facilitated but where scope existed for other leisure activities, particularly since the closure of the Golf Course.

The Committee acknowledged that the proposals contained within the District Council Master Plan provided for the introduction of new uses that would fundamentally change the nature of the Comyn and potentially result in it becoming a sub-regional attraction. Whilst this afforded income generating opportunities, it was evident that this would require significant changes to the site to accommodate the increase in numbers of visitors. There was a concern that such changes as the introduction of additional car parking were contrary to reducing vehicular activity necessary to contribute to wider climate change objectives and the impact that commercial activities would have on other competing service providers elsewhere in the immediate vicinity of the Comyn and within the neighbouring Town Centre. Reference was made to policies within the emerging Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan that seek to improve air quality and community health by enabling a modal shift to walking and cycling through less reliance on vehicle use.

The diverse nature of the site and its connectivity to other parts of the Town was emphasised. It was recognised that some residential parts of the Town such as Sydenham and Lillington, though geographically proximate to the site, did not benefit from clearly identified pedestrian access. The options for improving access from these locations and ensuring that they were adequately signposted was advocated. It was noted that some traditional footpath opportunities across the site were poorly signed and in some cases of questionable accessibility. These could be better exploited.

The connectivity of the Comyn to the national cycle network should also be recognised in the proposals for widening access to the site, together with options for a direct cycle route into the Town from Newbold Comyn. The proposals in the Master Plan included proposals for an outdoor activity centre to provide a range of activities for non-traditional forms of physical activity. Whilst this would be attractive to young people and families, it was emphasised that it would need to be carefully planned and integrated within the existing natural features of the site. A member also referred to recognising the use of the Comyn by dog walkers.

In summary, the Committee agreed that the Master Plan was a welcome addition to the discussion of proposals for the repurposing of Newbold Comyn. However, it was essential that proposals are avoided which focus on the development of facilities that may lead to the commercialisation and over exploitation of the site. Newbold Comyn should predominantly be maintained as an area of environmental importance,

appreciated for its biodiversity and wildlife and widely accessible to walkers, cyclists and those of limited mobility.

**RESOLVED** that a formal response to the consultation on the Master Plan for the future use of Newbold Comyn is made in accordance with the Committee's observations

**9. RE-ALLOCATION OF ROAD SPACE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19: LEAMINGTON TOWN CENTRE**

Consideration was given to proposals prepared by Warwickshire County Council, in collaboration with other partners, for the introduction of measures to reallocate road space in Leamington Town Centre. Revised maps indicating the location of various new pedestrian and cycle priority areas on Parade and adjoining streets had been circulated and were considered.

The Committee was reminded that the Town Council at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> June had formally agreed to support temporary measures 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. The Council had, having considered the County Council's draft proposals, endorsed Option B, of the schemes submitted by Warwickshire County Council as the best means of delivering the necessary social distancing whilst encouraging the return of the shopping public to the Town Centre. Councillor Sarah Boad advised that due to the urgency of the situation, the County Council had not been able to follow the usual consultation and notification procedures and the agreed measures would therefore be initially introduced via an emergency Traffic Regulation Order. As the measures were temporary, there would be further consultation with stakeholders as necessary.

It was noted that complementary measures to encourage people to return to the Town Centre were also being continued such as free parking in District Council Car Parks though enforcement of on-street parking by Warwickshire County Council was likely to recommence from 1<sup>st</sup> July. The encouragement of cyclists to the Town Centre was also being targeted. Reference was made to ensuring wherever possible timely information on the arrangements for re-opening the Town Centre were published on the Council's social media.

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the measures introduced by Warwickshire County Council to provide for safe distancing of pedestrians during the Covid -19 emergency are noted; and
- (ii) that the situation is kept under review with a further report to the Council meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2020.

Councillor Rasmussen left the meeting after conclusion of this item.

**10. FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF MEETINGS**

The Town Clerk referred to the report to the Council meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> June which had included various items relating to the management of Council meetings arising from the current Coronavirus restrictions.

It was noted that a meeting of the Communications Working Group had been convened for the purpose of considering how the Council was utilising various media forms to communicate both internally and externally. The Committee was agreed that the current practice of hosting meetings remotely had been largely successful though issues such as live streaming of the proceedings should be further considered in the light of practical meeting management.

The Town Hall remained inaccessible for face to face meetings in line with Government guidance. It was hoped that clarification on the position as regards the resumption of local authority meetings would be forthcoming in the near future.

**RESOLVED** that a report is made to the meeting of the Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> July, including the initial discussion and recommendations of the Communications Working Group.

**11. COMMONWEALTH GAMES – FUNDING**

The Chair referred to the work planned to be undertaken to improve accessibility of the Railway Station to the Town which had now been granted funding by the Local Enterprise Partnership. Councillor Alan Boad advised that a Report was to be made to the District Council on the requirements for planning permission for this project.

**RESOLVED** that the Report is noted.

**12. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY**

A copy of a schedule circulated by the Town Clerk setting out the payments made to the Council under the Community Infrastructure Levy was discussed. The Town Clerk advised that this would be updated for future payments enabling the Council to keep record of the income that could be applied to projects subject to the provisions set out in the CIL Regulations.

**RESOLVED** that the schedule is noted.

**13. ACCOUNTS**

There were no accounts awaiting approval.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.26 pm.