

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA
HELD ON 17th SEPTEMBER 2020

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

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

Robert Nash (Town Clerk) and Katherine Geddes (Democratic Services Officer).

There were two Members of the public present.

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Amy Evans.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations were made:-

Councillors Alan Boad and Bill Gifford declared non pecuniary interests in Leamington Station Forecourt Improvements, WDC Park Exercise Permits and the reallocation of road space – Leamington Town Centre, in view of their Membership of Warwick District Council.

Councillor Sarah Boad declared non- pecuniary interest in reallocation of road space – Leamington Town Centre, as a Member of Warwickshire County Council

44. PUBLIC FORUM

The Meeting was attended by Grace Bailey of Atkins Global following invitation to set out in greater detail the proposals for the improvements planned to the Station Forecourt and access arrangements at Leamington Spa Railway Station.

Ms Bailey advised that the proposals for Leamington Station were the culmination of work by the West Midlands Stations Alliance which aimed to deliver 'Stations as Places'. The objective was to ensure that railway stations were at the heart of the communities they serve and a part of WMSA's continuing commitment to making stations better places for everyone.

She outlined the principal changes envisaged to the Station forecourt area and explained that this was presently work in progress with the project being comprised of both short term and longer term actions. Among the significant medium term actions planned over the next 20 months were the following:-

Installation of improved way-finding to key assets/destinations,

Complete the station forecourt improvement scheme to provide high quality public realm, including upgrade of the subway

New pedestrian link from the car park on Old Warwick Road to the station

Investigate potential to provide bike hire docks at the station to facilitate sustainable tourism, linking to the Commonwealth Games

Improve cycle connectivity onto the canal from Tachbrook Road

Investigate potential for links with Creative Quarter at Spencer Yard

Create a 'community hub' focused on the Community Garden

Extensive consultation had been undertaken through workshop sessions and amenity groups, users and cyclists had been able to contribute.

The Project was opportune as the use of the station could be expected to increase significantly due to the large volume of new house building in the area. The Town was also a key venue for events during the Commonwealth Games and there was a need to integrate with the anticipated improvements to the Cultural Quarter at Spencer Yard.

Ms Bailey explained that at present some details of the prospectus remained commercially sensitive and therefore final design details of some aspects of the forecourt work could not be revealed but the Council's comments were welcomed on the general principles of the proposal.

Mr Archie Pitts of the Leamington Society was invited to make a representation and expressed optimism with the proposals for a new forecourt area. However he indicated that it was essential that this aspect of the project was critical to ensuring an avoidance of congestion and a smooth interface between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular users. He also noted that some users of the underpass were reluctant to use it at night and consideration of an alternative access point might be needed for evening use.

Members of the Council welcomed the outline prospectus emphasising how important it was to ensure that the key access routes to the Station, particularly via the pedestrian underpass and the routes from High Street and Tachbrook Road were recognised. There was a concern that insufficient detail was available in terms of the provisions within the forecourt area for parking, taxis and public transport and the Council would welcome opportunity to comment on this in due course.

Ms Bailey thanked the Council for the opportunity to outline the project and welcomed further feedback which would be sent to the forecourt design team.

45. COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR FORUM

Councillor Alan Boad reported on the following District Council matters:-

Changes were being proposed to the Planning System, some of which were immediately being implemented. A more detailed discussion of these matters took place later in the meeting.

The current dog control orders needed to be renewed and this had unfortunately been misinterpreted as referring to the extension of dog control powers to other areas of open space such as Newbold Comyn.

Councillor Sarah Boad reported the following County Council matters:-

on a recent meeting on site of representatives of the County Highway Authority, local County Councillors and District and Town Council representatives and the manager of BID Leamington to discuss the continuation of the road closure measures along Parade. The current arrangements were largely supported by business and the general public and this had helped develop a safe and congenial environment in the Town centre for all visiting it.

The County Council would be considering the authority's stance on Local Government reform in the forthcoming week. It was likely that Parish and Town Councils would increasingly feature in the conversation.

Councillor Gifford also reported on the following items in his role as a County Councillor:

The registration service for Births Deaths and Marriages was now operating again – details on how to use the service remotely was on the Warwickshire County Council website at

The recent commencement of the school term had witnessed a variation in the numbers of pupils being quarantined as a result of Covid-19 infections. Clarification was being sought on the role of the Head teacher in these matters from the Local Education Authority.

RESOLVED that the reports are noted.

46. NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Bryce introduced a motion calling upon the Town Council to support the motion before Warwick District Council on racial equality and stating that it will not tolerate any discrimination on racial grounds in terms of the administration of the Council, the delivery of its services and in the wider community. He accordingly moved that:

Royal Leamington Spa Town Council:

- recognises and supports Warwick District Council's motion on racial equality;
- will equally not tolerate any discrimination or in the council, council facilities and in the wider community;
- will ensure all members understand the definition of hate crimes and what constitutes these. The council will take note of guidance from the police and Warwickshire EQulP;
- recognises the importance of cultural diversity and the contribution it has made to our town;
- will continue to promote equality through objectives as stated in item 4 of our council SMART objectives, including promoting community involvement and

through fair and equal review of all each application. These objectives will be continually reviewed by the Cultural and Community committee; and.

- will work with other councils and bodies wherever possible to combat racial discrimination and promote equality

The motion was seconded by Councillor J.Alty.

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

RESOLVED that this Council

- (i) recognises and supports Warwick District Council's motion on racial equality;
- (ii) will equally not tolerate any discrimination or in the council, council facilities and in the wider community;
- (iii) will ensure all members understand the definition of hate crimes and what constitutes these. The council will take note of guidance from the police and Warwickshire EQulP;
- (iv) recognises the importance of cultural diversity and the contribution it has made to our town;
- (v) will continue to promote equality through objectives as stated in item 4 of our council SMART objectives, including promoting community involvement and through fair and equal review of all each application. These objectives will be continually reviewed by the Cultural and Community committee; and.
- (vi) will work with other Councils and bodies wherever possible to combat racial discrimination and promote equality.

47. WDC PARK EXERCISE PERMITS

The Chair referred to concerns raised by constituents regarding the implementation by the District Council of a policy of permits for organisations using parks and other areas of public open space for exercise and fitness activities. The Policy had been introduced by the District Council in order to ensure that the parks and open spaces within Warwick District are accessible to everyone and that health and safety issues arising from the Covid-19 emergency were observed.

It was noted that the policy was for a trial period of six months after which it would be reviewed.

RESOLVED that the matter is noted.

48. REVIEW OF THE PLANNING SYSTEM – “ PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE” AND CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO PLANNING POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Consideration was given to Reports (Report No 8 and 9) concerning current proposals for the reform of the Planning System, including changes to the national planning policies and regulations.

Councillor Alan Boad updated the Council with a presentation given to Members of the District Council.

It was evident that the proposals in the two consultation papers were extensive and represented a fundamental change to the planning system as it presently exists. Councillor Alan Boad highlighted the principal changes that would impact on local Plans and local authority planning Committees. These included:-

- the introduction of a standard method for assessing housing requirements that would be binding on local planning authorities (LPA's) This will remove the current provisions within Local Plans, including the duty to co-operate between authorities. The impact within Warwick District was that this could require a significant increase in the additional provision of homes each year beyond that calculated using the current Standard method of assessment.
- a new provision for discounting the cost of First Homes (homes for local first time buyers) with a minimum of 25% of all affordable housing units to be secured through developer contributions. The LPA can ask for a greater discount (up to 50%) based on evidence through the Local Plan
- an extension of the “permission in principle” to include developments of up to 150 dwellings
- the introduction of “zoning” with planning applications being assessed according to whether they relate to land in either a growth, renewal or protection area. In growth areas there would be an automatic presumption of planning permission
- Local Plans would be changed to focus on site specific policies and design codes. Development Management Polices would be determined centrally by a revised National Policy Planning Framework
- Local Plans would no longer need to satisfy a sustainability appraisal and this would be replaced by a single “sustainable development” test
- An overhaul of the current process of public notification and participation in the planning process with increased emphasis on digitised forms of engagement
- Continuation of the role of Neighbourhood Plans but in tandem with Local Plans these would not be able to allocate land for development or devise local development management policies.

The Council noted that these far reaching changes raised considerable matters of detail which were largely absent from the consultation papers. It was evident however that as presently proposed, the changes to the planning system would offer significantly less scope to local communities to influence key planning policies in their area and that the role of Local Planning Authorities and Parish and Town Councils could be diminished as a result. Given the far reaching nature of these proposals, it was suggested that the Council's response to the consultation is referred for discussion to the respective Groups and the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that a response to the Government White Paper “Planning for the Future” is referred for further consideration by the Planning Committee and the respective political groups.

After discussion of this item, Councillor Bryce left the meeting.

49. REALLOCATION OF ROAD SPACE – LEAMINGTON TOWN CENTRE

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No 10) regarding the review of arrangements for the re-allocation of road space along Parade and sections of Warwick Street and Regent Street.

Councillor Sarah Boad referred to the recent response to a survey that indicated that over 80% of people shopping in the Town Centre were satisfied with the current arrangements. The recent reintroduction of open air markets at Covent Garden had further augmented the image of the Town as a safe place to visit. It was noted that a further review was planned after six months.

Concern was raised regarding accessibility for delivery vehicles and access to the Town Centre for those who were less mobile. These concerns had been referred to Officers of the County Council who would be monitoring the effectiveness of the current arrangements.

RESOLVED that the Report is noted.

After discussion of this item, Councillors Atwal and Chowdry left the meeting.

50. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK

The Town Clerk reported that Mr Stephen Marks had been appointed as the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to the Council with effect from 1st October, 2020. The Council welcomed the appointment and looked forward to meeting and working with Mr Marks.

51. CAMPION HILLS ALLOTMENTS

Consideration was given to a Report (Report No. 12) regarding works to rectify and remove hazardous materials on the boundary of Campion Hills Allotments.

RESOLVED that the boundary between Campion Hills Allotments and Newbold Comyn is made safe at a cost of £1,200 utilising the District Council preferred contractor and that the cost is met from reserves.

52. MINUTES OF COUNCIL AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

(i) Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meetings of the Planning Committee held on 2ND July, 23rd July and 13th August 2020 (Reports Nos 13 (a) 13 (b) and 13 (c) are received.

Councillor Alan Boad declared neither approval or opposition to the above Minutes.

(ii) Cultural and Community Committee

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

(iii) **Policy and Resources Committee**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 9th July 2020 (Report no.13 (e) are received.

(iv) **Council**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 16th July 2020 (Report No13 (f). are confirmed as a correct record

53. ACCOUNTS

There were no accounts requiring authorisation..

54. RETIREMENT OF TOWN CLERK

The Chairman referred to the impending retirement of the Town Clerk, Robert Nash, for whom this was the final Council meeting. Members expressed their appreciation for Robert’s dedication and professionalism over the 18 years of his employment with the Town Council and wished him a long and happy retirement.

55. 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”.

56. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on the 17th July, 2020.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on the 17th July, 2020 are received.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.42 pm.

Signed.....
(Chairman)

Date.....