

MINUTES OF THE **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** HELD ONLINE **WEDNESDAY 27<sup>th</sup>**  
**JANUARY 2021** AT 7.00 P.M.

Present: Councillors R D Jenks (Mayor) Presiding  
M Joyce (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors: Mrs C Bunday C Jenks  
D Corney-Walker Mrs A Jones  
R Hall C N Parker  
R Hayes M Pilkington  
M Hocking M E Ryan  
D Howe Mrs L Sheffield

Invited Guests: Reverend Gareth Regan  
County and District Councillor Mrs Jackie Hook  
County and District Councillor Gordon Hook  
District Councillor Alistair Dewhirst Portfolio Holder for Waste  
Management, Recycling and Environmental Health  
Principal Environmental Health Officer Colin Bignall  
Environmental Health Technical Officer Becky Wotton

In attendance: District Councillor Andrew McGregor  
Mrs L Oldroyd Member of the public  
Mr T Callard Chairman of NA & District Allotment Association

Officers In attendance: Philip Rowe Town Clerk  
Samantha Scott Deputy Town Clerk & RFO  
Sally Henley Town Development Manager  
Nigel Canham Communications Advisor  
Alexandra Robinson Principal Administrator

611. **WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR**

Prior to the start of the meeting the Mayor welcomed everyone, including visitors and guests, to the first remote Full Council Meeting of 2021 and that being the Precept Meeting for the Council. The Mayor invited his Chaplain Rev Gareth Regan to open the Meeting with prayers.

612. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Colin Davieson and Mrs Karen Crout.

613. **INTERESTS**

None declared.

614. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were received and signed as a correct record, subject to the typographical amendment of Minutes (591) and (598).

615. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

## 616. **PRESENTATION UPDATE – AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN NEWTON ABBOT**

The Mayor invited Councillor Alistair Dewhirst, Portfolio Holder for Waste Management, Recycling and Environmental Health and Mr Colin Bignall, Principal Environmental Health Officer, Teignbridge District Council to update Members on the specific aspects of air quality relating to Newton Abbot.

Councillor Alistair Dewhirst introduced the Environmental Health Officers responsible for managing Air Quality in Teignbridge and the intention to form a working party to develop a greater understanding of the issues within Newton Abbot and to work towards a proposal for improving air quality in the three main 'hot spot' sites identified in the town.

Colin Bignall and Becky Wotton gave a summary of the Air Quality Action Plan for Teignbridge and raised the following key points:

- Air Quality Management Area (AQMA);
- Areas where levels of specific pollutants exceed national guidelines affecting air quality;
- Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP);
- New measures associated with the AQAP;
- Town Council to form a Working Party to consider new measures for Newton Abbot;
- Review of Air Quality Action Plan by Defra;
- Focused and targeted areas for Air Quality;
- Following Town and District Council review of the measures to form a business plan to seek to resolve and improve in areas identified; and
- Collaborative working between Devon County, Teignbridge District and the Town Council to achieve outcomes within the Business Plan.

The Mayor thanked Colin Bignall, Becky Wotton and Councillor Dewhirst for their outline presentation in keeping with the time constraints and reported that Council would call a Special Meeting to discuss the matter in more detail and make preparation for the Town Council Working Group. Accordingly it was;

**RESOLVED** that the Town Council would refer the matter of the Air Quality Action Plan to a future meeting for further consideration.

## 617. **MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor advised Members that engagements were severely restricted due to the Government guidelines but he was delighted to be able to report that he had recently attended the socially distanced celebrations for the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Francis Luscombe MBE a former Royal Marine serving on HMS Triumph (former air craft carrier). The Mayor had been able to liaise with Commander Waller of the current HMS Triumph to arrange for a commemorate plaque and honorary medal for Mr Luscombe. The gentleman was deeply touched by the tributes and contribution towards his special day.

## 618. **MAYORAL/CLERK ACTIONS TAKEN ON MATTERS ARISING BETWEEN MEETINGS**

The Town Clerk reminded the Council that further to Minute 20/12(SP50) as discussed at the Meeting of the Strategic Planning Forum, the contract for the provision of floral displays had reached the end of its term towards the end of last year. The contractor, Idverde, had provided a quotation to extend the contract. Therefore the Clerk had taken

action to renew the Contract for the provision of floral displays and plant watering for a further four years. Accordingly it was:

**RESOLVED** that the Council endorsed the action of the Town Clerk, to extend the contract with Idverde for the provision of floral displays and plant watering for a further four years, to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

#### 619. **REPORTS OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

The Mayor invited Chairmen to report on matters in relation to their Committees or Sub-committees during the period of COVID-19 Government restrictions.

A. Councillor Mrs Lesley Sheffield, Chairman of Community & Heritage Committee reported on the following issues:

- The Government restrictions had meant the Museum had to close again for the duration of the Lockdown;
- The continued work on the Collection and community engagement via social media had been commended by the Heritage Fund; and
- The request for delegated authority to be given to the Principal Administrator in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman to review and approve the policies and procedures of the Museum to be sent to the Arts Council to maintain their Accreditation. Accordingly it was:

**RESOLVED** that delegated authority be granted to the Principal Administrator in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Community & Heritage Committee to review and approve the revised policies and procedures for the Museum in accordance with their Accreditation with the Arts Council and to report back in due course.

B. Councillor David Howe, Chairman of Planning Committee reported on the following issues:

- The Chairman thanked Councillors for their continued consideration and responses to Planning Applications.

C. Councillor Mrs Carol Bunday, Chairman of the Events Sub-Committee reported on the following issues:

- Thanked all those involved in assisting the Remembrance Sunday Service, which met the Government Guidelines for social distancing, those in attendance or viewed via social media reported their appreciation for a sensitively delivered service in such difficult circumstances;
- Thanked the Town Development Manager and Events Co-ordinators for their organisation of the Christmas Give Away in the town, to the Councillors who gave their time and noted the appreciation among local shoppers that the Town Council was providing visible support in unprecedented times;
- There would be no Easter Events for 2021 due to the ongoing Government restrictions but work was underway to organise an 'Open Day' to celebrate the town's re-opening when restrictions were lifted and it was safe to do so;
- Due to the uncertainty about the lifting of Government restrictions it was necessary to postpone the Freedom of the Town Parade from the ships' company of HMS Triumph. It was important to defer the event until it was possible to allow the community to fully enjoy and participate the day;

- Arrangements were being made for both the Town Criers and Autumn Fayre events in September dependent upon the restrictions being lifted sufficiently to allow them to go ahead; and
- The Chairman of the Carnival Committee, Councillor Mike Ryan added that it was unlikely that the Newton Abbot Carnival 2021 would be able to go ahead this year.

The Mayor thanked the Chairmen for their updates to the Council and acknowledged the continued work and efforts in preparation for when the Government restrictions could be lifted and allowed activities in the town to resume.

## 620. PROCEEDINGS OF COMMITTEES

The Minutes of the Meeting of the **Finance & Audit Committee** held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 as presented by the Chairman Councillor C Parker, were received and approved; with the exception of Minutes 20/01(605) and (606)B.

## 621. PRECEPT 2021/22

The Mayor invited the Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee to report on the Precept for 2021/22. Councillor Colin Parker reminded Councillors that it was the statutory duty of the Council to approve a Precept for 2021/22. The Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee referred Members of the recommendation made to Council as set out in Minute 21/01/(606B). In doing so Councillor Parker reported that the budget and precept reflected the reaction to and the preparation for future plans in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the extraordinary difficulties faced by everyone. Councillor Parker recapped on the changes to staffing establishment to meet the growth in services provided to the town. Councillor Parker emphasised that Newton Abbot Town Council offered an exceptional standard in delivering services across town and would continue to support the recovery of local businesses as they emerged from the severe effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was proposed by Councillor Parker and seconded by Councillor Corney-Walker that a Precept in the sum of £914,707 be adopted for the year 2021/22.

Accordingly, it was

**RESOLVED** that the Council hereby adopts a Precept of **£914,707 for 2021/22** representing an increase of £5.70p p.a. (0.11p per week) or 5.6% for a Band D property in Newton Abbot and that Teignbridge District Council be therefore requested to collect on the Town Council's behalf the **sum of £914,707**.

## 622. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019/20

Arising from Minute 21/01(605) the Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee proposed that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 be approved and adopted by the Council, accordingly it was;

**RESOLVED** that a) the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 be hereby, approved and adopted and b) the RFO send a letter to PKF Littlejohn, External Auditor to the Council to seek clarification on the serious concerns raised by the RFO in the determination of the Other Matters made in respect of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 and to report back in due course.

**623. CALENDAR AND LIST OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2021/22**

The Mayor invited Members to consider the Calendar and List of Meetings scheduled for 2021/22, previously circulated, and to note the dates for office closure during the Christmas and New Year period. Following and acknowledgement that the schedule was subject to change to meet the necessary Government restrictions due to the ongoing implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was;

**RESOLVED** that the Calendar and List of Meetings and Events for 2021/22 be hereby adopted and approved.

**624. DEFIBRILLATOR FOR NEWTON'S PLACE**

The Mayor invited the Town Clerk to update on the proposal for a defibrillator to be installed at Newton's Place. The Clerk reported that whilst there were 14 such defibrillators in the town centre that only two, possibly three were accessible outside normal business hours and therefore it was felt that Newton's Place would be an ideal location to provide host to one and ensure its accessibility 24/7. A local charity Jay's Aim in memory of James Osborne had offered to supply a defibrillator funded by Newton Abbot College to Newton's Place subject to the Town Council being granted Listed Building Consent and being able to support the necessary power supply. Following discussion among Members, accordingly it was:

**RESOLVED** that the Town Council gave their full support to the Town Clerk to investigate the costs associated with seeking the necessary Listed Building Consent and power supply for the installation of a defibrillator at Newton's Place to be accessible 24/7 and further to investigate suitable additional sites within the vicinity of the town.

**625. NEWTON ABBOT ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY**

The Mayor referred to the Scoping document provided by Devon County Council and Teignbridge District Council in regard to the Active Travel Strategy for Newton Abbot. The Mayor invited nominations for a representative of the Town Council to join the Stakeholder Group. Accordingly it was:

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Colin Parker be appointed as the Town Council representative on the Newton Abbot Active Travel Stakeholder Group.

**626. PLASTIC FREE NEWTON ABBOT – APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION**

Further to Minute 19/11(283), the Mayor invited Councillor David Corney-Walker, the Town Council's representative for Plastic Free Newton Abbot to propose a resolution that would ensure it was able to meet the requirements of its Accreditation and to continue its work within the town. Councillor David Corney-walker proposed that the resolution be adopted as set out. Therefore accordingly it was;

**RESOLVED** that Newton Abbot Town Council pledges to support the co-ordinating activities of the Plastic-Free Newton Abbot campaign to achieve full accreditation for Newton Abbot as a Plastic-Free Community. The Council is willing to help the group reduce single-use plastics in Newton Abbot by:

- a) Appointment of Representative of Town Council to PFNA Steering Group;

- b) Agree to support the activities of the campaign; and
- c) Pledge to act by example and remove single-use plastic items from its premises and operations.

**627. NALC MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT 2020/21**

Arising from Minute 20/07(540) the Mayor reminded Councillors that the Council had reviewed the draft Model Code of Conduct as part of the consultation process. Following which NALC had issued the revised Model document, previously circulated. The Mayor emphasised the importance of the document and drew attention to the legal duty of a Councillor to declare any pecuniary interests as an example contained within the document. Accordingly it was:

**RESOLVED** that the NALC Model Code of Conduct 2020/21 be hereby approved and adopted.

**628. THE COMMON SEAL**

Following a proposition by the Mayor it was:

**RESOLVED** that the Common Seal of the Council be hereby affixed to the Contract in Minute 618 above as necessary to give effect to the resolution passed by the Council at the meeting.

**629. LATE CORRESPONDENCE**

A. In addition to written reports provided County and District Councillor Mrs Jackie Hook, previously circulated, she updated Council on the temporary crossing points located within the town. Exeter Road and Jetty Marsh Road had both received funding for permanent status and whilst the temporary installation would be removed the permanent crossing point would be reinstated as early as possible in the new financial year. Unfortunately the Ashburton Road crossing was not allocated funding as a permanent installation and would therefore be removed. Following a discussion among Members, Councillor Mrs Hook invited suggestions of potential sites that would benefit pedestrians and cyclists for consideration in future projects.

B. The Town Development Manager, Mrs Sally Henley updated Council on the local business economy in particular the impact the pandemic and associated Government restrictions were having on the town centre and its retailers. Mrs Henley raised the following key points and advised Members that she would provide a written update to be circulated in due course:

- A recent meeting of the Association of Town Centre Managers (100 plus in attendance) had highlighted the impacts of COVID-19 on town centres;
- Whilst support of Furlough and Grant Funding reaches out to some businesses it does not cover all and those excluded were facing severe hardship;
- Ridgway Shoes had to close due to the Pandemic and is no longer eligible for Business Rate Relief;
- The suppliers to the food outlets are not eligible for the same grants and furlough support schemes as the cafes themselves and it leaves gaps in the supply chain;
- Large employers such as AVIVA are considering home-working as a long term solution which removes the regular custom from their employers in larger towns and cities;

- Edinburgh Woollen Mill has closed permanently but it is hoped that both Peacocks and Bon Marche will survive the temporary closure;
- The Town Council's decision to purchase the specialist cleansing machine as operated by the Council's two Facilities Maintenance Officers is an important measure in demonstrating its commitment to the town and keeping it well maintained;
- The District Authority were successful in achieving a large proportion of its application for Grant Funding from the Future High Street Fund; and
- With the contributions from District Councillors Community Fund it was hoped that bespoke seating could replace the Chapter 8 Fencing in Courtenay Street near Costa Coffee.

The Mayor thanked Mrs Henley for her verbal report and invited questions from Members who discussed the necessity to write to Government to seek guidance on its intention to extend the Business Rate 'Holiday'. Accordingly it was:

**RESOLVED** that the Mayor write a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak and send a copy to the Rt Hon Ann-Marie Morris MP for Newton Abbot, to seek clarification on the Government's intention to extend the Business Rates 'Holiday' beyond April 2021.

#### 630. **MATTERS ARISING**

Councillor Mike Ryan offered his sincere thanks to the District Authority for facilitating the opening of Sherborne House for the COVID-19 vaccination programme and for the use of the car parks marshalled by members of the Rotary Club. This was echoed by fellow Members who noted that many of those involved in delivering the vaccinations were doing so in their own time and were to be commended for their dedication and commitment. Consequently, the Mayor agreed to write an appropriate thank you letter to TDC.

Councillor Mike Hocking noted the Government's intention to invoke the 'Sunset Clause' contained within the Coronavirus Act 2020 and thereby the Council would be expected to resume face to face meetings from May 6<sup>th</sup> 2021. Councillor Hocking reported that both DALC and NALC were seeking clarification and guidance on this matter given the current situation concerning COVID-19.

Councillor Colin Parker suggested that a report on the Grants and Financial Assistance provided to local organisations before Christmas be made to the local press; Nigel Canham the Council's Communications Advisor would assist.

Nigel Canham invited Members to provide ideas for inclusion in a fortnightly column in the Herald Express entitled Newton Matters and offered to assist with writing copy or editorial. Sam Scott echoed the invitation to include articles in the next edition of the Newton Cryer.

The Clerk thanked Councillors for their continued support and respect for one another and to officers of the Council, which was particularly appreciated during such difficult times.

#### 631. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting of the Council would be 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

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Chairman (Mayor)