

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ONLINE WEDNESDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021 AT 7.00 P.M.**

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

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

Invited Guests: Rev Gareth Regan

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

**662. WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Rev Gareth Regan to open the meeting with prayers.

**663. APOLOGIES**

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

**664. INTERESTS**

None declared.

**665. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021 were received and signed as a correct record.

**666. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

**667. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor advised Members that engagements were severely restricted due to the Government guidelines therefore, neither the Mayor nor the Deputy Mayor had been involved in any engagements since the last meeting of the Council.

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

The Town Clerk reported that he had not been required to take any action on behalf of the Council since the last meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

## 669. RESUMPTION OF IN-PERSON MEETINGS

The Mayor invited the Town Clerk to brief Members on the protocol document, previously circulated, regarding the resumption of In-Person Meetings. The Clerk reminded Members of the background to document whereby, prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic it was a requirement for all Councils to meet in person. However, as part of the Government restrictions, the Coronavirus Act 2020 made it lawful for Council's to meet remotely. The current legislation would effectively expire at midnight on 6<sup>th</sup> May and from 7<sup>th</sup> May there must be a resumption of in-person meetings.

It was noted that both NALC and the SLCC had been lobbying Government to bring about an extension to the legislation to facilitate a continuation of remote meetings as the consequences of the pandemic were still apparent but the Government had advised that it may not have time in which to do so. Therefore all Councils must prepare in readiness for meetings to resume in their 'traditional' format. The Clerk reported that a recent survey identified mixed feelings among Members about their confidence in returning to in-person Meetings but of those who felt able to attend it would allow sufficient numbers for the Council to be quorate and function lawfully.

The Clerk invited the Principal Administrator to report on the regulations required to be fulfilled by the Council in order to meet in-person. The Principal Administrator reported that there was guidance available to allow meetings of less than 30 people to go ahead in a practical and safe manner. Mrs Robinson advised Members of practical measures being considered for meetings within Newton's Place that would allow for social distancing to be maintained. She further advised that the requirements for meetings over 30 people was more stringent and would necessitate compliance with the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and Amended Regulations 2020 in regard to Health Prevention. Whilst careful consideration and planning would be given to the organisation of a COVID safe meeting; the Council was in the fortunate position that the size, layout and design of Newton's Place would allow for meetings to be held on site.

The Clerk clarified questions and comments from Members and confirmed that the cessation of the Coronavirus Act 2020 would not prevent the continuation of meetings to discuss non-decision making items to be held remotely and this alongside an adjustment to the timetable of Meetings of the Full Council and Delegated Committees could provide a practical way forward.

The Mayor thanked the Town Clerk and Principal Administrator for their reports and summarised the key points made by Councillors in noting their support for in-person meetings when it was safe to do so alongside their concerns and cautious apprehension that the virus still presented a credible threat to the wider community. Members praised the NHS roll-out of vaccinations but noted that due regard should be given to the safety of the Council's younger staff members and those within the community, who had not yet benefitted from the vaccination programme.

Following a detailed discussion among Members, it was:

**RESOLVED** that the matter of the Resumption of In-Person Meetings be referred to the next Meeting of the Council on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2021, for further consideration, prior to making a decision.

## 670. 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 Museum remained closed due to the Government restrictions but planned to re-open on 17<sup>th</sup> May subject to Government guidelines.
- The Museum would open operating in the covid-safe arrangements of up to six visitors at one session within a bubble.
- The Model Train had been fitted with an enhanced charger and was working well, it would be fully operational when the Museum re-opened.

B. Councillor Colin Parker, Chairman of Finance & Audit Committee reported on the following issues:

- Matters in relation to items under Minutes, (671),(672) and (673) below.

C. 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.
- Noted the distinction between the Town Council Ward of Brunel falling within the Teignbridge Ward of Buckland and Milber and that officers had sought to provide clarity on the Minutes of the Planning Committee.

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

- The Carnival Committee had decided to cancel Carnival 2021 but hoped to resume in 2022.
- The Rotary Club had invited the Town Council to co-host a 'Fun Day' but it was noted that government restrictions may not allow such events to go ahead, therefore after consideration the invitation had been declined.
- The Band Concerts would go ahead following an adjustment to the programme with concerts running from June through to September. It was felt that social distancing could be carefully managed and they would be a welcome event for the town.
- Preparations are underway for the Town Crier Competition to be held early September 2021 and will be in accordance with government social distancing requirements.
- The Town Development Manager was preparing for an 'Opening Event' for the town with a 'Give-away' gift to encourage support for shopping locally however events such as the Motor Show have had to be cancelled for this year.

The Mayor thanked the Chairmen for their updates to the Council and acknowledged the continued work and efforts during the Government restrictions.

#### 671. **PROCEEDINGS OF COMMITTEES**

- A. The Minutes of the Meeting of the **Finance & Audit Committee** held on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 as presented by the Chairman, Councillor C Parker, were received and approved.

#### 672. **POLICIES**

Further to Minute 21/02(656) the Mayor introduced the Council Financial Regulations and the Reserves Policy, previously circulated and noted that they were recently

reviewed at the Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Accordingly, it was;

**RESOLVED** that the Council's **Financial Regulations** and **Reserves Policy** be hereby, approved and adopted.

**673. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS – FINAL 2019/20 & INTERIM 2020/21**

Further to Minute 21/02(653) the Mayor invited the RFO to update Members on the Reports, previously circulated. Ms Scott referred to both the **Final Audit Report for 2019/20 and the Interim Audit Report for 2018-19** and noted that they had been considered at the Meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and invited additional comments.

There being no further comments, accordingly, it was:

**RESOLVED** that the Council hereby approves and adopts  
a) the **Final Internal Audit Report for 2019/20** and  
b) the **Interim Audit Report 2020/21**.

**674. NEWTON'S PLACE**

The Mayor invited the Town Clerk to give an update on matter relating to Newton's Place. The Town Clerk reported that the purchase of the small piece of land to the rear of the building had now been completed and the Council awaited the final documents from the Land Registry. The Clerk further reported that repairs had been made to the damaged glass window in the Ditchburn Room following the recent storm. He awaited further guidance from the supplier of the banners to ascertain whether the banners would be replaced with an alternative product or mechanism to hold them in place. The Clerk would provide a further update in due course.

Members noted the necessity for permanent storage facility for the Council and the Clerk advised that investigations were underway and he would report back to the Council in due course.

The Mayor thanked the Town Clerk for his verbal update on matters relating to Newton's Place.

**675. LATE CORRESPONDENCE AND MATTERS ARISING**

Nigel Canham, Communications Advisor reminded Members of the fortnightly column available to them in the Herald Express. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor thanked Mr Canham for his excellent support in recent public communications.

Phil Rowe, Town Clerk noted the complexities of online meetings where there are technical difficulties and welcomed the resumption of face-to-face meetings when it was considered safe to do so.

The Mayor closed the meeting in thanking all Councillors and Officers for their continued efforts during these extraordinary times.

**676. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting of the Council would be 7<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

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Chairman (Mayor)