

SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL

DRAFT – SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION

Minutes of the meeting of the SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL Virtual Meeting held on Monday 18 May 2020 at 6.45 p.m.

Present: Cllr J Andrews (Town Mayor), Cllrs, J Carling, V Coleridge-Matthews, M Crossman, S Greene, A Hall, M Hall, R Legg, J Pentolfe, B Taylor and J Warburton.

In attendance: Mr S Shield (Town Clerk), Mrs S Woodford (Civic Administrator).

Youth Advisors: Apologies.

1. PUBLIC SESSION

1.1 Police Report

Sgt Matt Whetham reported 35 crimes in the month of March. This included 2 Covid related hate crimes involving Chinese students, as the schools are now closed this type of crime is no longer a problem in Sherborne. The crime figures for April are down at 28, this reflects a nationwide reduction in crime during the lockdown. Sgt Whetham was unable to give figures on any police action on social distancing crimes as it is still ongoing. He recommended the Police website which has a detailed questions and answers section relating to Covid lock-down legislation. Cllr Greene expressed concern about the children playing on the Skate Park, which is still shut, Sgt Whetham agreed to get the local officers to patrol in that area more frequently.

1.2 Paddock Gallery Project

The Town Clerk raised questions submitted by two members of the public relating to the termination of the Paddock Gallery Project, with particular concern about the likely use of site. Cllr Andrews confirmed that the land is owned by the Sherborne Arts Trust, and there are covenants in place requiring that the land is used for a community arts facility. There is no longer any time constraint remaining on when the land should be put to its intended use, although that was imposed by Dorset County Council when the land was originally transferred. It was agreed that dialogue should remain with those involved in the Sherborne Arts Trust to ensure that the proposals for a community arts facility do not stagnate.

1.3 Priestland Steps

Cllr Greene had enquired about the handrails at Priestland Steps and the Clerk is taking this forward to Dorset Council Highways Department.

2. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCIL – COUNCILLOR ANDREWS

Cllr Andrews reported: -

- Dorset Council will be holding its first Full Council meeting since lock-down on June 11th. The attendance will be kept to the minimum but enough to be quorate and will be split equally amongst political parties.
- The head of Adult and Social Care, Laura Miller, thanks everyone involved in helping those who are shielding or vulnerable during the Covid Pandemic. This will include groups such as Sherborne Viral Kindness.
- There has been no increase in Domestic Abuse within Dorset, which is contradiction to the national trend, although this could be because it is going unreported. There is a website named 'youfirst' where Domestic Abuse can be reported.

- The new Car Park Scheme is causing problems as it is too technical for many residents. Cllr Andrews is requesting that cash payments are made available for council car parks as it is available for on street parking.
- 7,095 businesses have received grants totalling £84.94 million, which has caused the Dorset Council Revenue team to work flat out 7 days a week. Some businesses have slipped through and they are attempting to close any loopholes. 3,800 companies are eligible that have not yet claimed and they have been contacted to ensure they are aware of the grants available. The self-employed are now getting assistance also.
- Highways – The roadworks due to commence on 26 April not yet rescheduled. Cllr Andrews is pressing for a new date.
- Climate Change EAP to be held next, however Members are disappointed that they have no draft plan as yet.

3. REPORT FROM DORSET COUNCIL – COUNCILLOR M HALL

Cllr Hall reported: -

- The need for children’s care has increased during the crisis and there are now 483 in care, however 50% of foster carers are self-isolating which is affecting the service provision. ‘Cherries Home’ in Weymouth is still operating and is aiming to care for all of these children in the interim. Youth workers have been reassigned to the duty of caring for children with special needs.
- Many schools have remained open throughout the crisis, those catering for special needs and for the children of key workers. All schools have been assigned a social worker and have detailed risk assessments in place, further assessments will be necessary before reopening.
- Councillor Hall also referred to the scheduled road works and is keen to ensure that if the work does not take place this year, it is reassigned by Dorset Council highways to the schedule for next year.
- Members raised concerns regarding Harbour Vale School and the necessity for its pupils to receive some form of education. Cllr Andrews and Cllr Hall gave assurance that it is mentioned each week at the regular webinars and they will follow it up. Cllr Warburton suggested that the Town Council might be able to assist the disadvantaged children with i-pads or similar and suggested the formation of a working group to consider this. Cllr Andrews noted that Dorset Council reconditioned laptops are available to many, but he would look into and report back with an assessment of the need for further assistance.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATION REQUESTS

Councillors were reminded of their obligations to declare their interests in the following items and to indicate the action they will be taking when the item is considered in accordance with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Model Code of Conduct prepared to comply with the requirements of Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011.

- 5.1 Cllrs Andrews, M Hall, and Legg, as Members of the Dorset Council, declared an interest in Item No. 7 the Plans Committee Minutes.
- 5.2 Cllr Warburton declared an interest in Item 8.8 as she remains a member of Sherborne Douzelage.

6. MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 16 MARCH 2020

It was PROPOSED by Cllr A Hall and SECONDED by Cllr Pentolfe and AGREED (10 in favour and 1 non vote) that:

The Minutes (Appendix A), having been circulated to Members prior to the meeting, were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

The Town Clerk referred to the following matters arising from the Minutes of 16 March 2020:

- The article for the Sherborne Times has been written and refreshed to reflect the current crisis with them for inclusion in the April issue.
- Further street names have been agreed.
- The Designated Premises Supervisor licence has now been received and will hopefully be implemented once the Digby Hall reopens.
- The existing bar equipment in the Digby Hall has been purchased from the previous Licensee.
- The advertisements for the Communications Officer and the Road Sweeper were placed and responses received, but it has all been put on hold until the lock-down is lifted sufficiently.
- The Town Council Office Staff are either working from home or from The Manor House, the Grounds Team have been working in smaller teams, and back up to capacity as of today.
- The three-year internal audit support is now in place with a 3-year contract agreed.
- The removal of the heavy good vehicle bays at Culverhayes is ongoing as is the purchase of the new Sweeper.
- The General and Motor Insurance policies have been renewed.
- Confirmed that Low Carbon Dorset have kept in touch and will assist with seeking efficiency savings when considering the existing and new council offices and community hub.
- Members have been kept informed of council or related matters via the weekly members update.

Councillor Taylor congratulated the Grounds Team for the good work they have maintained over the crisis period, which is a credit to them, and he asked that this be passed on to them.

7. PLANS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Cllr Taylor referred to the meetings held on 6 April and 4 May 2020. Cllr Greene queried the minutes of the April meeting at Item 1 as she had not knowingly received the relevant papers and was therefore unable to comment on the plans. The Town Clerk apologised to Cllr Greene and explained that it was practice to deliver all relevant hard copies to Cllr Greene as she has no internet access, but these particular papers may have gone astray.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Taylor and SECONDED by Cllr Crossman and AGREED (7 in favour and 4 non votes) that:

The Minutes of the Plans Committees (Appendix B) held on 6 April and 4 May respectively were received and adopted.

8. FINANCE AND RESOURCES

8.1 Scheme of Delegation

Members were in receipt of a copy of an Emergency Scheme of Delegation (Item 8.1) drawn up to assist with the operation of the Council throughout this current pandemic and any similar crisis which may occur. The scheme to be used in conjunction with current Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

It was PROPOSED BY Cllr Andrews and SECONDED by Cllr Warburton and AGREED unanimously that Sherborne Town Council:

Sherborne Town Council approve the Emergency Scheme of Delegation at Item 8.1.

8.2 Section 1 Annual Governance Statement

Members were in receipt of a copy of the 2019/2020 Annual Governance Statement (Item 8.2) and it was PROPOSED by Cllr Warburton, SECONDED by Cllr Pentolfe and AGREED unanimously that:

Sherborne Town Council approves the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 at 8.2.

8.3 Payment Schedule

The paper was noted (Item 8.3). Cllr Hall gave assurance that all payments were being made and the council's finances were not impacted by the current crisis. He noted that some of the Mayor's Allowance had been allocated towards the provision of items for the Sherborne Food Bank. Cllr Carling has if any Town Council staff had been furloughed, the Town Clerk confirmed that none had. It was then PROPOSED by Cllr Hall and SECONDED by Cllr Warburton and AGREED unanimously that:

That for the period 17/2/2020 to 18/5/2020 Cheque Payments of £454.98, Credit Card Payments of £3,317.10, BACS Payments of £375,490.71 and Direct Debits amounting to £12,560.83 be approved from the Town Council Current Account and that for the period 17/2/2020 to 18/5/2020 BACS Payment of £12,474.47 and Direct Debits amounting to £2,068.87 be approved from the Digby Hall and Library Account.

8.4 Bank Balances

The paper was noted (Item 8.4) and it was PROPOSED by Cllr M Hall and SECONDED by Cllr A Hall and AGREED unanimously that:

The Bank Balances/Reconciliations for Sherborne Town Council and the Digby Hall and Library as of the 31 March/30 April 2020 are approved.

8.5 Budget Review – Quarter to April 2020

Members were in receipt of the Actual versus Budget Statement for the quarter to April 2020.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr M Hall and SECONDED by Cllr Andrews and AGREED unanimously that:

Sherborne Town Council receives and notes the Budget/Actual comparison for the quarter to April 2020.

8.6 Financial Regulations

Members were in receipt of a revised set of Financial Regulations (Item 8.6) including revisions made at Items 6.9 and 6.10 relating to the Internet Banking provisions, permitting the Finance Portfolio Holder and Deputy to authorise payments in the presence of the RFO.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Andrews and SECONDED by Cllr Pentolfe and AGREED unanimously that:

Sherborne Town Council approves the changes to Financial Regulations (at Item 8.6)

8.7 Grant Application – Sherborne Good Neighbours

A grant application was received from Sherborne Good Neighbours to assist with funds for their provision of a taxi service for the elderly and vulnerable in Sherborne. Members noted the financial hardships faced by groups such as Sherborne Good Neighbours during the current crisis, but were hopeful that the legacy might be a good one with people realising their importance and being prepared to give more support in the future.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr M Hall and SECONDED by Cllr Warburton and AGREED unanimously that:

Sherborne Town Council approves a grant of £500 to Sherborne Good Neighbours.

8.8 Grant Application – Sherborne Douzelage

A grant application was received from Sherborne Douzelage to assist with the links they maintain between Sherborne and Europe.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr M Hall and SECONDED by Cllr Carling and AGREED (10 in favour and 1 non vote) that:

Sherborne Town Council approves a grant of £350 to Sherborne Douzelage.

9. **REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

Cllr Taylor gave a report on Tourism and Business in the Town in the wake of the current pandemic. The Sherborne Tourism Forum note that ‘Tourism Dorset’ are conducting a survey on the impact of Covid 19 on the hospitality and visitor sector. The results indicate that if things begin to reopen in June 2020, 80% of businesses will survive, if that is delayed to September then 50% might survive, but if they do not reopen until the year end then only a quarter will probably manage to survive. So it is a very difficult and anxious time for those in business.

The independent traders report that running costs have increased, insurance has gone up with generally no easement from Landlords. Trade and Commerce are running remotely but have concerns about the restart of the town economy, the need for a ‘recovery plan’ and to be able to communicate this to the Town. The Town Council has a potential role in this, to be at the forefront of the recovery plan, communicating with businesses and guiding the community to the advice and assistance available, whilst giving support where needed.

Cllr Warburton considered that the recovery plan should be an item for the next agenda.

Cllr Taylor suggested that a note is put out to the traders and local business giving an outline of the recovery plan and the support available.

Cllr Legg suggested that the issues of rent payments and landlords is put on the agenda for discussion with Chris Loder MP as it is something that should be taken to the top within Government’.

10. EXEMPT BUSINESS

10.1 Councillor Resignation

The Town Clerk informed members of the resignation of a Council member, advising that the vacancy would be advertised to the community to give electors the opportunity to request a local election. If no election is requested, then the post will be open to co-option.

10.2 Verbal Report on staffing by Cllr Warburton

Cllr Warburton reported on the incremental increases due to two members of staff.

It was PROPOSED by Cllr Warburton and SECONDED by Cllr Andrews and AGREED unanimously that:

Sherborne Town Council approves the incremental increases for employee numbers 89 and 90 according to the current Local Government payment scales.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

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Town Mayor