

WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES 3RD AUGUST 2020

Minutes of the meeting of Wellington Town Council held online via Zoom on Monday 3rd August 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor J Lloyd (Mayor),
Councillors M Barr, C Booth, D Bradley, A Govier, J Hunt, M Lithgow, M McGuffie, S Pringle-Kosikowsky, V Stock-Williams, J Thorne.

Kathryn Hemensley (Town Clerk)
Annette Kirk (Deputy Clerk)
Alice Kendall (Assistant Clerk)

There was 1 member of the public present and 2 members of the press. Sgt Daniel Bishop was also present.

34. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Mayor opened the meeting and reminded Councillors to raise their hand when they wished to speak and to keep any mobile phones on silent.

35. APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were given and accepted from Councillor Powell-Brace.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Govier, Lithgow, Lloyd, and Stock-Williams declared personal interests as members of Somerset West and Taunton Council.

Councillors Govier, Lithgow, Lloyd, and Stock-Williams declared personal interests as members of Somerset West and Taunton Council.

Councillors Thorne, Govier and Hunt declared personal interests as members of Somerset County Council.

Councillor Lloyd declared a personal interest relating to payments to MTMIT, being a former customer of MTMIT, the Council's IT consultant.

Councillor Thorne declared a personal interest relating to payments to MTMIT, being a customer and personal friend of MTMIT, the Council's IT consultant. He also declared a prejudicial interest in item 3 on the Clerk's report as he had received a paid commission from the IT consultant to write and source articles for the new website.

Councillor Lithgow declared a personal interest in the Grant Application from Wellington Community Counselling as a former director of the organisation.

Councillor Govier declared a personal interest in payments to MTMIT as a customer of the business, and in relation to the Grant Application from Wellington Community Counselling as he had helped set up the organisation. He confirmed that he no longer has any involvement.

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37. MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve and formally adopt the minutes of the Council Planning meeting on 20th July and full Council meeting on 6th July 2020.

38. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor read a summary of a written report on the previous month. A copy is attached to these minutes. Further to this report, Cllr Lloyd reported that £100,000 will be granted to Wellington from a High Street Fund via Somerset West and Taunton Council. It was believed the Town Council would become responsible for the administration of said funding. It was suggested, but Councillors did not agree that a formal resolution would be required from Full Council with regard to submitting proposals for the use of the funding. A meeting was suggested for Tuesday 11th August to table this matter but declined with Councillors stating that managing the fund could be adequately dealt with by the Council's Town Centre Working Group. The Mayor informed Councillors that she was now in receipt of further documents containing more detail about the project and that she would circulate a copy to all Councillors for their information.

39. POLICE REPORT

Sergeant Dan Bishop gave an overview of his report that was circulated to Councillors before the meeting. Councillors briefly asked questions regarding the current bike marking event that was held. The Mayor thanked Sergeant Bishop for his attendance.

Sergeant Bishop left the meeting at this juncture.

40. CLERK'S REPORT

The report had been previously circulated to Councillors and it was so noted. Councillors asked about the situation regarding the installation of a bench at Brooklands Road. The Town Clerk advised Councillors that the 4 benches ordered in the previous financial year arrived just before lockdown. A shortage of ID Verde availability due to employees shielding had meant the benches had been stored. The Clerk would seek to progress this as she would be meeting with the ID Verde Service manager shortly.

41. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS

a) Wellington Community Counselling

This item was deferred from the Council meeting on 6th July, pending Councillor requests for further information which has now been received.

A grant application had been received from Wellington Counselling CIC requesting £6,000 to support their work in providing free and low-cost counselling to local children. The organisation had also been providing free online counselling to key workers during the Coronavirus pandemic. The Council granted this organisation funding of £6,000 in the previous financial year.

RESOLVED to set up a three-year Service Level Agreement for the amount of £12,000 to be paid in two instalments each year after a six-monthly review of the organisation's

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performance. Measurable outcomes are to be detailed in the agreement, and a panel of Councillors would meet with the Charity's Directors. There were eight votes in favour and three against.

RESOLVED to transfer funds from the health and wellbeing budget heading to fund these payments. There were eight votes in favour, one against and two abstentions.

b) PromiseWorks

A grant application had been received from PromiseWorks requesting £4,000 over a two-year period. This was to support their young person's mentoring service which currently operated County-wide but PromiseWorks hoped to bring the service to Wellington. The Application Form and supporting documents had been circulated to Councillors by e-mail in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED to decline the grant application from PromiseWorks stating the following reasons; Although the organisation has a reserves policy in place, Councillors felt that the company's funds were more than adequate and the Council aims to help those organisations who are less financially sound. There were also issues raised regarding the locality in which the money would be spent. Although it was stated in the application form that there is a waiting list in the Wellington area, it was not clear what their definition of 'the Wellington area' was. It was also noted that there is already a well-established mentoring service running in the Town. Councillors expressed their disappointment that there was no representative from the Company present at the meeting. There were nine votes in favour and two abstentions.

42. TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No representations had been received.

43. TO REVIEW ELECTRONIC DECISIONS MADE BY COUNCILLORS

At an emergency meeting on 19th March, made necessary by the Coronavirus lockdown the Council made several proposals that were subsequently approved by Full Council. This included electronic voting for decisions about the Council's affairs. A summary report of decisions to date was circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting and was so noted.

44. INTERNAL AUDIT AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

The Council's financial accounts for the year to 31st March 2020 were formally approved at the Council meeting on 6th July 2020. They were re-circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting.

(a) Internal Auditor's Report

The Internal Auditor's report was noted.

(b) To review the Council's Summary of Funds Report

RESOLVED to accept the Summary of Funds Report.

(c) Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) Declaration of Control Statement

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A copy of the AGAR was circulated to Councillors before the meeting. The statements in section one were read aloud by the Town Clerk;

RESOLVED to answer YES to statement 1

RESOLVED to answer YES to statement 2

RESOLVED to answer YES to statement 3

RESOLVED to answer YES to statement 4

RESOLVED to answer YES to statement 5

RESOLVED to answer YES to statement 6

RESOLVED to answer YES to statement 7

RESOLVED to answer YES to statement 8

Statement 9 is not applicable.

(d) Annual Accounting Statements 2018/19

RESOLVED to approve the Accounting statement section of the AGAR and confirm that the Accounting Statements are accepted by Councillors as true and accurate.

(e) Statement of Internal Control

RESOLVED to accept the annual statement of internal control.

(f) Risk management

RESOLVED to affirm that all Council activities are being conducted in strict accordance with the Council's revised Risk Management Scheme as adopted on 12th May 2020.

45. TO REVIEW COUNCIL OPERATIONS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CORONAVIRUS-RELATED WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

(a) *This item was deferred from the Council meeting on 6th July.*

NOTED that an Allotments Committee meeting will be held on 21st September after carrying out the annual inspections.

AGREED that committee meetings will be placed on a rolling review and an item will remain on the monthly Full Council agenda.

(b) Coronavirus budget

RESOLVED to add a Coronavirus heading the current years (2020-21) budget.

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RESOLVED to transfer £10,000 from the Community Service and Priorities budget to the new Coronavirus budget.

46. TO REVIEW COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHRISTMAS LIGHT SWITCH ON AND GIVE CONSIDERATION TO THIS AND FUTURE YEAR'S CHRISTMAS EVENTS

This item was deferred from the Council meeting of 6th July

(a) Somerset West and Taunton Council's final costs for Christmas 2019 were £22,738 net of VAT. Other costs of £6,195 related to the hire of Christmas lights, public address system, refreshments and roundabout hire. Councillors resolved to discuss these costs as part of reviewing the event. The former 3-year contract for the hire of Christmas lights had ended and a proposal for this year had been sought.

(b) There remained an ongoing problem with defective light fittings and timers, most of which are situated on private buildings in the town centre. This resulted in Christmas lights being on at different times of the evening last year. A report with costings is awaited from SWT, the plan having been to carry out repairs during this summer. A competitive quote was also being sought from a second electrical company, recommended Festive Lighting company, who provide the lights.

(c) The future of public events for the rest of the year remained uncertain, but consideration of a Christmas market had been proposed.

The Town Clerk advised Councillors that a new 3-year quotation for Christmas lights including installation and removal had been received and would be circulated to Councillors after the meeting. Christmas lights at Rockwell Green were requested by Cllr Barr who would investigate what connections are in place and report back.

RESOLVED that there will be no Christmas events held in 2020 but there would be lights, which would be switched on from the last Saturday in November (28th). There were ten votes in favour and one abstention.

47. TO REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS AND DOCUMENTATION RELATING TO THE LETTING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S ALLOTMENTS AT THE BASINS, CORAMS LANE, WELLINGTON

RESOLVED to accept the revised Application Form, Tenancy Agreement, and Risk Assessment. Also, to increase the deposit from £22.00 to £50.00 from the start of the allotment year, 29th September 2020. There were ten votes in favour and one abstention.

48. TO REVIEW AND AGREE FEEDBACK ON A REVISED COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT CURRENTLY UNDER CONSULTATION BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (NALC)

Following a report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life to government, NALC and the Local Government Association (LGA) had jointly developed an updated national model Code of Conduct for all tiers of local government. The Code of Conduct sets out required standards of probity and conduct from individual Councillors. The revised Code was currently under consultation and had been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting.

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After some discussion, it was agreed that the majority of the Council supported the proposed changes to the Code of Conduct. Two Councillors were not in support of the sanctions suggested in the document.

49. TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR AS AT 30TH JUNE 2020.

RESOLVED to approve the summaries of income and expenditure for the month of June, bank reconciliation as at 30th June 2020 and summary accounts for the period 1st March 2020 to 30th June 2020.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 10.20 pm.

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Councillor Janet Lloyd
Mayor