

## WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES 7<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

**Minutes of the meeting of Wellington Town Council held online via Zoom on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 7.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Lloyd (Mayor),  
Councillors W Battishill, C Booth, A Govier, R Henley, J Hunt, M Lithgow, M McGuffie, N Powell-Brace, S Pringle-Kosikowsky, V Stock-Williams, J Thorne.

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

There were 3 members of the public present and 3 members of the press. Sergeant Daniel Bishop and Dr Joanne O'Hara (Heritage at Risk Officer - Somerset West & Taunton Council) were also present.

### **57. 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.

### **58. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were given and accepted from Councillors D Bradley, and N Smith. Councillors N Powell-Brace and C Booth had contacted the Town Clerk to advise that they might be arriving late.

### **59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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.

Councillor Pringle-Kosikowsky declared an interest in items 7 and 8 as he is employed by South West Heritage Trust, who may independently make comment on heritage-related topics.

Councillor McGuffie declared a personal interest in items 18 and 19 as he lives in the area affected.

### **60. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to approve and formally adopt the minutes of the Planning and full Council meetings held on 3<sup>rd</sup> August after removing the duplicated entries on item 36 of the Full Council minutes.

**61. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT**

The Mayor reported that she had only attended one event since the last meeting; A small group of representatives from the Royal British Legion held a socially distanced wreath laying ceremony at the War Memorial to mark VJ Day on 15<sup>th</sup> August.

She further reported that she had regrettably accepted the resignation notice of the Town Clerk and Councillors were all in agreement when she said the Town Clerk would be sorely missed. Recruitment for a replacement was now underway with the Clerk's hours being increased to 37 per week. Shortlisting would take place on 24<sup>th</sup> September and interviews were scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> October.

It was brought to Councillors' attention that there had been reports of haulage and construction vehicles taking a wrong turn into Bagley Road and causing disruption as they had difficulty turning. Bovis Homes had been contacted asking them to provide clearer directions to drivers and perhaps signage on the approach to the site.

Finally, it was reported that a meeting of the Town Centre Working Group was held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September to discuss plans for the £100,000 Emergency High Street Fund. An updated indicative plan had been circulated to Councillors before the meeting. Approval was sought to submit the plan to Somerset West & Taunton Council and it was so **RESOLVED.**

**62. POLICE REPORT**

Sergeant Bishop reported that in the four weeks since the last meeting, he and his team continued to adapt to the changing Coronavirus guidelines. Reports of breaches of the guidelines had diminished. Those breaches that had been reported had been met with an explanation and education approach which had been well received. He was pleased to report that issues with youth anti-social behaviour had been low in the last 4 weeks. His team had increased patrols at Tonedale Mill and security patrols were also now in place. Recent police contact with neighbours had proved successful and was hoped would increase incident reporting.

In his previous report, it was stated that a number of alcohol nuisance and noise complaints had been received. He was pleased to inform Councillors that he had been working closely with the owner/landlord of the Vintage Inn, Fore Street, who had implemented a number of measures to reduce such complaints.

Crime figures remained around the same level as last reported with 74 crimes recorded in the past 4 weeks. There had been an increase in vehicular related crimes which his team were focusing on. There will be a social media campaign to raise awareness.

It was further reported that the first day in the Pop-Up shop had gone very well and they welcomed a number of visitors. The road safety team were also in the Town, displaying a car that had been involved in a fatal accident on the M5 after a driver using a mobile phone struck the stationary car. Working with the family of the person who lost their life, a campaign had been created to raise awareness of the dangers of using a mobile phone whilst driving. The team would hopefully visit the town again at the weekend. It was anticipated that the mounted team would visit the town this week and the rural team would

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also visit. The rural team would be providing details of the horse watch and farm watch schemes and providing item marking for theft deterrence.

Councillor Lithgow asked if there had been an increase in domestic violence reports throughout lockdown. Sargent Bishop responded to say that there has been a social media campaign addressing the issue. It was further reported that when he or his team attend any domestic incidents, a risk assessment is carried out and shared with internal and external partners to bring matters to their attention.

At this juncture, Councillor Battishill joined the meeting.

### **63. TONEDALE MILL**

Dr J O'Hara, the Heritage at Risk Officer from Somerset West & Taunton Council addressed the meeting. She thanked the Policing and Fire Brigade teams who had provided much needed support at the site both on the ground and behind the scenes. As previously reported, security at the site remained an ongoing issue and SWT were doing what they could to ensure the owners make the site safer. She informed Councillors that the relationship between the Council and the owners of the site had improved but it was very unfortunate that the accident involving a teenage girl happened just one day after considerable discussions had taken place. SWT have issued a number of Legal Planning Notices to the site owners obliging the owners to address the issues raised within a certain time frame. If this was not met, a more serious Legal Notice would be issued taking further steps. The Majority of the Legal Notices had been issued using legislation related to Listed Buildings. A security action plan was being put in place.

Sergeant Bishop said that his team had been patrolling the site more often and were working more closely with local residents who are helping to report issues.

Councillor McGuffie reported that he had visited the site in the past week and although security looked to have been improved, there was still work to be done in the North East corner of the site. He was concerned about an unprotected drop into the stream at the site and the weak perimeter fencing.

Councillor Govier thanked Dr O'Hara, Sergeant Bishop and their teams for all the work they had done.

Councillor Pringle-Kosikowsky asked if there were any limitations to safety works given that it was a listed building. Dr O'Hara responded to say that yes there were some limitations, but she had also been working with the Health and Safety Executive to find the best possible solutions.

### **64. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE FROM THE SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON COUNCIL (SWTC) HERITAGE OFFICER CONCERNING LOCAL SITES**

Dr Joanne O'Hara gave a verbal update on the Conservation area in Wellington including the 90+ listed buildings in the Town Centre. She was hopeful that something could be done to address the number of empty shops longer term. Councillors invited Dr O'Hara to attend the Town Centre Working Group meetings, the details of which would be confirmed to her by e-mail.

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Councillor Thorne asked if any special approvals were required for shop frontage and signage within the town centre Conservation Area as there were some that don't fit the street scene. Dr O'Hara would look into this and respond directly to Councillor Thorne.

At this juncture, Councillor Henley joined the meeting.

### **65. CLERK'S REPORT**

The report had been previously circulated to Councillors and it was so noted.

Councillor Lithgow asked if a reply had been received from the grant applicant who had not spent their award. The Town Clerk updated Councillors to say that there was a delay in receiving a reply to her first e-mail. The organisation had suggested holding the monies for future referrals but the Town Clerk had specified they should return the amount given. A further reply was awaited.

Councillor McGuffie raised a query relating to a bench that the Council adopted and was due to be refurbished. The Clerk reported that the Community Warden was due to carry out the works just as lock down came into force and the Warden's hours were subsequently reduced. She had recently met with the Warden and their Manager and it was confirmed that the job was still on the to do list and should be carried out shortly. The bench would be removed so the works could be carried out at the depot, the Warden would arrange for a sign to be put up informing the public that the bench would be returned.

Councillor Powell-Brace asked if it could be arranged for the Longforth Road toilets to be opened earlier in the day to allow use by the drivers of the shuttle bus service that is in place while Network Rail carry out repairs to the Tonedale Bridge. The Town Clerk would investigate.

### **66. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS**

No applications had been received since the last meeting.

### **67. IN LIEU OF PUBLIC SPEAKING TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

An e-mail communication had been received from Transition Town Wellington saying they would welcome the recommencement of the Environment and Open Spaces Committee as they would like to ensure that environmental concerns do not fall by the wayside.

### **68. TO REVIEW ELECTRONIC DECISIONS MADE BY COUNCILLORS**

At a Coronavirus emergency meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March, Councillors 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 electronic decisions made since the Council meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> August was circulated and was so noted. The Assistant Clerk informed the meeting that full version of the voting sheet would be made available on the website the next day.

### **69. COUNCIL ACCOUNTS**

#### **(a) TO NOTE AND APPROVE THE JULY BANK RECONCILIATION**

#### **(b) TO NOTE AND APPROVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ITEMS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY**

**(c) TO NOTE AND APPROVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET FOR THE YEAR TO DATE AS AT 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2020**

**RESOLVED** to accept the Bank reconciliation, income, expenditure and budget reports as presented.

Councillor Thorne raised queries regarding interest received on the Council's account and was advised that the deposit account accrued monthly interest and the annual investment account had interest added at the end of its one-year term.

Councillor McGuffie raised concerns that monies placed in the budget were not being spent, particularly in light of comments from the Auditor in his report for the 2019-20 financial year. The Town Clerk explained that the budget had been set in good faith during the previous year and that due to the pandemic, it would be an unprecedented year for auditing purposes.

It was noted and thanks were given to Churches Together for contacting the Council to return their unspent grant after their event was cancelled due to Coronavirus.

**70. INTERNAL AUDIT ACTION PLAN 2020**

**RESOLVED** to accept the internal audit action plan.

**71. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2021**

**RESOLVED** to appoint a new internal auditor after the new Clerk is in post.

**72. TO BE UPDATED ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TOWN'S CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

The Town Clerk gave an update on the current situation. The new lighting scheme had been ordered and works to replace the faulty fittings would be ordered in the coming days. Communication had been received from SWT suggesting they actually owned 5 of the 13 connection points in the Town. The Town Clerk had reported back to them with details of the works ordered by the Town Council and that it was expected that SWT would repair their 5 fittings to ensure the Christmas lights were uninterrupted. It was suggested that next year, SWT should be approached so that the Town Council could take ownership of these fittings to allow easier management going forward.

It was agreed that unless general reporting in the Wellington Weekly made it clear, a press release would be prepared to assure the public that although there would be no switch on event this year, there would be Christmas lights.

With regard to the four new Christmas lights proposed for Rockwell Green, a quotation for new connections had been requested. Property-owner permissions in principle had been agreed and formal letters would be sent once a date for the works had been confirmed. It was likely that the new light will be in situ for Christmas 2020.

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

The Mayor reported that an Allotments Committee meeting would be held on 21<sup>st</sup> September following the plot inspections and in preparation for the new allotment year. It was agreed that an Environment and Open Spaces Committee meeting be held as soon as possible. The Mayor proposed this would likely be in mid-October due to other items already in the diary.

Councillor Thorne requested consideration of reinstating in-person Council meetings, but this was not supported due to Coronavirus safety concerns.

**74. TONEDALE BRIDGE ROAD CLOSURE**

Background to the situation was given and Councillors raised a number of concerns. This included emergency vehicle access and the effect on businesses on the other side of the bridge. Councillor Govier reported that he had done all he could to ease the situation but agreed that the impact was widespread. It was reported that the timings for traffic light operations was inconsistent, and hoped that more clarity would be offered from Network Rail.

At this juncture, Councillor Hunt gave apologies and left the meeting.

**75. ADOPTION OF A DECOMMISSIONED BRITISH TELECOM TELEPHONE KIOSK**

A request had been submitted for the Council to consider the adoption of an out-of-service telephone box at Tone Hill for use by local residents.

Councillor McGuffie had discovered the box was on private land and it was understood that it could only be bought by the landowner. He would investigate this matter further and report back. He would also speak to the local residents to ascertain if a group of people could be assembled to manage the box if it is taken up by the Council.

Before the close of the meeting, the Mayor reported that Remembrance Day will not take its usual form this year due to Coronavirus. Unfortunately, there will be no poppies on sale as production had not been possible. A meeting with the Royal British Legion was planned and national guidance was awaited.

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.15 pm.**

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**Councillor Janet Lloyd**  
**Mayor**