

WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES 2 AUGUST 2021

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WELLINGTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT COURT FIELDS SCHOOL HALL WELLINGTON TA12 8SW ON MONDAY 2 AUGUST 2021 AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Lithgow (Mayor),
Councillors M Barr, W Battishill, C Booth, D Bradley, R Henley, J Lloyd, M McGuffie, S Pringle-Kosikowsky, J Thorne, N. Smith, V Stock-Williams

David Farrow (Town Clerk), Annette Kirk (Deputy Clerk), Alice Kendall (Deputy RFO & Assistant Clerk)

One member of the press was in attendance.

156 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Mayor opened the meeting.

157 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors A Govier, J Hunt and N Powell-Brace. These were accepted and the Mayor advised that a draft policy on managing Councillor attendance would be considered at the meeting of the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on the 11 August.

158 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillors Thorne declared a personal interest as a member of Somerset County Council.

159 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve and formally adopt the minutes of the Planning and Full Council meetings held on 5 July 2021. Councillor Thorne asked if the previous practice of circulating draft minutes in advance of the meeting could be re-introduced and the Town Clerk agreed to do this.

160 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No public representation had been received.

161 REPORT FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor reported that he had attended 3 civic events since the last Council meeting; the opening of new Florist at the Rumwell Farm Shop, a photo exhibition run by the Royal British Legion at The Lawns Club in Taunton and a Civic Ceremony in Chard to celebrate the efforts of those who had provided support to the community during COVID. Councillor Barr asked if in future The Mayor would be providing a written report. The Mayor said that at this point he did not intend to because of time commitments.

162 CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report had been circulated with the agenda and was noted. Councillor Lloyd asked why members of the public were still able to attend the meeting, but Sergeant Bishop had been

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asked not to attend. The Town Clerk said that following concerns raised at a previous meeting about COVID numbers in the town and Council meetings he had circulated an email to councillors with some ideas about how we could limit face to face contact at meetings, and thereby limit the risk of transmission, which had formed the basis of the approach to this meeting and the later agenda item on the subject. Only one councillor had replied. The public have a right to attend Council meetings whereas visiting speakers attend at the invitation of the Council. The Clerk therefore considered that to reduce face to face contact the Council should limit those invited to attend.

Councillor Thorne asked for details of the broadband speed in the Council office. The Clerk could not give detail but said he would provide it. He also reported that when the new broadband line had been installed the engineer had tested it and the speed was significantly higher than it had been previously and that the staff had not been experiencing any difficulties. He agreed that this was something that needed to be kept under review.

Councillor Barr raised concerns about the number of employees undertaking street cleaning duties in the town which he thought had reduced over time and said that numbers should be brought back up to previous levels. The Town Clerk agreed to investigate this.

163 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE LOCAL POLICING TEAM

Sergeant Bishop's report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and was noted.

Councillor Stock-Williams said that the policing team should be congratulated on the reduction in the number of incidents reported in the town in July.

164 COUNCIL MEETING ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

The Town Clerks Report had been circulated with the agenda. It was RESOLVED that

- Council/Committee meetings should only be held where decisions must be made to enable us to fulfil any statutory responsibilities or as required by Standing Orders or where there are time limiting factors which make a decision essential. Even in these circumstances agendas will be kept to the absolute minimum and be limited to decisions that must be taken.
- There should be no visiting speakers and the COVID rules we have established for meetings should remain in place. The Town Clerk will discuss with Chairs of Committees whether meetings should take place and what is needed on the agenda.
- Where meetings are required, they will continue to be held either at Court Fields School or the United Reform Church Hall.
- In this time there may be circumstances where The Town Clerk may seek views on issues via email to help shape a proposal for consideration by the Town Council at its next meeting
- Council offices will not reopen to visitors until after the September Council meeting at the earliest.

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- Whilst the office will not be open to the public, the Town Clerk and the Administrative Apprentice will work from the office full time. The Deputy Clerk and Deputy Responsible Financial Officer/Assistant Clerk will mix working from home and coming into the office. When staff are in the office, they will work in a COVID secure way i.e. ensuring social distancing etc.
- Members of the public will continue to be able to phone the office and, if needs be, make appointments for visits. Any visits will be conducted in a COVID secure way i.e. wearing face masks/social distancing etc.
- These arrangements will be reviewed at the September meeting.

165 TO CONSIDER ARRANGEMENTS FOR MANAGING THE DELIVERY OF THE STREET FAIR ON THE 25 SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that Town Council staff take over the coordination of activities required to deliver it. The funding of £3,000 from the Emergency High Street Fund which had previously been identified to be given to Wellington Carnival Committee to deliver the Street Fair will now be used by Council staff to do so. Should further funding be required this will come from the Emergency High Street Fund and be considered by the Town Centre Committee. If approved a revised Indicative Plan will need to be submitted to Somerset West and Taunton Council for consideration.

166 TO CONSIDER A NOMINATION FOR THE TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE ON THE WELLINGTON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

RESOLVED to recommend to Wellington School that Councillor Barr be appointed as a School Governor

167 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW DECISION

Given the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government's Statement to the House of Commons on the 21 July 2021 when he announced his decision on the future structure of local government in Somerset, which was to move to one unitary council for the County as set out in the One Somerset proposal, it was **RESOLVED**:

- To welcome that a decision has been made so there is clarity about the model that is being taken forward and that work can now start on developing the new structure.
- To commit to engaging with the One Somerset team to ensure that the development of a Local Community Network (LCN) in the area meets the needs of the residents of Wellington and that there is appropriate differentiation between the role of the LCN and the Town Council
- To commit to seeking to develop the role of the Town Council by exploring what services and assets currently delivered through either Somerset West and Taunton Council or Somerset County Council could be devolved to the Town Council to deliver and manage under the new structure.
- that the Policy and Resources Committee take the lead on this work providing regular reports back to the Council on updates and where decisions are required.

168 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE KINGS ARMS

Councillor Lloyd advised that she had met with the Chief Executive of Falcon Housing to discuss their plans for the building. Their intention was to create flats in the first and second floor of the building with the ground floor being used as a community space including the option of a shared working space. However, there was a lot of work that needed doing and it would 4/5 years before the ground floor space would be available.

Councillor Booth suggested that it would be useful if some information could be put up outside the building to explain what the plans were so that the public could see that something was happening. Councillor Lloyd agreed and said she would feed that back.

169 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE WELLINGTON- TAUNTON CYCLEPATH PROJECT

Councillor Lloyd updated the Council on the work of the group that she and the Clerk were part of looking at how a cycle path could be delivered between Wellington and Taunton. She explained that the initial feasibility study had looked at a route to the north of the A38 but work was now being done to look at the south side. This was being complicated by the Comeytrowe development including the park and ride and the potential housing development at The Blackbird Inn. The group were looking at funding options but given the complexity of the issues it is likely to be 4 to 10 years before the cycle path would be delivered.

Councillors Thorne and Pringle-Kosikowsky both welcomed the idea of the cycle path but were concerned that the project was being over complicated leading to an unnecessary delay in delivery. Councillor Lloyd agreed to feed that back to the next meeting of the group.

170 CHRISTMAS LIGHT SWITCH ON

RESOLVED that the Christmas Light Switch On for 2021 should take place on Saturday 27 November and that a Christmas Market be planned in conjunction with Somerset Farmers Market to take place on the same day. It was noted that the Council should check with Somerset West and Taunton Council whether free parking would be available on the day.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.50pm.

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Councillor Mark Lithgow
Mayor