

Town Council
20th July 2020 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors: T McMahon Chair
D Abbott
J Carroll
Y Farrell
S Goodchild
D Jones
R Morgan
A Slough
S Thorne
K Wattingham

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 1

Apologies: Councillors: C Copleston

Absent: M S Kennedy
D Dixon-Wilkinson

A minute silence was held in respect those suffering, and of lives lost, to Covid 19.

11264 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Copleston.

11265 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public asked a question relating to a staffing matter, whether the council felt all vehicles and grass cutting machinery was necessary and was the council satisfied all procedures and working practices were beyond reproach.

It was advised that it was not suitable to respond to the query on the staffing matter. It was advised that all machinery was necessary for the upkeep and maintenance of the recreation areas, sports pavilions and the sports facilities that Houghton Regis Town Council have.

11266 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

Cllr Goodchild declared an interest in item 13, HRN2 Community Building, as this was a non-pecuniary interest she would remain for the discussion.

11267 MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 20th January and 18th March 2020.

Members were referred to Minute 11207.

Point 1 - provide delegated authority to the Mayor and the Town Clerk to undertake any measures / make any decisions deemed necessary to provide support to the community and to protect the health and wellbeing of councillors and staff based on government and NALC advice. As the council had now resumed its meeting schedule, albeit virtually, the council was invited to consider whether this delegation arrangement remained necessary. The potential removal of this delegation arrangement assumed that both nationally and locally the Covid-19 threat remained in check. As such it was suggested that this delegation remained in place to enable the council to respond should the need arise, and it not be possible to hold a council or committee meeting.

Point 3 – provided for existing arrangements to continue. Members were advised that the following arrangements were to continue:

The position of Mayor would continue to be held by Cllr Tracey McMahon

The position of Deputy Town Mayor would continue to be held by Cllr Sue Thorne

The following policies would continue to be in place:

- Committee Functions & Terms of Reference as confirmed on 15th May 2019
- Standing Orders as confirmed on 15th May 2019
- Financial Regulations as confirmed on 15th May 2019
- Scheme of Delegation as confirmed on 15th May 2019

Committee, sub-committee and working group membership including chairs and vice chairs would continue as appointed in May 2019.

Representatives on Outside Organisations were appointed in May 2019 would continue as existing.

Members were advised that Risk assessments had been prepared to enable the council to manage the risk posed by Covid-19 in relation to its services and facilities. These would be updated as time moved on.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 20th January and 18th March 2020 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.

11268 COUNCIL CALENDAR FOR 2020/21

Members received the draft Council Calendar, including meeting dates, member briefing dates, and council and civic event dates, for 2020/21. Members were advised that in relation to council events, details were included but were subject to change as government guidance developed over the year due to the restrictions arising from Covid-19.

The approval of the calendar of council meetings, including the time and place of ordinary meetings of the council, up to an including the next annual meeting of the council was in accordance with Standing Order 4.j.ix.

Members requested that the AGM date be moved from 12th May 2021 to 19th May 2021.

Resolved: To approve the Council Calendar for 2020/21 subject to the AGM being held on 19th May 2021.

11269 GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

In order for the Town Council to continue to use the General Power of Competence it needs to resolve that it met the eligibility criteria (specified below) as contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011:

- At least 2/3 of Members were elected at ordinary elections or at a by-election
- The clerk holds the following recognised qualifications
 - (i) The Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy;
 - (ii) The CiLCA module on the General Power of Competence

Resolved: To confirm that Houghton Regis Town Council meets the eligibility criteria for the General Power of Competence as contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

11270 COMMITTEE AND SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the following committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

Corporate Services Committee	25 th November, 16 th December 2019, 14 th January 2020 <i>11052 Scheme of Delegation</i> <i>11058 Communication Policy & Communication Strategy</i> <i>11067 Officer/Member Protocol</i> <i>11068 Training Statement of Intent</i> <i>11069 Data Protection Policy</i>
Community Services Committee	28 th October, 4 th November 2019, 10 th February 2020
Environment & Leisure Committee	18 th November 2019 & 24 th February 2020
Planning Committee	6 th January, 27 th January, 17 th February, 9 th March, 16 th June 2020
Town Partnership Committee	29 th October 2019

To receive the minutes of the following sub-committees and consider any recommendations contained therein

Office Provisions Sub Committee	9 th September 2019
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To receive the minutes of the following working group and consider any recommendations contained therein

Proposed New Cemetery Working Group	8 th July 2019
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Resolved: To receive the Minutes detailed above and to approve the recommendations contained therein as follows;

- *11052 Scheme of Delegation*
- *11058 Communication Policy & Communication Strategy*
- *11067 Officer/Member Protocol*
- *11068 Training Statement of Intent*
- *11069 Data Protection Policy*

11271 TOWN MAYOR ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were advised that a virtual quiz had been held which had raised £50 for the food bank, a garden plant sale which raised £18.00 for the food bank, and a pictorial quiz would be coming shortly.

Members were advised that although the chosen charities had not changed, the Mayor felt that the food bank, in the current circumstances, was a worthy and high priority cause.

11272 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS & ON TRAINING SESSIONS ATTENDED

Members were invited to provide verbal reports from meetings they had attended of outside organisations or from training courses they had attended on behalf of the Council.

Cllr Goodchild advised members that she had not attended any meetings, however updated members on SORTED and the facilities they had provided. Online counselling was available for young residents with accessibility until 10pm and webinars to enable young people to have their voice heard.

Cllr Farrell updated members on the Memorial Hall. A grant had been awarded for security improvements, and it was hoped that the Memorial Hall would reopen in September, subject to government restrictions arising from Covid-19.

Members were advised that repair works would be starting on the car park during August and it was hoped that these would be completed in September.

Cllr Jones advised members that he had attended two meetings at the Town and Parish Council Executive Committee, one in person, before the restrictions of Covid 19, and one virtually. Item of note was a draft Code of Conduct, comments on this had been requested by the Town Clerk for receipt by 7th August 2020 in order for a reply to be formulated. Members were advised that NALC conferences had been cancelled for 2020 and 2021. BATPC AGM was scheduled for 21st October 2020, this was to be confirmed whether the meeting would be held virtually or in person.

Cllr Thorne updated members on Dial-a-Ride, they had felt financial repercussions during the restrictions of Covid 19, Cllr Goodchild advised members that grant money from Houghton Regis Ward Members had been awarded, which had totalled £1,000 to enable Dial-a-Ride to continue their service.

11273 HOUGHTON REGIS: OUR 2020 VISION

To report on the outcomes of the council's corporate plan, Houghton Regis: Our 2020 Vision.

Members discussed the successes of the Town Council, these included:

- The development of the Neighbourhood Plan
- The promotion of local retail & businesses to encourage an increased footfall
- In partnership with other organisations, worked to highlight our historical buildings; All Saints and Red House
- Developed a good working relationship with Central Bedfordshire Council planning officers
- Enviro crime reporting facilities for councillors to report graffiti, fly tipping & other nuisance activities
- School parking projects, this was a working progress
- The purchase of two additional redeployable CCTV cameras totalling three throughout the town.
- Subsidised bulk waste removals – progress held up by Covid 19
- Updated residents on strategic growth in the town through website, planning agendas and the Town Crier
- The installation of a family games area on the Village Green
- The installation of adult exercise equipment on the Village Green and orchard close
- The installation of enhanced seating and lighting at the skate park
- Two new events were launched; Houghton Rocks and firework display
- Collaborated with Beds FA for a sports club at Tithes Farm Road Recreation Ground
- Continued to provide community grants to community groups
- Provided an enhanced youth service through pop up café and holiday clubs
- Reviewed the corporate and democratic structure for improved working within the Town Council
- Installed energy efficiency measures in Houghton Regis Town Council buildings
- Raised the profile of the Town Mayor
- Developed two apprenticeship roles
- Promoted links to local charities and non-profit groups

Members requested that the previous council be thanked for their work on the 2020 vision and their contribution to the success of the vision.

Resolved: To note the successes arising from the work undertaken in delivering the council's corporate plan, Houghton Regis: Our 2020 Vision.

11274 OUR VISION OUR TOWN (2020/2024) HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN

Members were presented with the outcomes of the consultation on the council's draft corporate plan, Houghton Regis: Our Vision Our Town (2020/2024) and requested to confirm final approval.

Special thanks were given to those councillors who were involved in the consultation process, for their dedication in the development of this plan and giving their time to visit school councils.

Thanks were given to all councillors for their help, time and commitment in developing Houghton Regis: Our Vision Our Town (2020/2024).

A member suggested that councillors be involved in promoting the town to new residents by distributing the new resident welcome pack as the town's population grows.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To welcome the support shown through the consultation process for the Houghton Regis: Our Vision Our Town (2020/2024)**
 - 2. To approve the Houghton Regis: Our Vision Our Town (2020/2024)**

11275 SICKNESS POLICY

The Council was presented with the recommendation from Corporate Services Committee (8th June 2020) to approve the Sickness Management Policy.

- Resolved: To approve the Sickness Management Policy.**

11276 HRN2 COMMUNITY BUILDING

Members advised that they were pleased to have received a draft expression of interest from the Churches Group, points to note in the expression of interest was that this building was hoped to develop the community; and to build a welcoming and inclusive place, open to those of all and of no faith.

Members advised that the Town Council were keen to play an active part in the development of the Community building and were eager to visit buildings of similar use.

Members were advised that this expression of interest had been submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council.

11277 REVISED BUDGET 2020/21

To provide members with a revised budget for 2020/21 reflecting predicted changes in income and expenditure arising from the implications of Covid-19.

- Resolved:**
- 1. To thank the Town Clerk for her efforts in producing the Revised Budget 2020/21 to advise members of the various impacts on the Council of Covid-19.**
 - 2. To approve the Revised Budget 2020/21 and to adopt it as official guidance to the Council in managing its finances for the remainder of the financial year.**
 - 3. To confirm that the Budget 2020/21 agreed on 20th January 2020 will remain the base on which the budget for 2021/22 will be constructed.**
 - 4. To approve the virement of £18,000 from 302-4226 Youth Services into 191-4001 (£11,000), 191-4002 (£2,000) and 191-4003 (£5,000)**

to reflect the decision of the Community Services Committee (Minute 11152) to deliver the Pop-up Cafe and support for the Youth Council inhouse. The virement shall apply to both the Revised Budget 2020/21 and the Budget 2020/21 agreed on 20th January 2020.

5. To note the provision of £6,000 in 199-4026 Computer Costs for tablets/laptops for members and to require a report on the sourcing, support and cost of these items to be brought before the next Corporate Services Committee or Full Town Council meeting for approval.
6. To confirm that whether or not to accept the provision of the IT equipment will be a decision for each individual Councillor.
7. To write to Andrew Selous MP to advise him of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council and to outline, in consultation with the Town Mayor and the Chair of Corporate Services Committee, longer-term financial concerns arising from the pandemic.

11278 YEAR END ACCOUNTS

Members received a report providing brief outline of the year end accounting process. Members were invited to raise any queries relating to the process. No queries were raised.

11279 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019 / 2020 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2019 / 2020

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Members were presented with the completed Annual Internal Audit Report and supporting paperwork as part of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2020.

Members were advised that the internal auditor completed the year end internal audit on 18th June 2020.

There were no recommended actions to be considered, therefore no action plan was required.

Resolved: To receive the Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20.

11280 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019 / 2020 SECTION 1 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, a draft completed version of Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, for the year ended 31st March 2020 was received for consideration and approval.

Resolved: To approve Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2020.

11281 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019 / 2020 SECTION 2 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.3, Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return and the supporting Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020 was received for consideration and approval subject to external audit.

Resolved: To approve Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2020 subject to external audit.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.19pm

Dated this 20th day of August 2020

Chairman