

**STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL**

**VIRTUAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

**29 SEPTEMBER, 2020**

**TOWN CLERK'S OPEN REPORT**

1) Stratford-upon-Avon Youth Council Steering Group

- **To consider the Town Council's formal interaction with a Youth Council, once implemented**

The inaugural meeting of the Stratford-upon-Avon Youth Council Steering Group met on Thursday 17 September, chaired by Councillor Cleeve and clerked by Lisa Cowley.

Their enthusiasm was inspiring and uplifting and there is little doubt that there is a call for a Youth Council here in Stratford-upon-Avon which will be able to proactively engage with the Town Council.

There is still much work to be done before a Youth Council is up and running but the Steering Group would like to gauge how much interaction there would be. For example, will Council expect the Chairman of the Youth Council to attend Town Council Meetings to issue a report on their activities and recommendations? Although they would be unable to vote, should members of the Youth Council shadow Town Council Members at Town Council Meetings and partake in the discussion?

Councillor Cleeve will lead on this issue and provide a further verbal report on the meeting and the Steering Group's aspirations and expectations, as they are to meet again on 22 September before the Town Council Meeting.

## 2) Review of proposed new Committee Structure

- **To determine whether the new proposed Committee Structure is implemented and to determine the name of one Committee**

At the Town Council Meeting in June, the Town Clerk was tasked with working up proposed new Terms of Reference (ToR) for the new committees and sub-groups. In turn, committees were asked to review the ToR in order to provide feedback for the interim review on 28 July, 2020.

It is not as straight forward as bringing amended ToR to, for example, the General Purposes Committee (GP), as the existing remit of GP will now be spread over more than one committee. Therefore, it is necessary to review all the ToR for every committee collectively in order to see the wider picture. The proposed ToR for the new committees are attached as **Appendices 'A' to 'F'**. Members will see that the Town Clerk has assigned each ToR to a lead officer from amongst their number. Obviously, that is not to say that it will be an officer taking the decision, but this proposed structure will require a new way of working by the Council's existing personnel and for this working practice to succeed, it is important that a lead officer for each responsibility is easily identifiable.

It was relatively straight forward when recruiting an officer in the past. The Town Clerk, who is responsible for hiring and dismissing all staff, had the ToR of the committee and a selection of candidates. All that was necessary was to have the foresight to appoint the right candidate with the necessary acumen and ability to successfully service the committee as well as being confident they would fit in to the small, close-knit team.

Now however, the Council has officers' incumbent whose abilities will not necessarily fit neatly into the remit of any one committee, as the tasks they were previously solely responsible for have

been spread amongst at least three of the new Standing Committees.

When the pandemic hit and the country went into lockdown, the Council's Standing Committees were temporarily suspended as a result of government guidance. As Council became used to successfully working remotely, and once the legislation was in place to legally hold virtual Council Meetings, the Standing Committees were reinstated.

However, during that period, two Council Meetings were held whereby all business, irrespective of which committee it would usually have been referred to, was brought to Town Council.

The Town Clerk prepared the majority of the overall report, but called upon the other officers for their input regarding matters which were usually assigned as their responsibility. This worked well, and the Town Council papers contained various segmented accounts i.e:

- General Purposes Report
- Civic, Ceremonial & Events Report
- Personnel Report
- Town Clerk's Open Report to Town Council

As a result of trialling this collaborative approach, the Town Clerk believes that this same method will work well under the new regime.

The clerks will take it in turns to compile the report and clerk the meetings of the Community Services Committee and the Heritage and Events Committee. There will no longer be just one designated clerk for each of these two committees. When it is their turn, they will consider the remit of the committee they are clerking, and call upon their contemporaries for their input in compiling the overall report.

So, for example, if the Civic Officer was responsible for the next meeting of Heritage & Events Committee, he would call upon his fellow officers to see if they had something that needed to be included as an agenda item. The operation of the town's markets is set to come under Heritage & Events, but the Civic Officer has no experience of markets, whilst the current GP Clerk is veteran. The existing GP Clerk would provide the information and compile the written report, but the Civic Officer would ensure that it is contained within the overall paper for the committee that he would, on this occasion, be clerking.

It will be very important for members to work closely with the officers in order for this new regime to work. At the bottom of each agenda item within the report will be the name of the officer who wrote it. As an example, if a member had a question about the number of traders on the market, they would need to contact the officer concerned before the meeting to ascertain the answer. It would be unfair to rely on the officer present at the meeting as they may not necessarily have the knowledge to answer the question if markets were not part of their responsibility. The officer who wrote the article would, however, ensure that the officer clerking the meeting is copied in to their response so if the question was to be raised again at the meeting, the officer present would potentially be more qualified to answer but would be unlikely to be in a position to elaborate or give past history.

It is, therefore, imperative that members read their papers straight away and get in touch, otherwise there could be delays in determining an issue if it was considered that there was not enough information for the members to reach a considered decision, through no fault of the clerk.

The analogy that has been used to consult with the staff is to think of committee papers as publishing a newspaper. The editor is in overall control and has the responsibility of getting the paper to press on time, but they do not write the whole thing, reporters do that, and file their copy accordingly.

The clerk for that particular meeting is the editor, and their contemporaries the reporters. The staff must all work collaboratively and contribute to the overall paper, but it is to the instigator of the 'article' that members would need to turn to look for answers or for further information.

Staff are cautiously optimistic that this approach will work, but change is never welcome and the staff may well be 'outside their comfort zone' for some time. However, the proposal will play to the strengths of each individual which is positive.

The Planning Consultative Committee will stay very much as it is with the existing Planning Clerk and Committee Clerk facilitating the committee jointly. Town Council and Personnel Committee will remain the responsibility of the Town Clerk. The Personnel Committee sees few changes from that previously executed by the Human Resources Committee, although it has taken on some responsibilities that were previously considered by GP, namely the Town Hall as a place to work and the welfare of the staff therein. The Finance & Audit Committee will remain with the Deputy Town Clerk.

The two remaining committees, Heritage & Events and Community Services Committees will be facilitated by the existing GP/Planning officer, the Civic Officer and the Finance & Facilities Officer. The Town Hall Booking and Cemetery Co-ordinator has a different contract of employment and her skill set is predominantly burial authority based, which is exacting and specialised. She will not be included as a committee clerk for either committee.

The ToR for the new structure are attached as:

**Appendix 'A'** Personnel Committee

**Appendix 'B'** Heritage & Events Committee

**Appendix 'C'** Community Services Committee

**Appendix 'D'** Planning Consultative Committee

**Appendix 'E'** Finance & Audit Committee

**Appendix 'F'** Town Council

Each existing committee was requested to review the ToR in order for a comprehensive report and recommendation to be brought to the Town Council Meeting on 29 September. Council is being requested to determine whether this new structure is implemented with immediate effect. Not every Standing Committee was in full agreement with the proposed Terms. The Committee minutes record agreement, or proposed changes as follows:

- **H R Committee Minutes 30 June, 2020**

It was noted that the existing Terms of Reference for the HR Committee fitted seamlessly into those for the proposed Personnel Committee.

The terms that are new, primarily those relating to the Town Hall and Cemetery as a place of work and for the safety and wellbeing of the workforce therein, were understood and welcomed.

Members also understood the necessity to work with officers in terms of querying issues or requesting additional information well in advance of a committee meeting. Although it is possible for the committee to be facilitated by more than one clerk at a meeting, this does incur additional costs and should not occur unless absolutely essential.

The Town Clerk confirmed that she has consulted with staff throughout the process and none had disagreed with the new proposals and had come up with some really sensible and helpful feedback enabling the Town Clerk to prepare all the new Terms.

- **Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial & Events Committee Minutes 20 July, 2020**

The ToR of both new committees were examined together, due to the crossover of responsibilities between the existing committee structure and the new ones.

Members firstly considered the proposed name of Heritage and Events and felt it did not fully reflect the purpose of the Committee. It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RECOMMENDED: That the suggested name should be amended to be the Civic, Heritage and Events Committee.

Having examined the proposed ToR in detail, it was further Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RECOMMENDED: That sections 4.8 - 4.14 (Town Hall) and sections 4.15 - 4.17 (Cemetery) be transferred to Community Services and Section 4.18 (Town Centre Strategic Partnership) to Planning.

- **General Purposes Committee Minutes 19 August, 2020**

At the Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial and Events Committee Meeting held on 21 July, 2020 it was recommended by the members that items 4.8 – 4.14 (Town Hall), items 4.15 - 4.17 (Cemetery) of the Heritage and Events Terms of Reference be transferred to Community Services, and item 4.18 (Town Centre Strategic Partnership) to be transferred to the Planning Consultative Committee.

This was then reviewed at the Governance and Policies Panel meeting held on 11 August, 2020, where it was agreed that items 4.8 – 4.14 of the Heritage and Events Terms of Reference should remain within the remit of that committee. However, it was suggested that the wording of 4.14 should be amended from:

*4.14 To approve pro-bono use of the Town Hall*

to:

*4.14 To approve dates for pro-bono use of the Town Hall to enable the Community Services Committee to engage with organisations within*

the community seeking to hire the Town Hall on a pro-bono basis

It was also agreed that items 4.15 – 4.17 should be transferred to the Community Services ToR.

It was noted that the ToR for Town Council and all committees would be reviewed annually, and any required amendment can be done at this point.

It was unanimously AGREED to accept the ToR for the Community Services and Heritage and Events Committees.

- **Planning Consultative Committee Minutes 7 July, 2020**

The Chairman referred to the revised ToR for the committee, attached to the agenda as Appendix 'A'. Councillors had no amendments to make. They noted that the ToR were consistent with the other proposed ToR for committees under the proposed new Committee Structure due to be considered by the Town Council in September, 2020. The ToR will be reviewed on an annual basis. It was noted that there is good coverage of Councillors who also sit on the Environmental Strategy panel group who could act as a liaison with the panel group on matters relating to the environment.

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That Cllr J Fradgley should take the lead on liaison with the Environmental Strategy Panel Group.

- **Finance & Scrutiny Committee Minutes 9 June, 2020**

A number of members suggested amendments or asked for further information. Queries and concerns were noted by



the Town Clerk and will be addressed in subsequent draft versions of the ToR. These will be debated further at the Town Council meeting on 28 July, 2020.

The suggested transfer of responsibilities from one committee to another, together with the proposed amendments have been realised in the ToR **Appendices 'A' to 'F'**.

There is, however, one exception, that being the recommendation by the Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial & Events Committee that the new Heritage & Events Committee should be referred to as Mayoral, Heritage & Events Committee. Brevity is the reason for the shortened name and the ease in which it 'rolls off the tongue'. It was also considered that the word 'heritage' encompasses and does justice to our Mayoral history. The 'jury is out' on Heritage and Events Committee or Mayoral, Heritage & Events Committee, so Council is asked to determine the name if the new structure is to be implemented.

### 3) Appointment of Members to Standing Committees

At the virtual Town Council Meeting in early May, Council

**RESOLVED:** With one or two exceptions, it was agreed that members would continue to serve on the committees they were appointed to in 2019/2020, the exceptions being:

- i) Councillor Rolfe will replace Councillor Jackson on General Purposes and Councillor Lee on Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial and Events.
- ii) Councillor Vos will replace Councillor Jackson on Finance and Scrutiny.
- iii) Councillor Warren-Howles will replace Councillor Coles on Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial and Events.

If Council decide to implement the proposed new committee structure with immediate effect, it will be necessary to appoint members to the new committees.

Usually, members are provisionally appointed to standing committees at the Town Council Meeting prior to Mayor Making but owing to the extreme mitigating circumstances this year, and the call for a review of the committee structure, the appointment of members to the new structure would need to be done at the time a new structure is implemented.

The new ToR stipulate the number of members for each committee. Members are requested to serve on at least two committees made up of nine serving councillors, but as there are five standing committees in total, some members may have to serve on three. Please note that the Personnel Committee is restricted to seven serving members and does not include the Mayor.

In addition to stipulating the number of serving members on a committee, the ToR of the Planning Consultative Committee also state that membership of the committee should include, if possible, one member from each ward.

Members are requested to determine, in readiness for the Town Council Meeting on 29 September, their standing committee preference. It is usually possible for members to serve on their first choice of committee and more often than not, with a little co-operation and juggling from amongst Council's number, their second choice as well.

#### 4) Appointment of Town Council Representatives to Outside Bodies

- **To appoint members as Town Council representatives to Outside Bodies**

4.1 At the Town Council Meeting on 15 March, 2016 it was unanimously agreed that the appointment of Town Council representatives to outside bodies would be considered annually at the meeting preceding Mayor Making, with the exception of an election year when the appointments will be considered at the first appropriate Town Council Meeting following the ceremonial meeting.

This is in order to ensure the smooth transition from one municipal year to another and should plug the gap when a trustee's term expires before a new trustee is appointed.

Owing to the unusual circumstances in which we all find ourselves this year, the appointment to outside bodies has yet to be determined for 2020/2021 and will be considered at the September meeting of Council.

Members should familiarise themselves with the responsibilities of such appointments and extreme caution is recommended if a member is asked to 'stay on' (this often happens when having just served as Mayor) without the mandate of the Town Council, as this carries personal liability.

In accordance with s.101 of the Local Government Act 2000 (as modified), a Parish Council may indemnify any action by a member or officer which has been authorised by the Council, or which forms part of duties placed upon, or powers conferred on that member or officer, as long as such action has been authorised by the Council or is for the Council's purposes.

This would include situations where a member or officer is nominated as a representative of its Council to an outside body, for a Council may provide an indemnity to a member or officer where the action was outside their power and that of the Council, if the member or officer reasonably believed that the action in question was within their powers, or that of the Council.

The Council has the power to grant an indemnity or to secure insurance cover for its members or officers, as is the case for Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council.

However, it is perfectly acceptable and is recommended that members accepting an appointment as Town Council representative to an outside organisation, obtains its insurance/indemnity policy, and must be fully satisfied with the cover.

As a 'rule of thumb', if the organisation to which a member is appointed enters into contracts with outside bodies, the member must be satisfied that their input does not attract any personal liability, if the organisation later experiences financial difficulties.

Members will find the 'Guidance for Members Appointed as Representatives on Outside Bodies' useful, additional information. This guidance was provided to District Councillors some years ago by a former Monitoring Officer and is attached as **Appendix 'G'**.

- 4.2 The representation list to outside bodies is attached as **Appendix 'H'**.

Despite contacting all the organisations not all the outside bodies responded in advance of the Town Council Meeting.

Consequently, the agreement to appoint a representative to an outside body who responded positively will be determined at the Town Council Meeting, but those outside bodies who did not respond in time for the meeting will be notified of the proposed appointment thereafter. It will be subject to their agreement that they wish to retain the relationship with the Council and would welcome a Town Council appointee. Should they choose not to, any appointment made by Council on 29 September, 2020 will be void.

The purpose of appointing a Town Councillor to outside bodies is two-fold. It provides the conduit for a two-way relationship between the organisation and the Town Council and the outside body benefits from adding a 'grass roots' member to their team who generally has extensive local knowledge and insight.

However, members must be mindful that if appointed as a Trustee of an outside body, they 'must wear their Trustee hat' and not their 'Council hat' when attending their meetings and must abide by the constitution of that organisation. For example, those appointed to Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust rarely report to Council on Trust

activities for much of their discussions are confidential. However, the Chief Executive of the Town Trust, Sara Aspley, has advised that there are many occasions when Town Council representatives could and should feedback to Council, particularly regarding the strategic aims and objectives of the Town Trust which are sometimes misunderstood.

On the agenda of every Town Council Meeting, there is an opportunity for members to convey written information relating to the outside body on which they serve. Although a written report may appear somewhat onerous, it need be little more than bullet points which the member can verbally expand upon at the meeting.

In the past, if a member had particular knowledge or an interest in representing the Town Council on a particular outside body, they self-nominated and were usually appointed. If, however, there was more than one member who wished to be appointed and there was only one vacancy, each member gave a brief presentation on their candidacy, and the vote was then taken by written ballot. The same procedure will be followed at the Town Council Meeting on 29 September, although using zoom technology, votes will be conveyed to the Town Clerk by using the 'private chat' feature.

As agreed at the July, 2019 Council Meeting, the Chairman of the Planning Consultative Committee, is automatically appointed to the Town Transport Group (TTG) as these meetings prove invaluable in terms of keeping abreast of proposed transport infrastructure, which has a direct effect on planning development. This leaves an opening for one other member of the Town Council.

#### 5) Members' Allowances

- **To determine whether to adopt the Parish Remuneration Panel's recommendation for Town Council members to receive an allowance**

During Public Participation at the Town Council Meeting on 3 October, 2017, a former Mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon advised that, in his opinion, *'the lack of a members' allowance for Town Council members could be detrimental in attracting a cross section of candidates to stand for Council'*. He hoped for *'wider input from the community'*, and suggested that *'the time and effort and expense required in becoming a Councillor and acting proactively, may be off-putting if there wasn't some financial recompense'*. He requested that this matter be formally considered by Council.

Consequently, the matter was considered in depth at the Town Council Meeting on 28 November, 2017 where it was resolved that a Task & Finish Group would be instigated to look into the merits of a Members' Expenses Scheme but that any such scheme, if implemented, would not take effect until the new term of office in 2019.

At the Task & Finish Group meeting of 10 September, 2018 it was agreed that consideration of STC's allowance level by the independent Parish Remuneration Panel would form part of the review undertaken by SDC. From the minutes, the following is noteworthy:

- There was a general feeling of unease amongst the members present in determining a recommendation that would, or would not, result in Stratford-upon-Avon Town Councillors receiving an allowance, as it was thought that the newly elected Council from May 2019 should ultimately make the decision.
- The review and setting of an appropriate level by an independent panel would not necessarily result in STC members taking a Basic Allowance.
- As well as the Members' Basic Allowance, it was agreed that it is essential to consider a potential alternative, such as an Expenses Policy, so that members could still be reimbursed for incidental out of pocket expenses.

Members will recall that in 2019, the first year of the new administration, Council considered the issue of whether it would be appropriate to receive a Parish Basic Allowance (PBA) and the

proposal was rejected unanimously. The minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 30.7.19 record:

*The recent election which had returned or appointed a diverse, cross section of members, clearly refuted the claim by a member of the public that 'the lack of a members' allowance for Town Council members could be detrimental in attracting a cross section of candidates to stand for Council'.*

*During the debate, members made it clear that as a candidate in the recent election, they had been fully aware that, if elected, their role was purely voluntary and would not attract an allowance or remuneration. It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously:*

**RESOLVED:** *That Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council members would continue to serve without remuneration, but in accordance with good practice and Council's governance procedures, the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' Allowances would be reviewed on an annual basis.*

Consequently, Council is requested to re-consider this issue in accordance with the resolution passed last year.

The recommended PBA for Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council is 10% (rounded down to the nearest £10.00) of the recommended Basic Allowance (£5,820 – 2018/19) for Stratford-on-Avon District Council, which equates to £582 per year.

Expressed another way, this is the equivalent of £10 per week. It is recognised that the recommended PBA does not fully identify the time and effort put in by Town Councillors nor was there any representation to suggest it should do so. In effect, it was set at a level that sought to compensate Stratford-upon-Avon Town Councillors for out of pocket expenses for which they are not otherwise able to claim reimbursement, The element of the PBA to recognise time and effort is no more than that; recognition or an honorarium.

The Chairman of the Independent Review Panel recently stated:

*'It would make life simpler and more straightforward if STC went for a small(ish) PBA. It's not like Stratford Town Council is a small or invisible local government authority. It is the largest and most active of town councils that I know of and has a fine pedigree'.*

In essence, the recommendation of the Panel is for Town Council members to receive a PBA, which is effectively a net that catches all out of pocket expenses, including travel and subsistence and if adopted, it could be used as a contribution to the care of a member's dependents, as well.

The recommended rate of £582.00 per annum was set for a four year period from the date that the Town Council considered the report. However, Stratford-on-Avon District Council held a review in the Autumn of 2019 and resolved to increase their members' allowance to £6,129 per annum so if the Town Council declines to adopt a PBA on any subsequent year up to the end of the municipal year 2022/2023, the Remuneration Panel still recommends that the PBA should be 10% of that of Stratford-on-Avon District Council that is payable at the time. Therefore, the Town Council members' allowance would be £600 per annum.

Finally but most importantly, if the Town Council resolves to adopt the PBA, it is left to the discretion of each individual member whether they draw down the allowance. Even if adopted, it is not mandatory that every member does so.

6) Town Council and Committee Meetings Virtual -v- Physical

- **To consider installing the relevant equipment to enable live streaming of Council and Committee Meetings when meetings resume at the Town Hall**

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) (Amendment) (No. 4) Regulations 2020 came in to force on 14 September, 2020.



They amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020 ("the Principal Regulations"), so that people may not participate in social gatherings, in any place, in groups of more than six, unless they are members of the same household, two linked households, or if exceptions apply.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) view is that although the Principal Regulations continue to permit local councils to hold meetings now in COVID-19 secure premises (as an exemption to the six-person gatherings limit), the NALC position remains that if meetings can take place digitally without the need for face-to-face contact, they should continue to do so and they recommend councils continue to meet remotely.

Recently, there has been an increase in local lockdown restrictions nationally as the numbers of those contracting COVID-19 increases and as the 'R' number rises. As we are now approaching autumn/winter, it seems sensible to adhere to NALC's advice and continue to hold our Council and Committee meetings remotely.

Nevertheless, there will come a time when it is deemed safe for the Town Council to return to the Town Hall for physical meetings and it is felt that such meetings will be possible in the foreseeable future, even allowing for social distancing. However, the Council's virtual meetings, which are streamed on YouTube and Facebook, has enabled the general public to view proceedings from the safety of their own homes, and the interest in Town Council affairs has dramatically increased.

It would be unfortunate if that engagement with the electorate is lost if, similarly to previous Council meetings, members of the public have to be physically present in the Council Chamber to view proceedings or speak in Public Participation. Accordingly, the Town Clerk has met with Dudley Simpson, a local expert in sound and vision technology, to ascertain how much it would cost, to continue streaming our meetings from the Town Hall via Zoom when physical Council resume.

In consultation with Dudley Simpson, it is proposed that both the downstairs chambers are used enabling members to be socially distanced. In order to achieve maximum visibility, the desks will

be positioned in a v shape formation with the two desks nearest the dais being furthest apart and the desks thereafter narrowing (but safely) until they reach the point at the end, as detailed in **Appendix 'I'**.

The specification overview is as follows:

- Each desk to have a microphone/speaker unit;
- The Mayor and officials to have a microphone/speaker unit with one control button, if required;
- Up to three, discreet video cameras placed to provide video coverage of the side desks and the dais;
- A manual camera selector to connect the required camera to the Zoom PC;
- The switcher can also add power point and videos from an additional PC into the video stream;
- Two additional TV monitors (plus the Town Council's existing TV monitor) to be provided to give enhanced playback coverage for the whole of the Council Chamber/s and the dais.

Estimated costs:

Video system, 3 x cameras, switcher, Zoom PC, 2 x TV monitors and stands (required for either system) <b>TOTAL+ VAT</b>	<b>£ 3,400</b>
<b>Bosch Conference mics:</b>	
Wireless, per station £1,410 x 20 stations	£28,200
Charger x 5 units	£ 730
Access point	£ 2,470
<b>TOTAL + VAT</b>	<b>£38,200</b>
<b>Cabled system</b> (similar to that used at Mayor Making)	
Per station 5m cable	£ 460
Control	£ 1,450
Storage case 10 units	£ 300
<b>TOTAL + VAT</b>	<b>£ 5,610</b>
Costs do not include installation, which until a detailed specification is known is difficult to quantify. However, it is anticipated that installation will not	<u>£1,000</u>

exceed	
These are basic prices depending on the actual specification and layout used. Prices may change and once a full layout of the proposed installation is known, Simpson Sound and Vision will quote in detail	

In light of the huge price differential, Dudley considers that the cable system will suffice as it rare for people to move about during meetings other than to come to the dais to give a presentation, so the cables do not represent a high risk of trips and falls. He also believes that the events team will be capable of setting the cable system up prior to a meeting being held.

7) PING Stratford-upon-Avon Lead Partner Agreement

- **To approve a new agreement with Table Tennis England**
- **To determine table tennis locations**

The PING initiative quickly became a roaring success and just as it was ready to expand still further, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown occurred and everything came to a standstill.

Under the auspices of Councillor Taylor, PING is once again in full swing but the Lead Partner Agreement expired in March 2020 and unless Council approves a new agreement with Table Tennis England, it is unlikely that we will be able to apply for further funding.

Councillor Taylor has actively consulted with the Town Council members with regards to locations for tables. Currently, there are tables for the following locations:

- Alveston Manor Leisure Complex;
- Hodgson’s Green;
- Knights Lane;
- Recreation Ground;
- Shottery Fields;
- Stratford-upon-Avon Rugby Club;
- Waterside;
- Recreation Ground;

Potential new locations include:

- Bishopton Park;
- Burbage Avenue;
- Joseph Way;
- Orian Close
- Rowley Fields;
- Trevelyan Crescent;
- Trinity Mead;
- Woodchester Drive.

At the Town Council Meeting on 29 September, the Council will need to determine which of the potential new locations they would like included in the discussions with Table Tennis England.

Once again, Councillor Taylor will oversee all the negotiations and installation of new tables. The town's 2019 table tennis usage eclipsed many of the more established sites across the UK and Councillor Taylor is confident that if Council concedes to a new agreement with Table Tennis England and we apply for further funding, Council would be in a strong position to secure a similar amount as previously awarded in 2019 which was £3,574.

#### 8) Local Government Structural Reform

- **To give consideration to WCC's proposal for local government structural reform**

The Government has announced its intention to publish a White Paper on devolution and local recovery which is now expected in October, 2020. It is widely expected that the Government will set out its proposals for local government structural reform in England along with setting out the role which greater devolution will play in our national recovery.

There are many different types of local government re-organisations which factor in some or sometimes all of the various levels of local government. In summary:

- **Creation of county unitary councils** – This involves the creation of a single (otherwise known as a unitary) council covering a county (often shire) area. Here (as in Cornwall in 2009) the entire middle tier of district and borough councils

are removed (excepting those which are unitaries themselves). This then just leaves local councils under the county unitary. Very often county unitary areas are fully parished (e.g. Wiltshire).

- **Creation of unitary councils within a county area** – This happens when there are new unitary local authorities created within a county area and at a smaller geo-political spatial level than shire counties. This can be by amalgamating some former boroughs or districts, or can often be the creation of new city/district or borough unitaries (in 2009 Cheshire saw two new sub-county unitaries created).
- **Creation of new local councils** – This happens as a result of a Community Governance Review (overseen by the relevant principal local authority) and can take place when new county or sub-county unitary councils are created; or even independent of the creation of bigger new authorities – but the latter sees the creation of fewer local councils.
- **The merger of district councils** – sometimes district/borough councils are merged (for instance Suffolk Coastal and Waveney in East Suffolk) to create economies of scale and more efficiency. This sometimes leads indirectly to the creation of new local councils (in the Suffolk instance just given – Lowestoft Town Council, for instance).

In anticipation of the White Paper, WCC advised that many councils are actively considering their position on local government reform and the future direction they would wish to take. The County Council has also been undertaking such preparatory work in advance of the White Paper being published to enable the Council to be in a position to consider the options for Warwickshire, although it is the Town Clerk's understanding that it is down to the Secretary of State to 'invite' a proposal from a local authority to make a bid for a county or district, or group of districts, to become unitary.

WCC's report to Cabinet, attached as **Appendix 'J'** proposes a direction for Warwickshire and their preferred course of action.

In the report the preferred option is set out as follows:

*The case for change concludes that the current two tier structure of local government inhibit the ability of its councils to continue to meet the needs of our residents, communities and businesses. Further to this, Government has also indicated that ‘no change or status quo’ is not an option. The case for change also concludes that a newly formed single unitary council for Warwickshire is the only option that would reach the limits of what can be achieved for Warwickshire and that maintaining it would meet the Government’s aspirations and enable Warwickshire to secure a fair recovery from the impact of Covid, focused on improved outcomes for all citizens, whilst maximising the effectiveness of services and minimising the cost of government.*

This may be the preferred option, but there were three proposals put forward for consideration:

*The case for change considers the following options for reform, taking into account the Government’s indicative evaluation criteria for structural change:*

- 1) an enhanced two-tier model which would preserve the existing county council and five district and borough councils and optimise collaboration in areas of duplicated responsibility*
- 2) a single unitary council for Warwickshire which would see the creation of a new council, replacing the existing six, which would deliver all local government services*
- 3) a two unitary model for Warwickshire which would see the creation of two new unitary councils (a North and a South) each taking responsibility for the delivery of all local authority services within their respective areas*

Warwickshire County Council met on 22 September to determine the preferred option. The papers despatch for the Town Council Meeting on 29 September was on the same day as the WCC meeting, so the outcome of that meeting cannot be detailed in this report. County Councillors J Fradgley and Rolfe will therefore be best placed to provide a verbal update at the Town Council Meeting.

Whatever the outcome, copious rounds of public consultation will no doubt ensue but it will be helpful to have the Town Council’s

initial and collective view in order to respond during the pre-consultation process for already, the Herald is seeking word of the Town Council's stance on this issue.

Additional information is contained in **Appendix 'K'** – Local Government in England: structure. This is a briefing document published by the House of Commons Library, dated 8 June, 2020.

9) Fred Winter Centre

- **To agree further funding**

Members will recall that in June this year, the Chairman of the Fred Winter Centre stakeholder group contacted the Town Council to request further financial assistance following an unexpected development regarding lottery funding.

Paul Spooner corresponded as follows:

*I am writing to request that the Town Council kindly consider providing a further capital grant request of £10,000 as a one off additional contribution to the development of the Fred Winter Centre. This request has come about because the Lottery capital funding which we were seeking will unfortunately not now be forthcoming. The Lottery has reset its priorities in the light of COVID and we are in discussion with them about revenue support for our training and employment plan.*

*The total capital cost of the project is £2m. Spring Housing has agreed to replace the majority of the £250k shortfall which now exists, and I am seeking additional funding from the District Council and a smaller contribution from yourselves. You will be aware that while the Centre will support all people facing homelessness within the district, the majority of single people who need accommodation have a last address in the town. It is the single homeless who will benefit from the accommodation at FWC and the new garden area, you are kindly supporting.*

The Town Council's representative on the stakeholder group, Councillor How, requested additional information:

Q: *Was Lottery Funding part of the original plan?*

A: Yes, we understood the Lottery was interested in a capital grant bid towards the centre's build. We therefore started to prepare a bid for £250k and included it in our calculations.

Q: You mentioned that the Lottery is now focusing on return-to-work schemes, which this definitely falls under. Is there a chance further Lottery funding will become available?

A: Definitely, with the Lottery's change of focus and switch from capital to revenue we will definitely be bidding for revenue funding for our employment programme.

Q: Could you detail some of the costs which have increased? I know the garden (newly leased from STT) was not part of the original plan, what is the additional cost for this?

A: The most competitive tender we received was from our chosen builders. The price was higher than our QS estimate but after value engineering we are now back to £2m. The revenue costs of the garden are higher than expected. The Lottery loss is a capital loss.

Q: What is the impact/consequence of us not contributing to this? Is the project at risk?

A: Spring Housing has agreed to support the capital shortfall so the project may go ahead but have asked us to try to seek additional funding from our partners. A contribution of £10k from the Town Council is proportionally the same additional contribution we have agreed with the District Council.

Councillor How also made the point that, in light of COVID-19 the Town Council's income has decreased significantly, and thus additional scrutiny was required.

In light of Paul Spooner's answer to question four, the Town Clerk negotiated a compromise which satisfies both Mr Spooner and SDC and does not put the initiative in jeopardy. As a consequence, the Town Council is being asked to approve additional funding to the tune of £5,000 and not £10,000.

10) Enhancing the ambience of the Town Centre during the COVID-19 Pandemic



- **To consider partnership working with Stratford-on-Avon District Council to retain the enhancement measures in the town centre**

Members may recall at the Town Council Meeting on 26 May, the Mayor sought an update from the two Country Councillors, J Fradgley and Rolfe regarding the re-opening of the town.

They confirmed that Warwickshire County Council (WCC) had held meetings with the District Council (SDC), Stratford BID and Shakespeare's England and that WCC would be publishing the plans on 28 May. The County Councillors warned that *'the plan is not elegant as a result of having to move incredibly fast, but the plan, which would certainly not please everyone, is temporary and can be tweaked where necessary'*.

The plan was universally unpopular and 'less than elegant' was an understatement. The Town Council had various informal Zoom meetings thereafter, one of which was attended by the Deputy Leader of SDC, Councillor Daren Pemberton. At this meeting, a discussion ensued regarding initiatives to 'pretty' the town which resulted eventually in barrier hoardings along the run of central barriers in Bridge Street depicting pictorial past events in Stratford-upon-Avon.

To enhance the town still further, three corner pyramids that went around lampposts with a message of welcome were produced, and mature trees in large aesthetically pleasing containers were placed around the town. At the meeting when this was discussed, the Town Council gave a verbal commitment to partnership working with SDC and agreed to financially contribute to these measures. No set figure was determined at that time although a £5,000 contribution was mooted.

In an email exchange with Julie Lewis, Head of Community & Operational Services at SDC, the Town Clerk advised:

*'I recall the £5,000 being mentioned at a meeting we held in late June which Daren attended. There was general agreement that we should retain the existing scheme, with tweaks, and enhance the ambience. That is where the £5,000 came in as I explained that we could act relatively*

*quickly without having to take it to Council or Committee as I have delegated powers to spend up to £5,000.*

*This was a statement rather than a promise, but STC definitely wants to play its part in ensuring that the town is as welcoming and as safe as possible since it re-opened, so will be pleased to talk on Monday if possible.*

Following the meeting with Julie, the Town Clerk reported to Council on 27 June:

*I have agreed that the Town Council would share the cost of the lamppost banners which will be a joint initiative with SDC/WCC/STC. Julie will also ask BID to make a contribution. I have agreed this in principle, as she did not have the exact cost when we spoke.*

Until the middle of September, the Town Council was not approached by SDC to make this contribution, but further correspondence has now been received and SDC is enquiring if the Town Council could stretch their contribution to help beyond just sharing the lamppost banners expenditure which cost £4,000. SDC would like to extend the trees in the town for a little longer which come at a cost of £1,800 per month. Currently, they are due to come out at the end of September. If the Town Council were to agree £5,000, this would keep the trees in situ until the end of October.

However, as these trees have undoubtedly enhanced the Town Centre, SDC wonders if the Town Council could contribute further to keep them until possibly the end of March or even permanently. SDC would work in partnership with STC with both authorities contributing financially. SDC is currently ascertaining how much it would be to purchase them outright or if there is any 'wiggle room' with regard to the £1,800 per month to hire them.

#### 11) BT Phone Boxes

- **To consider the proposal to retrospectively agree to the adoption of a former BT Payphone Box in Clopton ward**

Those that serve on the GP Committee will recall the recent adoption by the Town Council of two former BT telephone boxes in the Tiddington and Bridgetown wards.

This cost the Town Council the princely sum of £1.00 each, although this is obviously non representative of the true costs going forwards, as they will have to be maintained and insured. However, the increase in the insurance premium is relatively minor, at just under £30.00 per box and the Open Spaces team includes the boxes on their weekly inspection of Council assets. Tiddington Residents' Association has taken over the responsibility for their box, although ownership remains that of the Town Council.

Councillors Fojtik and How have subsequently requested that the phone box on the corner of Birmingham Road and Justin's Avenue is also adopted by the Council, for although there is no immediate need for the kiosk, they both consider that it should be retained as a historic piece of street furniture and an important landmark in the Clopton ward.

The consultation deadline prevented this from being considered at the next GP Committee meeting and because of the time scales, officers have already started the procedure to adopt the box, although at this stage the expression of interest is not binding. Council is therefore requested to retrospectively agree to the adoption of the Clopton box.

12) Amendment to Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council Press Liaison Policy

- **To approve and adopt the revised Press Liaison Policy**

The Governance and Policies Panel proposed slight amendments to the Town Council's Press Liaison Policy.

An additional paragraph in point 2.4, highlighted in **Appendix 'L'** and 3.5 have been added. Council is requested to approve and adopt the revised Policy.

### 13) Town Centre Strategic Partnership

- **To note the report**

In accordance with Project TC1 of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, the Town Council has been instrumental in setting up the required Town Centre Strategic Partnership which met for the first time on 4 September, 2020.

The Partnership is made up of the following representatives:

- Accessible Stratford – Elizabeth Dixon;
- BID – Joe Baconnet;
- Royal Shakespeare Company – Geraldine Collinge;
- Shakespeare Birthplace Trust – Tim Aucott;
- Shakespeare’s England – Helen Peters;
- Stratford-on-Avon District Council – Daren Pemberton, Julie Lewis (Jenny Fradgley – observer but available to speak as SDC member for the town centre);
- Stratford Society – John Scampion;
- Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council – Richard Vos, Sarah Summers (The Mayor, Tony Jackson observer);
- Stratford Town Trust – Sara Aspley;
- Town Transport Group – Colin Stuart;
- Warwickshire County Council – Kate Rolfe, Rachel Baconnet, David Dayton-Hill (Jenny Fradgley observer).

The purpose of the first meeting was to get to know the other key stakeholders, appoint a Chairman and Deputy and agree the Terms of Reference for the Partnership. However, for this meeting an interim Chairman was appointed as a stakeholder, who had expressed a willingness to be Chairman, was unable to be present.

The Partnership will meet again on 2 October to determine the vision for Stratford-upon-Avon and determine a vision. A further update on that meeting will be provided by the Town Council’s Partnership representative, Councillor Vos.

14) Enhancement of patches of under-utilised green space within the town's nine wards

- **To note the report**

A new operative joined the Town Council's Open Spaces team on 1 September, 2020. In light of the Town Council's green credentials and the desire to enhance the community realm with initiatives to combat climate change, the Town Clerk was looking for a different skill set in the new recruit.

The appointee, has vast experience of gardening and ground maintenance, having worked as Head Gardener at the Birthplace Trust for many years, so had above and beyond the skills that were sought.

He will be of significant assistance when the Town Council embark on their plan to enhance patches of under-utilised green spaces within all wards in the town by planting wildflowers which are attractive to wildlife, as well as being pleasing to the eye.

The areas identified for possible enhancement are detailed in **Appendix 'M'**, attached.

Councillor J Fradgley, Chairman of the Climate Change Emergency Panel, will lead on this issue and will provide a further verbal update at the Town Council Meeting on 29 September, 2020.

**Town Clerk**  
29 September, 2020