

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

In accordance with s78 of the Local Authorities and Police Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulation 2020

26 May, 2020

MINUTES pages 1 - 10

Present: The Mayor (Cllr Jackson) in the Chair

Councillors:

Alcock	J Fradgley
Cleeve	How
Coles	Lee
Curtis	Mackenzie
Dowling	Rolfe
Dyer	Taylor
Fojtik	Vos
I Fradgley	

Clerks: Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, General Purposes Clerk,
Press: Absent
Public: Absent

Before the Mayor declared the meeting open the Council's Chaplain,
Rev Dr Paul Edmondson, presented his 'thought for today'.

10) Apologies

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors Wall and Warren-Howles and accepted for the reasons given.

11) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest declared.

12) To Receive Written Requests for Dispensation for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no requests.

13) To Grant any Requests for Dispensation

There were no requests.

14) Public Participation

No one had registered to speak in Public Participation

15) To Adopt Draft Open Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 28 April, 2020 and the Draft Minutes of the Annual Meeting and Mayor Making held on 15 May, 2020

RESOLVED: The Draft Open Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on 28 April, 2020 and the Draft Minutes of the Annual Meeting and Mayor Making held on 15 May, 202 be approved as a correct record.

16) Planning Consultative Committee Meeting held on 11 May,2020

The meeting was cancelled.

17) To Adopt the Draft Notes of the COVID-19 Stratford Support Meetings held on 21 and 28 April and, 5, 12 and 19 May, 2020

RESOLVED: The Draft Notes of the COVID-19 Stratford Support Meetings held on 21 and 28 April and 5, 12 and 19 May, 2020 be approved and adopted.

18) To Adopt the Draft Notes of the Town Hall Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel Meeting held on 13 May, 2020

RESOLVED: The Draft Notes of the Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel Meeting held on 13 May, 2020 be approved and adopted.

- 19) To Adopt the Draft Notes of the Website, Social Media and Newsletter Panel Meeting held on 4 February and 20 May, 2020

RESOLVED: The Draft Notes of the Website, Social Media and Newsletter Panel Meeting held on 4 February and 20 May, 2020 be approved and adopted.

The Panel was asked to consider an agenda item for the next meeting to review the costs of producing the Council's newsletter, Bridging the Gap, and seek alternative quotes for the work to ensure that the newsletter is being produced cost effectively.

GENERAL PURPOSES

- 20) Repairs to the Garden of Remembrance Wall

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: To appoint local construction company S J Nurdin Ltd to undertake the repair to the Garden of Remembrance wall, as soon as possible and that the Council's Insurance Company be notified accordingly.

- 21) BT Phone Box Adoption Update

The report was noted.

- 22) Stratford-upon-Avon Cemetery – Kerbing

The report was noted. It was agreed this matter would be referred to the General Purposes Committee to consider the next phase for installing kerbs throughout the Cemetery and budget accordingly.

The General Purposes Clerk withdrew from the meeting shortly thereafter.

MAYORAL, CIVIC CEREMONIAL AND EVENTS

23) VE Day 75 Virtual Commemoration De-brief Report

The comprehensive report compiled by Escape Arts was noted, as was the call by two members for a vote of thanks to all those involved. It was hoped that the Council would once again work collaboratively with Escape Arts and Welcome Radio in the future, as it had all gone extremely well despite the difficulties of holding the event virtually. The Mayor echoed the vote of thanks.

HUMAN RESOURCES

24) Outstanding Holiday Entitlement

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: To approve that the outstanding leave of three employees be carried forward and added to their 2020/2021 leave entitlement.

Although members fully understood that employees would be currently reluctant to take any leave during the lockdown period, staff should be encouraged to take perhaps one day of leave per week. This would prevent the build-up of leave by every employee, resulting in the possibility of them perhaps wishing to take leave simultaneously.

The Town Clerk assured members that this had already been discussed and that the staff were well aware that leave would have to be staggered so that there was sufficient administrative cover in the office at all times.

Only in exceptional circumstances would employees be able to extend their leave entitlement into 2021/2022 but if there were mitigating circumstances, these would be taken into account on a case by case basis.

25) Review of a Safe, Staged Return to Work

Members agreed that the report was comprehensive and clearly outlined what appeared to be a workable, safe, staged return to

work by employees to the Town Hall, which had met with the approval of staff and the Council's Health & Safety Consultant.

However, it was noted, that currently, staff are working well from home and that a return to work at the Town Hall by everyone simultaneously was unnecessary, even when restrictions have been lifted.

It was Proposed by the Mayor and AGREED that the existing Town Hall Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel would oversee the return to work.

TOWN COUNCIL

26) Aims and Objectives

The report was noted.

27) Review of Council's Committee Structure/Decision Making Process and Appointment of Members to Standing Committees

The revised Committee Structure proposed by Councillor How was cautiously well received and Councillor How was congratulated for his excellent work.

Generally it was considered that the new concept had merit but members were reluctant to agree to the proposal immediately, declaring they required more time to deliberate and fully understand the knock-on effect of the new structure, particularly as it involved a significant increase in delegated powers for each committee, particularly with regard to budgets and spending responsibilities.

A number of issues were considered and the resolutions which were all Proposed and Seconded have been documented as one:

- RESOLVED:
1. To temporarily retain the existing structure of five Standing Committees and appoint members accordingly to Finance & Scrutiny, Human Resources, General Purposes, Planning Consultative, and Mayoral, Civic

Ceremonial and Events until a further review of the proposed revised Committee Structure is completed.

2. 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.
3. The Council reserves the right to disband the temporarily reinstated Standing Committee Structure at any time, if it determines that the proposed revised structure should replace it.
4. That the Town Clerk will work-up the Terms of Reference for each of the proposed revised Standing Committees and once completed, these would be referred to the appropriate Standing Committee for a thorough review.
5. That an interim report on progress will be brought to the Town Council Meeting on 28 July and that final consideration of whether to instigate the new structure would be determined at the Town Council Meeting on 28 September.

6. That Council Meetings will continue to be held in the evening and whilst they are being conducted virtually, they would commence at 6:00pm. This would be reviewed again once it is possible to hold Council/Committee Meetings in the Town Hall.

28) Calendar of Meetings

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: To revert and meet in accordance with the Calendar of Meeting approved and adopted at the Town Council Meetings in January 2020.

29) Town Council Representation on Board of Trustees – Municipal Charities of Stratford-upon-Avon and St Joseph’s Homestead

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: To comply with the Municipal Charities of Stratford-upon-Avon and St Joseph’s Homestead’s request to reduce Town Council representation on their Board by appointing only one representative. Councillor Coles will retain her position on the Board until 2023 and Ms Lezley Bott will not be replaced by the Town Council when her term of office terminates in 2022.

The Mayor’s involvement will be purely as a civic ceremonial supporter and the incumbent will no longer be an ex-officio Trustee.

30) Government’s Financial Support to the Town and Parish Sector

It was noted that the Town Clerk had sought clarity from Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP regarding the letter he sent to the Town and Parish Sector apropos the government’s intent that this sector should see a share of the £1.6 billion tranche of additional government financial support during the COVID-19 crisis. It was further noted that the Clerk had also written to the MP for

Stratford-upon-Avon, Mr Nadhim Zahawi MP, to see if he could expedite a response from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Town Clerk advised, that upon receipt of Mr Jenrick's letter, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council had allocated 1.7% of the precepts raised by every Town and Parish Council in their Borough and that the Parish Councils were already in receipt of the money from their higher authority.

As this demonstrated clear disparity, it was considered necessary to await a response from the government ministers before taking matters further.

The Town Clerk also advised that the Secretary of the Warwickshire/West Midlands Branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks is also writing to Mr Zahawi, as the Parish Clerks all raised concern during the branch meeting that Stratford-on-Avon District Council appeared to be deliberately penalising parishes in their district.

The Mayor temporarily suspended the Town Council Meeting for five minutes.

31) The Re-opening of Stratford-upon-Avon

Since the reports were published, matters have moved at a furious pace with regard to the re-opening of the town. Consequently, the Mayor sought an update from the two County Councillors, Jenny Fradgley and Kate Rolfe.

They confirmed that Warwickshire County Council had held meetings with the District Council, Stratford BID and Shakespeare's England and that Warwickshire County Council will be publishing their plans on Thursday 28 May. Unfortunately, the plans are confidential until that time.

The Councillors warned that the plan 'is not elegant' as a result of having to move incredibly fast, but the plan 'which will certainly not please everyone' is temporary and can be tweaked where necessary.

It is anticipated that Stratford-upon-Avon will see a resurgence of visitors, and it was necessary to agree a workable plan quickly in an effort to ensure that necessary hardware e.g. signs, barriers are available as the move towards opening towns nationally will put unprecedented pressure on resourcing these necessary commodities.

Council AGREED that it was a question of waiting and that there was no alternative other than to put faith in the two County Councillors to come up with the best approach for the town.

32) Written Reports by Representatives to Outside Bodies

The reports were taken as read but there were some additional matters arising:

32.1 Councillor Jenny Fradgley advised that Stratford-in-Bloom wanted to raise awareness for the In-Bloom Front Garden Competition and sought volunteers to agree to a stake board in members' gardens advertising the competition. The following members agreed to display a stake board:

Councillors Cleeve, Coles, Curtis, Dowling, Dyer, Fradgley, Mackenzie, Rolfe and Vos.

With the exception of Councillors Alcock, who needs to check her availability, and Dyer, all members of the Town Council agreed to act as judges for the initial stage of the Competition. Councillor Jenny Fradgley advised that she would forward all the relevant paperwork shortly.

It was suggested that Council and Council members use their social media network to raise awareness still further. Councillor Fradgley advised that Stratford-in-Bloom would be most grateful for this additional support.

32.2 The Mayor asked Councillor Taylor whether a meeting of the Market Forum had been arranged, following government advice that outdoor markets may resume. Councillor Taylor will inform Council when a meeting has been arranged.

33) Ward Reports

Verbal reports were received from:

- **Councillor Rolfe – Resurfacing of Highways**

Advised that re-surfacing work on High Street/Barclays Bank roundabout and Union Street would commence on 27 May, 2020 for approximately 3 days. This work was scheduled to take place next year but has been brought forward to coincide with the reduction of vehicular traffic on highways.

- **Councillor Gill – Cleeve – Volunteers**

Similarly to the sentiments expressed at the meeting held on 28 April, Councillor Cleeve once again paid tribute to all the volunteers who had come forward to assist the Council and Town Trust with their endeavour to provide support for the community through their joint Stratford Support initiative.

34) Town Clerk's Verbal Report For Information

The Town Clerk advised that Stratford-upon-Avon Cemetery is operating with a significantly reduced work-force, from four to two operatives, one being the Foreman. One operative is having to self-isolate for twelve weeks, hopefully returning in late July, and another will have to self-isolate for fourteen days as of 26.5.20 as his wife, a nurse, has just tested positive for the virus.

Contingency methods are in place should the need arise to temporarily recruit additional manpower to ensure that the Cemetery remains open and functioning.

35) Date and Venue of Next Town Council Meeting

The virtual Town Council Meeting will be held at 6:00pm on 28 July, 2020 using zoom technology.

The Mayor declared the virtual meeting closed at 8:21pm