

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

VIRTUAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

28 July, 2020

TOWN CLERK'S OPEN REPORT

1) **Financial Statements (Annual Accounts) for the Year Ended 31 March 2020**

- **To approve the Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020**

It is usually necessary for Council to approve the Financial Statements (Annual Accounts) and Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) in June each year, as the deadline date for submission to the External Auditor is 1 July. However, this deadline was extended this year to 1 September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The responsibility to approve these documents cannot be delegated to a Standing Committee.

Prior to the Town Council Meeting on 28 July 2020, the year end Accounts, attached as **Appendix 'A'**, were presented to the Finance and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20 July 2020. It was

RECOMMENDED: That the Financial Statements (Annual Accounts) for the year 2019-20 be approved by Council.

Council's Reserves have been adjusted as follows:

- There is a net transfer of £4,948 from Designated Reserves following a reduction in the Building Maintenance Reserve for work undertaken on the Town Hall and a reduction in the Christmas Festival Reserve to cover a budget deficit. These were offset by increases in the Election Expense Reserve, Shakespeare's Birthday Celebration Reserve, Vehicle Replacement Reserve and the addition of a new Designated Reserve for the Community Infrastructure Levy.

- As determined during the Budget review process for the last three years, further costs for the maintenance of the Town Hall over the next financial year will be taken from the Designated Reserve for Building Maintenance, which has decreased after initial expenditure for 2018-19 and further expenditure in 2019-20. It must be noted that the remaining balance in the Designated Reserve is insufficient to cover the estimated remaining costs and will need to be replenished or supplemented from the General Reserve at some point.
- Following the dissolution of the Old Stratford & Drayton parish, and the transfer of funds to the Town Council, the remaining funds in the Designated Reserve were spent before October 2019 in Bishopton Hamlet for the sole benefit of the community, in line with the terms and conditions of the settlement.
- Members will also note the Designated Reserve for Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrations shows an increase of £4,979 from the previous year. The Town Council facilitates the organisation of the Celebrations and, as the 'banker', the Council receives various donations and grants from other interested parties. With the cancellation of the event in April 2020, there was little income received but expenditure was not required so the funds will be carried forward to support next year's event. The figure of £73,047 represents the balance in the accounts as at the 31 March, 2020.
- As per the change introduced three years ago, the policy of including accruals, prepayments and deferred income relating to these activities elsewhere in the Town Council's accounts is no longer being used, which has resulted in greater transparency of funds available throughout the financial year. Because of the cancellation of the event in 2020, the budget contributions of the District and Town Councils for 2020-21 have not been taken. With little additional income or expenditure in 2020, the Management Accounts as at the end of June 2020 show a small change to the current "pot" of £73,424.
- As already mentioned above, additional funds have been transferred to other Designated Reserves. These were in line with budget decisions and minutes from Standing Committees.

Therefore, the revised **Designated Reserves** at 31 March 2020 show a small net **increase of £4,157**.

The **General Reserve fell by £78,321**, much of which can be attributed to reduced income and increased expenditure on the Town Hall, including professional fees, and election expenses. It should be noted that this is approximately half the original budgeted deficit for 2019-20 of £148,551.

Reserves are now reported as:

Building Maintenance	£136,615
Cemetery Land & Building Maintenance	£ 25,400
Allotment	£ 27,162
Christmas Festival	£ 7,154
Vehicle Replacement	£ 15,000
Election Expenses	£ 18,462
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	£ 5,755
Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations (SBC)	£ 73,047
Total Designated Reserves	£308,595
General Reserve	£442,390
Total Reserves	£750,985

Note – the Financial Statements are required to show figures for Fixed Assets, but members should be aware these only reflect valuations of the Council’s assets at a point in time and do not indicate funds available to finance the Council’s ongoing activities.

Members are requested to approve the Financial Statements.

2) Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/2020

- **To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return**
- **To approve the Accounting Statements 2019/2020 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return**

The Council’s Internal Auditor, H L Barnes, has completed their annual internal audit which is required for the Annual Governance and

Accountability Return (AGAR). Following their work, no issues or items have been identified which require further attention or response.

The Internal Audit Report is attached as **Appendix 'B'** together with the other pages of the AGAR.

Following the outcome of the Finance and Scrutiny Committee's earlier meeting, the Chairman Councillor Coles will lead on this issue and will, if necessary, provide a further verbal account in support of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee's RECOMMENDATION that Council approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, which includes the Annual Internal Audit Report, Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements for the year 2019/20.

In line with official guidance, the documents should be approved by Council in the following order:

2.1) Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

2.2) Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20

3) Interim Review of Council's proposed new Committee Structure and Terms of Reference

At the Town Council meeting held on 26 May 2020 it was resolved that:

The Town Clerk would draft Terms of Reference for each of the proposed revised Standing Committees and once completed, these would be referred to the appropriate Standing Committee for review.

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 2020.

The Terms of Reference for each of the proposed revised Standing Committees: Planning Consultative, Personnel, Finance, Community Services, and Heritage and Events, are attached as **Appendix 'C'**.

It is necessary to review all the Terms of every Committee because the existing remit of some committees, General Purposes for example, may be spread over more than one committee under the new proposed

structure and a review will ensure that all Town Council responsibilities are assigned to a Committee with none being missed if the structure is reorganised.

The Finance & Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Finance & Audit Committee at its meeting held on 9 June 2020. A number of members suggested amendments or asked for further information. Queries and concerns were noted by the Town Clerk and have been addressed in subsequent draft versions of the Terms of Reference.

The Planning Consultative Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference for the PCC committee at its meeting held on 7 July 2020 and did not raise any issues of concern.

The Human Resources Committee reviewed all the Terms of Reference for each Committee at its meeting on 30 June 2020. The Committee 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 Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial and Events Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference for the new Community Services Committee and Heritage and Events Committee on 21 July 2020.

Under the new proposed structure, the General Purposes Committee remit will be covered across other committees and the General Purposes Committee will no longer exist. The Terms of Reference highlight where responsibilities that were previously assigned to General Purposes are now assigned and Members are asked to this.

Members will see that the Town Clerk has assigned each task to a lead officer from amongst their number. That is not to say that it will be the officer taking the decision, for obviously decisions are taken by Council alone. However, this proposed structure will require a new way of

working by the Council's existing personnel and for this working practice to work, it is important that a lead officer for each responsibility is easily identifiable.

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. When it is their turn, they will consider the Terms of Reference of the committee they are clerking, because it will be one or the other, there will no longer be just one designated Clerk to these two committees, and they will then call upon their contemporaries for their input in compiling the overall report.

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, and 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.

4) Appointment of Governance & Policies Panel

Although this panel would not be required in the proposed revised Committee Structure, it is important to appoint members for the interim period, at least until the matter is determined at the Town Council meeting on 29 September 2020.

Membership shall comprise no more than 6 members, plus the discretionary, ex-officio attendance of the Mayor. However, the Terms of Reference recommends that the panel should have a representative from each of the Council's standing committees, preferably but not necessarily the Chairman or Deputy Chairman, together with one additional 'floating' member from any of the Town Council's standing committees.

Ordinarily, the appointment to committees takes place at the Town Council Meeting preceding Mayor Making (other than in an election year). In accordance with clause 2.3 of the Governance & Policies Panel's Terms of Reference, determining membership of this panel is deferred until the July Town Council Meeting when all standing committees will have met and appointed their Chairman/Deputy.

Members are requested to consider appointing the following members to the Governance & Policies Panel and appoint the additional 'floating' member from amongst their number:

Mayor Jackson	-	Ex-officio
Councillor Coles	-	Finance & Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Taylor	-	General Purposes Committee
Councillor Vos	-	HR Committee
Councillor Rolfe	-	Mayoral, Civic Ceremonial & Events Committee
Councillor I Fradgley	-	Planning Consultative Committee
Councillor X	-	'Floater'

Should any of the aforementioned choose not to serve on the Panel, then it would be usual to consider appointing the Deputy Chairman of the committee in question.

5) Update on Temporary Town centre measures in response to COVID-19

Councillors J Fradgley and Rolfe, as WCC Councillors will give a verbal report on the latest review meeting on 23 July 2020 regarding the temporary Town Centre measures in response to COVID-19.

6) Implementation of TC Project 1 – Town Strategic Partnership – the appointment of a Town Councillor Representative

The Town Centre Strategic Partnership is a Town Centre project in the Neighbourhood Development plan intended to comprise of key stakeholders tasked with preparing, implementing a Town Centre strategy to address key issues outlined in the NDP.

At the Aims and Objectives meeting held on 10 March 2020 the Town Clerk advised that she had received confirmation that the following would represent their organisation on the proposed Town Strategic Partnership Board:

SDC – Deputy Leader, Cllr Darren Pemberton and Deputy Chief Exec, Tony Perks

RSC – Director of Events and Exhibitions, Geraldine Collenge

SBT – Tim Aucott, Director of Strategic Projects

BID – Director, Joe Baconnet

STT – Chief Executive, Sara Apsley
Stratford Society – John Scampion
STC – Town Clerk, Sarah Summers and one member, yet to be appointed
Clerk to the Board – Joanne Mayes (STC)

One of the three County Councillors for Stratford upon Avon would also attend.

Members should nominate a Town Councillor to be its representative on the Strategic Partnership Board.

Once the membership of the group has been finalised a date will be organised for its inaugural meeting, which has been delayed due to the COVID19 pandemic.

7) The appointment of a Task and Finish Group to consider future Town Centre initiatives.

It has been proposed that a new Task and Finish Group is set up to provide some immediate focus on town centre initiatives.

The future development of the town centre and Town Council's input into this process must use the Neighbourhood Plan as its base starting point. It is suggested that this proposed new subgroup will look at developing aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan and help to devise a strategy going forward, in response to the changing circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

It should be noted that Cllrs J Fradgley and Rolfe, who are also County Councillors and District Councillors, will continue to represent and update the Town Council over ongoing matters relating to the temporary town centre arrangements already in place.

It should also be noted that the Aims and Objectives Task and Finish Group determined at their meeting on 10 March 2020 to support the Mayor's desire to see the following three items from the Neighbourhood Plan given focus during his mayoral year:

- 1) TC Project 1 - Town Centre Strategic Partnership
- 2) TC Project 5 - Improving the Balance between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists

3) CLW Project 2 - Promoting New Strategic Green Open Spaces

The setting up of the Town Centre Strategic Partnership has already been discussed and it is acknowledged that the work undertaken by the new Town Centre Task and Finish Group would be referred to the Strategic Partnership through the Town Council's appointed representatives.

Members should also be mindful that the Town Council can only ultimately achieve change in the town centre by working in partnership with Warwickshire County Council, the District Council and other key stakeholders, hence the requirement for the Town Centre Strategic Partnership. However, in the short term, there is a window of opportunity to put forward proposals to the County Council and other partners.

Cllr Vos will lead on this item. A summary of the subgroup's purpose is attached as **Appendix 'D'** and the proposed Terms of Reference are attached as **Appendix 'E'**. Further supporting information is also attached as **Appendix 'F'**.

Members are asked to consider the proposal and determine whether this new subgroup should be instigated.

8) Model Code of Conduct consultation by the Local Government Association (LGA)

- **To consider a response to the Local Government Association's consultation on a new model member code of conduct**

The Local Government Association (LGA) has launched a consultation on a new model member code of conduct.

High standards of conduct and behaviour are of huge importance to the local (parish and town) council sector as they are needed to protect the integrity of decision making, maintain public confidence, and safeguard local democracy.

All councils are required to have a local Member Code of Conduct. This Model Member Code of Conduct (**Appendix 'G'**) is now out for consultation. It has been developed in collaboration with the sector and will be offered as a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with

local amendments.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) therefore strongly encourages local councils and county associations of local councils to consider the proposed new model member code of conduct and respond to the LGA consultation before the deadline of 17 August 2020.

9) Youth Town Council

- **To consider the proposal to set up a small steering group to discuss the possibility of setting up a Youth Council.**

The possibility of setting up a Youth Town Council was discussed at a previous Aims and Objectives meeting. Councillor Cleeve researched this and is now proposing that the Town Council forms a small steering group of enthusiastic young people to work with us while the initial groundwork is being done, so they are involved from day one, have ownership and feel empowered to take the Youth Council forward.

The possible aims of Stratford-upon-Avon Town Youth Council (SUATYC) will be a non-political, independent group of young people (aged 11 – 18) who meet to organise events and discuss issues that are important to the youth of Stratford-upon-Avon.

The job of a Youth Council is to have the ideas that could make a difference to the lives of young people in the town. Whilst all Councillors were young once, and do try to listen lots to young people, it is fact that young people think about the world in different ways. And that different things matter to them.

It would be hoped that our Youth Council would exist to agree actions that they can take on themselves or to seek help from the Town Council (or others) to make the town an even better place for those under 18.

The Youth Council's aim is to include Stratford-upon-Avon's young people in local government, give them a voice within the town and the opportunity to develop and shape their community for the benefit of young people. Youth Councillors also take part in Town Council organised events, such as Local Democracy week.

More information on setting up a Youth Council is attached as **Appendix 'H'**.

**Deputy Town Clerk
22 July 2020**