



MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING **HELD ON 23th April 2020.**

PRESENT: Councillors: David Greaves, Peter Groves, David Marren, Andrew Martin, Arthur Moran (Mayor), Pam Kirkham (Deputy Mayor), Stuart Bostock, John Statham, Carole Thomas and Stephanie Wedgwood with the Facilities Manager David Thomas and Samantha Roberts the Town Clerk.

Also Present: One member of the public and one member of the press.

154. PUBLIC FORUM

154.1 There were no representatives from the Police

154.2 Representations from members of the public.

John Coulter, a representative of the Food Festival Committee asked the Town Council their views on events with large gatherings between now and the end of the year. He advised that the Food Festival committee would be meeting shortly to discuss this years festival. He shared his concerns with the Town Council over financial commitments and the festivals credibility should it have to be cancelled. Councillor Bostock asked about the festival's insurance and committed expenditure. Councillor Marren suggested that once the lockdown is over there is likely to be social distancing measures in place for some time and suggested the committee should consider this when making their decision. Councillor Groves added that the Ocktober Fest in Germany had already been cancelled for this year. Councillor Kirkham reassured Mr Coulter that the credibility of the festival would not be affected as these were unprecedented times.

154.3 Representations from the public on planning applications – None.

154.4 Questions submitted in advance in writing.

There were no questions submitted in advance.

154. APOLOGIES: There were apologies from Councillors: Penny Butterill and Phil Staley,

ABSENT: none

155. DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests expressed.

156. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

156.1 Resolved: That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5th March 2020 be confirmed as a correct record, approved and signed by the Mayor.

156.2 Resolved: That the minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 19th March 2020 be confirmed as a correct record, approved and signed by the Mayor.

156.3 Resolved: To receive and note the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 19th March 2020 and to accept and approve the recommendations contained within the minutes.

157. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor's report on his list of engagements since the last meeting was received. He advised that he had issued a press release to the resident of Nantwich during these unprecedented times, and had also been interviewed by CAT radio. The Town Council had held a children's drawing/colouring competition and Morrisons had donated a prize. The winning drawing would be placed into the time capsule and placed in the floor of the Peggy Killick room when the repairs were carried out.

158. NANTWICH TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING

Members considered the previously circulated information detailing the On 2 April, published The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. Members considered the options for holding the Annual meeting of the Town Council and following discussion agreed that an Annual Town Council meeting would be held as scheduled on 15th May 2020, but the agenda would only include the appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. All other appointments including committees would be agreed at a later meeting of the Town Council once the Council are able to meeting once again at the Civic Hall.

Resolved: It was resolved to hold the Annual meeting of the Town Council virtually through Zoom on Friday 15th May to appoint the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for 2020/21. All other appointments to be made once the Town Council are able to meet at the Civic Hall again.

159. STANDING ORDERS

Members considered the previously circulated extract for additional standing orders in relation to holding remote meetings, noting that the regulations only allow for remote meetings until 7 May 2021.

Resolved: It was resolved the approved the temporary amendment to the standing orders in relation to holding remote meetings.

160. INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT

Members considered the previously circulated third interim audit report from the internal auditors JDH Business Services Ltd and note the actions to address the three new recommendations.

Resolved: It was resolved to support the responses of the Town Clerk to address the three recommendations of the internal auditor.

161. ACCOUNTS AND PAYMENTS

Resolved: That the schedule of payments be approved in accordance of the previous resolution of the Town Council to use the General Power of Competence, the total sums as follows:

- Current account = £15,561.23

- Petty Cash = £20.45
- Trading Account = £111,433.16
- One Card = £4,088.90

162. FINANCIAL YEAR END AND AGAR

The Clerk advised members that the information relating to amendments to the timeframe for local council audits had been presented for information only. The Clerk would be working to prepare the draft accounts for Council within the new timeframe of 31 August 2020 or earlier if possible.

Resolved: It was resolved to note the new regulations and amended timeframe for local council audits.

163. VAT REPORT

Members considered the previously circulated report of the VAT consultant together with a response report prepared by the Town Clerk detailing how the recommendations can be addressed. The Clerk informed members that the outcome of the backdated VAT audit was that there was no VAT owed from previous years as the partial exemption claim had been below the £7,500. However, for 2019/20 the partial exemption figure had been over £7,500 which has resulted in an amount of £9,159 owed to HMRC. The Clerk advised that further work is still be carried out as advised by the VAT consultant on events delivered by the Town Council since 2016/17 and it is likely VAT will be owed to HMRC for this. Members raised their concern over the quality of previous years auditors who had led the Town Council to believe that all financial activities were in order.

Resolved: It was resolved to approved the responses provided by the Town Clerk as actions to address the recommendations of the VAT consultant.

164. COVID19 - FINANCIAL IMPACT REPORT

Members considered the previously circulated report and spreadsheet detailing the likely impact on pandemic on Town Council finances in 2020/21. The Clerk provided members with comparative figures from April to June 2019 identifying a significant shortfall in income during the same period in 2020. The Clerk advised members that this is an estimate and further consideration may need to be given if the pandemic and lockdown goes beyond 30 June 2020, which it is likely to do. The spreadsheet also provided the approved 2020/21 budget together with areas where the Town Council could make savings during the year on each of the budget headings. The Clerk had identified a potential £189,000 of savings, of which some would be natural savings due to the offices being closed, but other areas relating to grants and financial support to external organisations. In addition, the Clerk advised that the budget savings included the removal of funds to appoint a Town Ranger in 2020/21.

Members discussed the implications of the pandemic and agreed that the appointment of the Town Ranger should be postponed until 2021/22. Members discussed the grants to external organisations and agreed to defer payment of grants until after the end of the first quarter. This will allow for confirmation of some organisations which may not require financial support as their events/activities would not go ahead in 2020. It would also give the Town Council the opportunity review the finances at the end of the quarter before having to make any difficult decisions. Member agreed that the other areas of savings could be managed by the Town Clerk with the overall aim of reducing expenditure to ensure a balanced budget. The Clerk advised members that the budget had also included ear marked reserves of which some

could now be spent from Capital Reserves instead of General reserves, this included the Market Hall shutters and the Civic Hall reserves for flooring. Members agreed that the ear marked reserves should be amended to allow for spend from Capital for these items.

Resolved: It was resolved:

- a) To postpone the appointment of a Town Ranger until 2021/22;
- b) To review the financial position at the end of the first quarter before providing grants to external organisations;
- c) That the Town Clerk manage the remaining budget with the aim of making savings on budget heading where possible to ensure a balanced budget;
- d) That the ear marked reserves be amended so that Capital funds can be used for the Civic Hall and Market Hall ear marked reserves.
- e) To review the financial position at the end of the first quarter to aid in monitoring any further impact of the pandemic on the Town Council.

165. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC.

Resolved: It was resolved to exclude Press and public pursuant to the Public Bodies Admission to meetings Act 1960 as personal and financial details of individuals are likely to be discussed.

Councillor Carole Thomas was able to join the virtual meeting by telephone at 7.30pm.

165. STAFFING MATTERS

Members considered the previously circulated report together with additional financial information and advice from the HR consultants.

Resolved: It was resolved to approve the recommendations contained within the report.

166. BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORTS

Councillor Groves informed members that he had been working with the Highways department in relation to repair works at South Crofts. He advised that Highways had now agreed that further patching is useless and have now recommended a resurfacing programme. The locations for resurfacing will be reassessed in the Annual Condition Survey between June and September 2020 and Councillor Groves is working with the Portfolio Holder for Highways to get the funding stream agreed so that the work can be done as soon as that is in place.

Councillor Moran shared with members the continued work of ANSA ensuring that the household refuse collection service continues with the three waste streams. The workforce had been excellent and flexible during the lockdown with 16 highways personnel retraining carry out refuse work.

In addition Councillor Marren added in a similar vein the Cemeteries and Crematoria service had also continued to provide an excellent service during the lockdown ensuring that all cemeteries remain open. Councillor Marren suggested that a letter of thanks be sent to both service areas for their continued efforts. Councillor Groves supported this suggestion.

167. REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES

There were no reports of representatives on external organisations.

The meeting ended at 7.45pm

Signature of Chair :.....

Date :.....