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MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING **HELD ON 16th July 2020**

PRESENT: Councillors: Pam Kirkham (Mayor), Stuart Bostock (Deputy Mayor), Penny Butterill, Peter Groves, David Marren, Arthur Moran, John Statham, Philip Staley, Carole Thomas and with the Facilities Manager David Thomas and Samantha Roberts the Town Clerk.

Also Present: Three members of the public and one member of the press with PC Matt Stonier and PC Marc Harley.

33. PUBLIC FORUM

33.1 PC Stonier apologised for not attending the virtual meetings of the Town Council, due to IT issues. PC Stonier provided members with an update on issues faced since the relaxing of COVID guidance and the opening of licenced premises again. They had attended a positive meeting with all local licensee holders at the Civic Hall before the public houses had reopened. It had been evident that the pubs had taken social distancing requirements seriously and worked to introduce safe operating measures. He also advised members that the Nantwich Pride had been able to go ahead in a much smaller format.

Councillor Butterill commented that she had been pleased to see the PCSO's out on Birchin Lane reviewing vehicle speeds

33.2 Representations from members of the public.

There was representation from two member of the public, expressing concern about the security of Coronation Gardens now that Barony Park was receiving significant investment. PC Stonier advised that they had visited the travelling community when they were present at Coronation Gardens. PC Stonier added that other open spaces were also at risk and gave the recent examples where youths had congregated at Brookfield. The member of the public welcomed the fencing around the Barony Park but asked if there were any additional laws that could be breached with having the fencing. Councillor Moran provided additional update on Barony Park. Following discussions relating to Nantwich Town Council being requested to fund fencing at Coronation Gardens it was agreed that it should be discussed under the agenda item on the Strategic Plan.

33.3 Representations from the public on planning applications – None.

33.4 Questions submitted in advance in writing. The members question relating to the Barony Park had been addressed.

34. APOLOGIES: Councillors David Greaves, Andrew Martin, and Stephanie Wedgwood

ABSENT: none

35. DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were declarations of interest declared by Councillor Moran for agenda item 7. Planning Control, relating to planning applications 20/2609N and 20/2306N.

35. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

35.1 Resolved: That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11th June 2020 be confirmed as a correct record, approved, and signed by the Mayor.

36. MAYOR'S REPORT

The Mayor reported that due to the lockdown she had not been able to carry out many activities but had visiting all the local independent traders on 15 June to welcome them back following lockdown and wish them success. On 22 June she had attended Brine Leas school where the Food festival committee had donated to the Food Bank. Councillor Kirkham had also attended zoom meetings for the Rotary Club and Nantwich in Bloom.

37. MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

Members considered the previously circulated draft document being consulted upon by the Local Government Association (LGA). The Clerk provided members with some background information giving some comparisons to the Welsh Code of Conduct and the availability of an ombudsman where sanctions are available when a member is found to have breached the code of conduct.

Councillor Marren believed it to be a well written document but agreed that it provided no real sanctions. Councillor Marren aired caution as the code of conduct could be used as a weapon for vexatious complaints. Councillor Marren also questioned whether adhering to the political whip could be viewed as bringing the role of council into disrepute.

Councillor Moran agreed with the comments relating to vexatious complaints and asked whether the acceptance of gifts value should be higher as most items would likely have a value of greater than £25.

Resolved: It was resolved:

- a) That the Clerk provide the comments made by the Clerk together with those received from Councillors Marren and Moran as a response to the consultation document to the LGA.

38. PLANNING CONTROL

Resolved: It was resolved that there were no objections in respect of the applications listed in Appendix A.

39. DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

Members considered the previously circulated draft plan. The Clerk advised members that she was seeking support for the content and not the design. If members were happy with the content, then the draft document would be consulted on with residents and key stakeholders. Councillor Groves sought support to include an additional action relating to littering in open spaces and education associated with littering following a request from a member of the public. Members also discussed the earlier request to address issues with open spaces, their

protection and enhancement, including Coronation Gardens and Brookfield Park. Councillor Thomas highlighted the need to update the map of the town and suggested an amendment to the document to remove the information relating to the Cheese festival in the town as this will not be the case from 2021.

Resolved: It was resolved that the draft document be approved for consultation subject to the following amendments/additions:

- a) An action to work with Cheshire East and Key stakeholders to enhance and protect open spaces within the town;
- b) An action to introduce littering posters together with educational activities;
- c) An up to date map of the town;
- d) To remove reference to the Cheese Festival

40. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Members considered the previously circulated report detailing the current financial position of the town council particularly because of COVID 19. The Clerk advised members that she would still recommend the Town Council continue to act with caution and refrain from unnecessary expenditure.

Resolved: It was resolved to:

- a) Note the report and approve the review of income and expenditure and the bank reconciliations as of 30 June 2020;
- b) Continue to act with caution and refrain from unnecessary expenditure.

41. ALLOTMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS

Members considered the previously circulated report detailing recommendations by the Clerk for amendments to the Allotment holders' rules and regulations following a request to consider bonfires and opening and closing times.

Councillor Marren advised members that the Allotment Panel had been consulted on the proposals and believed the proposals to be a fair outcome.

Resolved: It was resolved to approve amendments to the rules and regulations as detailed within the report.

42. ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Members considered the previously circulated report containing recommendations of the internal auditor. The Clerk advised members that responses on how each of the recommendations would be address were detailed within the table. The Clerk reminded members that they had already received and considered the three interim internal audit reports which had been provided again for information. Following comments from Councillor Marren relating to his disappointment with the previous internal auditors who had not picked up the issues raised by the new internal auditors, members agreed to note the recommendations and approve the proposed actions by the Clerk.

Resolved: It was resolved to note the year end internal audit report and approve the recommended actions by the Clerk to address all issues raised.

43. ACCOUNTS 2019/20 – GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Members considered the Annual Governance Statement prepared by the Clerk and approved the responses to points 1-9 of the statement for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020,

Resolved: It was resolved to approve the responses to points 1-9 of the Annual Governance Statement.

44. ACCOUNTS 2019/20 – ACCOUNTING STATEMENT

Members considered the Accounting Statement for 2019/20 prepared by the Clerk and approved the figures contained within boxes 1-11.

Resolved: It was resolved to approve the Accounting Statement for 2019/20.

45. ACCOUNTS 2019/20 – ANNUAL RETURN

Resolved: It was resolved to approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 Part 3, and for the Chair to sign the approved document.

46. CIVIC HALL EXTENSION

Councillor Moran sought support from council to continue the plans to build the Civic Hall extension despite the impacts of COVID 19. He believed the extension would bring investment into the town and would create a much-needed space at the Civic Hall that would generate additional income for the Town Council. Following a question from Councillor Thomas relating to a return on investment the Facilities Manager in support of Councillor Moran added that a number of larger events had been booked for 2021 before the pandemic which were booked on the assumption that the extension would be completed, in addition there would be scope to increase the price of tickets for larger events. The Clerk advised members that the pandemic would likely set back the completion of the project by approximately six months should council approve the continuation of the plans.

Councillor Statham asked about the responses to the consultation that had taken place prior to the pandemic. The Clerk informed members that a number of responses had been received some of which were very supportive of the plans, with other responses suggesting the funds should be spent on infrastructure improvements, suggesting members of the public are not familiar with what the Town Council's responsibilities are and what the funding can or cannot be spent on.

Resolved: It was resolved to approve the continued the plans for the Civic Hall extension.

47. NOTICE OF MOTION

47.1 Councillor Arthur Moran – Councillor Moran sought support of council to investigate the current provision of public conveniences in the town. He mentioned earlier feasibility work on the former Snowhill site, adding the importance of public convenience provision for tourism

and shoppers. Councillor Marren suggested that the proposal could be incorporated within the draft strategic plan discussed earlier in the agenda.

47.2 Councillor Peter Groves – Councillor Groves sought support from members to provide financial assistance to the newly formed Nantwich Buddies. He provided details of the voluntary group and what benefits they could bring to the town to help shoppers following the pandemic. Councillor Statham in supporting the proposal gave examples of where similar schemes were popular including Chester. The Facilities Manager in supporting the proposal advised members of the need for suitable risk assessments for the group.

Resolved: It was resolved to:

- a) To amend the draft Strategic Plan to include further feasibility in the provision of additional public conveniences at Snow Hill;
- b) Give delegated power to the Clerk to issue a grant of up to £500 should the Nantwich Buddies submit a grant application request.

48. ACCOUNTS AND PAYMENTS

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

One Card = £252.04
Trading Account = £101,264.48
Current Account = £1,899.87

49. COMPREHENSIVE NEW FUNDING PACKAGE FOR COUNCILS TO HELP ADDRESS CORONAVIRUS PRESSURES AND COVER LOST INCOME DURING THE PANDEMIC

The Clerk provided members with details of the last government support package being provided to district and unitary authorities in England. She informed members that based on advice received from NALC the grant was not for the town and parish council sector but as a high proportion of the package was not ringfenced and it allowed local authorities discretion over how the funding was allocated. NALC urge all town and parish councils to speak to their principal authorities as the Secretary of State has encouraged those authorities to work closely with the sector where councils have funding needs and to consider this when allocating funding.

Resolved: It was resolved that the Clerk would write to Cheshire East seeking clarification on funding support for the Town Council.

50. NANTWICH TOWN COUNCIL ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT/POLICY

Members considered the previously circulated Accessibility statement and policy to accompany the new website prepared by the Marketing Manager. Members comments on the excellent work by the Marketing Manager on the new website and the associated policy and statement and asked that their thanks be passed on to her.

Resolved: It was resolved that the Accessibility Statement and Policy be approved for publishing on the new website.

51. BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORTS

There were no reports from Borough Councillors.

52. REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES

Councillor Bostock provided members with some additional financial information relating to Nantwich in Bloom. Councillor Bostock also advised members that he had attended a zoom meeting for the Food Festival which has arranged special awards event, details of which had been circulated by the Clerk by email. Councillor Bostock asked that members considered nominations for the five categories.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm

Signature of Chair :.....

Date :.....