



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON 19th MARCH 2020.**

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

Also Present: One member of the public.

150. PUBLIC FORUM

150.1 There was no representatives from the Police

150.2 Representations from members of the public.

A representative from the market traders sought clarity from the Town Council relating to COVID-19 and the impact on the market particularly traders having to self-isolate, market rents and cash handling.

150.3 Representations from the public on planning applications – None.

150.4 Questions submitted in advance in writing.

There were no questions submitted in advance.

151. APOLOGIES: There were apologies from Councillors: Arthur Moran (Mayor), Penny Butterill, Carole Thomas, David Greaves, Phil Staley, Stephanie Wedgwood and Andrew Martin

ABSENT: none

152. DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interests expressed.

153. COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

Members consider the previously circulated draft Business Continuity Plan and risk assessment. The Clerk advised that the Continuity Plan had a number of recommendations contained within the report which required individual consideration and decisions. It was agreed that members would consider each area of the Continuity Plan and make a decision on individual recommendations.

Staffing: Members considered the recommendation for town councils staff to be split into two operational teams, working on a weekly rota basis, one week at home, one week in the office.

Councillors: Members considered the recommendation for members to keep the Clerk up to date on availability and where possible nominate a substitute for council committee meetings.

Public Events: Members considered the recommendation that all Town Council events are either postponed or cancelled, with new dates in the diary later on in the year for the large events.

Council/Committee meetings: Members considered the recommendation to cancel all future council and committee meetings and work to introduce video conferencing meetings once legislation is amended to allow this.

Statutory Deadlines/Requirements: Members noted the current legal requirement to hold the Annual Town meeting between 1 March and 1 June each year, and the requirement to hold the Annual Town Council meeting during May of each year. Members also noted the legal requirement to approve the annual accounts and annual return before 1 July 2020.

Services: Members noted that the development of the new website and issue of the quarterly Talk of the Town will continue unaffected. Members considered the potential need to close the Civic Hall in the future subject to Government instructions. In the meantime the recommendation for staff to man the Civic Hall on a weekly rota would ensure continued service. Members also consider the recommendations to aid the market traders during the pandemic, noting the potential that the market may have to close if the Government instruct this.

Communication: Members considered the measures to put in place to ensure continued communication between staff and members. Including a secure VPN server for home working by staff, the provision of IPADS for non-Cheshire East councillors and the introduction of ZOOM for video meetings.

Maintaining Lawful Decision-making Processes: Members considered temporary amendments to the Financial Regulations to allow the delegation of power to the Clerk to ensure continuation of services during the pandemic.

Resolved: It was resolved:

- a) A working from home policy implemented from Monday 23 March 2020 with two operational teams, to cover the offices on a bi-weekly basis.
- b) Councillors to continue to advise the Clerk on nominated substitutes prior to any required meetings.
- c) To postpone or cancel all Town Council events, with new dates confirmed for some larger events later in the year.
- d) That meetings only take place where necessary business/decisions are required and cannot be postponed until the autumn or delegated to the Clerk.
- e) That such meetings should only take place if new legislation is introduced to permit videoconferencing.
- f) To proceed with the Annual Town Council meeting via videoconferencing
- g) That if practical and permitted to proceed with the approval of the Annual Return and Accounts in June by videoconferencing.
- h) A rent-free period for all market traders. This will be reviewed in line with Government guidance throughout the pandemic, with rent charges being re-introduced when the Town Council believe that the Country is over the worst;
- i) Outside market traders are welcome to continue trading but gazebos and tables will no longer be provided by the Town Council. This will also be reviewed, and reintroduced once conditions improve.
- j) The Market Supervisor will open the Market Hall each morning and close the Hall following the end of trade but will not remain at the Market throughout the day and

will be based at the Civic Hall. Traders will be able to access the Market Supervisor by telephone throughout trading days for advice/assistance.

- k) The public conveniences will close on non-market days, but will be opened every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday during trading hours. Again, the Cleaner will not be based at the toilets throughout the day but will ensure the toilets are clean in the morning upon opening.
- l) The Town Council will consider requests for new traders where this does not conflict with services/goods that are already offered by existing traders.
- m) The Town Council will continue to promote the market offer on social media and press
- n) The Town Council will share with traders any information obtained relating to Government support available for businesses.
- o) That the Clerk continue with the delegated authority to manage the staff and services of the Town Council and take whatever decisions are necessary in line with the Council's Risk Assessment.
- p) That the Clerk be authorised to utilise (if necessary) short term and temporary contractors where necessary to keep essential services running.
- q) That Councillors log into their Town Council or Cheshire East email account on a daily basis whilst social isolation measures are imposed.
- r) The re-imburement of costs to staff for using personal mobile phone for work purposes.
- s) The authorisation of costs associated with the VPN server.
- t) To approve the Business Continuity Plan
- u) To approve the Delegation of Authority policy

The meeting ended at 7.50pm

Signature of Chair :.....

Date :.....