

## LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL EXTRAORDINARY FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020

#### **Present**

**Chairman:** The Mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe, MBE

**Councillors:** Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr J. Broom, Cllr K. Ellis, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr R. Smith, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr S. Williams

**Officers:** M. Adamson-Drage (operations manager), M. Green (deputy town clerk), A. Mullins (support services manager), M. Russell (finance manager), J. Wright (town clerk)

**Absent:** Cllr L. Howe

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe, read out the protocol for virtual meetings and ensured all participants could hear each other.

#### **19/312/C Public Forum**

##### **J. Smith Oliver**

As chairman of Turn Lyme Green (TLG), J. Smith Oliver spoke in relation to agenda item 14, Response to Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy Public Consultation and agenda item 15, Environmental Aspect Assessment and Net Zero Carbon 2030 Strategic Plan. She said item 14 was a clear and supportive response to Dorset Council's (DC) action plan and item 15 was a very clear plan laid out by Cllr B. Bawden and the operations manager to help the town council achieve carbon-free status by 2020 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. She thanked Cllr Bawden and the operations manager on behalf of TLG for producing such an extensive, detailed, well thought out piece of work, with the intention of helping the town to achieve these goals, even down to different streetlights being converted to LED. J. Smith Oliver said we were living in a time when the impossible could be possible and a year ago no-one would have thought we would be where we are now. She said many of us had been through personal and community discomfort by letting go of old behaviours and belief patterns that were no longer relevant and she felt now was a time of real community action and pulling together to form a new identity. She said Lyme Regis could do this, to bring forward a new eco identity. J. Smith Oliver said many supporters of TLG had said they were proud to live in a town with such a proactive group of councillors. She said although what was proposed in response to the climate emergency may be uncomfortable at first, she felt the impossible would soon become possible. She said in 2030, people would look back at this meeting, knowing an intention was set and it will have been achieved.

## **P. Benfield**

P. Benfield spoke on the same two agenda items. She said there had been so much national news lately with central government announcing its 10-point plan for green industrial revolution, the recent report of the government's own climate change committee looking at how to reduce carbon emissions and how to achieve net carbon budgets nationally. She said internationally, the prime minister took part in a climate ambition summit with 45 countries, and next November the UK would host the UN Climate Change Conference, COP 26. P. Benfield said she found it reassuring these items were being taken seriously and it was even more reassuring that closer to home in Dorset and Lyme Regis, work was being done to make changes to protect and preserve the environment for future generations. She said she was pleased to see the town council was working through DC's proposals for climate change as it was so important DC heard from local councils. She said the council was giving important time to these issues in the town and as a resident, she was pleased to see the thoughtful and thorough work that went into the assessments being considered at this meeting. P. Benfield said it was a terrific analysis of how the council could achieve net zero by 2030 and gave the council a template to follow for the next 10 years. She said if in future people looked back with hindsight to 2020, local residents would be reassured to see their local council had the foresight to take on the issues head on, working with community groups and residents to pull together to reach the goals. P. Benfield said it would be hard work but a wonderful pay-off, having cleaner air, a more diverse environment, plants and trees, a sustainable community growing its own food and looking after each other, supporting local producers, and improved health and wellbeing.

## **N. Ball**

N. Ball wished everyone a good Christmas and a prosperous New Year and thanked the staff, especially the outside staff who looked after the gardens, which had been vastly improved, along with the cemetery. He thanked the council for its reply to his statement in the public forum at the last meeting, confirming the council was owed £120,000 by debtors and he felt a prosperous New Year would involve the writing off or collecting of the debts. He said the council shouldn't be adding extra projects when there were debts owed.

N. Ball also spoke about the new roof above the amusement arcade and said he was aware a new piece of glass was being installed the following day, weighing between 80 and 90 kilos. He said he hoped the Health and Safety Executive and the insurance company had been notified about the incident of the glass smashing. He also asked if vehicles would be allowed on the roof and said he was concerned about market stalls, gas bottles and metal feet dragging across the surface and the risk of the glass being hit with metal tubing. N. Ball said the building regulations stated it was only a viewing platform and he asked if councillors were aware of this. He said he believed it was a botched job because water was standing on the surface. He said the operations manager had told him it was the council's problem to deal with, not his, but nothing seemed to have been done about it. He said he was concerned about glass falling on people below and he had spoken to DC about this. N. Ball said he hoped the members thought about markets on the roof and the risk to the public.

## **G. Symonds (read out by the mayor)**

G. Symonds said he wrote to the council during the first lockdown asking how it was going to support its tenants during this time and it took over a month to receive a reply from the deputy town clerk. He said in his reply, the deputy town clerk stated that the council's loss adjuster would deal with each business fairly and promptly and would contact him very shortly regarding the forced closure of his business due to the Covid lockdown. However, he said the first contact from the loss adjuster Peter Satchel was on 22 September 2020. G. Symonds said when he asked Mr Satchel when he was appointed by the council, he said he would forward this question to the council to respond. He said this concerned him, as the agent that had been appointed could not answer a simple question, yet he was asking for a great deal of personal information from him. He gave an example of one of the questions, which asked for an outline of the nature of the business, the services or goods provided and the nature and breakdown of the customer base by age and sex and whether they came from Lyme Regis or otherwise. G. Symonds said he felt this showed there was no understanding of his business and it was a nonsense question. He said the office of the town council was not following instructions from councillors and not complying with terms of reference or standing orders. He said the office did not reply to the email from the loss adjuster regarding when he was employed by the council. G. Symonds said he had a meeting with the mayor, town clerk and Cllr J. Broom on 25 September 2020 about various issues and he was still waiting for a response for questions raised in this meeting. Regarding the incident on 7 October 2020 when G. Symonds said one of the glass panels above the arcade shattered onto himself and members of the public below, the operations manager came and spoke to him on the same day. He said the operations manager said he would go back to him with an update but he was still awaiting this. He said the health and safety report the operations manager submitted on 7 October 2020 made no mention of the glass falling onto people below, which was a glaring omission. He said the report did not explain the full facts of the incident. G. Symonds said these were just a few examples where he had been ignored by the office, demonstrating that the town clerk, deputy town clerk and operations manager were not following councillors' policies. He believed this was not the correct way to run an office and it needed to be investigated independently as it would not be correct procedure for the office staff to investigate a complaint against them. He said he believed the Nolan Principle should apply in this case and evidence could be supplied for all the issues raised.

## **19/313/C Dorset Council Matters**

Cllr D. Turner gave an update on the increased car parking charges, as she said he had seen a number of comments which indicated people didn't understand the impact on many highways' related issues. He said it could reduce hunting spaces, reduce traffic movements around town, help park and ride by improving their viability and attractiveness, reduce CO<sup>2</sup> emissions which improves air quality and affects climate change, increase the use of public transport and ride share, and encourage walking and cycling. The negatives were that it may change destinations, which he didn't think would particularly affect Lyme, and may increase parking away from car parks, which needed to be monitored and addresses if it

became an issue. He said there was also some weak evidence of a relationship between economic growth and these charges.

Cllr D. Turner highlighted the press release from Cllr Ray Bryan, the portfolio holder for highways, which said although the all-day price had increased from £2 to £8, it would be a graduated charge like in Weymouth. He said Sunday charging would continue to apply but town and parish councils could ask for free days for special events, and the recommendation to extend charging until 8pm had been withdrawn. He said special arrangements for workers who required all-day parking would be considered in due course, and the new arrangements would apply from 1 February 2021.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said he assumed the increase was DC's attempt to achieve a balanced budget and if the charges were not increased, the council tax charge would have to be increased.

Cllr D. Turner said the increase couldn't be budget related, it could only be related to car parking and highways' improvements. He said there was no direct correlation but money from other parts of the budget wouldn't have to be fed into car parks in future.

Cllr D. Sarson asked if Cllr D. Turner could give assurances that special arrangements for workers, residents and shoppers' permits would be implemented early next year and not in the second stage.

Cllr D. Turner said there was no date identified and it would be up to the Executive Advisory Panel to set the date.

**19/314/C Questions from Councillors**

There were none.

**19/315/C Apologies for Absence**

Cllr R. Doney

**19/316/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

There were none.

**19/317/C Dispensations**

There were none.

**19/318/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 18 November 2020**

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 18 November 2020 were **ADOPTED**.

**19/319/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 25 November 2020**

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 25 November 2020 were **ADOPTED**.

**19/320/C Matters arising from the minutes of the Full Council meetings held on 18 and 25 November 2020**

**Guildhall window**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe asked why the drawings and specifications hadn't been finalised yet.

The deputy town clerk clarified this was in relation to building regulations, not the planning application, as there had been uncertainty over whether building regulations approval was required. As it was a public building, building regulations would be required but he didn't see any reason why this would delay the work. He said his main concern was related to the planning process because as of 15 December 2020, it had still not been registered by DC.

The deputy town clerk said he would follow this up and would also ask Cllr D. Turner if he could assist.

**Member IT**

The deputy town clerk said DC would prefer if all members used the IT equipment it provided as it would help with GDPR and give assurances the town council email addresses would work. He said he would write to members individually to determine exactly what equipment they would like.

All members indicated they would like a laptop but no separate keyboard was required.

**Bowls club lease**

The deputy town clerk said the lease was with the bowls club for comment but he would chase it up.

**19/321/C Update Report**

**Seafront roof**

The deputy town clerk said it was anticipated the replacement glass panel for the seafront roof would be installed the following day, but it was weather dependent. He confirmed the same specification of glass would be installed.

## **External audit**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe asked if members could have sense of the correspondence which had been received by the external auditors in relation to the Annual Return.

The town clerk said the external auditor had not shared this information with him.

### **19/322/C Planning Committee**

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, it was **RESOLVED** to receive the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting on 2 December 2020

### **19/323/C Health and Safety Policy Review**

The operations manager said the policy had been amended to increase the amount paid for an eye test from £20 to £30, but he suggested it was changed to 'a reasonable cost' because of varying prices at local opticians. Members agreed this change.

Cllr J. Broom asked why the policy was being reviewed now as he didn't think it was due for review until mid-2021.

The operations manager said the review was delayed due to Covid-19 and should have taken place in mid-2020.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to approve the Health and Safety Policy, with the addition of 'a reasonable cost' to be paid for eye tests.

### **19/324/C Budget and Precept 2021-22**

Cllr D. Sarson asked if the increase in office admin expenditure in 2023-24 was intentional or a clerical error. He also asked why grants' expenditure decreased from 2023-24 onwards.

The finance manager said the increase in office admin expenditure in 2023-24 was due to the civil wedding licence being payable in that year.

The town clerk said the decrease in the grants' expenditure was due to there being a three-year funding agreement in place with Lyme Regis Museum, which expired in 2022-23.

The town clerk said members had been presented with similar figures to those presented at the meeting on 25 November 2020, but with minor changes due to the setting of discretionary charges. He said members were being asked to set a 2021-22 budget of £1.693m, with expenditure of £1.305m and a precept held at the 2020-21 level of £132,779. He added this would represent a precept of £64.41 for an average Band D property.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** to approve an income budget estimate of £1,693,436 and an expenditure budget estimate of £1,305,548 for 2021-22; approve a reserve estimate of £947,900 in 2021-22; approve the 2021-22 precept at £132,779; and note the five-year financial plan.

**19/325/C Response to Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy Public Consultation**

Cllr B. Bawden said she had completed three of the eight sections and she would email the remaining sections to members for their approval before the consultation deadline of 20 January 2021. She said several things had happened which had changed the context, including the Climate Change Committee proposing much shorter targets, which meant DC would need to act quicker than originally thought.

Cllr B. Bawden said the town council's response would say it was a good plan, but DC needed to work much closer with town and parish councils and community groups, drawing on their commitment and expertise.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the plan was rightly ambitious and felt it echoed the town council's plan in that it was framed into three areas; direct action, indirect action and partnership working.

As the remaining sections would not be formally approved by the council, the town clerk suggested the response stated it was the view of the council, rather than a resolution.

Cllr B. Bawden encouraged members to respond as individuals and to encourage others to do so. She said social media resources had been supplied by DC to share on the council's pages.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to agree the draft response to Dorset Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy consultation so far, and further sector-based responses will be circulated to members by email before the consultation deadline of 20 January 2021, with responses to be sent directly to Cllr B. Bawden.

**19/326/C Environmental Aspect Assessment and Net Zero Carbon 2030 Strategic Plan**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the proposals made a great deal of sense and everything seemed achievable. He felt the plan contained initiatives the council could realistically deliver.

Regarding the carbon literacy training, Cllr B. Bawden said it was hoped this could be delivered in February through the DAPTC.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr R. Smith, members **RESOLVED** to note the environmental aspect assessment findings and approve the broad programme of action to reach net zero by 2030.

## **19/327/C Behaviour Related Public Space Protection Order**

The deputy town clerk said when the order was last considered by this council, members asked that the area covered included Theatre Square where there was a significant issue with people feeding seagulls, as well as the Church Cliff Walkway. However, he said the former West Dorset District Council chose not to include these areas and he suggested a request was made to extend the order to those areas.

Cllr M. Ellis said her biggest concern was the policing of the order as she didn't want the town council to have to employ security guards again, at its own cost.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said the security guards were employed as the council was presented with a significant problem it couldn't ignore, and it did resolve the issues. He said it had also helped support the council's argument for extra police resources during discussions with the police and crime commissioner.

It was clarified the order would not mean a complete ban on people drinking alcohol in public, only if people were causing a nuisance and had received a warning.

Cllr G. Stammers was concerned it would put too much responsibility on the council's enforcement officers.

The town clerk said the enforcement officers would be involved at a low level as the first contact in incidents where alcohol is involved, but the order would give them some powers in terms of initial intervention.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to request from Dorset Council an addition to the Behaviour Related Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) – prohibition of feeding seagulls, to include anti-social behaviour related to the consumption of alcohol across the seafront and in the Langmoor and Lister Gardens, and to extend the order to include Theatre Square and Church Cliff Walkway.

## **19/328/C Land Stability**

The town clerk said the Town Management and Highways Committee needed to consider options for addressing ground movement in Stile Lane and this would occupy officer time to work with engineers.

Cllr J. Broom asked why DC hadn't been involved yet as it was a public footpath.

The town clerk said officers agreed there was a significant obligation that would fall to DC and it would be involved.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said some of the footpaths in the gardens which had cracked were at the front edge and there was less soil, so this may need shoring up.



### **19/329/C List of Payments**

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said staff clothing seemed to appear often on the list of payments and he asked for more detail on payments in the November list.

It was confirmed this was for hi-vis clothing for the external works' team following discussion at the Health and Safety Committee, so this would not be regular expenditure.

The town clerk said officers would bring a report to members with a list of staff clothing that was required so members could get a sense of what was being spent.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments for November 2020 for the sum of £206,389.59.

### **19/330/C Tourism Website**

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential matters relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

### **19/331/C Work of the Retained Business Loss and Claims Adjuster**

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr M. Ellis, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential matters relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

### **19/332/C Media Blog**

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential matters relating to information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

## 19/333/C Debtors' Report

Proposed by Cllr R. Smith and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, members **RESOLVED** that under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business as it included confidential matters relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person within the meaning of paragraphs 1 and 8 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Section 1 and Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985), as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

## 19/334/C Exempt Business

### a) Tourism Website

The support services manager said since the meeting with members of the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee, officers had had discussions with some but not all parties involved in the website. She said a further meeting would be held with Visit Dorset and NVG on 8 January 2021 which would hopefully take things forward. To allow extra time for discussions and ensure advertisers had the full 12 months of advertising, she asked members to consider an extension of the website contract until the end of April 2021.

Cllr C. Reynolds asked if she could attend the meeting on 8 January 2021. The support services manager confirmed Cllr C. Reynolds would be invited as vice-chairman of the Tourism, Community and Publicity Committee, along with the chairman Cllr K. Ellis.

Cllr B. Bawden asked how information could be fed into the Visit Dorset website as there needed to be better information about railway links at Axminster.

The support services manager said contact details could be provided for the Visit Dorset team.

The support services manager gave an update on the delivery of the discovery trail map and website. She said the website had been soft launched and the map would be printed and distributed w/c 21 December 2020.

Proposed by Cllr D. Sarson and seconded by Cllr G. Stammers, members **RESOLVED** to approve an extension of the contract with NVG for the tourism website [lymeregis.org](http://lymeregis.org) at a cost of £1,965 + VAT, covering 1 March to 30 April 2021.

### b) Work of the Retained Business Loss and Claims Adjuster

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to note the work of the council's retained business loss and claims adjuster and agree a deadline of 31 January 2021 for the receipt of any claims from the council's commercial tenants relating to hardship arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

**c) Media Blog**

The town clerk said there had been no further developments since the meeting with members on 6 December 2020 and legal advisors had been held in abeyance.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members **RESOLVED** to approve the approach in response to the blog from David Hencke.

**d) Debtors' Report**

The deputy town clerk the debt relating to the caravan and chalet park was reducing all the time and related to a relatively small number of properties. However, the council was limited in the legal action it could take due to restrictions under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

The deputy town clerk confirmed the discount in rent approved by the council due to Covid-19 would only be applied if owners paid by 31 March 2021.

*The meeting ended at 9.03pm.*