

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020

Present

Chairman: The Mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe, MBE

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

Officers: M. Green (deputy town clerk), A. Mullins (support services manager), M. Russell, (finance manager), P. Williams (operations supervisor), J. Wright (town clerk)

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

19/185/C Public Forum

D. Boggon

D. Boggon said he was concerned about the cost of holiday accommodation parking at Woodmead car park. He was speaking as someone who had owned a property in Lyme Regis for 33 years and spent a lot of money on improving it using local contractors and had paid for parking at Woodmead. He said if they didn't provide parking for their guests, they would spill out into the streets and this would create a bigger problem, so they were conscious this was something that was done for the community. D. Boggon said they had paid £670 for the current year on 1 April 2020 and asked for a refund when lockdown began and the car park was barriered off which meant it couldn't be used anyway. When they wanted to renew the permit, they were informed it would still be £670, which he said didn't seem at all reasonable. He said if someone booked a restaurant but were told the head chef was sick and the restaurant was closed, they would feel aggrieved if they had to pay anyway. D. Boggon said for the period of time left in the year, the cost of the permit should be £502.50 rather than £670 and he asked the council to consider this figure.

N. Ball

N. Ball thanked the office staff who had been kept on during lockdown, the external works' staff who kept things going outside, and the mayor for his guidance and balanced view through the crisis. He said he hoped business could pick up to off-set some of the losses and that there wasn't a second wave. He was pleased to see the beach huts would be re-opening, particularly as the cancer charity hut could be used as there had been a lot of interest in it. N. Ball said everyone needed to pull together in these times. He said at the last council meeting he was shocked it had come to the casting vote of the mayor to decide on whether there should be a mayoral vote and he felt some members needed to take a step back and look at

things in a different light. He felt all members should have backed the mayor. He said if someone wished to be mayor, they should have the opportunity and this was not the time or the place for change. He said it showed how some people took being a councillor personally but this was not why they were elected.

19/186/C Dorset Council Matters

Cllr D. Turner sent his apologies.

19/187/C Apologies for Absence

Cllr J. Broom
Cllr L. Howe

19/188/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Cllr G. Stammers declared an interest in any discussions involving Lyme Bay Holidays as her son was an employee but as it was a non-pecuniary interest she would still take part in discussions.

19/189/C Dispensations

There were none.

19/190/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 24 June 2020

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr D. Ruffle, the minutes of the extraordinary Full Council meeting held on 24 June 2020 were **ADOPTED**.

19/191/C Re-opening the Town

Members discussed the cost of a holiday accommodation parking permit.

Several members felt the cost of the permit was too low to begin with and the permit could still be used for eight months of the year, including the main holiday season.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said this was not the time to discuss the original price; this would need to be discussed at the annual review of charges.

Cllr C. Reynolds felt it was unfair to expect people to pay for parking as they hadn't been able to use the car park.

The town clerk added that the holiday accommodation also couldn't be used due to the government restrictions.

Cllr M. Ellis suggested a discount of £100, i.e. £570 for the remainder of the year. She asked for a recorded vote on this motion.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to charge £570 for a holiday accommodation parking permit for Woodmead car park for the remainder of the 2020/21 financial year.

Voted for – Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr R. Smith, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr K. Ellis, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr B. Larcombe

Voted against – Cllr S. Williams

Abstentions – Cllr C. Reynolds

Members discussed the 2020/21 fees for the chalets, caravans and beach huts. The town clerk said the residents were proposing a 25% discount because the council had closed the site.

The deputy town clerk clarified that the licence fee was for eight months of the year so the proposal for a 25% discount was not unreasonable given the period the site had been closed.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said although the closure was not the council's fault, he felt the proposal was reasonable, but he hoped it would be reciprocated by the owners with early payment of their fees rather than waiting until the end of the financial year. He said the value of this, given the council's current financial position, was greater than the sum of the discount.

The deputy town clerk clarified that although early payment could be encouraged, the current lease/licence allowed for payment in up to six installments, so there would be no opportunity for a condition to be imposed that payment had to be made up front.

As it was the government's restrictions which meant people couldn't travel to holiday homes, Cllr M. Ellis felt a 20% discount would be more reasonable, but with some conditions. She added that those who had used their chalet or caravan during the lockdown shouldn't receive the discount.

Cllr R. Smith was concerned if the council gave a discount and there was a second wave of the virus which meant people were not allowed to travel to holiday homes, it would set a precedent and the council would be expected to provide a further discount.

The town clerk said if this happened the council would have a responsibility to address it at that time.

Cllr G. Turner asked if owners who rented out their property and had received a £10,000 grant from the government would also receive the discount as he believed it shouldn't apply to them.

Cllr C. Reynolds asked if the council was aware which properties were rented out and if there was any way of knowing who had received the grant. She added that the discount agreed for holiday accommodation parking permits was 14% and suggested the same discount be applied to the chalets, caravans and beach huts.

The deputy town clerk said not everyone who sub-lets would have received the grant and there was no way of determining who had received it.

Cllr R. Smith suggested the discount was only given to owners who gave an undertaking they were not operating as a business.

Cllr G. Stammers suggested the 20% discount could be given subject to owners paying within 28 days.

The town clerk said he understood members may want to put conditions on any discount but it would make things too complicated and may result in a dispute with the residents.

Cllr M. Ellis requested a recorded vote on the following motion:

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** to approve a 20% discount on the chalet, caravan and beach hut fees for 2020/21, subject to the following conditions: 2020/21 fees are paid in full by 31 March 2021; the discount will not be applied until any outstanding sums owed by residents are paid; and the discount will not be applied retrospectively where debts are settled after 31 March 2021.

Voted for – Cllr R. Smith, Cllr D. Sarson, Cllr R. Doney, Cllr K. Ellis, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr D. Ruffle, Cllr G. Stammers, Cllr C. Reynolds, Cllr G. Turner, Cllr B. Larcombe
Voted against – Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr S. Williams

Abstentions – None

Members discussed the re-opening of the council offices and acknowledged that although working from home was working well, it was important for the public to have access to services.

The operations supervisor said various measures were already in place to allow staff to return to the office, such as hand sanitiser at the entrance and signs and floor markings, but a Perspex screen for the counter was yet to be delivered.

Providing the Perspex was delivered when expected, the town clerk said the office could be re-opened on 13 July 2020.

Regarding park and ride, the deputy town clerk said it was unlikely it could operate this year without the council providing a substantial subsidy.

Cllr M. Ellis suggested Strawberry Field could be considered at a future date as a park and walk facility.

Members discussed the performance area at the Marine Parade Shelters, specifically for use for events and performances. It was acknowledged that although an event or performance could be made Covid Secure, the main issue was people congregating to watch it, which the council couldn't be seen to encourage.

Regarding alfresco seating, the town clerk said there was a drive from the government for local councils to make more outdoor seating available for businesses, with a cap of £100 on licences, as well as a consultation period of five days and an implementation period of a further five days.

The town clerk said the advice from Dorset Council was to follow this guidance, although the council shouldn't do anything to compromise the recent court judgement on alfresco seating. He added the council needed to be satisfied a business was Covid Secure and it may not be possible to grant every licence as there were pinch points on Marine Parade where social distancing would not be possible.

The town clerk said in granting licences, there should not be any other obstructions on Marine Parade, such as A boards, which would further restrict people's ability to socially distance.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe asked who would ensure a business was Covid-19 compliant.

The town clerk said officers would have an initial discussion with businesses and ask to see their risk assessment and method statement, but that was where the council's involvement would end.

Cllr M. Ellis agreed A boards were an issue and suggested the council discussed with its tenants that they shouldn't be out at this time, as well as asking Dorset Council to enforce the regulations.

The town clerk agreed and felt it should apply not only to A boards but to all paraphernalia outside businesses on town council land. He suggested a ban on this kind of equipment for this year and members agreed.

The deputy town clerk said the former Blue Sea Café, now Kiosk, was proposing to have picnic style benches outside the property, which he was inclined to approve providing the number of seats was not increased.

Members discussed the trampoline and deckchair concessions and were concerned it would be difficult to keep them Covid compliant due to the high frequency of use.

Members also discussed the hair braiding and henna tattooing concession and although not opposed to the concession itself, there was concern it would cause congestion on a busy area of the seafront and restrict the ability to socially distance.

The town clerk asked members to consider a proposal from the RNLI for the provision of lifeguards this year. The charity said it would need to employ a third person to provide a first aid and lost children service, as well as lifeguarding, which would cost the council an additional £2,070.

The deputy town clerk said this was a one-off for this year and members shouldn't underestimate the number of first aid cases and lost children the lifeguards dealt with. He said the RNLI would fund two-thirds of the third person's salary and the £2,070 requested from the council was the remaining third.

Members were disappointed this was considered to be an extra service this year and felt the lifeguards wouldn't turn away a lost child or someone who required first aid, if the situation presented itself.

The operations supervisor said not having this service would have implications on town council staff if they had to administer first aid and deal with lost children, which would take them away from their normal duties.

Incidents of anti-social behaviour were discussed, particularly people urinating and defecating in public when the toilets were closed, rubbish being left on the seafront, and late-night parties in the gardens which were affecting the lives of residents living nearby.

The town clerk said it was proposed to keep the Marine Parade toilets open until 10.30pm and to pay council staff overtime to do a final rubbish collection and tidy-up and to close the toilets. He said although there was a cost involved to the council, it was deemed necessary due to the negative publicity the issues were creating.

Regarding the parties in the gardens, the town clerk said the council may have to step in to protect open areas and members agreed this would be kept under review.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, members **RESOLVED** to agree the following in line with the government guidance:

- Open Candles on the Cobb Pavilion toilets
- Open the chalet and caravan park
- Open the amenities area
- Open the Anning Road and Henry's Way play areas
- Open the council offices
- Hold monthly Full Council meetings but other meetings may be held in between to discuss urgent business
- Keep the park and ride closed for 2020
- Allow weddings in the Guildhall
- Not to allow events and performances in the performance area
- Keep Langmoor and Lister Rooms closed
- Open the Cart Road beach huts (including privately owned)
- Officers use their discretion to allow alfresco seating where the location allows
- Hire out beach wheelchairs
- Keep beach showers closed
- Not to allow the trampoline, deckchair, children's games and activities, and hair braiding concessions for the 2020 season unless government advice changes

- Not to part-fund a third RNLI lifeguard

19/192/C Use of Market Area

Cllr C. Reynolds felt it wasn't necessary to bring this request to members as officers could have dealt with it as a normal market area booking.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** that the request from the Lyme Oyster Co. to rent the market area of the Marine Parade Shelters on a regular basis was dealt with by officers as a normal booking.

The meeting closed at 9.54pm.