

LYME REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL EXTRAORDINARY FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 JANUARY 2021

Present

Chairman: The Mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe, MBE

Councillors: Cllr B. Bawden, Cllr J. Broom, Cllr M. Ellis, Cllr D. Ruffle, 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)

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

A prayer was given by the Rev. Chris Martin.

19/335/C Public Forum

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

19/336/C Dorset Council Matters

Cllr D. Turner said the Local Plan consultation was running from 18 January to 15 March 2021 and once adopted, it would guide planning applications for the next 15 years. He said there were details on dorsetforyou.gov.uk on how to input into the consultation, town and parish councils would be consulted, and there were a limited number of hard copies of the consultation available in libraries. He said there would also be a dedicated phone line but the details were not yet available.

Cllr D. Turner said cases of Covid-19 had risen across the county in the last week, although there was a steeper increase in the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area. He said Bridport Medical Centre was doing a great job in administering the vaccinations at dedicated clinics. He said a postcard was being delivered by the Royal Mail to every household in Dorset outlining the current restrictions and relevant contact details, as 20% of people were not online.

Cllr D. Turner said Dorset Council's (DC) climate change consultation ended today. He said it had been announced funding of £19million had been awarded to DC by central government for climate change initiatives, although it was estimated the changes required would be in the range of £100million.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe said members were concerned the advocates of the proposed Dorset National Park were suggesting Lyme Regis Town Council was

supportive of the proposal but this was not the case; the council had asked for more information before forming a view. He asked what credence was being given to the advocates and what DC's current position was.

Cllr D. Turner said there was no buy-in from DC currently. He said a Government White Paper was intended to be published six months ago but it had been delayed, although Dorset had been mentioned as a possible site for a national park. He said the town council's position with the advocates was not a matter for him to deal with.

Cllr B. Bawden asked if vaccinations would be administered at Lyme Regis Medical Centre as she was aware of some residents, particularly those in sheltered accommodation, who were not able to get to Bridport.

Cllr D. Turner said Bridport Medical Centre was dealing with patients from the whole area and nothing had been set up at Lyme Regis yet. However, he said the National Voluntary Service could take people to vaccination clinics and there were around 25 responders available in Lyme Regis.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe thanked Cllr D. Turner for the help and support he had given to the town council, particularly on issues that required DC's support.

19/337/C Questions from Councillors

There were none.

19/338/C Apologies for Absence

Cllr R. Doney
Cllr K. Ellis – illness
Cllr C. Reynolds – minor operation

19/339/C Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

19/340/C Dispensations

There were none.

19/341/C To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 16 December 2020

Proposed by Cllr G. Turner and seconded by Cllr J. Broom, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 16 December 2020 were **ADOPTED**.

19/342/C Matters arising from the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 16 December 2020

External audit

The town clerk said there was still no sign-off from the external auditor but he had chased it up again this week.

Climate change consultation

Cllr B. Bawden said she had emailed the remaining sections to members earlier that day and would submit the final response by the deadline at midnight. She said the response was broadly supportive of DC's strategy but was asking for more action sooner, and more collaboration with town and parish councils and community groups. It also asked for a target deadline of 2030 for net carbon zero.

Cllr B. Bawden said sections on water and natural assets were supportive of the Dorset Climate Action Network's submission. She said issues specific to Lyme Regis had been included in the food and drink and economy sections, such as the Totally Locally initiative and the Royal College of Art's sustainable transport report.

Cllr B. Bawden said the response had not committed the town council to anything, it just provided a response to the consultation, although she was aware DC viewed this as the start of listening to councils and communities about the topic.

Member IT

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe asked how the equipment would be delivered to members.

The deputy town clerk said it was more practical for DC to deliver the equipment to the office than to deliver to individual addresses. He said staff were going into the office and would arrange distribution to members.

Staff clothing

As the Human Resources Committee meeting scheduled for 27 January 2021 had been cancelled, Cllr M. Ellis asked if the report on the cost of staff clothing would go to the following meeting or another committee.

The town clerk said it would go to the next Human Resources Committee meeting.

Letters from the mayor

Cllr M. Ellis asked if members could have sight of letters which were sent by the mayor in response to issues raised in the public forum.

The town clerk agreed copies of the letters would be circulated to members in future.

19/343/C Update Report

Grants

The support services manager said the deadline for applications was now at the beginning of March as the process had started later this year. She said there were several weeks between the deadline and the meeting to consider the applications as officers needed time to gather any missing information from the applicants.

Powerboat club lease

The deputy town clerk said the lease had been finalised and sent to the powerboat club. He said as the principal terms had already been agreed, it was hoped it would be agreed quickly.

19/344/C Mayor's Engagements and Meetings

Members noted the report.

19/345/C Internal Audit Report, Visit One 2020-21

The town clerk said there were eight recommendations; one high level, one medium and six low, which demonstrated things were beginning to strengthen and systems and processes were now more robust. He said the high-level recommendation related to debts and officers were working hard on this issue, as outlined in the debtors' report elsewhere on the agenda.

Members acknowledged there had been some success in recovering debts but more work was needed, especially as there was now an audit recommendation.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** to note the internal auditor's report and approve the management responses.

19/346/C Budget Performance, 1 April – 31 December 2020

The finance manager said income was forecast to be down against the budget due to the impact of Covid-19, but expenditure was also forecast to be down against the budget as many objectives had not been carried out. He said this meant a forecast deficit of £417k, against a budgeted deficit of £345k.

The finance manager said the forecast cash position at the end of the financial year was £596k, which was lower than previously reported due to the impact of the third national lockdown which would primarily affect car parking, amenities and beach hut hire income.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe clarified this was not a deficit in real terms, only against the forecast budget which was directly affected by Covid-19, and that the council didn't owe anyone, nor was it in crisis. He asked at what point the identified savings would be implemented.

The town clerk said during the 2020-21 financial year there had been a high level of expenditure on one project, which meant the council intended to spend more than the projected income, but there had been money in the bank to cover this.

The town clerk said the identified savings were built into the 2021-22 budget, but savings were already being made where possible.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to endorse the measures agreed previously to reduce the forecast budget deficit.

19/347/C VAT on Memorial Benches

The town clerk said although it was unlikely many more benches would be purchased, officers believed VAT on the sale of benches had been treated incorrectly and in future, it should be treated as zero-rated. He emphasised this was an accounting error and the advice from the council's internal auditor was the money did not need to be paid back to the purchasers.

Cllr J. Broom asked if the VAT paid to HMRC would be reclaimed.

The town clerk said the money would be reclaimed and this would be at no loss to either the council or the purchasers.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, members **RESOLVED** VAT on memorial benches is treated as zero-rated.

19/348/C Seasonal Concessions

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe asked where the concession would operate as the council intended on putting two more beach huts on Cart Road, which would encroach onto the area the concession was usually sited. He was also concerned about how the concession would operate under the current restrictions.

The support services manager said the concession would only be allowed to operate if restrictions allowed and this concession came under the same category as hairdressers. She said the location of the concession was at the council's discretion and this would be discussed between the concessionaire and the operations manager.

Proposed by Cllr M. Ellis and seconded by Cllr B. Larcombe, members **RESOLVED** to approve a one-year extension to the hair braiding and henna tattooing concession for 2021, but this did not signal any likely intent for future years, and agree not to advertise the arts and crafts concession for 2021.

19/349/C Works to Guildhall

The deputy town clerk said members were being asked to approve an exception to the council's standing orders and financial regulations which required works of this

likely cost to be advertised on the Contract Finder website. He said members may also want to consider at the next review of standing orders and financial regulations if small contracts should be advertised in this way.

The deputy town clerk said the standing orders and financial regulations also stated quotes or tenders should be returned in hard copy addressed to the town clerk. However, due to Covid-19, it had been agreed with the architect that quotes would be sent by email and it would therefore be necessary to also approve an exception to the relevant clauses. The deputy town clerk suggested this was also considered as part of the next review as it was now common practice to allow quotes or tenders to be received electronically.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr D. Sarson, members **RESOLVED** to approve an exception to standing order 18.d and financial regulation 11.11 in not advertising the works on the Contract Finder website and the reasons for that, and an exception to standing order 18.f.iv and financial regulation 11.4 to allow quotes to be returned by electronic means, and to ensure the internal auditor is informed of the exceptions and the reasons for this.

19/350/C List of Payments

Cllr G. Turner asked if the council was a member of the AA.

The finance manager said the council switched from the RAC to the AA as it was cheaper and the payment in the list was the annual fee paid.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe asked if the list could specify if the payments were monthly, quarterly or annual. An example was given of the Dorset Waste Partnership collection fees as the frequency of the payment was not clear.

The operations manager said he could provide members with a breakdown of the fees.

The mayor, Cllr B. Larcombe referred to the £2,500 electricity fees and said he assumed there would be a credit as the council office was closed.

The finance manager said the payments were based on estimated bills from the previous supplier as the new supplier had not asked for meter readings. He said he was following this up and hoped to get a credit note as the estimated too high.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr G. Turner, members **RESOLVED** to approve the schedule of payments for December 2020 for the sum of £98,308.46.

19/351/C Tourism Website

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.

19/352/C Debtors' Report

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.

19/353/C Exempt Business

a) Tourism Website

Members were supportive of the proposal to work with Visit Dorset and Simpleview to incorporate the current tourism website, lymeregis.org, into a microsite of Visit Dorset.

The support services manager explained the benefits of the proposal and members felt it would be beneficial to have the increased exposure from Visit Dorset's established tourism platform, the experience of their team and the cost benefits it would produce.

Proposed by Cllr B. Larcombe and seconded by Cllr S. Williams, members **RESOLVED** to approve the building of a microsite of Visit Dorset to replace the current tourism website, lymeregis.org, incorporating the discovery trail.

b) Debtors' Report

Members noted the report.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.