

BARTON-UPON-HUMBER TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING
held via TELEPHONE/EMAIL BETWEEN COMMITTEE MEMBERS & THE TOWN CLERK
on
MONDAY 27 APRIL 2020

Councillor K Vickers (Chairman)

Councillors Mrs A Clark, J Evison, Mrs J Oxley, A Todd and J P Vickers

Also, Ms S Richards (Town Clerk)

328. **Apologies for Absence**

None

329. **Declarations of Interest**

None declared

330. **Minutes of Meeting held on the 13 January 2020**

It was noted that these minutes had been signed as a correct record, for action as necessary, at an extra-ordinary meeting of the town council held on 20 January 2020.

331. **Matters Arising**

(a) **Maintenance Issues at The Assembly Rooms** (*Min Ref: 235(a)/104-F&GP 13/01/20*)

The Clerk reported the damp-proof work to The Assembly Rooms was still outstanding. She had reminded CHAMP Ltd about this and Mr N Turner was chasing up the appointed contractor.

Resolved this matter be noted.

332. **The Following Financial Request Was Considered:**

(a) **Barton Carnival**

Following the received financial application for this, the Clerk had contacted Mr B Troop of the Barton Carnival Committee, whereby he confirmed this years' event had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was agreed and

Resolved

The 2020/2021 Community Committee £2,000 earmarked reserve budget for the Barton Carnival Committee remain in general reserves of the town council.

333. **The Town Council's Programmed Events up to August 2020 due to Covid-19**

Discussion took place regarding the Government's current guidelines and future predictions for 2020 regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, together with advice received from NALC/ERNLLCA and forward planning of immediate, urgent changes placed upon the town council operational issues. It was agreed and

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Resolved

- (i) The July 2020 edition of the Bartonian to be cancelled. All submissions normally to be submitted no later than 1 June. Many events that usually feature in the community magazine have been cancelled and the printers of the publication are currently not at work due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As they use a third party to print the magazine, they too may not be working either. The publication is hand delivered to each household in the town by a single delivery person and the distribution agent needs to be kept safe. He struggled to deliver the April edition of the Bartonian due to the Government advice and 'lockdown' issues. It is currently impractical and not in line with the Government's advice for him to deliver to the whole of Barton.
- (ii) The 2020 Annual Garden Competition to be cancelled. Viewing of the respective gardens would commence in July and the presentation evening event would involve public gathering. Also, with garden centres currently closed, it is difficult for everyone to purchase garden supplies. It was therefore decided not practical to go ahead with this in the current climate.
- (iii) Picnic in the Park 2020 be cancelled. The event is only three months away, therefore it is felt the resources put into this beforehand to be a waste of money and could also attract some cancellation fees of booking entertainers etc.
- (iv) The preparation of a Premises Licence and the formal paperwork required, to be submitted to North Lincolnshire Council for the Christmas Festival 2020, should this event be able to go ahead. The town council await further Government advice regarding public gathering on this.
- (v) Advice has been received from North Lincolnshire Council they no longer have the resource to cut the designated public areas of grass this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic with immediate effect. The committee have looked into various options regarding this matter and the urgency of the service requirement. A local contractor has been sourced, whereby a quotation has been submitted of £3,600 per grass cut. By negotiation, North Lincolnshire Council has agreed to support the town council with the cost of this. It is agreed that the grass be cut in the designated areas on plans supplied by North Lincolnshire Council, once per month, May to September 2020. Any slight variations to this quotation price, to be taken from the town council's reserves. The contractor to be notified as soon as possible to accept the quotation and to undertake the work. It was felt this course of action, although a temporary arrangement is ideal to trial the grass cutting contract, in order to gain experience and knowledge for the service provision in future years by the town council, whilst ensuring a 'seamless' service level of the grass cutting in the town.
- (vi) The town council have received the renewal for the town council's insurance policy. As the value was virtually the same as last year's policy, it was agreed to accept continuity of the policy for the year 2020/2021. The policy to be reviewed again in 2021.
- (vii) Options to undertake virtual meetings of the town council are being investigated, with an agenda item to be placed on the 6 May 2020 meeting agenda to discuss this.

334. **The Following Issues Were Considered:**

- (a) **Report of the Barton & Area Homeless Project** (*Min Ref: 256(8)/116 – BTC 05/02/20*)

As previously requested, a report of the above project has been received, explaining how the donation given to this group from the town council had been utilised over the past 12 months with a financial summary 25 May 2018 to 31 January 2020 included. All members were furnished with a copy of the report for perusal. It was noted that very little of the donation funding had been spent.

Resolved this be noted.

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(b) Audit Provision of the Town Council – Software, Internal & External Auditors

The Clerk reported that individual audit requirements of the town council for the financial year ending 31 March 2020 would be undertaken differently this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All audits would be conducted remotely between the respective auditors and the Town Clerk/RFO. The software audit is to be undertaken week commencing 27 April. The Clerk has already furnished the software company with background information to commence this procedure. The internal audit would be carried out mid-May. The internal auditor has already undertaken two preliminary audits during the current financial year in October 2019 and February 2020, with the remainder of the year to finish. Information regarding the external audit has just been received whereby an extension of time has been allowed. All information of the complete financial accounts for 2019/2020 submitted to them no later than the end of July 2020. The timeframe involved and the additional participation of the Town Clerk/RFO in the auditing procedures is much more involved this year due to the current situation with the pre-programmed, on-site audits not taking place due to the current pandemic issues.

Resolved this be noted.

(c) Review & Update of the Town Council's Asset Register

Review and update of the town council's asset register took place. It was agreed and

Resolved that additional Christmas lights purchased to be added to the asset register in the sum of £2,262.50.

(d) Review of the Town Council's Financial Regulations

All members were furnished with a copy of the latest official NALC financial regulations, with information included, relevant to the current financial regulations of the town council. It was agreed and

Resolved the latest NALC financial regulations, incorporating the town council's requirements be adopted by the town council and to meet the audit requirements and current legislation.

(e) Review of the Town Council Meetings (Min Ref: 341(f)(x)/148-F&GP 15/04/219)

Due to the reduction in councillor numbers following the election on 2 May 2019 from 22 to 12, it was agreed to review this after one year. Meetings over the last 12 months, the effectiveness of committees, resources available, the current Covid-19 pandemic issues, staffing changes and the best way to forward plan was reviewed. Following advice received from NALC/ERNLLCA that no May 2020 statutory annual meetings of town/parish councils to take place was also considered.

The main changes determined, in light of the current NALC/ERNLLCA advice that no May 2020 annual meeting of the town council is to take place, then all members appointed to mayoral positions, committees and outside bodies be the same for 2020/2021 as appointed at the annual meeting of the town council held on 13 May 2019 (incorporating the amendments made during the year), until the annual meeting of the town council to be held May 2021. All subject to agreement with the relevant councillors.

To streamline the system, make best use of resources, incorporate staff changes, reduce costs and the carbon footprint of the town council, it was determined to hold a quarterly meeting of the Community, Environment Committee and Finance and General Purposes Committee on the same Monday evening as the newly revised monthly Planning Committee meeting. This back to back

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system of committee meetings means the first committee meeting of the evening (Community, Environment or Finance) to commence at 6pm and the Planning Committee meeting at 7pm following it. This system, although accidental, worked well during the course of the year, particularly during inclement weather and winter months. The result is the meeting room is only required one Monday per month, reducing the heating and lighting costs, with members and staff of the town council meeting for the town council's committees on one evening per month as opposed to two or three, reducing meeting and travelling times.

It was agreed and

Resolved:

- (i) An Ordinary meeting of the town council to be held the first Wednesday of each month, commencing at 7pm. To be held in the Council Chamber, Baysgarth House, Barton.
- (ii) The Community Committee to have 5 Members, meeting four times a year (quarterly). Meetings to be held 6pm at The Assembly Rooms, Barton. The Committee to mainly deal with the town councils events and The Bartonian and have no devolved powers. It must review the Community Committee budget each financial year for submission to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- (iii) The Environment Committee to have 5 Members, meeting four times a year (quarterly). Meetings to be held 6pm at the Assembly Rooms, Barton. The Committee to mainly deal with the towns community planting, 'Best Kept Gardens' competition and presentation evening, bulb planting, litter picking etc. and have no devolved powers. It must review the Environment budget each financial year for submission to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- (iv) The Finance & General Purposes Committee to have 5 Members, meeting four times a year (quarterly). Meetings to be held 6pm at The Assembly Rooms, Barton. The Committee to mainly deal with the town council's budget and precept to future plan each financial year and monitor, consider grant applications, maintenance of The Assembly Rooms, policies and procedures of the town council and governance. To have partial devolved powers to set the budget/precept of the town council for submission to North Lincolnshire Council.
- (v) The Personnel Committee to have 3 Members, meeting at least once a year and as and when required regarding personnel issues. Meetings to be held at The Assembly Rooms, Barton and have devolved powers.
- (vi) The Disciplinary Committee to have 3 Members (not to be Members of the Personnel Committee or the Grievance Committee). To meet as and when required.
- (vii) The Grievance Committee to have 3 Members (not to be Members of the Personnel Committee or the Disciplinary Committee). To meet as and when required.
- (viii) The Planning Committee to have 5 Members, meeting once a month. Meetings to be held 7pm at The Assembly Rooms, Barton. The Committee to deal with planning applications and planning matters. To have partial devolved powers to allow the Clerk to inform North Lincolnshire Council of planning decisions made the day after the meeting is held. It was also agreed that planning applications and information received after issue of the meeting agenda, received in time for the meeting to be accepted for inclusion at the meeting. Rolling forward these issues to the next meeting has posed difficulties in meeting consultation timescales etc. Advice has been sought from ERNLLCA on this issue, where it was stated North Lincolnshire Council are the local planning authority, who have full responsibility for planning applications, planning matters and public consultation. The town council is a statutory consultee in planning matters only.
- (ix) The number of Members on outside bodies to be no more than 2 Members.
- (x) Following advice received from NALC/ERNLLCA that all statutory annual town/parish meetings to be held in 2020 to be cancelled, it was agreed that the Mayoral positions of the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor be retained by the current holders appointed for 2019/2020 until the May 2021 annual meeting. Also, the current members appointed onto the town council's committees and outside bodies for 2019/2020 to be retained until the May 2021 annual meeting, in line with other town and

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parish councils adopting the same procedure, including the local principal authority. The mayoral allowance of £2,000 for the year and the authorised signatures on cheques to be the same for 2020/2021 as in 2019/2020, i.e. Councillors Mrs A Clark, J Evison, Mrs J Oxley and J P Vickers. This would ensure that no changes to the bank mandates would be required.

(xi) a schedule of meetings for the year 2020/2021 to be drafted reflecting the review/changes of the town council meetings and presented at the 6 May ordinary meeting of the town council.

(f) 2019/2020 Budget – Quarterly Summary of Income/Expenditure

Members were furnished with a summary of the council's income/expenditure for the period 1 January to 31 March 2020, being the last quarter of the financial year 2019/2020. The Clerk reported that expenditure was within the budget line allocations generally, with most spending levels in order. Some budget line overspends had been previously reported.

All financial accounts, income and expenditure for the financial year 2019/2020 have been balanced by the Town Clerk/RFO. All quarterly VAT returns have been submitted to HMRC for payment.

The first half-year precept payment for 2020/2021 has been received from North Lincolnshire Council. Also, the grant element has been met and remitted by them in the sum of £6,102.

The Chairman, Councillor K Vickers

.....Chairman

6 May 2020