



TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES
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MINUTES FROM THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 19TH MAY 2020 AT 7PM

This was a virtual meeting On Zoom

Attendance: Councillors T Faith, S Hale, M Harrison, B Height, E Hobbs (Chair), C Inchley, G Kennedy, M Lovell, B Manley and G Mayall.

Present: C Starkie, Town Clerk, L Evans, Assistant Town Clerk, T Jessop, Project Officer

Public: 4 members of the public

There were no public questions.

1. **Apologies for Absence.**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors McGuire (on an extended period of absence).

2. **Chairman's Announcement.**

Council Hobbs announced that there were plans being made by Mendip District Council to pedestrianise the Market Place, High Street and Town Street to facilitate social distancing and allow the public more space to walk freely without traffic.

3. **Declarations of Interest.**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Minutes of the meetings held on 28th April 2020**

Councillor Harrison requested that an amendment be made to reflect that he was in the meeting to the end, and did not leave early (as stated in the draft minutes).

The minutes from this meeting was accepted by the council as a true record (subject to the above amendment) and signed by the chairman.

Resolved that:

The minutes of the meeting on 28th April 2020 were amended and signed.

5. **Update from the Crisis Management Team**

Resolved that:

The contribution of the Crisis Management Team be noted.

SIGNED: (CHAIRMAN) DATE:.....

6. Update from the County Councillor

No report was received.

7. Update from District Councillors

Councillor Hobbs stated that the road to West Shepton Playing fields had been resurfaced.

He also stated that his responsibilities at the District Council had been realigned with work on the Strawberry Line and connectivity of cycling paths in town and to neighbouring areas.

Councillor Inchley stated that he was pleased that the resurface at West Shepton Playing Fields had been progressed and he was hoping work could start on the Strawberry Line, Little Ostry and the café in Commercial road. Regeneration was essential and as he was involved in the Social Deprivation Working Party, he saw at first hand the impact of social isolation and the hardship felt by those who rely on the benefits system.

8. Update from Neighbourhood Plan

Councillor Harrison provided an update to confirm that whilst almost 80% of the Neighbour Plan is complete, there are delays, because of issues with the Local Plan Part II and also due to the pandemic delaying its sign off. In addition, any referendum that might have been called is postponed until after May 2021.

However, the Steering Group continues to pursue work and will be undertaking a transport review as well as focussing on local green spaces. These green spaces need to be used as recreation areas or be identified as local wildlife corridors in order to give them protected status.

There was a general discussion on housing needs and the deliverability of the proposed planning applications, across several sites. If developer did not commit to the agreed proposals and start building, other developers might be submitting proposals to build on other sites, including green field sites on the outer lying areas of town.

In particular, the development at the Prison was discussed and that the council would welcome this development as soon as possible. The Town Clerk was requested to write to the developer to make enquiries of their intentions.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has requested that £10,000 be formally transferred to the Neighbourhood Plan Earmarked Fund, from the Local Project Fund, to continue to meet expenses.

This was agreed with 9 councillors in support of the release of the funds, and one councillor against.

Resolved that:

£10,000 be transferred from the Local Projects Earmarked Fund, to the Neighbourhood Plan Earmarked Fund, to meet consultancy costs.

The Town Clerk to write to the developers of the prison to establish their intentions.

9. To Consider the integration of a meeting management system and tablets

The Town Clerk presented a proposal to consider the integration of a new meeting management system and the purchase of tablets, to improve the way that meeting paperwork was produced, for the purposes of efficiency in staff hours, transparency, ease of use for councillor and public and to improve communication between councillors, office staff and the general public. The benefits were the amount of time saved by office staff, per meeting, and the way that meeting reports can be shared. Costs were £395 for the initial set up, £3,600 per annum for the licenses for the software and another £1,600 capital for the purchase of tablet.

Questions were raised in relation to the life of a tablet (agreed that they have a life of 4 years), insurance (council will insure them), GDPR Compliance (it is) and the need for some technology support (light touch on a contract basis) if councillors are issued with tablet devices.

This was agreed with 9 councillors in favour of the purchase of the system and one council against.

Resolved that:

The Council agree in principle to the proposals in the report to the purchase of the lbabs meeting management system and tablets, but that the Town Clerk obtain a quote from the current ICT support for a revised contract for ongoing support.

10. Grant Funding

The meeting received a report from the RFO to seek permission to make grant payments, in accordance with the budget setting process.

It was agreed that the following payments be made:

- £10,000 to Citizen's Advice Mendip
- £6,500 to the YMCA Youth Club
- £4,000 to the Snowdrop Festival
- £1,500 to the Community Transport Scheme
- £1,300 to the Carnival Club

The Carnival had been cancelled for 2020 but the council recognised that this contribution will help with their costs into 2021.

It was noted that as the Tourist Information Centre had closed, there was no requirement to pass on the funds of £6,000.

All councillors supported the above payments.

Resolved that:

Payments be made as follows:

- £10,000 to Citizen's Advice Mendip
- £6,500 to the YMCA Youth Club
- £4,000 to the Snowdrop Festival
- £1,500 to the Community Transport Scheme
- £1,300 to the Carnival Club

11. Road to Recovery

- **Coronavirus Secure in the work place**

The Town Clerk informed councillors that staff were working from home and attending the office, but that visitors (including councillors) were requested to make an appointment, with the number of staff and visitors able to enter the offices limited to three people and for short periods of time due to the small size of the office and the lack of facilities. A risk assessment had been undertaken and shared with staff. Meetings would continue on a virtual platform until government guidance advised differently, and when it was safe for all councillors and the public (bearing in mind ages and underlying health matters) to meet in person in the council chamber.

- **Health and safety matters in the relation to town council facilities**

Collett Park Café had requested that it re-opened on limited hours, and this had been agreed by the Town Clerk. The café had identified the risks and taken steps to mitigate them, including a limited takeaway menu, one hatch for ordering and one hatch for collecting orders, cashless payment system, social distancing in a queue, and no sitting at the benches by the children's play area. It was agreed that this be received on a regular basis and to be aware of any concerns expressed by the general public.

The Town Clerk asked councillors if they wished to consider the purchase of an industrial size, mobile hand sanitiser unit of approximately £500, to be installed near the children's play park in Collett Park, and possible a second one in the market place.

It was agreed that this was a good idea but that the one in the market place could pose problems, with people drinking the liquid, if not locked away at night. Consideration could be given to its purchase if it could be kept in the library overnight.

Councillor Height left the meeting at 8.05pm

- **People's Fund and to consider how the council proceeds**

It was agreed that a Working Party be formed, to consist of Councillors Hale and Harrison with the Project Officer and the RFO. The RFO had already undertaken some research of how the fund could operate.

- **Tourism update**

The Town Clerk had attended further discussions with Mendip District Council on the road to recovery and was considering a wide range of local initiatives in order to support business recovery and growth, leading from the pandemic. Mendip District Council had engaged a tourism consultant who had been engaged to develop a Mendip wide tourism strategy, that links the towns and villages and ensures that everyone is working together to assist with recovery after the pandemic.

Other ideas had been proposed and it was agreed that a Tourism Working Party be formed, to consist of Councillors Hobbs, Kennedy, Harrison and Mayall, with the Project Officer. An additional three members of the local community would be invited to participate with the Working Party.

A proposal has been made to consider the implementation of a Shepton Mallet Business Awards, to fill the gap being left by the cancellation of the Mendip Business Awards. It was agreed that this be discussed at the first meeting of the Tourism Working Party.

- Corporate Plan update
The Town Clerk had drafted a revised Corporate Plan which would be emailed to all councillor for feedback, ready be to adopted at the next council meeting. A paper would also be presented that considers the adoption of a communication strategy that considers the publication of a newsletter, the annual report, social media and the website to deliver the corporate message and keep the public informed.

Resolved that:

Councillors note the measures in place in the office and in relation to online meeting, to adhere to social distancing regulations and to reduce the spread of Covid 19.

The Town Clerk was requested to order a mobile hand sanitizer unit for Collett Park

The Town Clerk was requested to enquire if a mobile hand sanitiser can be stored in the library, for use in the market place. If agreed, then to purchase one.

A People's Fund Working Party be set up to consist of Councillors Hale and Harrison with the RFO and Project Officer, to discuss the implementation and criteria of a People's Fund.

A Tourism Working Party to be set up to consist of Councillors Hobbs, Kennedy, Harrison and Mayall, with the Project Officer and to include an invitation to three members of the community, to discuss the future of Tourism in Shepton Mallet, and the Business Awards scheme.

12. To receive the notes from the Town Development and Planning Committee

Councillors received the notes from the discussions that had taken place between councillors in relation to planning applications and submitted to MDC on 12th May 2020.

13. Date of the next meeting

It was agreed that a meeting would be held on Tuesday 30th June 2020 at 7pm. Zoom invitations would be sent out with the agenda as well as being on the website for the public to obtain.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm