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MINUTES FROM THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13TH JANUARY AT 7.00PM

THIS WAS A POSTPONED MEETING FROM 12TH JANUARY 2021 DUE TO TECHNICAL ISSUES.

This was a virtual meeting On Zoom

Attendance: Councillors T Faith, M Harrison (Chair), S Hale, B Height, G Kennedy, M Lovell, G Mayall (*after Public Question Time*), A McGuire, T O'Connor, N Shearn, N Tolson

Present: C Starkie, Town Clerk
L Evans, Assistant Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer

Public: 4 members of the public were present

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME – Comments can be found at Appendix A.

10.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Inchley.

10.2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10.3 Chair's Announcement

Councillor Harrison acknowledged the points made during public question time.

Councillor Harrison thanked Somerset County Councillor, John Parham, for his written report which was noted.

Councillor Harrison withdrew the final two items from the agenda: Exclude the Public and Press in order to consider a confidential matter, and the Confidential Business.

Councillor Harrison made a public acknowledgement to thank Lorraine Pratten for her sterling work in having run the Shepton Mallet Tourist Information Centre for many years. Due to the closure of the business, Lorraine was instrumental in dealing with all matters related to the closure, and was able to return previously granted funds of £4,000 to Shepton Mallet Town Council for future tourist projects.

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

Councillor Harrison notified Councillors of the First Bus survey which had been circulated, and asked that Councillors complete the online survey.

Councillor Harrison reminded Councillors of the interesting and frequent training opportunities that they are invited to, and asked that Councillors respond promptly to the invitations, if they wish to secure a place.

Councillor Harrison acknowledged the resignation of Gemma Kayum as a councillor, and thanked Gemma for her service to the Town Council. Councillor Harrison reminded Councillors of the need to work together to produce the outcomes as listed in the Town Plan.

Councillor Kayum's resignation left some vacancies on committees and it was agreed that Councillor Nick Tolson would replace Councillor Kayum on the People & Promotion Committee, Collett Park Management Committee, and he would be appointed to the HR committee as requested in the committee restructure in November 2020.

Resolved that:

The RFO would write an acknowledgement letter to Lorraine Pratten for the donation of £4,000.

Councillor Tolson be added to the committees for People & Promotion, Collett Park Management and HR.

10.4 Update from PC Stephen Reading

Councillors received a written report from the local police force and thanked them for the information.

10.5 To Consider and approve the minutes from the meeting held 1st December 2020

The minutes from this meeting were accepted by the council as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Resolved that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2020 were agreed and signed.

10.6 To note that the following draft minutes from the committee meetings have been circulated

- a. 8th December 2020 and 5th January 2021: People and Promotion
15th December 2020: Town Development and Planning
5th January 2021: Policy and Resources Committee
- b. To receive a verbal update from the above committee Chairs

People & Promotion

Councillor O'Connor reported that the committee was meeting on the 19th January 2021 to finalise the finance funding for the Heritage Trail. The committee is keen to form a working party consisting of Councillors and members of the public for the development of future art projects.

Town Development & Planning

Councillor Harrison informed Councillors that there were currently about 4-5 applications for each meeting.

A meeting regarding recent flooding had been attended by multi-agencies and put on a Section 19 investigation, Flood and Water Management Act 2010, to look at improvements.

Policy & Resources

Councillor Hale informed Councillors that the committee had given extensive consideration to applicants and awarded a number of Community Donations from the current budget and a number of Community Grants for the next financial year.

Update from Mendip District Councillor Garfield Kennedy

Councillor Kennedy thanked the Town Clerk and the office team for the work they have achieved so far.

Councillor Kennedy reported that the subject of phosphates was still impacting on the local planning decisions at Mendip District Council, information about which can be found on the Mendip District Council website.

Councillor Kennedy informed Councillors that Mendip District Council had moved to 'emergency mode', due to the Covid pandemic, and were to focus on essential and statutory functions as a priority.

Councillor Kennedy informed Councillors of the objection by North Somerset Council for the expansion of Bristol Airport due to effects on the environment.

Resolved that:

Councillors noted the above minutes had been circulated to Councillors and placed in the public domain.

10.7 To note the recommendations from the Policy and Resources Committee to adopt the Internal Auditor's Report, the Corporate Governance Statement and the Financial Risks Assessment

Councillors received a written report from the RFO with a recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee to adopt the Internal Auditor's Report, the Corporate Governance Statement and the Financial Risks Assessment.

Resolved that:

- a. Councillors agree with the assertions in the Corporate Government Statement and adopt it and request that it be signed by the Chair and RFO.
- b. Councillors agree with the assertions in the Financial Risks Assessment and adopt it.
- c. Councillors agree with the recommendations in the Internal Audit Report and delegate responsibility to the RFO to carry out the actions.

10.8 To agree the budget and precept of £615,970 for the financial year 2021/22

Councillors received a written report from the Town Clerk and RFO with a recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee to agree the budget and precept of £615,970 for the financial year 2021/22.

Councillor Kennedy stated that in a time of stress in our community that this was a reluctant decision to make a small increase, as it is a difficult time for many people.

Councillor Height wanted it noted that she did not agree with any increase in the budget or precept and would not vote in favour of this proposal.

Resolved that:

- a. The budget for 2021/22 is £615,970.
- b. The precept for 2021/22 is £615,970.
- c. Delegated authority is given to the RFO to inform Mendip District Council of the required precept for 2021/22.

10.9 New Grant recipients in 2021/22

To receive a written report from the RFO with a recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee to award a total of £11,000 in new funding to grant recipients in the financial year 2021/22.

Councillor Kennedy stated that the grant applications had fully discussed by the Policy and Resources committee at the meeting on 5th January 2021, and that all details could be found in the minutes of that meeting.

Councillor Height stated that she opposed to giving money out to 'the Arts' and would not vote for this recommendation.

Resolved that:

- a. A majority of councillors agree with the recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee and delegate responsibility to the RFO to carry out the actions, to confirm the grants and to produce a draft Service Level Agreement with A&IT for approval and the next Policy & Resources Committee meeting.
- b. Positive communications be undertaken to highlight this collaborative work with the relevant stakeholders.

10.10 Town Plan Progress and Future ways of workings

Councillors received a written report from the Chair, to note the achievements of the Council since the adoption of the Town Plan, to consider plans to prioritise outputs for the forthcoming year and to consider improved communication methods.

Councillor Harrison informed Councillors of a plan to hold a workshop with a facilitator to re-visit the Town Plan and consider the council's ambitions and agree the best way to move forward and work together.

The Town Clerk expressed concerns that the changes in priority at Somerset County Council and Mendip District Council due the pandemic could have an impact on the service delivery of work of officers at Shepton Mallet Town Council. It was also noted that the pandemic could have a wider effect on future funding streams, including the possibility that interest rates on a Public Works Loan might increase. i

Resolved that:

A workshop is organised on 9th February 2021, for all Councillor to attend, to consider and prioritise objectives from the Town Plan and move forward with improved methods of communication.

10.11 Calendar of minutes 2021/22 and consider the filming of meeting and starting times of meetings

Councillors received a written report to consider and agree the dates for Council and Committee meetings in the municipal year 2021/22. To also consider the recording and live streaming of Council and Committee meetings and to agree, contrary to Standing Orders, if meetings can take place before 7pm.

Councillors discussed the implications of the recording and live streaming of meetings around GDPR issues and protecting the privacy of Councillors and the public. Councillors in the main, agreed with recording meetings in the interest of openness and transparency, subject to further enquires and issues being resolved.

Resolved that:

- a. Councillors agree the schedule of meetings for the municipal year 2021/22.
- b. Councillors agree to the future recording of Council and Committee meetings.
- c. Councillors delegate responsibility to the Town Clerk to prepare the appropriate policy and storage system and GDPR statement.
- d. Councillors agree in principle to live stream Council and Committee meetings, subject to seeking further clarity and advice.
- e. Councillors delegate responsibility to the Town Clerk to prepare the appropriate policy and storage system and GDPR statement.
- f. A temporary amendment be made to Standing Orders to allow committee meetings to deviate away from the scheduled meeting time of 7pm and hold online meetings at 6.30pm.

Councillor Hale left the meeting.

10.12 Impact of Coronavirus lockdown

Councillors received a written report from the Town Clerk, that referred to what the council was doing in relation to town information signs to support the public during the pandemic, an update on the volume of phone calls to the 0800 phone line. As national and local events were having to be cancelled due to the ongoing restrictions to protect public health, it was agreed that Collett Festival, that usually takes place in June, be postponed and possibly be reduced in size if the regulations allow some return to socialising later in the year. Councillor Tolson informed Councillors of the continuing volume and severity of calls to the emergency services, in relation to Covid 19.

Councillor Hale re-joined the meeting.

Councillor Hale informed Councillors of the continuing support systems SPARK have in place and their main focus supporting volunteers to support the vaccination rollout.

Somerset County Councillor John Parham informed Councillors that the Shepton Mallet Coronavirus Volunteers group was back up and running, mainly providing a prescription collection service.

Councillor Kennedy informed Councillors that the newly designed banners were going up around the town.

Resolved that:

- a. The new banners be put up around the town.
- b. The 0800 number for Shepton Mallet Town Council be kept in service.
- c. Councillor Kennedy refresh the Help Shepton website and to change the times of availability of the Shepton Mallet Town Council 0800 number to office hours only.
- d. The 2021 Collett Festival be postponed.

10.13 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 7pm.

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

The meeting closed at 20:35

APPENDIX A – Public Comments – 13th January 2021

One member of the public spoke at the meeting:

- To thank the Town Clerk and Councillor Harrison for responding urgently to the technical issues immediately prior to the meeting on 12th January, and for re-scheduling the meeting to the 13th January. That meetings in general had been very well organised since being held via a digital platform.
- To raise a question about the current councillor vacancies and the co-option and election process.
- To raise the issue of excluding member of the public for confidential business.

DRAFT