

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Minutes of a meeting of Bishop Auckland Town Council held on Tuesday 17th November 2020 at 6.00pm via Zoom

Present: - Cllrs. J. Allen (Mayor), L. Chappell, J. Cullen, D. Fleming, D. Wilson, A Zair, L Zair, S. Zair.

In attendance: - Ms. S. Harris Town Clerk, Mr. N. Bryson, Town Team

FC 71.00/2020 - Notice of Meeting – Agreed

FC 72.00/2020 - Agree Notice of Motion - to call the meeting to be held on 22nd October 2020.

FC 73.00/2020 - Apologies absence - Cllr. J. Blackburn, Cllr. L Brownson

FC 74.00/2020 - Declarations of interest – No declarations of interest were received. Cllr S Zair as DCC member for Planning application for proposed new cinema.

FC 75.00/2020 - Minutes – Members approved the Minutes of

- Town Council 22 October 2020
- Planning Committee 22 October 2020
- HR Committee 2 November 2020
- Allotment and Environment Committee 3 November 2020

FC 76.00/00 - Matters Arising - To from the above Minutes which are not included elsewhere on the agenda (for information only).

- Allotments and Environment Committee – Item AE 04.0/2020 – Members agreed to go ahead with the repair to the watermain at Mill Race with the contractor who was approved in Feb 2020.
- Allotments and Environment Committee – AE 11.0/2020 Members agreed to renew the pest control contract for 6 months.

FC 77.00/2020 - Public Participation – No Members of the public were in attendance.

FC 78.00/2020 Reports

FC 78.01/2020 - Town Team Report

The Mayor welcomed Mr. N. Bryson to the meeting. Mr. Bryson reported on the following: -

- a. As the Pandemic is still ongoing the Events Team have no events planned until 2021
- b. It was reported that the Heritage Action Zone had hosted a very successful online festival.
- c. Signage for Fore Bndgate is going up this week
- d. Empty properties in town have gone down.
- e. Planning application is in for McIntyres for a Bar and restaurant
- f. The remaining money from the water trough works at Castle Chair is going to be used for the works at the water trough at West Road
- g. There is a bid in for the future high street fun and stronger towns so whole town is hopeful that some of the money can come this way.
- h. Lots of key boards looking at strategy of the town, therefore the Town Team are having a look at what their contrition could be and having a review.
- i. Footfall in town has been massively reduced by Lockdown2.0

Signed Chair of Meeting:
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FC 78.02/2020 County Councilor Report

Cllr. S Zair & J Allen reported:

- a. DCC are painting the railings
- b. Fore Bondgate signage is going up
- c. Cllr Zair has managed to get the Find it Fix it tea, to revamp the water trough at High Bondgate.
- d. Planning comment has gone in from Town Council for the Cinema application, both Town Councilors are in support of the proposed location.
- e. Leisure Centre Consultation is out for comment.

FC. 78.03/2020 - Mayors Report – The Mayor participated in Remembrance Activities.

FC 79.00/2020 - Town Clerk Reports

FC 79.01/2020 Christmas Activity - The Town Clerk presented the report on the Christmas activity which the Town Council were both coordinating and which activities the Town Council were directly delivering on.

Members were pleased with the activities being developed and were pleased that despite COVID-19 alternative arrangements were being made and there was going to be some hope for the residents of the town.

Activities include, the Christmas Eve Jingle Colouring competition, light projections within the market place, window trails, Christmas services, memory trees, etc.

Cllr Fleming proposed that the Town Clerk could just use the allocated Christmas budget and due to time scales not be required to check back with members. Cllr L Zair and L Chappell agreed.

Resolved: Members agreed that the Town Clerk could use the allocated Christmas Budget for the Christmas activities. Town Clerk does not need to get additional spend sign off for each activity.

FC 79.02/2020 – Accommodation Update – Town Clerk presented a report on the progress made with Kingsway.

An update on the paint issue with the Sash windows was given. Cllr S Zair, D Fleming, L Chappell agreed that this remedial work could be done within the 6-month rectification period to ensure more suitable weather to help dry the windows.

The issue of a damp piece of wall and the cellar ventilation was raised. Members debated the issue and decided to repaint for now and price the ventilation system.

There are only a handful of outstanding items before the building is complete. These include toilet window glassing being finished, plus window weight checks, and training on stalled systems of CCTV, Server, and Telephone system. Upon completion members have agreed to make the third payment to VEST and the final Payment to BOXAS for architectural services.

The report updated members on the status of the fire panel. Members considered the presented options and agreed that contractor A be contacted to see if access to the panel can be made. If not a new panel to be commissioned per the quotations from Contractor A. The existing contract with the inspection provider be cancelled and risk assessment be paid for.

Members considered the information on the cleaning contract options. Members agreed subject to references to use Company B.

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The Town Clerk reported that quotations were being received for alarm monitoring. All Members agreed that this was a needed service. They agreed that the Town Clerk go back to members regarding the company who had quoted, once full contract terms had been received.

Members agreed that the local electrical service be used to replace the inadequate earth cable.

The Town Clerk presented options on a procurement service available to the Town Council which could advise them and support them across a range of supply and purchasing topics. Potential savings could be made, but importantly advice on legal positions can be given.

Members agreed that it is a worthwhile spend, and wish to enter into the annual contract. Town Clerk will check if there is a sharing scheme for any rebates received.

Resolved: Members agreed that repainting on the sash windows could be done with in the 6-month rectification period.
Members agreed for the Town Clerk to price the ventilation system and get the section of wall sanded and repainted.
Members agreed to make the third payment to VEST and the final payment to BOXAS.
Members agreed to commission contractor A for the fire panel investigation and works, and that the current inspection contract be cancelled.
Members agreed subject to references that company B be selected for the cleaning contract.
Members agreed that he Town Clerk should get full contract terms for the Alarm Contract and share with members.
Members agreed that the local electrical service be used to replace the inadequate earth cable.
Members agreed to join the procurement scheme.

FC 79.03/2020 - Covid-19 Update – Town Clerk presented a report on how the Officers were managing to work from home. Works station assessments had been undertaken and identified that staff needed some equipment.

Cllr Cullen asked if that equipment would be the property of BATC, the Town Clerk assured him that it would be and it was being ensured that the needed equipment could also be used at the office.

Cllr Allen asked the Town Clerk to check that the screens staff are using are suitable for use all day.

Resolved: Town Clerk to check the suitability of screens
Town Clerk to order the equipment and to ensure staff are aware that it is property of BATC.

FC 79.03/2020 – Staff Handbook – Town Clerk presented a report on how a staff handbook of policies is being developed with the HR Committee. However, a sickness absence policy is still missing, as DCC HR Service is assisting us with the HR matters they are able to provide a bespoke policy to BATC. Members agreed to purchase the policy, and receive the handbook for adoption at the next meeting.

Resolved: Members agreed to purchase the sickness absence policy, and receive the handbook for adoption at the next meeting.

FC 79.04/2020 – Armed Forces Covenant – Town Clerk brought back information on the Armed Forces Covenant. Members agreed that it was a good idea to sign. Cllr Allen invited the Events and Project Officer to come to the next meeting to present information on how BATC could work towards bronze, silver and gold standards.

Resolved: Members agreed to sign the covenant, and bring a further report to the next meeting.

FC 80.00/2020 – Monthly Accounts and Payments – the Town Clerk updated members that online banking was now in place. Then presented the payments which needed to be made, as well as highlighting those which decisions had been made.

Resolved: Members agreed to make the payments of all Invoices.

FC 81.00/2020 Correspondence – The Town Clerk presented two items of correspondence:

FC 81.01/2020 – Corporate membership of Darlington and Stockton Railway. We had been members last year, and members opinion was sought as to whether to renew. Cllr D Fleming and L Chappell agreed.

Resolved: BATC to renew their corporate membership.

FC 81.02/2020 County Durham Leisure Transformation Update – correspondence had been received regarding this consultation. Members were unanimous that the leisure site should be on the same site at woodhouse close as possible. Members tasked the town clerk with drafting a response, circulating to members for sign off then, publicly sharing, as well as sharing the consultation and explain how people can comment on the location of services as the consultation isn't very clear.

Resolved: Members agreed for the Town Clerk to prepare a response in consultation with the Planning Committee Members, and submit the response on behalf of the Town Council.

FC 81.03/2020 CDALC Larger Councils Forum. Town Clerk advised that the larger councils forum is happening on the 19th Nov. three reps are able to attend. Cllr Fleming is attending as Chair of the forum. Town Clerk is attending also. No other members available to attend.

Resolved: Members noted the report.

FC 81.04/2020 Rural Energy Fund. Members were advised that the application had been submitted and members were thanked for the support in getting it done quickly as the timescale was very short.

Resolved: Members noted the report.

Exclusion of Press and Public In accordance with the provisions of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council do now exclude the press and public for the remaining item on the agenda by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted since publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest.

FC 82.00/2020 - Reports of the Town Clerk – the Town Clerk Presented Reports on:

FC 82.01/2020 - Human Resources Report - The Town Clerk provided a further update on the ongoing HR matter as reported at the last meeting. HR and Legal services have made some progress but they needed agreement of the council to their latest recommendations. Members debated and agreed however if this does not resolve the matter a special meeting needs to be called in order for HR and Legal services to report on the next stage to members.

Resolved: Members agreed the current recommendation from Legal and HR.

FC 82.02/2020 – Complaint – Members were advised that a complaint had been received regarding Remembrance Sunday. The complaint had been responded to by both the Mayor and the Town Clerk. It was understood that the complainant was not happy with the responses which had been received, and they had been advised to respond back to the Council.

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Cllr Chappell asked at the request of the complainant if she could read comments regarding the letters, the Chair refused this as it was not an appropriate thing to do. The complainant has already been advised to write back to the Council.

Resolved: It was agreed that if the complainant responded to the Council and it was deemed necessary the further information would be brought back to Members.

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