

Bishop Auckland Town Council

Amended - Minutes of a meeting of Bishop Auckland Town Council held on

Thursday 11th February 2021 at 6.00pm via Zoom

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

In attendance: - Mrs. S. Harris Town Clerk, Mr N Bryson, Town Team, Mr C Myers, DCC on Behalf of Brighter Bishop Board.

FC 107/2020 - Notice of Meeting – Agreed

FC 108/2020 - Agree Notice of Motion - to call the meeting to be held on 11 February 2021.

FC 109/2020 - Apologies absence – Cllrs. L Brownson and J Cullen.

FC 110/2020 - Declarations of interest – Cllr Allen declared an interested as a member of the Brighter Bishop Board

FC 111/2020 - Minutes – Members approved the Minutes of the Town Council 19 January 2021.

FC 112/2020 - Matters Arising – No matters arising.

FC 113/2020 - Public Participation – No Members of the public were in attendance.

FC 114/2020 Reports

FC 114.1/2020 Future High Street Fund

Mr Chris Myers, from DCC attended on behalf of the Brighter Bishop Board, to update Members on the Future High Street Fund.

Unfortunately the presentation wouldn't work so this would be sent to Members following the meeting.

A comprehensive update on the Future High Streets Fund was given. It is estimated that it will create an additional 112 jobs, to support the estimated visitor number of 395k. Mr Myers outlined the projects which are in the bid including, changed to car parking, bus station redevelopment, changes to the former WH Smith building, changes to access from Kingsway to Newgate Street, the former Beales store has planning approval for hotel/ apartment use to support visitor numbers.

Grant award was announced on Boxing day 2020, however they are still awaiting the forma offer letter. Work is planned to start in April 2021.

Mr Myers took questions from Members:

Cllr L Zair asked – the new food offer to replace WH Smiths is their sufficient access at the rear for food trucks etc?

Mr Myers responded – yes there should be full details will be assessed as the project moves forward.

Cllr Chappell – How much of the fund is going to the Auckland Project?

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Mr Myers responded – One project to enable the Queens and Postchase to become an appropriate hotel offer to support the visitor numbers.

Cllr Chappell – with WH Smiths being demolished what guarantees are we going to have that we are not going to be left with a horrid building in its place which doesn't fit in with the town?

Mr Myers responded – this will be led with a project brief and working with HAZ. Full community engagement will take place.

Cllr Chappell – How many buildings are on the at Risk Register?

Mr Myers responded – The West Tower is has had work and is now off. St Anne's Church is still on but we are working with Rev. Matt to see what can be done.

The Mayor thanked Mr Myers for attending, and he left the meeting.

FC 114.2/2020 Town Team Update

Nigel Bryson was in attendance to provide a Town Team Update.

Footfall numbers are showing from 5th March 2020 – to present 378,906 visitors to town. It is estimated that without lockdown that 420K would have been achievable.

Data patterns are showing that when non-essential retail reopened the foot increased in town. Fridays seem to be busiest.

So far all events are cancelled, they are optimistic that by September, they may be able to have the Bishop together event.

FC114.3/2020 Durham County Council Report

Not much to update fairly quiet. Members are getting the weekly update from DCC leader.

Cllr Wilson asked: what is happening with the Leisure transformation Consultation and the future of Woodhouse Close Leisure Centre? Do we have an update? What is the process?

Cllr Allen advised that it was going to Cabinet next month.

Cllr Wilson asked – can we get an update as we want to keep it in the Town and that was the Town Council Response. Can Cllr Allen speak to Cllr Carl Marshall to fight our case?

Cllr L Zair – Agreed we need to fight harder for this now. We need to fight for the People of Bishop, as Cllr Allen is cabinet Member at DCC we need her to speak up at DCC about this.

Cllr Allen – the Consultation is county wide and not just about Bishop Auckland.

Cllr Chappell – I agree we need to fight harder and Cllr Allen needs to fight our corner at Cabinet.

Cllr Cullen – Asked how the decision would be made at cabinet.

Cllr Allen responded – that a report is presented and Cabinet members make the decision.

Resolved:

- It was agreed that the Town Clerk would write to Cllr Marshall and the Head of Service again reiterating the Town Council position, and asking why their offer to work with BATC and speak to Members hadn't been acknowledged.
- It was agreed that Cllr Allen would speak up at Cabinet to keep the provision on the current site.

FC 114.4/2020 - Mayors Report – Mayor was had attended a virtual Burns night quiz with the Mayor of Darlington. The Mayor had sent a birthday card, balloon, and had a call with a gentleman who was 105 years young.

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FC115/2020 – Rural Community Energy Fund

Members were updated that the bid to the Rural Community Energy Fund which was submitted in December had been successful. The only successful bit within the Town.

Resolved:

- It was agreed to receive further update at the next meeting.

FC116/Kingsway Office Accommodation Update

A report was presented on the position relating to the overall position with the building and an update on a potential tenant and the VAT position relating to this. Members discussed the information and need to have a detailed strategy for moving forward with the use of the building.

Resolved:

- It was agreed to not take on any tenants at this time until COVID restrictions improve, the Town Clerk to inform the potential tenant.
- It was to agreed to a receive a report from the Town Clerk setting out a detailed business strategy to presented to Members on the use of the building.

FC116.1 Roof

Information was presented to Members on an issue with the building roof.

Resolved:

- It was agreed that it was priority to get the roof fixed as soon as possible.

FC116.2 Car Park and Fencing

Members were updated on the outstanding works needed on the outside of building including the Car Park and fencing.

Resolved:

- It was agreed for the Clerk to present quotes for the work to the next meeting.

FC116.3 Contracts – Energy and Maintenance

Information was presented to Members regarding signing up to a Energy Management and Carbon Reduction Service Level Agreement. This would enable the Council to access better rates for energy usage, whilst also reducing the carbon emissions.

Information was presented on the need to address ongoing maintenance costs, this included general maintenance, as well as services such as snow clearing etc.

Resolved:

- It was agreed that the Council would sign up to the Energy Management and Carbon Reduction Service Level Agreement.
- It was agreed that the Town Clerk would present a detailed report on the ongoing maintenance costs at the next meeting.

FC 117/2020 - Lease of office space at Kingsway

A report was presented on the position relating to the overall position with the building and an update on a potential tenant and the VAT position relating to this. Members discussed the information and need to have a detailed strategy for moving forward with the use of the building.

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Resolved:

- It was agreed to not take on any tenants at this time until COVID restrictions improve, the Town Clerk to inform the potential tenant.
- It was to agreed to a receive a report from the Town Clerk setting out a detailed business strategy to presented to Members on the use of the building.

FC118/2020 - Finance

FC118.01/2020 - IT System – Finance Software.

A report was resented on the complications with the current financial management system. The report proposed the used of an alternative system from April 2021, as the current system, is clunky, and not easily adaptable to the changing work needs of modern town councils. A range of options was presented. The preferred option from the options appraisal is a cloud based bespoke system for use of Town and Parish Councils, it is fully GDPR compliant and meets the changing needs of the Council.

Resolved:

- It was agreed to move to the preferred option from April 2021.

FC118.02/2020 – Month 10 – Financial update.

The Month 10 financial update was given along with the Q3 out turn report relating to spends against cost codes, giving an indication to the end of year outturn, the Q4 report will not be able to be presented until the May 2021 meeting as there is no meeting of the Council in April due to Purdah, for the elections.

Resolved:

- It was agreed to note the report.

FC118.03/2020 - Community Fund Applications

Holiday Hunger

Further to the discussion at the previous meeting relating to Holiday hunger. A report was given on the needs of the community, and the options for support that the Council could undertake. Throughout the current school term the Woodhouse Close Community Centre have been providing a lunch and snacks to those children in need once per week. Whilst the government did relent on their care packages for free school meals children and re-issue the families with shopping vouchers, there are still a lot of families struggling and lots fall just below the threshold so they don't get any support. On average the community centre has been providing 50-70 meals per week. They have had some additional funding so they are able to delivery some food during the February half term but not for the Easter and may half term holidays. Members were asked to consider a donation of £2500 for the Council to work in partnership with the Community Centre and Auckland Youth and Community Centre to deliver 'holiday lunches' in the Easter and May half terms. Including the Council supplying Easter Eggs for distribution to the families.

Resolved:

- It was agreed to support the partnership holiday hunger activity with £2500.

FC118.04/2020 - Monthly Payments and Cheques

The payments were presented and considered.

Resolved: It was agreed to authorise the payments – the list is attached at the end of these minutes.

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FC119/2020 - HR Policies –

FC119.1/2020 Adoption of Sickness Policy

The bespoke Absence Management Policy for staff was presented. This policy had been commissioned via the HR Services Agreement with DCC.

Resolved: It was agreed to adopt the policy.

FC119.2/2020 Other Policies for Staff Handbook

The range of other policies needed to make a comprehensive and appropriate staff handbook were presented and discussed. One identified policy is a Mental Wellbeing policy, having this commissioned rather than just updated would ensure that it was fully fit for purpose.

Resolved:

- It was agreed to commission a mental wellbeing policy from DCC and to receive the identified policies at the next meeting for adoption.

FC120/202 - Correspondence – details of any Correspondence (letters or email received) including:

FC120.1/2020 – Social Media Training

Correspondence had been received from CDALC informing Clerks of Social Media Training session on 2nd March 2021 via zoom at a cost of £10 per booking.

Resolved:

- It was agreed for the Clerk and Events and Projects Officer to attend the training.

FC120.2/2020 – Section 137 Limit for 2021-22

Correspondence had been received from the Ministry of Housing Via CDALC informing Town and Parish Councils of a change to Section 174(4)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 for parish and town council in England to £8.41 per elector.

Resolved:

- It was agreed to note the correspondence.

FC120.3/2020 – Town Team Address

It had come to the attention of the Clerk that the Town Team had changed their correspondence address for banking to the new Council Premises and letters were now addressed to ‘Town Team C/O Bishop Auckland Town Council). The Clerk was seeking clarification of permission from the Council had been sought to make this change to the Council’s address.

Resolved:

- It was agreed that Members felt that this address change was not appropriate and would be better if Town Team used and alternative address. It was agreed that the Clerk contact them regarding this change.

FC120.4/2020 – Additional Funds from DCC

Correspondence had been received from the DCC to inform the Council that as our tax base for 2021-22 had reduced by £227.78 and that they were prepared to pay this amount over to the council as a one off payment.

Resolved:

- It was agreed to note the correspondence and accept the payment.

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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.

FC121/2020 – Staff vacancy and Job Evaluation.

A report was given to Members on the current vacant post and options for moving forward. Interim support arrangements were discussed. Options were presented for Job Evaluation processes.

Resolved:

- It was agreed that interim support is put in place, subject to satisfactory HR advice.
- It was agreed that the Job Evaluation process be undertaken and a report given to the next meeting.

List of Payments authorised under - FC118.04/2020 - Monthly Payments and Cheques above, for the period - 18.01.2021 – 10.02.21

Chq	Current Account (To be authorised)	Detail	£	Authorised	Notes
EP	Wave (NWG Business)	Water: Tindale Crescent 10/06/20-09/12/20	£354.26	Ongoing	
EP	RC Event Services	Christmas Light Gobo Projections in Market Place (6 Nights)	£3,304.00	Events Committee	
DC	Ultimate Flowers	Bouquet of Flowers from BATC	£28.50	Town Council	
EP	Wave (NWG Business)	Water: Edge Hill 01/09/20-30/11/20	£2.77	Ongoing	
2013	Durham County Council	ICT Panda Defense Antivirus - 1 User	£13.20	Town Council	
DD	British Gas	Electricity: Skate Park 22/11/20-22/12/20	£10.78	Ongoing	
DD	British Gas	Electricity: Skate Park 22/12/20-22/01/21	£11.19	Ongoing	
2014	A. Breeze Pest Control Ltd.	Pest Control - Tindale Crescent 01/01/21-30/06/21	£450.00	Ongoing	
2015	Total Business	Printing Costs: December 2020	£32.86	Ongoing	
2015	Total Business	Printing Costs: January 2021	£22.61	Ongoing	
EP	Wave (NWG Business)	Water: West Mills 09/10/20-08/01/21	£224.41	Ongoing	
2016	Mazars LLP	External Audit of 2019/20 Accounts	£1,200.00	Town Council	The Town Council was placed in a higher band this year due to the turnover from the PWLB.
DC	Zoom Video Communications Inc.	Standard Pro - 18/01/21-17/02/21	£14.39	Ongoing	
2017	JLA Limited	Kingsway: Fire Safety Service Contract 01/12/20-31/12/20	£31.00	Ongoing	
2017	JLA Limited	Kingsway: Fire Safety Service Contract 01/01/21-31/01/21	£31.00	Ongoing	
DC	Cards N Clothes	Card and Balloon for 105th Birthday	£4.00	Civic and Approved Duties	

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Chq	Current Account (To be authorised)	Detail	£	Authorised	Notes
DD	British Gas	Gas: Kingsway 09/12/20-18/01/21	£301.62	Ongoing	
DD	British Gas	Electricity: Kingsway 26/12/20-25/01/21	£53.05	Ongoing	
EP	Wave (NWG Business)	Water: Kingsway 16/09/20-15/12/20	£11.85	Ongoing	
DD	Information Commissioners Office (ICO)	Data Protection Renewal 2021/22	£35.00	Town Council	£40 fee due, £5 discount if paid by Direct Debit
2018	Evolve Group Ltd.	Kingsway: Telephone & Broadband - July 2020	£218.29	Town Council	Overdue – Received batch of invoices in February
2018	Evolve Group Ltd.	Kingsway: Telephone & Broadband - August 2020	£218.29	Town Council	Overdue – Received batch of invoices in February
2018	Evolve Group Ltd.	Kingsway: Telephone & Broadband - September 2020	£218.29	Town Council	Overdue – Received batch of invoices in February
2018	Evolve Group Ltd.	Kingsway: Telephone & Broadband - October 2020	£218.29	Town Council	Overdue – Received batch of invoices in February
2018	Evolve Group Ltd.	Kingsway: Telephone & Broadband - November 2020	£218.29	Town Council	Overdue – Received batch of invoices in February
2018	Evolve Group Ltd.	Kingsway: Telephone & Broadband - December 2020	£218.29	Town Council	Overdue – Received batch of invoices in February
2018	Evolve Group Ltd.	Kingsway: Telephone & Broadband - January 2021	£218.29	Town Council	Overdue – Received batch of invoices in February
2018	Evolve Group Ltd.	Kingsway: Telephone & Broadband - February 2021	£218.29	Town Council	Overdue – Received batch of invoices in February
DC	Screwfix Direct Ltd.	Kingsway: Health and Safety Signage	£43.82	Town Council	Legal requirement as an employer
EP	B&Q	Pipe Insulation and Cable Ties - Woodhouse Close Allotment	£12.44	Ongoing	To insulate all water pipes on all Town Council allotment sites
2019	A. Breeze Pest Control Ltd.	Pest Control - Tindale Crescent 01/07/20-31/12/20	£450.00	Ongoing	Overdue invoice – Received February
EP	LMG Cleaning Services	5 Hour Clean of Offices	£65.00	Ongoing	
EP	LMG Cleaning Services	5 Hour Clean of Offices	£65.00	Ongoing	
EP	LMG Cleaning Services	5 Hour Clean of Offices	£65.00	Ongoing	
(To raise)	Bishop Auckland Music Society	Community Fund - Service of Steinway Grand Piano	£400.00	Town Council 15/12/20	Paid invoice received for Community Fund – Usually paid by cheque, but requested a bank transfer
		Total:	£8,989.07		

DC - Debit Card

Payment Type
EP - Electronic Payment

DD - Direct Debit

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