

Minutes of a meeting of Newbury Town Council
Held at 7.00 pm on Monday 15 June 2020

Present

Councillors Jeff Beck; Phil Barnett; Martin Colston; Jo Day; Billy Drummond; Sue Farrant; Nigel Foot; Chris Foster; Jon Gage; Roger Hunneman; Olivia Lewis; Stephen Masters; David Marsh; Vaughan Miller; Andy Moore; Gary Norman; Elizabeth O’Keeffe (Town Mayor); Erik Pattenden, Pam Lusby Taylor; Sarah Slack, Martha Vickers and Tony Vickers.

Officer in Attendance

Hugh Peacocke – Chief Executive Officer

Apologies for absence

Absent: Councillor Jeff Cant

18. Declarations of interest and dispensations

Councillors Phil Barnett, Jeff Beck, Billy Drummond, David Marsh, Stephen Masters, Andy Moore, Erik Pattenden, Martha Vickers and Tony Vickers are also Members of West Berkshire Council, which is declared as a general interest on their behalf and a dispensation is in place to allow them to partake in discussions relating to West Berkshire Council business.

19. Minutes

The following amendments were made to the draft minutes, as circulated:

a) Minute 13. Election of Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council for the 2020/2021 municipal year, to read:

Proposed: Councillor *Martha Vickers*

Seconded: Councillor Erik Pattenden

Resolved: That Councillor Martin Colston be elected Leader of the Council for 2020/21.

b) Minute 14. Committees / Sub-Committees for 2020/2021 municipal year.

Councillor Martin Colston proposed the following amendments to the memberships as circulated to the Council:

- That Councillor *Stephen Masters* is appointed to the Civic Pride, Arts and Leisure Committee and Councillor *David Marsh* a substitute on that Committee and that Appendix 1.1 of the minutes is amended to show this change.

Proposed: Councillor Erik Pattenden

Seconded: Councillor Nigel Foot

Resolved: To approve, as amended, the minutes of a meeting of Newbury Town Council held on Wednesday 20 May 2020.

20. Questions and petitions from members of the public

A. Question received from Mr. Thomas Tunney:

The Council was requested to review its decision regarding Simon Kirby and an allotment. What progress has been made by the Council on this matter?

The Mayor replied that the Council has reviewed the matter and Mr. Kirby will be invited to apply for an allotment, subject to the Council's standard conditions and criteria. The relevant application form and particulars will be sent to Mr. Kirby this week.

Has Mr Kirby been contacted yet officially to tell him this ruling is being reviewed?

The Mayor replied that Mr. Kirby has not directly approached the Council in this matter. The Councillor who brought the matter to our attention is aware that it is being reviewed.

Given what this has put Mr Kirby through, what does the council intend to do to make right and fix any wider impact this has had?

The Mayor replied that Mr. Kirby's application will be considered the same as any other. He should be aware that there is a long waiting list at the moment (over 80 applications on hand) and very few vacant plots.

B. Question received from Ms. Susan Millington

Will Newbury Town Council consider allocating the land adjacent to the housing development in Hutton Close for use as a community woodland, with planting to start in winter 2020-2021?

The Mayor replied that the Council has already indicated its support for the Lockdown Wood. The Council has attended a meeting with West Berkshire District Council and The Friends of The Earth to explore options regarding the woodland. The Council will continue to work with partners to seek a suitable home for the Lockdown Wood.

21. Members' questions and petitions

A. Question received from Councillor Phil Barnett:

During these unprecedented times, the residents of our town have had to endure many things completely alien to normal day to day life, staying at home, self- isolating, cut off from friends and family, reliant on others, To name a few This has taken its toll on many.

Therefore, can you Madam Mayor, join with me and the council to congratulate them for the patience and compliance of the government's recommendations during these difficult three months?

The Mayor acknowledged the enormous voluntary work being done by so many organisations and individuals in the community. She told the meeting that she has thanked and congratulated some of those concerned with letters and on the Council's social media. She was happy to congratulate all who had contributed so much over the past 3 months.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Phil Barnett:

Many of these residents have been totally dependent on the generosity of volunteers, neighbours , relatives, carers, NHS, to name a few.

Therefore Madam Mayor can you join with me and the council in offering a thousand thanks to all these people and organisations that have gone the extra mile in assuring all these residents have been kept safe and supplied with their daily needs?

The Mayor and the Council thanked all the people and organisations involved. She added that the High Sheriff was inviting people to submit names of those who should be thanked. It was hoped that it might be possible at some time in the future to hold a celebration event to recognise all of these contributions.

B. Question received from Councillor Phil Barnett:

Some residents in Boundary Road and Kings Road are likely to experience a reduced quality of life once the new link road is constructed. Lots of residents parking considerable increase of traffic movements can this Newbury town council urge highways of West Berkshire council to ensure adequate provision is eventually made available on the new Sterling cable site for the displaced ones and in the short term which could be months temporary parking?

The CEO replied that he would urge Highways of West Berkshire Council to ensure adequate provision is eventually made available on the new Sterling Cable site for the displaced ones and in the short term (which could be months) temporary parking?

Supplementary Question from Councillor Phil Barnett:

Once the link road is constructed, can Newbury Town Council urge West Berks Council to encourage (or even direct) vehicles going from the Sainsbury's roundabout to Hambridge lane area, to use the new road, giving Mill Lane residents a better quality of life and making Kings road a cul de sac, resulting with benefits to others as well. Furthermore, for cyclists - the installation of a more direct and safer route from the Eastern area into the town centre

The Mayor replied that the Council would urge West Berks Council, as requested.

C. Question received from Councillor Nigel Foot:

The town witnessed 2 BLM demonstrations last week involving large numbers of residents from across our community, demonstrating the strength of feeling and support for tackling racial inequality. What steps does the Mayor suggest we should take to support the cause of BLM so that Newbury can truly be a town that all are proud of?

The Mayor replied that she would like to congratulate the organisers of both of these events. Friday's march was very well attended and supported and it was very encouraging to see the youth in our community demonstrate their passion and belief for such important issues.

Similarly, Saturday's event in Victoria Park was very moving and attracted a large crowd who promoted their cause with great dignity and respect. The organisers also ensured that social distancing requirements were observed at both of these events.

The Mayor thanked Thames Valley Police for the quietly efficient way that they marshalled both events and ensured that they passed off safely and without any risk to the participants.

The Mayor said that the Council supports the messages that were heard Friday 12 June and Saturday 13 June and that the Council Strategy aims to Promote cultural identity and equality of opportunity. The Strategy states that *“To do this, We will strive to ensure that our policies and actions do not exclude any sections of the community, and that our services are accessible by all citizens of the town.”*

The Mayor said that to further these aims and to get a better understanding of these issues, she would like to invite the organisers of these events to the next meeting of Full Council to hear how they think that the Council could help them to achieve their aims.

D. Question received from Councillor Vaughan Miller

In the WBC Exec meeting of 13th February 2020 the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Community Wellbeing stated they had appointed Standard Surfacing Ltd (at a cost of up to £18,000) to carry out a feasibility study on alternative sites as potential replacements for the Faraday Road ground, with completion due by end March 2020.

Since it is now 10 weeks since they were supposed to complete their report, will the Chief Executive write to West Berkshire Council to ask what conclusions the consultants have reached?

The CEO confirmed that he would write as requested and that he would bring the response to the next available meeting of the Planning and Highways committee for consideration.

Supplementary question:

If the consultants report that there is no suitable alternative, could this Council request West Berkshire Council to revise their stance in line with the Town Council Strategy?

The Mayor replied that this matter would be progressed through the council’s Planning and Highways Committee.

E. Question received from Councillor Tony Vickers

With the District Council about to start preparing its statutory Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which is due to be complete by the end of this autumn, could the Chief Executive write to the Head of Transport & Environment at West Berkshire Council to request that the appointed consultants attend a meeting of our Planning & Highways Committee at the earliest opportunity to hear what this Council would wish to see in their Plan, in particular in the area of the Hambridge Road Employment Area, which is the largest employment area in West Berkshire, has no bus route, is highly congested in peak hours, extremely difficult and dangerous to bike through – but

presents us with a tremendous opportunity to improve bike and bus commuting when the new Sterling Cables B-road link is complete late next year?

The Chief Executive replied that he would request that the appointed consultants to attend a meeting of our Planning & Highways Committee at the earliest opportunity to hear what this Council would wish to see in their Plan.

22. Town Mayor's Report

The Mayor reported on Civic and Mayoral activities since the meeting of the Council on 20 May 2020.

23. Leader's Report

The Leader presented his report which was noted by the Council. In response to Councillor Martha Vickers he replied that the Council was proud to have kept open the public toilets at The Wharf throughout lockdown. Councillor Gary Norman said that a strong, unified voice was required to help set the future agenda for Newbury Town Centre. He asked that the Council set up a working group to take this forward. The Leader replied that he would discuss this with the CEO.

24. Chief Executive Officer's Report

The CEO reported that there had been no changes to staff or working arrangements since the last meeting of the Council on 15 May 2020.

25. List of Payments

The Council noted the payments made during the period 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2020.

26. Income and Expenditure Account 2019/20

The Council received the Income and Expenditure Account for the period ended 31 March 2020.

Proposed: Councillor Billy Drummond

Seconded: Councillor Martin Colston

Resolved: to approve expenditure against cost centres that are over the annual budget, 2019-2020, in accordance with this Council's financial regulations.

27. Reserves and Balances at 31 March 2020

The Council noted the Council's balance sheet at 31 March 2020.

The Council noted the balances on Community Infrastructure Levies and contributions to the Council under Section 106.

Proposed: Councillor Tony Vickers

Seconded: Councillor Sue Farrant

Resolved: To approve the earmarked reserves at 31 March 2020, as circulated.

28. End of Year Statutory Accounts 2019/20

The Council received the Annual Return (subject to external audit) for the financial year 2019/20.

Before the Council considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return the CEO pointed out that the Internal Audit report had not yet been completed. This had arisen due to unexpected tragedy for our internal auditor and the difficulties which the current crisis was causing to his firm. The Council noted that best practice recommends that this should be completed with the Annual Return, but that it is not a statutory requirement. It will be completed before the public inspection period (scheduled to commence on 1 July, unless not completed) and will be part of the documents submitted to the external auditors for the Council's annual statutory audit.

Proposed: Councillor Roger Hunneman

Seconded: Councillor Erik Pattenden

Resolved: To approve each individual paragraph (1-9) of the Annual Governance Statement 2019-20 as defined at Section 2 of the Annual Return and

Resolved that Newbury Town Council has:

1. Put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.
2. Maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.
3. Took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.
4. Provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
5. Carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.
6. Maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.
7. Took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.
8. Considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.
9. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.

The meeting considered the Accounting Statements shown on page 5 of the Return. The CEO pointed out that the Council's balances during the year had increased by £347,985, which largely reflected the instalment of Community Infrastructure Levies received by the Council in October 2019.

Proposed: Councillor Jeff Beck

Seconded: Councillor Stephen Masters

Resolved: To adopt the accounts and **to authorise** the signing of the Annual Return by The Town Mayor.

29. Town Centre re-opening

The meeting received a report on *Supporting Our Town Centres to Reopen Safely*, A webinar for West Berkshire businesses, presented by West Berkshire Council on 10 June 2020. The following actions were agreed:

- The Council's dual-hatted members were requested to urge West Berkshire Council to a) deal quickly and flexibly with applications from the hospitality industry for seats and tables on the footpath/ highway as they attempt to re-open their businesses in line with social distancing and public health requirements and b) to urge West Berkshire Council to reduce parking charges, including 2 hours free parking, while coronavirus restrictions apply in the Town Centre
- Ask West Berkshire District Council and Newbury BID to explore options for street furniture hire/ short-term provision of street furniture for the re-opening period
- The CEO to request West Berkshire Council to grant the licences for a period extending beyond 31 August 2020
- Seek the provision of more cycling racks in the Town Centre
- Ask Newbury BID to actively promote the Shopmobility Scheme
- Newbury Town Council to form a Working Group with relevant partners to consider town centre matters including LRIE regeneration, Hambridge Road/ Sterling Cables site and relevant matters that might arise should the Council decide to make a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The CEO and The Leader to draft Terms of reference and membership of the Working Group, for approval at the next appropriate Council or Committee meeting.

30. Forward Work Programme for Full Council meetings 2020/21

The Council noted and agreed the Forward Work Programme.

It was agreed that the organisers of The Black Lives Matter events be invited to the next meeting of the Council.

It was noted that schools were very unlikely to be involved in Local democracy Week in October but this matter would be kept under review by the LDW Working Group.

There being no further business, the Town Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.44 pm.

Town Mayor

Date: _____