

**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF BURNTWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 11 MARCH 2021 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Evans [in the Chair]

Councillors Banevicius, Birch, Bishop, Bullock, D Ennis, L Ennis, Flanagan, Gittings, Ho, Kirkham, Loughbrough Rudd, Norman, R Place, M Place, Tapper, Westwood, Willis-Croft and Woodward

In attendance

G Hunt, Town Clerk

Ms J Minor, Deputy Clerk

Six members of the public

PUBLIC FORUM

No questions were raised by members of the public.

94. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Brown and Greensill.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Banevicius declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 - Planning and Development Committee Minutes and in particular Minute No. 11[b] [planning application 21/00155/FUL - Land adjacent, 24 Farewell Lane] as the applicant is known to her.

96. MINUTES

The Chairman reminded Members that they were being asked to comment solely on the accuracy of the Minutes.

It was proposed by Councillor Woodward, seconded by Councillor D Ennis, and following a unanimous show of hands it was

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 11 February 2021 [Minute Nos. 82-93] be received and where necessary approved and adopted.

Following inappropriate comments by certain members of the public the Chairman suggested an adjournment of the meeting until those members of the public could be blocked from the meeting.

97. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman praised all NHS workers, carers, and caring organisations for the tremendous job they had done during the pandemic. She mentioned the NHS vaccination programme which was well organised in Burntwood and the "return to school" and the brilliant job undertaken by all staff including teachers, cleaners etc.

The Chairman referred to the Town Clerk and the fact that he was retiring at the end of the year and the need to start the process of employing his successor to continue the work of the Town Council [Better Burntwood].

Before Covid-19, the Town Council had discussed a dementia friendly town and the Chairman suggested that the Town Council needed to start thinking about this and moving forward on this matter once restrictions had been lifted.

Councillor Woodward thanked both Councillor Tapper and Mrs Williams [present] for volunteering at vaccination centres.

With the Town Clerk retiring in December, she felt that this gave the Town Council an opportunity to think ahead of what they would like to see in the future for Burntwood [succession plan].

98. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Norman, seconded by Councillor Woodward, and following a unanimous show of hands it was

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 04 February 2021 [Minute Nos. 14-19] be received and where necessary approved and adopted.

99. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Councillor Birch referred to Minute No. 10 - Information from the Minutes and confirmed, as agreed, that he had emailed Lichfield District Council expressing the Town Council's concerns at the way in which an application [planning application 20/00261/FUL in respect of Padbury Lane Farm, Padbury Lane] had been determined. He confirmed that he had spoken to Councillor Marshall, Chairman of the Planning Committee and he was awaiting a response from Ms Billings, Planning Development Manager.

It was proposed by Councillor Birch, seconded by Councillor Gittings, and following a unanimous show of hands it was

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning and Development Committee held on 24 February 2021 [Minute Nos. 7-11] be received and where necessary approved and adopted.

100. APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS FROM 09 FEBRUARY TO 26 FEBRUARY 2021

Councillor Norman referred to previous discussions and for example several individual payments made to one company per month. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was work in progress and Councillor D Ennis stated that, hopefully in the future, this would be limited to one BACS payment per payment run and not several individual payments.

It was proposed by Councillor Woodward, seconded by Councillor D Ennis, and following a unanimous show of hands it was

RESOLVED That the payments from 09 February to 26 February 2021 in the sum of £14,874.15 be approved.

101. ASSESSMENT OF DEMAND FOR ALLOTMENTS

Councillor Norman referred to the reports prepared for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been held on 04 February 2021.

Councillor R Place felt that the demand for allotments may have been greater during the lockdown restrictions and asked whether expressions of interest could be based on interests in the short term. Councillor Norman stated that this was a long-term project.

Councillor Flanagan referred to Burntwood Diggers and asked if they were still an interested party. Councillor Woodward thought that the organisation was in the process of setting up a constitution and asked Councillor Loughbrough Rudd, as a Trustee of the organisation, what was the current status. Councillor Loughbrough Rudd confirmed that he would email Councillor Woodward with an update.

Councillor D Ennis felt that scrutiny was definitely needed with regard to costings, how many people would benefit etc. Councillor Norman referred to the reports prepared for the meeting held on 04 February 2021 and confirmed that those questions had been addressed and would continue to be addressed.

The Town Clerk outlined the Town Council's responsibility under the provisions of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908.

It was proposed by Councillor Norman, seconded by Councillor Bishop, and following a unanimous show of hands it was

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk be authorised to promote and organise an opportunity for residents to express an interest in renting an allotment.

102. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Town Clerk confirmed that the May meeting [Annual Meeting and Annual Town Meeting] was already in the diary [12 May] and that he was monitoring the situation around public meetings due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Previously, Councillor Norman had suggested that the Town Council could follow Lichfield District Council with YouTube recordings and he asked about progress. The Town Clerk explained a technical problem was being fixed by the Council's IT provider.

Councillor Loughbrough Rudd reported that he had written to the MP about continuing Zoom meetings after May, when the legislation ends, and was awaiting a response which he would share with the Town Clerk.

Some Members felt that virtual meetings saved time and money

Councillor R Place pointed out that the under 45s [of which a number of Town Councillors were] would not be getting their vaccination until perhaps June/July and felt that face to face meetings were not appropriate but Councillors cannot be barred from meetings.

It was proposed by Councillor Woodward, seconded by Councillor D Ennis, and following a show of hands [For 17, Abstention 2] it was

RESOLVED That the following Council meeting dates be approved:

Wednesday 14 April 2021
Tuesday 15 June 2021
Wednesday 14 July 2021
Tuesday 10 August 2021
Tuesday 14 September 2021
Wednesday 13 October 2021
Tuesday 16 November 2021
Wednesday 15 December 2021
Wednesday 12 January 2022
Wednesday 16 February 2022
Wednesday 16 March 2022
Tuesday 12 April 2022
Wednesday 11 May 2022

103. END OF YEAR BUDGET STATEMENT

Even though the Town Clerk had reported an overspend at the December 2020 Town Council Meeting and mitigating measures approved, it had now come to light that there would indeed be an underspend in the sum of £133,378. This was largely due to an underspend on salaries, cancellation of community events programme, delay in the transfer of the management of the public conveniences and the referendum relating to the Burntwood Neighbourhood Plan. Although the underspend in individual cost centres was known the accumulated impact on the budget was not reflected in the budget statement that was reported to the December Council meeting. The Town Clerk apologised for this mistake and confirmed he had already instigated measures to prevent this error from happening again.

Councillor Ho stated that when Labour took control back in 2019 the Council increased the precept by 7%. Burntwood Town Council took more money from its residents when it did not need to because it over budgeted by over £133,000. He asked whether the Leader would take responsibility for this.

Councillor Woodward referred to the forthcoming May elections and explained that it was good to be open and transparent. The Town Council now had almost six months running costs in reserves as requested by both parties. She would take responsibility for bringing the Town Council into the 2020's Century having put many issues right [no Health and Safety Policy etc

in place]. She said all councillors had a responsibility to scrutinise the budget but no Councillors had spotted the underspend.

Councillor Tapper referred to the unspent CIL money and asked as it has not been spent it should be returned. Councillor Birch explained that CIL money received must be spent within 5 years of receipt or can be taken back by Lichfield District Council. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was a key task of the Planning Advisory Group which was due to meet on 16 March 2021.

Councillor R Place felt that this was a serious oversight issue.

Councillor Norman asked if the Leader when summing up could avoid mentioning the lack of health and safety, systems inherited, Neighbourhood Plan etc.

Councillor D Ennis referred to the fact that all Members of the Town Council had seen the budget allocation, no-one knew how Covid-19 would affect them and the Town Council had planned a budget to be spent. Councillor R Place stated that if we would have known about the underspend, we could have approved an alternative budget.

It was proposed by Councillor Woodward, seconded by Councillor D Ennis, and following a unanimous show of hands it was

RESOLVED That the Budget Statement be endorsed, and the suggested earmarking of the underspend be approved.

104. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Councillor Evans moved that although there were no longer members of the public present the Council still needed to approve the exclusion of the press and public so the next agenda item could be treated as confidential.

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies [Admissions of Meeting] Act 1960 [Section 2] [and as expended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972], the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

105. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The Chairman reminded Members that the Minutes were for accuracy purposes only.

It was proposed by Councillor Woodward, seconded by Councillor D Ennis, and following a unanimous show of hands it was

RESOLVED That the Confidential Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 11 February 2021 [Minute Nos. 90-93] be received and where necessary approved and adopted.

106. OLD MINING COLLEGE IMPROVEMENTS

It was proposed by Councillor D Ennis, seconded by Councillor Flanagan, and following a unanimous show of hands it was

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk be authorised to seek quotations for the work described and let a contract of up to and not exceeding a value of £7,500.

[The Meeting closed at 7.22 pm]

Signed

Date