

**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF BURNTWOOD TOWN COUNCIL  
HELD ON THURSDAY 25 JUNE 2020 COMMENCING AT 6.02 PM**

**PRESENT**

Councillor Evans [in the Chair]

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

**In attendance**

G Hunt, Town Clerk

Ms J Minor, Deputy Clerk

Four members of the public

**PUBLIC FORUM**

No questions were raised by members of the public.

Councillor Evans, as Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded Members that if they have to leave the meeting for whatever reason, they should let the Town Clerk know and also if/when they return. Councillor Evans informed Members that the Church Street Car Park was now open from 9am until 5pm seven days a week giving better access to Chasewater. Councillor Evans stated that Burntwood Town Council would be marking Armed Forces Day this Saturday, 27th June 2020, with a socially distanced tribute at Burntwood Library. Councillors who are able to attend will be marking the day at 11am. Councillor Evans referred Members to Agenda Item 8 [Council Meetings] and in particular the extra virtual meeting proposed on 20 August 2020.

**11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors Banevicius, Bishop, Brown, Kirkham and Taylor [Dispensation]

**12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

None declared.

**13. MINUTES**

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

Councillor R Place made reference to Minute No. 2 [Election of Vice-Chairman of the Town Council] and stated that he had in fact asked that in future, a nomination could be considered from a Councillor from the Opposition Group.

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

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 13 May 2020 [Minute Nos. 1-10] be received and where necessary approved and adopted.

#### **14. ANNUAL TREE INSPECTION AT COULTER LANE BURIAL GROUND**

Councillor Evans thanked the Town Clerk for undertaking the inspection of the trees at Coulter Lane. The Town Clerk stated that under current policy a full tree survey is undertaken by a qualified Arborist every five years and that the inspection undertaken recently by himself was the annual visual inspection. However, another visual inspection was carried out recently by the Town Clerk following the storms to check for evidence of damaged/fallen branches. The Town Clerk suggested that a full tree survey undertaken by a qualified Arborist should be undertaken every three years due to the high risk nature of the site [trees situated on the boundary, age of trees etc] and that this would be an item for consideration on the July 2020 Town Council Agenda. Councillor Woodward explained that there was no additional expenditure for the annual visual inspection as the Town Clerk previously worked for the Forest of Mercia. Councillor R Place stated that the Town Council needed to know the costs involved before agreeing to a three year full tree survey and Councillor D Ennis stated that a report was needed detailing exactly what was entailed. Councillor Birch pointed out the impact on lives, financial damage and reputation of the Council [under the provisions of Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 [revised 2015] if the Council did not manage the risks of trees in its ownership properly.

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

**RESOLVED** That the annual tree inspection report be received and noted.

#### **15. DOCUMENT RETENTION AND DISPOSAL POLICY**

The Town Clerk informed Members that an update was needed due to change to legislation [the Town Council is required under the provisions of the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice as issued under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to implement a records retention and disposal policy]. The Town Clerk confirmed that he was currently working through the paper archive.

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

**RESOLVED** That the updated Document Retention and Disposal Policy be received and where necessary approved and adopted.

#### **16. RENEWAL OF SERVICE SUBSCRIPTION FOR EMPLOYMENT LAW ADVICE**

Councillor D Ennis felt that over the last twelve months Keelys Solicitors had provided an excellent service and were good value for money. Councillor Ho made reference to due diligence and asked if other quotations had been requested [how could we say if they were good value for money if no other quotations were received]. The Town Clerk confirmed that Keelys Solicitors give employment issue advice and provide drafted letters etc however additional costs were involved when dealing with tribunals.

Councillor Woodward stated that Keelys Solicitors had been very responsive over the last twelve months and Councillor Norman stated that he felt [as part of the Tribunal Panel] that Keelys advice had been essential.

Councillor R Place asked how much the cost of the employment advice was last year and the Town Clerk made reference to 5.1 of the report [Conclusion] and stated that the cost of renewal had been held at last year price. Councillor R Place made reference to the Financial Regulations and in particular the contracts worth up to £1,000 [one price quote] which he felt had been increased from £500 recently.

The Town Clerk explained that the Financial Regulations had always been contracts worth up to £1,000 [one price quote], contracts worth between £1,001 and £10,000 [three written quotations], contracts over £10,001 [formal tendering process] etc. The Town Clerk made reference to the Disposal of Assets Procedure [Policy and Resources Committee - 19 November 2019] where the procedure was approved and adopted subject to the following amendment:

If the value of the asset is above £500 the approval of the Policy and Resources Committee is needed. If the value of the asset is below £500 the approval of the Finance Officer is needed.

Councillor Norman stated that the “cheapest” quote was not always the best quote and the Town Clerk referred to the current operational restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 lockdown which makes it very difficult to identify and assess other potential companies that can supply the advice to the level that is required. Councillor Ho stated that you do not have to meet a solicitor to get a quotation [they are classed as key workers]. Councillor Willis-Croft suggested that next year the Town Council should look at other companies to obtain more quotations. Councillor Tapper felt that the Town Council were not in a position to say that we had obtained the best quote.

Councillor Woodward stated that this was a valued service and that both Staffordshire County Council and Lichfield District Council would not spend time and effort on this matter.

It was proposed by Councillor D Ennis, seconded by Councillor L Ennis and following 10 in favour, 3 against and 3 not voting it was

**RESOLVED** That the Financial Regulations be waived in respect of Section 11.1[d] and the service subscription with Keelys Solicitors be renewed for a further twelve months.

## **17. REPLACEMENT BUS SHELTER**

Councillor Ho stated that he would favour a like for like replacement as he felt that the wooden shelter would involve more maintenance and provided no seating.

The Town Clerk explained that a gentleman had visited the reception office at Lichfield District Council and stated that the police had requested that he remove the bus shelter as it was causing an obstruction. However, the CCTV evidence held by Aldi was not very helpful on this occasion and the Police have no report of the incident.

Councillor Tapper felt that there would be no real benefit in having a wooden bus shelter with no seating and Councillor Loughbrough Rudd stated that he would prefer a bus shelter with seating as the bus shelter was situated on a main bus route and suggested asking the public to see which one they would prefer.

Councillor D Ennis confirmed that this bus shelter had been knocked down twice and suggested that as the bus shelter was situated very close to the road that it could be turned around [legs by the fence].

Councillor Birch reminded Members that the Town Council had pledged sustainability in our decision making and asked if this was a safe location.

Councillor R Place stated that he would be happy with the bus shelter if it was situated further back [away from the road]. Councillor Willis-Croft felt the vehicle insurance should be liable to pay for the replacement bus shelter however, the Town Clerk confirmed that there was no evidence and that the insurance claim had been approved by Zurich.

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

**RESOLVED** That the bus shelter be replaced however that the design [safety of passengers] be delegated to the Leader, Opposition Leader and Ward Councillors.

## **18. COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Councillor R Place stated that the Town Council does not normally meet in August and asked if a meeting in August was needed.

Councillor Birch made reference to a hybrid meeting where Councillors and members of the public could join the meeting by for example dialling in externally. Councillor Woodward stated that a hybrid meeting may be a way forward. This could be held in the Ron Bradbury Room adhering to Covid-19 guidance on social distancing as some people are unable to take part in the virtual meetings because they are unable to access the internet from home.

Councillor Loughbrough Rudd made reference to the Christmas Events and asked if any decisions had been made. Councillor Woodward referred to Minute No. 6 - 13 May 2020 refers [Community Events Update] and Councillor D Ennis as Chairman of the Community and Partnerships Committee stated that he was monitoring the Covid-19 guidance on mass gatherings [social distancing] very carefully.

Councillor R Place stated that the Town Council normally meet every two months however Councillor Woodward explained that in between those meetings Committee meetings take place.

Councillor D Ennis felt that there was pros and cons in having an August meeting however with regard to the current restrictions he felt that it was worth trying a meeting in August.

Councillor Woodward explained that she had been approached by Councillor Norman, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ask if Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings could be included in the Calendar of Meetings. Councillor Woodward explained that scrutiny was not to make things difficult but was to improve the way we do things [make better decisions] and that the Town Council had some big decisions to make in the future [i.e. whether or not to take on the public conveniences].

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

**RESOLVED** That the current restrictions to the meetings calendar for 2020/21 to monthly virtual Council Meetings for the next three months [29 July, 20 August and 24 September] be

approved and that Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings be included in the meetings calendar.

## **19. ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2019-20**

Following a unanimous show of hands, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Internal Audit report from the AGAR for the year ended 31 March 2020 be received and noted.

## **20. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

### **20.1 Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2020**

Following a unanimous show of hands, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2020 be approved.

### **20.2 Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2020**

Following a unanimous show of hands, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 March 2020 be approved and that the Chairman and the Responsible Financial Officer be authorised to sign the document.

### **20.3 Annual Return: Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31 March 2020**

Following a unanimous show of hands, it was

#### **RESOLVED**

That the following be agreed in order to comply with legislative requirements:

1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control, including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.
3. We 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 on its finances.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

5. We 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. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this smaller authority and, where appropriate have included them in the accounting statements.

#### **20.4 Annual Return: Section 2 - Accounting Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2020**

Following a unanimous show of hands, it was

**RESOLVED** That the Annual Return: Section 2 – Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 be approved and that the Chairman be authorised to sign the document.

Councillor Woodward explained to Members that the Town Council had to set their budget before the impact of the Covid-19 was known and thanked the Finance Officer for the work undertaken.

#### **21. 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.

#### **22. CORONAVIRUS CONTINGENCY PLAN UPDATE**

Councillor Woodward gave background information regarding Church Street Car Park and in response to a request for help from Staffordshire County Council the Town Council had taken on the responsibility of opening and closing the car park. The car park is now open 7 days a week from 9am to 5pm to provide additional car parking for visitors to Chasewater and provide health and well-being to residents in Burntwood by providing better access to Chasewater.

Members raised concerns from residents concerning the opening of the car park in particular anti-social behaviour, drug taking, litter however the Town Clerk confirmed that a visual inspection was carried out upon opening and closing of the car park and behaviour would be monitored.

Councillor D Ennis stated that the opening and closing of the car park was on a trial basis until September and that promotion of the car park was key.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

[Councillor Tapper left the meeting at 7.11 pm]

**23. PERSONAL INJURY CLAIM**

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

[The Meeting closed at 7.14 pm]

Signed .....

Date .....