

## **MORECAMBE TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Meeting of Morecambe Town Council held on Thursday 3rd October 2019 at 7.00 p.m. at Morecambe Town Hall.**

**Present:** Councillors: P. Heath (Chairman), T. Anderson, P. Anderton, Mirka Balcer, Mariusz Balcer, J. Bates, V. Boyd-Power, S. Burns, T. Clarke, R. Cleet, I. Clift, G. Dennison, R. Dennison, M. Evans, J. Firth, J. Goodwin, J. Hanson, D. Jenkins, C. Matthews, J. Newton, M Pattison and J. Pilling.

**Officers in Attendance:** N. Kitchen (Project Officer), Sergeant L. Brown (Lancashire Constabulary) Jonas Bartle (Community Engagement Officer - Volunteer Champions Scheme)

The Chairman opened the meeting by warmly welcoming everybody present.

#### **61. Apologies for Absence:**

Councillors: J. Ashworth (Vice-Chair) A. Ashworth, P. Ross-Clasper. D. Whitaker.

#### **62. Declarations of Interests:**

Councillors Anderton, Boyd-Power, Goodwin, Hanson and Matthews declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Planning Applications as they were all members of the Planning Committee at Lancaster City Council.

#### **63. Minutes of Meetings held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019:**

The Council considered the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 5th September 2019 and it was **resolved** that the minutes be signed as a correct record.

#### **64. Public Participation:**

The Meeting was not adjourned because there were no members of the public present who wished to address Council.

#### **65. Chairman's Report:**

The Chairman congratulated Councillor M. Pattison on her recent appointment and welcomed her to the Council.

The Chairman apologised to Members for any outstanding administrative tasks and explained that the Town Clerk was still on long term sickness absence having recently sent into the office another fit note until October 20<sup>th</sup>.

The Chairman explained that the Acting Town Clerk and Project Officer were working under difficult circumstances and were experiencing significant operational difficulties due to their part time nature and also trying to find paper trails on some issues. Tasks both Officers and advised Members that they had been outstanding in trying to get

things up to date and ensuring normal business could continue. The Chairman's statement received unanimous applause.

The Chairman invited Sergeant L. Brown and J. Bartle from Lancashire Constabulary to address Council.

Sergeant Brown provided detailed background information regarding crime and policing both nationally and locally. Whilst crime rates had seen an encouraging reduction in numbers, there were still however ongoing issues regarding 'hotspot' areas within the Town.

Youth Anti-social behaviour (ASB) although still an issue, had reduced. Poulton Ward and West End in particular, had not seen any real reduction in levels of ASB. ASB had also been identified in specific roads within the town and Sergeant Brown advised that any such areas would receive a targeted response and were subject to mobile patrols.

Sergeant Brown advised Council about two serious and community affecting issues which the Police were actively working to address:

- **County Lines:** criminal gangs set up a drug dealing operation in a place outside their usual operating area. Gangs will move their drug dealing from big cities such as Manchester or Liverpool, to smaller towns in order to make more money. This can have an effect on the community who live there and bring with it, serious criminal behaviour.
- **Cuckooing** is when drug gangs take over the home of a vulnerable person through violence and intimidation, using it as their base for selling/manufacturing drugs.

Sergeant Brown advised that due to an injection of funds nationally, Lancashire Constabulary anticipate an introduction of 400 new officers. Through the precept, Morecambe Town residents had received 4 new officers who were part of the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Sergeant Brown concluded by reminding Members about the scheme for ward working volunteers, which he had informed Members of at the Annual Town Meeting this year.

Sergeant Brown invited Jonas Bartle to address Council about the Community Champions Scheme.

Mr Bartle explained the scheme as one that was influenced through the recruitment of local people who had local knowledge, and as such, would perhaps be aware of any issues in their own neighbourhoods. Members were advised that a Community Champion would receive training and guidance and could volunteer for anything between 2 – 6 hours a week. Members showed significant interest and asked several questions regarding the scheme which Mr Bartle provided answers for.

**Actions:** Any Members who wish to participate with the ward working and Community Champion Schemes, to indicate to the Acting Town Clerk or Project Officer.

The Chairman thanked both Sergeant Brown and Mr Bartle for their informative and positive briefing.

## **66. Acting Town Clerk's Report:**

The report provided was detailed and concentrated around all matters regarding financial regulation, financial practices and audit control (See appendix 1). There were several recommendations and requirements for Council to determine what actions should be duly taken.

### **Audit Review – Annual Governance and Accountability Statement.**

- 1. Standing Orders & Financial Regulations:** Changes within the Town Council to the committee structure necessitate the need to review and amend Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and its functions and responsibilities to ensure that good governance is maintained.

It was **resolved** that Council accepted these recommendations and that the Acting Town Clerk implements necessary changes to strengthen or enhance internal controls.

- 2. Payment controls:** The schedule of payments presented to and authorised by resolution to each meeting of the Town Council should be initialled or signed by the Chair and the total amount recorded in the Minutes.

It was **resolved** that Council accepted these recommendations and that the Acting Town Clerk implements necessary changes to strengthen or enhance internal controls.

- 3. Contracts for Services and Goods:** In accordance with s.135 of the *Local Government Act* (1972), Standing Orders and supporting Financial Regulations must make provision for securing competition and regulating the procedure for the receipt and award of tenders. The Town Council's financial regulations specify a limit of £5,000 above which formal tenders are to be sought. Public Contract Regulations now state that formal tender arrangements should be for works and services above £25,000. It is recommended that the Town Council reviews the current arrangements and determines the limits for seeking tenders based on local circumstances.

Council noted that this was an issue that had been raised previously. It was **resolved** that Council should retain the limit of £5,000 and not raise it any higher.

- 4. Reserves:** The Town Council's balances as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, after taking account of earmarked reserves, whilst acceptable, was at the lower end of what is generally accepted as being prudent. It is recommended that the Town Council reviews its *Reserves Policy* and determines a level for general reserve as part of the budget process and before setting the precept for the coming year.

It was **resolved** that Council accepted these recommendations and that the Acting Town Clerk implements necessary changes to strengthen or enhance internal controls.

- 5. Grants:** The Town Council currently only has criteria by which they award grants for the Community Grant scheme. In order to ensure that the Town Council is awarding grants that are within their legal powers, it is recommended that the application process for all grants is reviewed, and the relevant powers used to award grants clearly recorded.

Several questions were raised, and it was **resolved** that grant procedures and arrangements be considered at a future meeting.

### **External Audit Report – Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.**

Members were advised that following the conclusion of the audit due, 'on or around the 30<sup>th</sup> September', the following actions must be carried out:

1. Prepare a '*Notice of conclusion of audit*' detailing the rights of inspection, in line with statutory requirements;
2. Publish the 'Notice' along with the certified AGAR, including publication on the Town Council's website;
3. Keep copies of the AGAR available for purchase by any person on payment of a sum to be determined by the Town Council;
4. Ensure that the AGAR is available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.

It was **resolved** for Council to accept the requirements and for the Acting Town Clerk to ensure the necessary actions are carried out in order to comply with *Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015)*.

## **Grants.**

As the Acting Town Clerk was satisfied that all criteria had been met and the necessary paperwork had been received and verified, Members were asked to approve payments for:

1. Morecambe Pride, £7,000;
2. Morecambe 1940's revival, £4,000, and;
3. £1,000 for an 'Armed Forces Grant';

It was **resolved** that Council approve the payments and instruct the Acting Town Clerk to issue payments accordingly.

Two further applications had been received, under the provisions of the *Miscellaneous Grant* scheme where both applicants had bid for the maximum available grant of £500. The Acting Town Clerk requested that Members determine whether to review the procedure and criteria for all grants.

Members discussed several issues surrounding grants and it was **resolved** that the Acting Town Clerk be requested to provide a full report outlining the budget allocations for grants, and the value of funds spent and remaining from the current agreed budget 2019/2020.

**Actions:** The Acting Town Clerk to prepare a report for the November 2019 Council Meeting.

## **Payments Schedule.**

Members were requested to approve the payments list and to consider purchasing an additional two pages for the forthcoming edition of *The View*. It was explained that the extra pages within *The View*, due to be published in November, would allow the Council to ask residents what their priorities were which would therefore inform proposed budget decisions.

Members were reminded that the Council had facilitated the opening of the Dome toilets from Easter until September and therefore, were now closed. However, it had come to the Chairman's attention that the contract to monitor and check the toilets for Legionnaires' disease would still require to be paid despite the toilets being closed, unless the contract was formally cancelled.

After discussion it was resolved that **resolved** that:

1. Members approved the payment list.
2. Members approved the expenditure for the two additional pages to be inserted into *The View*.

It was **resolved** that Council wished to cancel the contract to check and monitor for Legionnaires' disease and that the Acting Town Clerk formally notify the contract provider to terminate the arrangement.

### **Staff.**

Members were advised that they had previously been provided with some numerical errors regarding salaries and scale points, and the correct figures were contained within the Report for Members to note.

There was still some difficulty with gaining access to some systems and therefore there were some outstanding issues regarding the Local Government Pensions Scheme (LGPS).

### **Payroll, accounting and banking arrangements.**

Members were requested to note the considerations within the Report and consider whether they wish to pursue alternative arrangements.

### **Resolved:**

1. For Members to note the statement regarding Scribe Accounting System.
2. For the Acting Town Clerk to arrange to remove the existing payroll system 'Payroo' and replace with the HMRC payroll system.
3. For the Acting Town Clerk to make arrangements to cease banking with HSBC and commence banking with Unity Trust Bank.
4. For the designated signatories to be the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council, And the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Personnel Committee.

### **Website.**

The Town Council has previously resolved '*That the Town Clerk be requested to obtain tenders/quotations for the provision of a new Town Council Website and to submit these to Council for consideration*'. The Acting Town Clerk reviewed the emails received and identified that several quotations have been received, and that those submitting a tender have since requested an update on progress with the tendering process. Members were requested to approve the Acting Town Clerk to submit a report to Council for consideration on how to proceed with the website.

**Resolved:** For the Acting Town Clerk to prepare a detailed report for consideration in Council's November meeting.

## **67. Project Officer Report.**

Members considered the report and recommendations regarding the activities of the Environmental Enforcement Officer. Members were requested to consider purchasing a laptop to remove the necessity of the Officer having to return to the Town Hall to complete administrative tasks.

Members were advised that 2 Councillors had accompanied the Officer and their reports will be presented in the November meeting. It was suggested during discussion that the Officer would benefit from a video camera in his vehicle, particularly in 'hotspot' areas, and that if the Officer was employed for more hours than he currently is, more could be achieved.

It was **resolved** that the Council would purchase a laptop from Lancaster City Council under the conditions set out in the Report.

## **68. Planning Applications.**

Councillors Anderton, Boyd-Power, Goodwin, Hanson and Matthews left the meeting at this point as they had declared an interest earlier in the meeting.

The Council considered the following Planning Applications:

Application Number	Proposal Details	Site Address
19/01139/FUL	Erection of a single storey side extension.	2 Wingate Avenue. Morecambe. LA4 4SH
19/01152/FUL	Erection of a detached bungalow.	Montressa. Green Lane. Heaton with Oxcliffe.
19/01173/PAD	Prior approval for demolition of existing single storey music building and two storey art building.	Morecambe Bay Academy. Dallam Avenue. Morecambe. LA4 5BG
<p>Road Traffic Order.</p> <p>Effective from 08:00 hours on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019</p> <p>No person shall cause any motor vehicle to proceed over that length of Back Crescent Street, Morecambe from its junction with Pedder Street to its junction with Nelson Street.</p>		
<p>Road Traffic Order</p> <p>Effective from 08:00 hours on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020</p> <p>No person shall cause any motor vehicle, cycle or pedestrian to proceed over that length of Back Marine Road, Morecambe from its junction with Albert Road to its junction with B5274 West End Road.</p>		

**Resolved:** In respect of the Road Traffic Orders, Council queried whether this would prevent people from gaining access to private parking facilities.

Members requested some information from the West End and Heysham Allotment Association which is managed in agreement with the Council. Specifically, an update was requested regarding the expressed intention for the Association to relocate on site the hut and the chimney. Details regarding Councillors attending meetings was also requested.

It was **resolved** that the Project Officer obtain the information and report back to Council.



Councillors Anderton, Boyd-Power, Goodwin, Hanson and Matthews returned to the meeting at this point.

### **69. Neighbourhood Plan Update.**

Councillor Bates gave Council an informative and detailed update on the project and made the following key points:

- Progress was slower than anticipated.
- The Steering Group now required evidence to support the Neighbourhood Plan proposals.
- The voices of young people were a noticeable absence in the data already gained.
- The list of Community Assets
- The Plan required a consideration of Environmental policies, Climate Change mitigation and low carbon initiatives.
- The importance of demonstrating that the Plan supports community engagement was stated.
- Using the 6 key Lancaster City Council Ward, an introduction of area forums where Members have an understanding about their respective wards may prove beneficial.

Members considered that Councillor Bates was doing an excellent job and queried whether the Eden Project could complement the Neighbourhood Plan, and whether sites such as Frontierland could invite new opportunities for the Town.

It was **resolved** that the Project Officer would circulate details regarding the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meetings and warmly invite Members to participate should they wish to do so.

### **70. Morecambe in Bloom.**

Members received an update on Morecambe in Bloom and the voluntary group Morecambe Bloomers which the Council supports.

Due to the continued long-term absence of the Clerk, coupled with problems experienced in establishing what had or had not been completed, it was decided at the previous meeting that the Morecambe in Bloom presentation evening would be postponed until the New Year. It was confirmed that the venue booking for an evening in October, had now been cancelled at no cost to the Council.

It was noted that the Bloomers had met the previous evening where the main discussion had been the future constitution of the group because the Chairman had decided to step down. There had been no date set for their next meeting.

## **71. Exclusion of Press and Public.**

The Council was recommended to pass the following recommendation in relation to the following item:

*“That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act.”*

Members are reminded that, whilst the following item has been marked as exempt, it is for the Council itself to decide whether to consider it in private or in public. In making the decision, Members should consider the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A of the *Local Government Act 1972* and should balance the interests of individuals or the Council itself in having access to information.

The Project Officer left the meeting.

## **72. Personnel Committee Report and recommendations.**

Council were advised that a Personnel Committee Meeting had been held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019.

It was **resolved** that the recommended independent specialist be appointed to deal with personnel issues with a limit of £10,000 in the relevant budget.

The Assistant Clerk returned to the meeting.

## **73. Date of Next Meeting.**

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

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Chairman

Nicola Kitchen, Project Officer to the Council

01524 422929 or via email to [assistantclerk@morecambe.gov.uk](mailto:assistantclerk@morecambe.gov.uk) 25th October 2019