



## MORECAMBE TOWN COUNCIL

### **MINUTES of the Extraordinary Meeting of Morecambe Town Council held on Friday 17th January 2020 at 2.00 p.m. at Morecambe Town Hall.**

**Present:** Councillors: P. Heath (Chairman), J. Ashworth (Vice-Chair), P. Anderton, Mirka Balcer, J. Bates, R. Cleet, I. Clift, G. Dennison, R. Dennison, M. Evans, J. Hanson, D. Jenkins, C. Matthews, M Pattison J. Pilling and P. Ross-Clasper.

**Officers in Attendance:** B. Bailey (Town Clerk), N. Kitchen (Assistant Clerk).

**Apologies for Absence:** V. Boyd-Power

The Chairman opened the Meeting by welcoming everybody present. It was explained that this extraordinary meeting had been called by the Chairman given the concerns raised by Members relating to payments made to Morecambe Business Improvement District (BID) in 2018/2019 and matters arising from the Personnel Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> January, relating to the statement of the Assistant Clerk following the outcome of her grievance raised against the former Town Clerk. Members noted that given the circumstances, and following advice from Lancaster City Council, the three clear days' notice period of the meeting, as set out in Standing Orders had been waived by virtue of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.

20012. **Declarations of Interests:** To receive declarations by Members of interests in respect of items on this Agenda. Members are reminded that, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, they are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests which have not already been declared in the Council's Register of Interests. (It is a criminal offence not to declare a disclosable pecuniary interest either in the Register or at the meeting).

Whilst not a legal requirement, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10 and in the interests of clarity and transparency, Members should declare any disclosable pecuniary interests which they have already declared in the Register, at this point in the meeting.

In accordance with Part B Section 2 of the Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare the existence and nature of any other interests as defined in paragraphs 8(1) or 9(2) of the Code of Conduct.

20013. **Public Participation:** There were no members of the local community present.

20014. **Exclusion of press and public:** The Council **RESOLVED** to pass the following exemption in relation to the following agenda 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 personal and private information about individuals and therefore exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act."*

20015. **Governance, accountability and internal control procedures:** Members were informed as a result of matters raised and upheld in the Assistant Clerk's grievance, an investigation into payments made to Morecambe BID, had identified that the Town Council had contributed towards the cost of the planters in Morecambe, contrary to the disclosure made at the Annual General Meeting in May 2019.

Members signing the cheque, authorising the payment, stated that they had not known that its purpose was to contribute towards the cost of the planters.

It had been established that at a Morecambe BID meeting in January 2019, attended by certain Councillors, a proposal for a joint initiative, between Morecambe Town Council and Morecambe BID, to install planters on Morecambe promenade had been agreed in principle. Subsequent Minutes of the Planning and Development Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019 indicated that Morecambe BID had approached the Town Council for monies towards the cost of planters and that Members had been informed that there was money left in the budget to pay for these, but there was no record of any formal resolution either at this meeting, or the full Town Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019 – held during a period of purdah prior to the local elections.

Members were informed that an invoice was subsequently received from Morecambe BID dated 23<sup>rd</sup> March, and the cheque authorising payment had been signed on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019. There followed a lengthy discussion on the reasons why governance and internal control arrangements had clearly failed on this occasion, and the impact that this could have on the reputation of the Town Council.

Following a recommendation by the Town Clerk it was **RESOLVED** unanimously that a Finance and Governance Committee be established, responsible for financial and budget planning, management and monitoring; recommending to full Council the annual precept; governance and internal control procedures.

Members then discussed statements and matters arising from the Personnel Committee held on held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020, in relation to the line management and appraisal of the former Town Clerk, where the Chair of Personnel Committee stated that he had not carried out these

functions prior to May 2019. Members were informed that direct responsibility for this had, in fact, commenced from April 2018.

Considering a statement made by the Assistant Clerk on what she thought was an unsatisfactory end to the Personnel Committee meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> January; comments from Members on the shortcomings of the appraisals process, and inaccuracy of previous statements, the Chair of the Personnel Committee stepped down with immediate effect.

Councillors Hanson then moved a motion of no confidence in the Chairman of the Town Council. Councillor Hanson was advised that in accordance with Standing Orders the motion must be made in writing, at least ten clear days before the next meeting of the Town Council scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

20016. **Appointment of External Audit:** Considering the matters identified, Councillor Pilling moved a motion to appoint an external auditor to review the Town Council's financial management and governance arrangements.

The Town Clerk advised that 'external auditors' of parish / town councils are carried out annually by a body appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and that any such review would need to be conducted by an internal auditor appointed by the Town Council.

It was then pointed out that in line with Standing Orders any such motion would need to be in writing and with at least ten clear days' notice having been given.

20017. **Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting ended at 3.45p.m

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Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Bailey', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bob Bailey, Town Clerk

01524 422929 or via email to [clerk@morecambe.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@morecambe.gov.uk) 27th January 2020