



MORECAMBE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of Morecambe Town Council on 2nd July 2020 **Due to the Covid19 pandemic and related restrictions the meeting was held** **remotely using the Zoom Cloud meetings application**

Present: Councillors: Janice Hanson (Chair); Tony Anderson; Paul Anderton; June Ashworth; Mariusz Balcer; Mirka Balcer John Bates; Vicky Boyd-Power; Roger Cleet; Trisha Clarke; Ian Clift; Glynis Dennison; Roger Dennison; Merv Evans; Jason Firth; Jake Goodwin; Patricia Heath; Debbie Jenkins; Cary Matthews; Jim Pilling; Margaret Pattison and David Whitaker

In Attendance: B. Bailey (Town Clerk) and six members of the public

20072. **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from Councillors Alex Ashworth; Shirley Burns and Jack Newton.

20073. **Declarations of Interests:** Town Councillors who serve on Lancaster City Council's planning committee declared an interest in agenda item 20084. As an elected County Councillor, Cllr Pattison requested, and was granted, dispensation on any discussions relating to Lancashire County Council.

20074. **Chairman's Urgent Business:** Members were asked to consider the following matters:

- 1) **Coronavirus Update:** Councillors Evans and Councillors Pattison provided an update on the latest position in the Lancaster District and Lancashire on the coronavirus pandemic and the actions and activities of Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council. The Town Clerk reported on the latest information from the Lancashire Resilience Forum.

Members noted that plans are 'fluid' as lockdown restrictions are eased. Most staff at both Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council are still being employed on providing advice, support and services related to the coronavirus pandemic. Members unanimously agreed that staff at both City and County Councils have been exemplary over the last few challenging months and that their continued support and guidance is much appreciated.

2) **Morecambe Sparkles project:** Members discussed further the proposal and presentation recently received by the Chair of Morecambe Business Improvement District.

Broadly, the proposal set out details of the technology, infrastructure, cost and funding to illuminate Morecambe Promenade with different sets from the Battery to Lord Street from October 2020 for an initial period of five years.

After some discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that, given current challenges, it would not be practical at this time for Morecambe Town Council to financially support the Morecambe Sparkles Project in 2020 / 2021 but that it would be considered further as part of the budget setting process for 2021 /2022

20075. **Minutes:** It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 4th June 2020 be approved.

20076. **Correspondence:** In line with his stated responsibilities, the Town Clerk presented the schedule of correspondence received and previously circulated to Members. It was reported that appropriate action had, or will be, taken by the Town Clerk and/or Committees to address any matters arising from correspondence received, including raising awareness of the latest information and updates on the coronavirus pandemic on the Town Council's website and social media; and progress being made by the group taking forward the Morecambe Neighbourhood Plan.

It was **RESOLVED** that the schedule of correspondence received, and actions taken and planned be noted.

20077. **Public Participation:** There were no representations from members of the public present at the meeting.

20078. **Action Plan / Record of Decisions:** The Town Clerk reported that all actions and decisions made by the Town Council during the COVID-19 lockdown had been recorded for transparency and scrutiny. Except for an updated Risk Assessment, considering additional risks to the Council during the Coronavirus pandemic (on the Agenda for this meeting) all actions and decisions had been implemented. All activities, actions and decisions set out had been previously reported to Members at informal weekly remote meetings since the lockdown came into operation.

As lockdown restrictions continue to ease, the Town Clerk suggested that, going forward, all the Town Council's activities, tasks and planned actions be logged in an Action Plan containing information needed to complete each task, person(s) responsible and an expected completion date, with a view to this being monitored at each Council meeting to review progress and make informed decisions on delivery.

After some comments and questions, it was **RESOLVED** that the updated Action Plan / Record of decisions taken to date during the coronavirus pandemic be noted and that the Town Clerk produces an Action Plan/Log of Town Council activities going forward so that implementation can be monitored and managed.

20079. **Finance & Governance Committee:** Councillor Evans presented for information the recommendations, actions and resolutions arising from the meeting of the Committee on presented the report of the Finance & Governance Committee held on 17th June 2020 including:

- 1) **2018 / 2019 Audit - Terms of Reference:** Consideration of terms of reference for an independent audit review of the financial year ending 31st March 2019, specifically expenditure transactions that had been subject of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Town Council held in January 2020. Members had previously been sent the draft terms of reference that had been delegated to the Committee Chair and Town Clerk at that meeting.

At this point, Councillor's Anderton and Matthews, requested that '*approval*' of the draft Minutes of the Finance and Governance Minutes be deferred for further discussion.

It was pointed out that Committee Minutes are issued as a record of the activities of that Committee for information and acknowledgment by the Town Council, as well as recommendations (outside delegated responsibilities) for consideration and approval by the Town Council.

Councillor Paul Anderton was asked to clarify the reasons for his request to which he responded that, in his view, Minute 20020 of the Committee Minutes did not reflect a true record of the discussions around the terms of reference and purpose of a further audit of the 2018 / 2019 accounting transactions and governance.

There followed a lengthy debate about the accuracy of the Committee Minutes and the terms of refence for the independent audit where it was separately argued that:

- a) an audit of the whole financial year did not represent best value for money;

b) an audit of the full financial year would provide a review of the financial management and governance arrangements throughout 2018 / 2019.

Councillor Cary Matthews then proposed, seconded by Councillor June Ashworth, that *'An independent Internal Audit review be undertaken of the financial and governance arrangements for the whole of the financial year ending 31st March 2019'*.

On being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the proposal at which point the Chair declared the motion carried. **(Please also see: Town Clerks will provide a separate report on decisions made at the meeting for Member consideration)**

- 2) **Risk Assessment:** An updated assessment of the risks facing the council, including risks associated with the Coronavirus pandemic.

Members were reminded that an annual review of risks and arrangements to mitigate them is an essential internal control and a statutory requirement of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

Members noted that the risk assessment includes a range of risks associated with the main operational, technological, financial, reputational, health and safety and additional Covid19 related risks to the Council's operations.

It was the Finance & Governance Committee's **RECOMMENDATION** that the Town Council considers the draft Risk Assessment 2020 for adoption;

- 3) **Habitual or vexatious complaints policy:** A draft policy that aims to set out when and how the Town Council will deal with abusive, offensive or threatening behaviour or where a complainant behaves in a way that is considered repetitive, habitual or vexatious.

Members were informed that the policy supplements the Town Council's Complaints policy and will only be used in exceptional circumstances and with a clear explanation of the reason for any restrictions being imposed and when these would be reviewed.

Members commented that such a policy would be an important and necessary supplement to protecting staff and Councillors from problematic behaviour.

It was the Finance & Governance Committee's **RECOMMENDATION** that the draft Habitual or vexatious complaints policy be adopted.

4) **Payments Schedule:** The Town Clerk presented the payment schedule to 30th June 2020. Members were asked to note that the payment schedule now presented included transactions after the statutory three-day notice for the meeting but in relation to payments in the month under consideration.

Members commented on two payments from the Community Resilience Fund to community groups supporting residents during the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown.

After some comments and questions, it was **RESOLVED** that the Risk Assessment 2020/21; the Habitual or vexatious complaints policy and payments schedule be approved.

20080. **Community Resilience Fund:** The Town Clerk reported that, to date, there had been six successful applications for the Community Resilience Fund covering a wide range of activities and support. Twelve applications had been received to date and funds amounting to £12, 932 had so far been paid out on the delegated approval of the Community Resilience Committee.

Members discussed the success of the scheme to date and the essential advice and support that these funds had provided to our local communities during these challenging times.

A detailed report on the outcomes, benefits and value of these funds will be reported later in the year.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the update on the award of funding from the Community Resilience Fund be noted.

20081. **Environmental Committee:** Councillor Matthews presented for information the recommendations, actions and resolutions arising from the meeting of the Committee on presented the report of the Environmental Committee held on 18th June 2020 including:

- 1) Arrangements and guidance on planned weed clean ups and litter picks during the coronavirus pandemic to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out to ensure peoples safety;
- 2) Regular meetings held between the Chair and senior officers at Lancaster City Council around grass cutting, weed management, street cleansing and general public realm arrangements, implications and restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic.

- The Committee resolved that senior officers be requested to attend a meeting of the Community Resilience Committee to discuss a range of related matters;
- 3) A recommendation that the Town Council reviews the Ward and Community Resilience funding;
 - 4) A resolution that the Town Council undertakes a detailed review of the current lease and management arrangements at the Devonshire Road (Heysham North) allotments with a view to establishing a long-term agreement / lease that complies with relevant statutes and ensures that there is a clear and effective landlord / tenant arrangement.
 - 5) Updates on activity around environmental matters including litter and fly tipping; closure of the Household Waste Recycling Centres due to Covid19 and its perceived impact; environmental enforcement generally and, specifically, a revised Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Morecambe Town Council and Lancaster City Council around the work, performance and management of the Environmental Enforcement Officer

The Town Council noted the updates and suggested amendments to the SLA.

ACTION: That the Chair of Environmental Committee and Town Clerk discuss and agree changes to the SLA and recirculate to Members.

The Chair then commented that she had been working closely with Councillor Jenkins on developing plans for a *'Love Morecambe, Keep it Clean'* campaign and invited Councillor Jenkins to give a presentation.

Councillor Jenkins provided an excellent presentation setting out the purpose, plans and effective promotion of a *'Litter prevention campaign to engage locals, encourage visitors and bring together a sense of community and love of our town'*.

Councillor Jenkins was warmly praised for the presentation and for her vision in coming up with a scheme that would help to keep our town clean – beginning with our beaches and promenade – and instil a sense of pride in our local communities whilst sending out a clear message that Morecambe Town Council (with the support of our partners at Lancaster City Council) really does care about our town.

In response to a question about the likely cost of the scheme in its initial stages, Councillor Jenkins estimated a cost of between £2,000 - £2,500.

At this point, Councillor J Ashworth proposed, and Councillor G Dennison seconded that *'The Environmental Fund be moved from the [Community] Resilience Fund so that a best tender price can be determined by the Environmental Committee to deliver this excellent scheme'*

There followed several questions aimed at seeking clarity on the proposal which some Members considered to be ambiguous. There was confusion over the amount of money to be *'moved back'* to the Environmental Fund and in response to a direct question, Councillor Ashworth confirmed that the proposal was that *'all'* balances currently in the Community Resilience fund be managed by the Environmental Committee.

There followed several suggestions around funding of the Litter campaign and the proposed transfer of funds to be managed by the Environmental Committee, including:

- 1) Transfer of £5,000 to cover the cost of the scheme only with the remainder to be reviewed later in the year when the longer-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic is known;
- 2) Transfer back only the balance of the Environmental Committee funds (approximately £100,000) from the Community Resilience Fund;
- 3) Confirm agreement of the scheme and refer funding of this and delivery of the wider environmental matters to the Finance & Governance and Environmental Committees with recommendations to be presented to a future meeting of the Town Council;
- 4) Confirm agreement of the scheme and fund the cost directly from the Community Resilience Fund.

There followed further debate before, on a point of order, a vote was taken on the original motion. On being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the original proposal at which point the Chair declared the motion carried.

No formal amendment to the original motion was proposed. **(Please also see: Town Clerks will provide a separate report on decisions made at the meeting for Member consideration)**

20082. **Year-end Accounts & Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR):** The Town Clerk presented a report on the Council's Accounts for 2019/20 and submitted the draft AGAR for approval. The appointed Internal Auditor has carried out the audit on a risk basis to assess compliance with relevant procedures and controls in operation during the financial year ended 31st March 2020.

It was reported that the Internal Auditor had signed off the annual accounts and AGAR and had concluded that, in all significant respects, eight control objectives had been achieved.

In the Internal Auditor's opinion the Council had not fully complied with two objectives, being:

- 1) *This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviews the adequacy of arrangements to manage these;*
- 2) *The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored and reserves were appropriate.*

Member had been previously advised and were reminded that it is the responsibility of the Town Council to ensure that there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the Annual Statements for the year ending 31st March 2020.

Members acknowledged that measures had been taken during the year on the advice of the Town Clerk and on the earlier recommendations of the Internal Auditor to ensure that expected governance arrangements are in place. Principal amongst these was the introduction of the Finance & Governance Committee who have recommended an action plan to enhance the Council's financial management and governance arrangements.

Taking these actions and the Internal Auditors report into consideration, it was the opinion of the Town Clerk that, except for carrying out a formal assessment of the risks facing the Town Council, the expected governance arrangements set out in Section 1 of the AGAR are in place and the statement could be approved.

Section 2 of the AGAR set out the Accounting Statements for 2019/20, the figures corresponding with budget statements, appended to the Agenda and audited.

The Town Clerk recommended that the AGAR be approved, and the period of public inspection be set as Monday 6th July to Friday 14th August 2020 (30 working days).

Members were advised that subject to Town Council’s approval the AGAR and supporting documentation would be sent to the Government appointed external auditors.

No questions were raised, and it was then **RESOLVED** that:

- 1) That the Annual Internal Audit Report be noted and accepted;
- 2) That Section 1 of the AGAR – the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20, is approved;
- 3) That Section 2 of the AGAR – Accounting Statements 2019/20 is approved;
- 4) That the period for the exercise of public rights to inspect the accounts is set as Monday 6th July to Friday 14th August 2020 (30 working days).

20083. **Planning Applications, Temporary Road Closures and Planning Decisions:**

Councillors who are Members of Lancaster City Council’s Planning Committee had declared an interest and were removed from the meeting

Application No:	Description & Site Address
20/00495/FUL	Erection of a single storey side and rear extension - 30 Lowlands Road, Morecambe LA4 5SB
20/00586/FUL	Erection of a single storey rear and side extension – 1 Norwood Drive, Morecambe LA4 6LT
20/00589/FUL	Erection of a single storey side and rear extension – 10 Wakefield Avenue, Morecambe LA4 6DY
20/00601/FUL	Change of use of trampolining and stunt school centre and film studio to 9 flats, alterations to windows & doors & erection of a bin store – Regent Park Studios, 93 Regent Road, Morecambe LA3 1AF

Considering each planning application in turn, Members **RESOLVED** that they be supported in principle except for planning application 20/00601/FUL which the Town Council objects to as, in their opinion, the planning proposals do not meet the aims and objectives of The Regeneration of The West End and there is already too many flats in this area of Morecambe.

The Town Council also requested that the following comments/questions are taken into consideration by Lancaster City Council's Planning Committee:

- 1) What is the expected demographic of the tenants occupying these flats?
- 2) How will these flats be managed, and will they be regulated in the event of problems with tenants?
- 3) What measures will be out in place for the management of waste and recycling?
- 4) What will be the impact on management of vehicles and parking?

20084. **Planning decisions:** Members considered the up-to-date position on decisions of the planning authority (Lancaster City Council) on planning applications previously considered by the Town Council. It was noted that three planning applications had been permitted and nine were awaiting a decision.

After some comments and discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that the up-to-date position on planning authority decisions on planning applications considered by the Town Council be noted.

20085. **Date of Next Meeting:** The date if the next meeting is Thursday 3rd September 2020 at 7.00p.m.

The meeting closed at 9:15pm

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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