

CARTERTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING
ON TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2020
COMMENCING AT 6.30 PM

Present: Cllr M Mead – Chairman
Cllr N Leverton - Vice-Chairman

Cllr S Baylis	Cllr L Little
Cllr J Bull	Cllr M McBride
Cllr C Cook	Cllr D Melvin
Cllr R Crapper	Cllr J Sangster
Cllr M Crossland	Cllr D Wesson
Cllr C James	Cllr K Wood

Apologies: Cllr P Handley, Cllr E Hatton

In attendance: Cllr N Field-Johnson (County Councillor)
Several members of the public

Officer: Ron Spurs – Town Clerk

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Wood - Payments relating to Allotments.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 May 2020, previously circulated to Members, were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Cllr Little said that she believed the Urgency Committee should report back to full Council in the same way as other committees and she requested that this be an item on the next Agenda.

3 ADJOURNMENT FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO RAISE MATTERS

Linda Moore spoke about three items on the agenda. Firstly, regarding the item on Town Hall Refurbishment, particularly the opening up of the Reception area. In the light of the current social distancing rules and the need to keep all staff safe, she suggested these plans be put on hold until the long term effects of the Covid-19 virus become clear.

Secondly, regarding the item on a Memorial for the Town Centre to commemorate those who had lost their lives to the Covid-19 virus, she wondered what it might cost and suggested that perhaps it was too soon for a memorial as the pandemic was not yet over and the number of lives lost would not be known. Cllr Mead said the project would take time to organise so it was wise to start initial discussions now and the cost would not be known until further along in the process.

Thirdly, regarding Accounts for Payment, she asked about the cost of the harassment claim and had concerns that the Council continued to spend large amounts of money on this with no sign of a conclusion. The Town Clerk said that he understood that the public were concerned that public money was being spent, but the Council had to defend itself against the allegations of

harassment by a Councillor. The matter had gone to Court and found in the Council's favour and the Court is in the process of deciding the sum that the Council should be awarded.

4 ADJOURNMENT FOR COUNTY COUNCILLORS TO RAISE MATTERS

Cllr Field-Johnson's report for June had been circulated prior to the meeting. He requested that it be posted on the Council website for members of the public to see. The report highlighted the following:

Oxfordshire NHS and local authorities continued to work together to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and as the lockdown eases are working on a recovery plan. To mark National Thank a Teacher Day on 20 May 2020, the NHS has written to all headteachers to thank them and their staff for caring for their children during the pandemic. The NHS also expressed its thanks to the army of people who returned to the frontline to support patients. A total of 339 people responded to the call.

Patients receiving cancer care are reminded that safe care is still available during the pandemic and it is important that anyone with symptoms come forward so that diagnosis and treatment may begin as early as possible and those currently receiving care can be reassured that there is a safe environment for continued treatment.

Changes to transport links and road structures are being planned across the county as the lockdown eases, with funding from the government. Plans will have a strong focus on walking and cycling, working towards zero emission transport, as well as keeping people safe from the virus.

During the lockdown, there had been a number of road repairs taking place, which had made a significant improvement in the community. He continues to receive reports of poor road surfaces on several estates around the town.

The Mayor thanked Cllr Field-Johnson for his report and he then left the meeting.

5 ADJOURNMENT FOR DISTRICT COUNCILLORS TO RAISE MATTERS

Cllr Bull - Carterton North West and Inclusion Champion: She continues to keep in touch with those on her list of vulnerable residents, together with those with learning disabilities. They all continue to cope very well.

Cllr Crossland – Carterton North West: There have been some concerns over construction vehicles accessing the Linden House development via Kilkenny Lane. The public can be assured that they are working as quickly as they can to move the access from Kilkenny Lane to Jasper Lane, which will then become the main access to the new development. The Lowlands Planning Committee had met this week and discussed the application for demolition of the house at Fairseat in Arkell Avenue to be replaced with 12 new dwellings. This was met with great enthusiasm and was passed unanimously.

Cllr Leverton – Carterton South and Armed Forces Champion: He had also attended the Lowlands Planning Committee and added to Cllr Crossland's report on the Fairseat development that some of the S106 money would go towards local bus improvements. The application for a new housing development on Milestone Road had been rejected, primarily due to its design that included 100% social housing, which would mean no S106 money towards local infrastructure. He was pleased to report that a young airman experiencing housing problems had now been rehoused near his family by Cottsway Housing Association.

Cllr McBride - Carterton North East and Deputy Chairman of the WODC Environment Committee: He continued to keep in contact with residents on his vulnerable list. He and his wife are themselves on the vulnerable list and he expressed his thanks to the local volunteers who were supporting them at this time.

Cllr Mead - Carterton South and Cabinet Member for Health and Leisure: She reported that the District Council was now working towards the recovery stage of the lockdown. The plans for Witney town centre included one-way traffic systems, diverting buses, widening pathways etc. Carterton is fortunate to have more open spaces and these measures are not needed here. Shops were beginning to reopen, and she was pleased that people were naturally adhering to the 2m social distancing guidelines. The government would make an announcement about the reopening of leisure facilities on 4 July. The Leisure Centre continues to be used for Covid-19 testing and she expressed her thanks to the GLL staff who allowed them to use the facilities there.

6 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There continued to be no functions for the Mayor to attend and represent the town.

The Mayor expressed her thanks to the Town Clerk and those Councillors who had been so supportive to her over the last couple of weeks, whose help and advice had been much appreciated. She thanked Cllr Crossland for her hard work in support of the town on the Lowlands Planning Committee.

The Mayor said she attends the market every Thursday and expressed how pleased she was at the warm welcome she always receives and how friendly the residents of our town are.

Lastly, she expressed her thanks to the Town Hall Staff who continue to keep Council business running whilst working from home.

7 RESIGNATION OF CLLR D MELVIN

Cllr Melvin had tendered his resignation from the Town Council on 8 June 2020.

8 URGENCY COMMITTEE

Council received the Minutes of the Meeting of the Urgency Committee held on 3 June 2020, which was convened to approve the additional funds for Knights Solicitors to prepare documents for the Costs Hearing relating to the Carterton Town Council v Linda Little court case, which was approved by the Committee.

Cllr Mead explained that this related to the Court requiring hard copies of a large number of documents for the Hearing, which took place on 11 June 2020. The outcome of the Hearing is awaited.

The Minutes were noted.

9 REPORT OF THE INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Report of the Internal Auditor had been circulated to Councillors with the Agenda.

The Auditor recorded Positive responses to the majority of items, with only one Negative response relating to the annual review of risk that should have been done in March. He said this was a common issue around the reconciliation of the year end due to the Covid-19 virus outbreak. He advised that the Council should review and formally agree the items relating to

Grants for the Lantern Parade and the Family Centre, and also look at how the HSBC bank balance was treated in the year end reconciliation. These issues are Agenda items at this evening's meeting.

The Mayor expressed her thanks to Tan Marchant and Ron Spurs for their hard work in preparing for the Audit. The Town Clerk added that Tan's work had been exceptional in difficult circumstances working from home.

10 ASSET REGISTER

The Asset Register had been circulated to Councillors with the Agenda.

The Register was noted.

11 DRAFT ANNUAL RETURN FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

- (a) Annual Internal Audit Report – Members noted the Internal Auditor's Report.
- (b) Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 - Members RESOLVED TO APPROVE the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return, which was then signed and dated by the Chairman and the Clerk.
- (c) Accounting Statements 2019/20 - Members RESOLVED to APPROVE the Accounting Statements at Section 2 of the Annual Return, which was then signed and dated by the RFO and the Chairman.

12 RISK REGISTER

The Risk Register had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. Cllr Bull proposed that Vandalism be upgraded from a low/medium risk to a high risk. Council agreed and the Clerk would make this alteration.

Council RESOLVED to APPROVE the Risk Register, subject to the above alteration relating to Vandalism.

13 COVID-19 RISK – DUTY OF EMPLOYER AND LANDLORD

The Clerk had been working with the Council's HR provider to ensure that the Council's buildings are Covid-secure prior to reopening. Risk assessments need to be carried out on all premises to ensure the safety of staff and the public. This had been done for the Market and the Shake Shop and the rest would follow in due course.

14 GRANT FOR LANTERN PARADE

At its meeting on 18 June 2019 Council had approved funding of £3,000 for the Lantern Parade. The Internal Auditor said that the minutes should reflect that this was a Grant application.

Council RESOLVED to APPROVE the Grant for the Lantern Parade.

15 GRANT FOR ALLANDALE ROOF

At its meeting on 14 May 2019 Council had approved funding of £32,000 for the replacement of the roof at the Allandale Centre. The Internal Auditor said that the minutes should reflect that this was a Grant application.

Council RESOLVED to APPROVE the Grant for a new roof at the Allandale.

16 SOLAR PANELS

Quotes had been received for the installation of solar panels on the roof of the Town Hall and the Veterinary practice. However, officers were of the opinion that the quotes did not provide sufficient information for Councillors to make an informed decision at this time. It was therefore recommended that more work is done on this before bringing it back to a future meeting.

Council agreed to this approach.

17 TOWN HALL REFURBISHMENT

The Clerk gave a verbal update. Council had previously chosen a contractor for refurbishment work at the Town Hall, but the work had to be put on hold due to the lockdown and officers had since been unable to contact them. Council accepted the comments made by the member of the public earlier regarding Covid-19 and agreed that any work on the building would need to comply with any guidelines set by the government to protect staff and the public.

Officers would continue to work on this matter and a report would come back to the next Council meeting.

18 CARTERTON CRIER

Fyne Associates had been commissioned since 2015 to provide four editions per annum of the Carterton Crier. The magazine runs to a maximum of 64 pages (minimum of 32 pages) and 7,000 copies are produced each quarter and delivered to homes and businesses by Royal Mail.

Cllr Little was disappointed with the quality and content of the Crier and would like to see more about Carterton and the good things that happen here. She had also received concerns from Shilton Park residents that they had not been receiving a copy through their doors. She asked who decides what articles are published. Cllr Mead said this would be a good time to reform a committee to look at all potential articles for the magazine.

Cllr Crossland said it would reach more people online and fully supported the idea of a digital version. Cllr Mead encouraged Councillors to come up with good stories to feature, particularly if they had ideas for organisations and residents to feature in the magazine. Cllr Wood suggested the Allotments Association.

Council RESOLVED to APPROVE the commissioning of Fyne Associates to produce four editions of the Carterton Crier magazine for the year 2020/2021 at a cost of £15,000, to contain a minimum of 32 pages and a maximum of 64 pages, produce 7,000 copies to be delivered by Royal Mail and in addition produce an online version for social media.

19 MEMORIAL FOR TOWN CENTRE – COVID-19 LOSS OF LIFE

Cllr Mead had emailed Councillors to ask for ideas for a memorial in the town centre to commemorate those that had lost their lives due to the Covid-19 virus. The majority favoured planting a tree, but other suggestions were welcome.

Cllr Crossland reported on Cllr Hatton's idea of a metal tree fixed to the Town Hall wall with each leaf bearing a person's name. Cllr Wesson suggested a plaque(s) on the wall adjacent to the Vets building. Cllr Leverton suggested a stainless steel water feature bearing inscriptions saying Dad, Mum, Brother etc rather than individual names. Cllr Little agreed with Cllr Leverton's idea, but it was decided that further discussions should take place before a decision is made. Cllr McBride said perhaps a combination of ideas rather than just one.

Cllr Wood suggested that this should encompass two things – a memorial to those who had lost their lives but also a thank you to the people of Carterton, including the NHS and key workers, together with all the unsung heroes who had volunteered to help those in isolation during the lockdown, including the shops and businesses. She also suggested a Handkerchief tree.

The Town Clerk suggested that the community be consulted on what they would like the Council to do, perhaps via social media or the Carterton Crier magazine. Voluntary organisations are also approaching Councils to work with them to help finance a memorial, so there is an opportunity for the U3A or Carterton Lions to become involved if they wished. Cllr Crossland suggested a public consultation with displays at the Town Hall and Community Centre.

The Clerk would take this project forward.

20 TREE PLANTING PROJECT

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update on the project to plant trees along the four main roads leading from the town centre crossroads. Surveys had now recommenced following the lockdown and more would follow on this in due course.

21 MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report. The Mayor receives an allowance each year which is contained within the Town Council budget. The allowance is used as and when payments need to be made or income is received and is managed by the staff.

The report was noted.

22 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Financial Statement to 31 May 2020, set out at Annex A, was noted.

23 INCOME RECEIVED

Income Received during May 2020, previously circulated, was noted.

24 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Council RESOLVED that the Accounts for June 2020, set out at Annex B, be APPROVED for payment.

Cllr Little asked for her abstention to be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm.

21 July 2020

Town Mayor