

MINUTES
of the Full Council meeting held remotely via Zoom
on 8th March 2021 at 6pm

Present: Cllrs P Aldridge (Chair), H Davis, S Raywood, M Sztymiak, J Raywood, K Powell, C Cody, H Bowman, C Danter, S Raywood, R Gurney, K Brennan, A Rudge, A Carter, P Devine, T Fowler

In attendance: D Hill (Town Clerk), J King (Assistant Town Clerk), Borough Cllr Workman & County Cllr Cromwell. Two members of the public.

20/21 - 185 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Smith (personal).

20/21 - 186 To receive declarations of interest

Cllr S Raywood, J Raywood & Sztymiak declared an interest in the election of the Mayor & Deputy Mayor.

20/21 - 187 To consider requests for dispensation

None requested.

20/21 - 188 To receive written questions from member of the public

None received.

20/21 - 189 Public participation

One member of the public raised questions regarding the legal position of the Watson Hall and the proposed changes to financial regulations; particularly those relating to bad debts, audit reports, and publishing lists of payments.

20/21 - 190 To note the Mayor's announcements

- Tewkesbury High Street regeneration – proposed initiative to fill the windows of empty shops to make the High Street still look appealing.
- Annual Town Meeting – this will be delayed until the end of May as recommended by National Association of Local Councils (NALC) to enable the safest opportunity in the required timescale to hold a community meeting.
- Remote Council meetings – current legislation allowing us to meet remotely ends on 7th May. We will therefore discuss options at the Full Council meeting in April, when hopefully there will be some clearer information available from NALC. This will obviously have an impact on Mayor Making and probably the Annual meeting of the Town Council.

20/21 - 191 To approve the Minutes of the meetings held on 8th February 2021

There were three proposed amendments to the minutes:

Item 20/21-181: for clarity for the following will be included:

It was noted that this item is for Cllrs to report back on meetings with outside bodies that they have attended in their role as Cllrs. It was also noted that there may be occasion where a Cllr has attended a meeting where the information is useful for the whole Council to be aware of, but they should disclose that they did not attend as a Cllr.

Item 20/21-171: Typographical error 'wii' to 'will'.

Item 20/21-174: Include the words 'for the Watson Hall' after the words 'lockdown grant'.

It was RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2021.
Proposed by Cllr Sztymiak, seconded by Cllr Brennan.

20/21 - 192 To note the following Committee Minutes:

Planning – 6th & 20th January 2021

Finance – 11th January 2021

Environment & Amenities – 12th January 2021

Staffing – 26th January 2021

Buildings & Moorings – 27th January 2021

The above minutes were noted.

Questions raised:

Re: Planning on 20th January. Why did the Council withdraw objection to outline planning at the Garden Centre. The lead flood authority had given their approval and it was not possible to use flooding as a reason to object to this part of the application.

Finance on 11th January. Why was £6000 used from contingency rather than ear marked reserves for the museum work? Cllrs can propose that ear marked reserves are used, but as it is period 11, it is unlikely that the contingency will be used for any other work. The overall cost of the works will require both the contingency and the ear marked reserves to be used.

Staffing on 26th January – Cllrs will be informed of when staff are on annual leave. How many staff have been furloughed? All bar staff have been furloughed. All are employed on zero hours contracts, so have been furloughed based on past hours. This was done following advice from HR. Events officer was furloughed (part time) and another member of staff was furloughed, as they were advised to shield. Is the furlough in addition to the business interruption grant? Yes.

20/21 - 193 Matters arising from the Minutes – for information only

20/21- 176 – Ex-officio roles – to be discussed at May meeting.

20/21 - 194 To receive Councillor reports for Tewkesbury Borough Council from Cllr Sztymiak and Gloucestershire County Council from Cllr Smith

Cllr Sztymiak provided an update from Tewkesbury Borough Council.

- 4.02% increase in Council tax
- Small portion of land being sold to Tewkesbury Cricket Club
- Cllr Andrew Reece is the next Borough Mayor
- Covid cases continue to fall

Cllr Smith provided a written report from GCC:

- Flooding update provided from December 2020

- Highways update

20/21 - 195 To receive the finance reports for January 2021

The finance reports to the end of January 2021 were received.

The Town Clerk advised that there was a one off pension payment shown in salary expenditure this month, regarding a historical redundancy that was unbudgeted. The budget for 21/22 was set based on £22,000 going in to general reserves at the end of the year and are currently on track for this.

A Cllr asked about the figure for the redundancy and the reason for the £4000 overspend on the moorings. **Action:** Town Clerk to circulate details to Councillors.

20/21 - 196 To note the recommendations of the Finance Committee regarding the external audit report from 2019/2020

The recommendations were noted.

The Mayor thank the Town Clerk for the progress made on the external audit report. The only issue raised by the audit report is the ongoing status of the Watson Hall; which has been in the report for years. It had been hoped that more progress would have been made to resolve it, but lockdown has slowed the process. The intention is to resolve it by the end of the next financial year.

20/21 - 197 To receive and vote on nominations for the positions of Mayor & Deputy Mayor

It was RESOLVED that Cllr J Raywood will be Mayor for the year 2021/22.

Proposed by Cllr Aldridge, seconded by Cllr Brennan.

It was RESOLVED that Cllr S Raywood will be Deputy Mayor for the year 2021/22.

Proposed by Cllr Davis, seconded by Cllr Bowman.

20/21 - 198 To agree a response to the Government consultation: National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code

Thanks were given to planning committee for the time they had put into this.

It was RESOLVED to approve the Planning Committee response to the Government consultation: National Planning Policy Framework and National Model Design Code.

Proposed by Cllr J Raywood, seconded by Cllr Cody.

20/21 - 199 To receive and update from the Climate Change Working Group

Cllr Cody provided an update. It has been difficult to progress many items due to Covid restrictions although it is now possible to recycle natural corks and resealable cheese wrappers at the Town Hall.

Plastic Free Tewkesbury is also making good progress. Three out of five elements to achieve plastic free status have been completed and the final two are in progress.

Next meeting of Climate Change Working Group will be 26th April at 6pm, all Councillors are welcome to attend.

20/21 - 200 To discuss and agree the updated Financial Regulations

Following the recent Finance Committee meeting, item 4.1 was clarified and item 7.8 added that 'Cllrs will be informed of decisions made'.

Cllrs discussed delegated authority, particularly with regard to events at the Watson Hall and whether there should be a limit. The Town Clerk advised that the spending parameters are set by the budget and then monitored by the individual Committees, Finance Committee and Full Council.

It was RESOLVED that writing off bad debts should be agreed by Full Council rather than the Finance Committee (as at present). Section 1.14 to be updated to reflect this. Proposed by Cllr Sztymiak, seconded by Cllr Powell.

The Town Clerk advised that the model document provides guidelines and that larger Councils have more complex processes and responsibilities that require a deviation from the model document thus tailoring Financial Regulation to the specific needs of the Council.

Cllrs asked about events and liability and the limits for stocking the bar.

The Town Clerk advised that the bar at the Watson Hall is now run by the Town Council. Historically it was run by a third party and in the seven years before it was taken over by the Council the Council received zero income. In the first year that it was run by the Town Council the income was circa £11,000. The Watson Hall had historically been neglected and since the Town Clerk has been in post, improvements have been made and the building has been made safe again and able to be utilised by the Town Council. Local community and other third parties.

The Town Clerk provided some historical figures for the Watson Hall.

Financial Year 2015/16 – budgeted £15,000 – actual income £9,013

Financial Year 2016/17 – budgeted £15,000 – actual income £9,937

Financial Year 2017/18 - budgeted £15,000 – actual income £6,040

Financial Year 2018/19 - budgeted £8,500 - actual income £13,142

Financial Year 2019/20- budgeted £15,000 - actual income £16,552

The staff are beginning to make the Watson Hall work and generate income, if the hall is not used properly it will need subsidising. It was an asset that was not properly used, and the team have worked hard to turn it around. Delegated Authority is required in order to be able to do this. We are now in a position where promoters are booking the Hall for events; such as Martin Kemp 80's DJ Set. This is the ideal situation where they take the risk on the events, but the Council gets the income from the bar. Events are also organised directly on behalf of the Town Council, Covid restrictions have set this back, but the staff continue to work on rebuilding.

It was RESOLVED to extend the meeting by thirty minutes.

Proposed by Cllr Aldridge, seconded by Cllr Sztymiak.

Cllrs discussed payments lists and a Cllr requested that payments lists should accompany the agenda. The Town Clerk advised that this is logistically very difficult and that the internal auditor advised that it would be more appropriate to minute the total amount approved.

It was RESOLVED that the payments list be published with the minutes.

Proposed by Cllr Sztymaik, seconded by Cllr Rudge.

Proposed Amendments

4.1 insertion of the words 'at the Watson Hall' after 'booking events'

4.8 Any variances over £1000, Clerk give written report to finance committee.

4.9 List of outstanding EMR should accompany the income and expenditure reports.

It was RESOLVED to agree the updated Financial Regulations, subject to the amendments listed above.

Proposed by Cllr Aldridge, seconded by Cllr Brennan.

- 20/21 - 201 To receive reports from members representing the Town Council on outside bodies**
Cllr J Raywood provided a written report on the South Worcestershire Development Plan briefing. She advised that there had been lots of discussions about flooding, but that there is not a lot of consideration about what happens outside of the border. As a Council we need to be aware of this and work towards better cross border co-operation in terms of flood water impact and also understand how flood alleviation schemes are passed for their efficacy.
- 20/21 - 202 To review and agree grant applications**
There were no grant applications.
- 20/21 - 203 To approve the payments list**
No payments list.
- 20/21 - 204 Correspondence**
A further £2096 will be paid or lost income at the Watson Hall, as part of the Covid-19 Business Continuation Grants. This payment is up to 31st March 2021.
- 20/21 - 205 To resolve that the press and public are excluded due to the confidential nature of the business under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings Act) 1960 s.1. sub-section 2.**
It was RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded.
Proposed by Cllr Brennan, seconded by Cllr Sztymiak.
- 20/21 - 206 To discuss and agree the nominations for the Tewkesbury Town Covid-19 Community Response Awards**
The nominations were discussed. It is hoped that it will be possible to recognise the individuals in person, later on in the year.
It was RESOLVED that all nominees should be recognised in the Covid-19 Community Response Awards.
Proposed by Cllr Aldridge, seconded by Cllr Sztymiak.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.45pm.

Signature of Chairman upon approval of the minutes 19th April 2021