

**BARNARD CASTLE TOWN COUNCIL  
COUNCIL MEETING (VIRTUAL)**

**27 JULY 2020**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Blissett (Town Mayor) (in the Chair), Chatterjee, Child, Harrison (Deputy Town Mayor, Kirkbride, Mrs Moorhouse, Drew, Thackery and Mrs Thompson.

**Also in attendance:** One member of the public and one member of the press.

**Officers:** Martin Clark (Town Clerk), Miss Claire Atkinson (RFO).

**4. ACCEPTANCE, OR OTHERWISE, OF APOLOGIES**

An apology was received from Councillor Miss Blissett (Technical difficulties preventing access to Zoom).

No apologies were received from Cllr Hallimond

**Resolved** – That the apology be accepted.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked whether they had any personal, pecuniary, or prejudicial interests in any matter on the agenda and, if so, to declare those interests at this point of the meeting. Members were reminded that a declaration could be given later in the meeting if a need arose during discussion. No declarations were made.

The Clerk referred to approved dispensations authorised for Cllr's Mrs Moorhouse, Kirkbride, Blissett, Harrison and Chatterjee due to their membership of Making Barney Brighter Together. The dispensations were granted so as not to impede the business of the council.

**6. COUNCIL MEETINGS**

**6.1 Full Council 16 March 2020**

A motion was moved under 10a(ii) of the Council's Standing Orders to correct an inaccuracy in the minutes Item 91/March/20 refers (Clerk's Update):-

*“Approval should also be given to the joint Clerks' report (supplemental) of 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 in its entirety which will include all recommendations.”*

**Resolved:** That the motion was carried; and

**Resolved** - That the minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record.

**6.2 Extraordinary Council Meeting 15 June 2020**

**Resolved** – That the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting be accepted as a true and accurate record.

**7. ANNUAL COUNCIL AUDIT 2019/20**

**(i) Expenditure and Income Statement**

Submitted - A report with the published agenda on expenditure and income for the year end 31 March 2020.

Cllr Mrs Moorhouse recorded for the minutes the council's thanks to Miss Atkinson, RFO for producing an excellent summary under difficult circumstances.

**(ii) Conclusion of Internal Audit**

Submitted – A report from the internal auditor on the successful conclusion of the internal audit 2019/20.

**(iii) Approval of Section 1 & 2 of Annual Governance & Accounting Statement (AGAR) 2019/20**

Submitted – The Council's Annual Governance & Accounting Statement (AGAR) for approval of Sections 1 & 2 of the annual audit form.

**Resolved** - That items 7(i) to 7(iii) be approved En Bloc.

**(iv) Verbal Update on Current Financial Position**

The RFO informed members that the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter input was complete and that the VAT return had been submitted.

The council extended its thanks to the RFO for getting the report completed given the difficulties of working from home.

**8. FINANCIAL PLANNING – BARNARD CASTLE COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**(i)** Members considered establishing the Barnard Castle Community Support Fund by using £10,000 transferred from the council reserves. The fund would show that the council was doing something to support the local community during this difficult time.

A discussion took place and the main points were:

- Businesses would welcome any kind of support;
- The money may help to tap into other funding streams;
- Identifying which area to support is important – get it right;
- For local trade and local people which could include local groups/clubs and Consideration must be given to the best possible use of the funds.

**Resolved** - That the council transfer £10,000 from its general reserves to establish the Barnard Castle Community Support Fund (a restricted budget) and establish a small working party.

**(ii)** It was agreed to defer identifying members for the working group at this meeting. The proposal at (i) above refers to the establishment of the group.

The Clerk referred members to the meeting of 16 March 2020 and the Clerk's supplemental report Item 13/5.2/March/20 and the agreement that the budget for the 1940's weekend is vired to mitigate the effects of Covid 19 in Barnard Castle. The £4,000 would therefore be placed in the Barnard Castle Community Support fund making it £14,000.

## **8.1 Other Financial Matters**

The need to look at creating a designated website to help attract tourism to the town was highlighted. A website that could help promote visitor attractions and local businesses and show what we have and what is on offer when visitors get here.

It was noted that MBBT website created was never designed for commercial benefit and therefore not accessible through Google searches.

**Resolved** – It was agreed to use the £1,000 Tourism budget to create a new website that would promote both visitor attractions and local businesses.

## **8.2 Mayoral Allowances 2020/21**

The Town Mayor informed the meeting that the mayoral allowances for the current year remained unspent due to the current situation with Covid 19. The allowances would remain in place and on hold should things change with functions before the end of the civic year.

## **9. REQUESTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES TO THE COUNCIL**

**9.1** The Clerk informed the meeting that a request had been received from Barnard Castle Christmas Lights and the Clique to use The Upper Demesnes for the bonfire and fireworks.

Members realised that the planning of such an event should start now however, to give permission when there was a risk that the event may not go ahead was too great from an organisational and financial standpoint. A lot of events have already been lost to Covid 19 restrictions and regrettably firework displays are being cancelled because of the unknown.

**Resolved** - That regrettably this year permission to use the Upper Demesnes for the bonfire and fireworks is not given due to the risks with unknown restrictions that may be imposed due to the ongoing pandemic.

**9.2** The Clerk informed members of a request from Covid Cutz, a local fundraising group to support the outline proposal for a memorial bench in honour of those that have helped in the fight against Covid 19.

**Resolved** - It was agreed in principle that the council would support an initiative to mark what had happened, and with the way in which the community had come together to support each other. It would be happy to get involved in discussions at an appropriate time with local groups on how best to do this.

## **10. EVENTS FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2020**

The Clerk sought a decision from members on how to proceed with those events it is involved in considering the current restrictions. These events are Red Ensign Day, Remembrance Sunday, and Christmas Lights.

**Resolved** - Following a discussion it was agreed the events should take place (under guidance) and that the Partnership Committee look at how they take place, especially Remembrance and Christmas.

It was noted that members did not want to cancel Christmas!

**Action:** Clerk refer to Safety Advisory Group (SAG) and any other official guidance released.

## **11. EAST WARD VACANCY**

The Clerk informed the meeting that, following the resignation of Cllr Louise Finlay a 'notice of vacancy' had been published and following that notice no one had come forward to call an election.

The option for the council is to consider advertising for co-option or holding the vacancy as elections are due in May 2021.

**Resolved** - It was decided under the current restrictions not to consider co-option but to hold the vacancy.

## **12. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES**

### **1) Teesdale Residents' and Travellers' Forum (Councillors Blissett & Harrison)**

Members were advised that no meetings had taken place.

### **2) Larger Local Councils Forum (Clerk)**

The Clerk informed members that he had nothing to report.

### **3) Dementia Friendly Communities (Councillor Kirkbride)**

Members were informed that no formal meetings had taken place and that sadly the group had recently lost an inspirational member, Mavis Willoughby.

Morrisons supermarket have agreed to allow an unmanned bucket collection in the not too distant future.

Cllr Kirkbride had recently completed an online module on Dementia friends and similar sessions could be arranged for councillors.

### **4) Barnard Castle Mechanic Institute and Witham Hall Community Association (Councillor Hallimond)**

As Cllr Hallimond was not present no report was presented.

**Resolved** – That the information be noted.

## **13. CLERKS REPORT & VERBAL POLICE UPDATE**

The Clerk went through his written report submitted with the agenda. Additional verbal updates were given on:

*Play area at the Lower Demesnes* – the wrong slide had been delivered . Once the correct one arrives the area will be completed and opened;

*Bollard at the Upper Demesnes* – awaiting a revised quote for the new bollard and installation;

*Swing gate at the Lower Demesnes* – pricing for this gate being gone through at the moment. The bolt was cut off the height restrictor recently but when the swing gate is installed there will be no requirement for this barrier;

*Mini Golf* – commitment by the council to open it and to that end, work is ongoing to do that. The 'hut' is being deep cleaned; staffing being looked at; hand sanitisers on order and how people queue to keep in line with social distancing has been looked at. Its not perfect but opening safely is the priority.

The issue of payment and contactless payment was discussed but yet to be resolved Further discussions will take place over the next week. Any contactless payment system would need to be in the name of the council and adhere to audit regulations;

The Clerk gave members a short Police update:

Apologies from Sergeant Angela Drasdo our new Beat Officer who replaces Simon Rogers:

- The month of May saw an influx of visitors to Low Force which caused safety concerns due to the number of vehicles parking on both sides of the B6277 near Bowlees. Durham County Council, Durham Police, Raby & Strathmore Estates met to find a solution. Very quickly double yellow lines were laid down at this beauty spot as a Traffic Regulation Order was successfully made and this has certainly addressed the problem.
- The Police would like to reiterate to all residents that the Government NHS Track & Trace System of contacting members of the public if they are believed to have been in contact with another individual known to have Coronavirus will NEVER ask for any bank details or require payment. Please never provide financial details over the phone no matter how genuine a caller may sound.
- Sgt Simon Rogers has now retired having held the position of Neighbourhood Policing Sgt at Barnard Castle for 7 years. He would like to extend his sincere thanks to Barnard Castle Town Council for their help during the time he has held this position.

Cllr Drew gave her apologies for future meetings until December due to maternity leave.

It was recorded that thanks be given to staff members who had worked hard during difficult times.

Meeting Closed