

**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING
OF FULL COUNCIL HELD
ON 19 MARCH 2020,
IN THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, LEDBURY**

PRESENT: Councillors Bannister, Howells (Town Mayor, Chairman), Knight, Manns, Morris and Vesma

IN ATTENDANCE: Angela Price – Town Clerk
Caroline Green – Traders Association
Tim Barnes – Community Action Ledbury
Peter McCann – U3A

C246. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Harvey and Whattler.

C247. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

C248 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Councillor Howells asked if any of the members of the public wished to speak on any items on the agenda. All those present expressed an interest in speaking and the Mayor invited them to speak in turn.

Caroline Green asked about how businesses would be able to access the financial support being offered by the Government during the Coronavirus Pandemic. She was advised that she should contact the Ward Members for Ledbury, Councillors Howells, Harvey and l'Anson as this would be something that Hereford Council would be responsible for.

She also raised concerns from the traders in the town, in respect of payments being made by cash during the pandemic. She asked if the Council could help get the message out that wherever possible the traders would ask that residents pay by cards and not cash. The Clerk advised that this was something that the Council could promote on their website and other social media platforms.

Peter McCann of U3A advised that U3A had a membership of 599, 480 of whom could be reached via email. He advised that around 270 of those members were older members who fall into the government's group to be "shielded". He asked how the U3A Group's could help the Council and any organisations through this Pandemic. The Clerk advised that the Deputy Town Clerk was working closely with a group in the town and the CV-19 Response Team in Hereford and that she would pass his details onto them.

Tim Barnes advised that he was their both as a representative of Community Action Ledbury and also the volunteer group that had been set up by Katie and Lara, due to them having to self-isolate. Tim advised that whilst many of his members were DBS Checked they were currently trying to carry out more so that they can be of assistance to the CV-19 response team within Ledbury. He advised that they could offer their phone lines as a mini-call centre and advised that they could help with concerns over how payments could be made by those who are isolating and unable to get to the shops.

This brought forward a discussion on how the issue of collecting shopping for those isolating themselves as per government instructions and it was agreed that the Clerk would write to Tesco, Co-op and Aldi to ask whether they would consider preparing shopping bags of essential items at a set cost, which would be available for the group to collect on behalf of residents who were in isolation, whilst providing assurance for residents in respect of payments.

The group also considered an email that had been received from Kelly Shotton of the Ledbury Food Bank. Shelly had asked that the following points be raised at the meeting:

1. The Food Bank is determined to remain open and if there is anything that the Council or other attendees could do to help we would appreciate it. We have experienced challenges with supplies (which we are endeavouring to source locally) and deliveries and whilst making good progress on these issues we may need further assistance.
2. Referring parties and those who can authorise food bank vouchers, please be aware that we remain open to provide food for individuals and families that are suffering financial hardship – no one should go hungry.

The council agreed that any help that they could offer the Food Bank through this time would obviously be considered and offers of help made were appropriate.

With regard to the food bank vouchers, as an organisation who issues the food vouchers the Clerk and Councillor Knight had discussed this issue earlier in the day, as they were concerned how those in need would be able to acquire the vouchers. Councillor Knight had agreed that she would be happy to be the point of contact, whilst the council offices were closed and staff working from home.

RESOLVED:

1. **That the Clerk put a notice on the Council's social media platforms advising that the Food Bank is still operating and hoped to be able to operate throughout the pandemic.**

2. **That Councillor Knight meet with the Clerk at the Council offices to collect the Food Bank Vouchers and to be instructed on the process, to enable her to manage these through the period of the Covid-19 Pandemic.**

Councillor Howells thanked the members of the public for their input and assistance into the issues around the current crisis.

- C249. **TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 5 MARCH 2020**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 5 March 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

- C250. **TO ADOPT THE DRAFT MODEL PANDEMIC CONTINGENCY POLICY AS PROVIDED BY THE SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS (SLCC)**

RESOLVED:

That the draft Model Pandemic Contingency Policy, as provided by SLCC be approved and adopted.

- C251. **TO SET UP A PANDEMIC CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PANDEMIC CONTINGENCY POLICY**

Members were requested to set up a Pandemic Crisis Management Team in line with the newly adopted Pandemic Contingency Policy.

Members agreed that the Pandemic Crisis Management Team should consist of the Clerk and the chairs and vice chairs of all Council Committees, with delegated powers being given to the Clerk to allow the Council's business to continue and that any actions be undertaken in consultation with the relevant committee chairs.

The Clerk raised several items with Members that needed to be considered.

1. The law does not currently allow for local authorities to hold "virtual" meetings. The Local Government Act states that in order to participate in a meeting a member must be in a "place". This means that all those participating in a council meeting must be physically in the "place" where the meeting is being held to take part in the discussion and to have a vote. It is anticipated that new legislation will be available in respect of this in due course but until such time this is available it is not lawful for Ledbury Town Council to hold meetings.

2. Consideration be given to how to proceed in respect of the annual parish and annual council meetings until clarification is provided on how to proceed with these meetings, via the Coronavirus Bill which is due to come into force on 31 March 2020.
3. Consideration was given to the cancellation of upcoming events being hosted by the Mayor and the Council, to include the Mayor's Quiz night and end of year event and the planned VE Day celebrations.
4. As the Government had initiated a request that were workers can work from home for the foreseeable future, all staff be offered the opportunity to work from home, noting that staff will need to attend the office for some tasks until such time arrangements can be made to have lap tops updated with finance and burial apps.

Councillor Bannister raised some concerns about the Council offices not being open to the public and asked whether the office could be open from 10am – 12 Noon Monday, Wednesday and Friday in order to provide a service to the public. Whilst members understood why Councillor Bannister was asking for the office to be open they did feel that it would be inappropriate to expect staff to have to attend the offices and put themselves and the public at risk. Councillor Bannister expressed his disappointment that members had not agreed to his suggestion.

5. That all payments be made by BACS where possible to avoid the need for councillors to attend the offices to sign cheques, but that a plan be put in place to follow social distancing if cheques do need signing.
6. That consideration be given to postponing the co-option process and the Distinguished Citizen Awards. Members felt that the deadline dates for both should remain open for the time being, noting that there may be several people who should be considered for the Distinguished Citizen Awards for their actions during the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Pandemic Crisis Management Team should consist of the Clerk and the chairs and vice chairs of all Council Committees, with delegated powers being given to the Clerk to allow the Council's business to continue and that any actions be undertaken in consultation with the relevant committee chairs.
2. That all Council and Committee meetings be cancelled up to the end of May 2020 with a review in mid-May noting that the meetings to be cancelled are as follows:

- 19 March – Resources Committee Meeting
 - 23 March – Viaduct Parish Meeting
 - 25 March – Youth Parish Meeting
 - 26 March – Finance Committee
 - 1 April – Climate Emergency Working Party
 - 2 April – Full Council
 - 9 April – Planning
3. That the Annual Parish and Annual Council meetings be postpone until the implementation of the Coronavirus Bill, which is due to come into force on 31 March 2020 and subject to the legislation provided in respect of these meetings.
 4. That the Mayor's Quiz night and end of year event be cancelled, along with the VE Day Celebration, with a view to holding a bigger event for VJ Day in August, subject to a change of circumstances in respect of Covid-19.
 5. That all staff be offered the opportunity to work from home with immediate effect in order to comply with government guidance, noting that there will be occasions when staff will need to attend the office.
 6. That all payments be made by BACS where possible to avoid the need for councillors to attend the offices to sign cheques, but that a plan be put in place to follow social distancing if cheques do need signing.
 7. That the co-option process and Distinguished Citizen Awards deadline be extended with the processes in respect of these be postponed for the foreseeable future.
 8. That Jason at the Ledbury News be asked to hold the Dog Poo Bags on behalf of the Council whilst he remains open and that the £1 charge for these be stopped for the time being.

The meeting ended at 8.11 pm

Signed Dated
(Town Mayor)