

BRIDGWATER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING

**HELD ON THURSDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 7.30PM
AT THE CHARTER HALL, TOWN HALL, BRIDGWATER**

PRESENT: Cllr D Rodrigues (Mayor - in the Chair), Cllrs AM Glassford, GJ Granter, T Heywood, P Johnstone, L Leavy, D Loveridge, A Moore and BD Smedley

Apologies: Cllrs Cresswell, Lerry, Morley, Pearce, Redman, Turner and Wilson

29/18 DAVID MEARS

At the commencement of the meeting, the Mayor introduced Mr David Mears, who had been appointed to the post of Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, and would commence duties in November.

30/18 POLICING IN BRIDGWATER (Min 14/18):

PCSO Dan Wheller was present and gave an update on policing matters. There had been a slight increase in recorded anti-social behaviour, most notably affecting the vacant former Bridgwater Hospital site on Salmon Parade. In terms of staffing he outlined the make-up of the new Town Centre Team and the concentration on policing in and around the Town Centre as well as the teams covering the wider areas. Changes were again being introduced in the way in which neighbourhood policing would be managed. This included facilitating extra bodies on the beat through the use of 'tablets' and bicycles.

Support was also evident from Response Teams although the night-time economy was not proving problematic. There had been an apparent increase shop thefts over recent weeks, and to combat this new prevention measures including use of plain clothed officers were being invoked.

Members raised a series of questions in relation to control of drinks promotions and effect on the night-time economy, continuing resource impacts in Blake Gardens, and difficulties caused by obstructive parking in the vicinity of the Railway Club and Station in Wellington Road. PCSO Wheller also confirmed the position with the handover to Highways England for clean-up following the serious accident on the M5 motorway earlier in the day.

The Mayor thanked PCSO Wheller for his attendance and the information provided.

31/18 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 02/08/18:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 02/08/18 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

32/18 REPORT OF THE YOUTH WORKING PARTY (05/09/18):

The Mayor introduced the Report which had been circulated confirming a recommendation for the award of three further Youth Grants.

RESOLVED:

1. That the three further grants be awarded as per the schedule; and
2. that the proposed Youth Council be requested to put forward any suggestions for the use of any balance remaining from the allocated Youth Grant budget.

33/18 PROPOSED YOUTH COUNCIL:

The proposed representation and agenda for the establishment of a Youth Council was brought forward. Cllr Loveridge, drawing on his role as a Corporate Parent through the County Council, suggested that representation on the Youth Council might be extended to accommodate a nomination from the County Council Children's Services, where individuals were already observing and informing appropriate County Council committees. Members agreed that this should be reviewed, further supplementing youth empowerment, a major part of the remit for a Youth Council.

RESOLVED: That the representation and remit and agenda be taken forward to the inaugural meeting of the Youth Council, to be chaired by the Mayor.

34/18 REPORT OF THE TOURISM WORKING PARTY:

Cllr Smedley gave an update on the preparation of the Tourism Brochure for 2018/19 and the work in progress with a view to the launch in October. The Tourism Working Party were now looking beyond the brochure to assess what else might be needed to support tourism, part of which would complete the audit of activities and resources available. One of the agreed priorities was to improve the tourism offer and build on the existing resource and mini tourist information centre available at the Town Hall. This would also consider work alongside and with the Carnival Centre which received support, albeit limited, through SDC. The Town Clerk also advised that the Council were examining, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, a tie up for Bridgwater with Visit Somerset.

RESOLVED: That the position be noted and these issues further considered and discussed at the next meeting of the Tourism Working Party (note by Town Clerk now 22/09/18).

35/18 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND RECEIPTS:

RESOLVED: That the payments, including Section 137 payments made during August (month 5) itemising all cheques and ddrs paid, be approved and confirmed, and income received during the period together with the cost centre reports and bank reconciliations and investments be noted.

36/18 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES (02/08/18):

i. **Forward Plan 2018/19 (Tracker) (Min 24/18i)** - Cllr Smedley introduced the updated version of the Forward Plan with items also referred elsewhere on the Agenda. Cllr Loveridge confirmed that within his remit a further Town Centre walkabout and review would be conducted following Bridgwater Fair.

ii. **Bridgwater Post Office, Eastover (Min 24/18iii)** - The Town Clerk reported on further communication with the Post Office and the current operator of the premises, which confirmed the current location extended to November. Negotiations towards the long-term future were positive.

iii. **Town Hall(s) and Properties Working Party (12/07/18) - Trinity Hall (Min 21/18)** - The Town Clerk confirmed that the planning application for the change of use from Community Hall (use class D1) to Bike Workshop and Sales (B1) had been submitted and was going through the planning process.

iv. **Community Toilet Scheme** - The Town Clerk reported that two of the interested businesses had now, unfortunately, resigned their interest for the time being. All the necessary information and agreements had been supplied to the interested parties and response was still awaited from the other two businesses. Members agreed to review the position with the entire scheme at the next meeting of the Finance Committee alongside the budget consideration.

37/18 FINANCE - INTRODUCTION TO BUDGET 2019/20 - TIMETABLE AND HIGH LEVEL OVERVIEW - REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK:

Members received a Report from the Town Clerk with a review of the financial year in the final year of the current term of office for members, during which most of the objectives had been or were being achieved.

The Report also set out the variety of factors to be taken into account in the

preparation of the budget for 2019/20 not least the loss of Government Grant reducing to nil, impact on the current precept at Band D, and the anticipated tax base likely to be finalised in November.

RESOLVED:

1. That the timetable be approved - draft budget to Finance Committee 28/11/18, draft budget to Council 06/12/18, final budget to Council 10/01/19; and
2. that in terms of the high level overview, in line with previous practice the Council plan for a continuation budget which will enable the shortfall from loss of grant to be covered, and in so doing examine any additional projects and increase costs to be taken into account.

38/18 MAYORAL ITEMS:

The Mayor gave an update on the series of Facebook interviews he had initiated with some 25,000 views to date. He had also, with the Council, confirmed support for an application known as “Integr8” through Youth Unlimited CIC to the EDF/HPC Mitigation Fund. This was targeted at support for young people, particularly those from communities wary of the vulnerability of young people in society with the HPC impact.

Members welcomed the Mayor’s initiative and offered congratulations on the success so far of the Facebook activities.

39/18 PUBLICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE:

The Town Clerk reported on correspondence and papers received, those for decision and those for information.

RESOLVED: That all items be noted as listed in the Report dated 06/09/18 (agenda item 12) and decisions taken as follows:

Decisions:

1. Bridgwater Town Team, Snowflakes and Switch-On, and Christmas Lights - **Resolved:** 1. That the Meeting on 20/09/18 to finalise arrangements for the switch-on, including entertainment, and possibility of additional lighting cross-road strings - **noted**, the lighting of the tree in St Mary’s Church Yard - **approved**, and the payment of £685.06 for replacement repairs – **agreed**; and 2. that the proposal to support through the Bridgwater Town Team, the Chamber of Commerce Business Awards and the Town Centre Independent Trader/Retailer category confirmed.
2. SDC Community Scrutiny through the Task and Finish Working Group:

Rejuvenation of Town Centres Meeting cancelled - **Resolved:** That this be noted and further report awaited.

3. Grant Applications:

A. General Grants - **Resolved:** That the following grants be approved:

- i. Sydenham Community Centre - project funding (£5,000)
- ii. St Mary's Church, church tower clock maintenance service (£312.00)

B. General Grants - **Resolved:** That the applications from the Bridgwater and District Civic Society and the Somerset Levels and Moors SHED (Men's Shed in Bridgwater) be referred to the Finance Committee for examination.

C. Ward Grant Applications 2018/19 - **Resolved:** That the Ward Grants for Wyndham Ward - Haygrove School - Garden Produce (£490) and Westover Ward - Rage Against Rubbish (£500) and Victoria Ward - Active Living (£250) be approved.

D. Youth Grant Applications 2018/19 - **Resolved:** That the application from the Somerset Federation of Young Farmers Clubs be deferred to the next tranche.

4. **Resolved:** That the letters of thanks from the Victoria Park Community Centre and the Musgrove MRI Million Campaign be noted.

(Cllrs Granter and Loveridge declared an interest in the application submitted by Sydenham Community Centre and took no part in the consideration and did not vote thereon.)

For Information:

Items 1 - 20 as circulated noting also that SDC have now offered bulbs to Town and Parish Councils and Ward Members as in previous years.

40/18 FRACKING: (Min 104/16 MOTION):

The Town Council had previously adopted a motion which declared the Town to be a "Frack-free" Zone.

It had now come to the Council's attention that the Government were proposing changes to planning rules which would redefine non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration applications as permitted development and redefine large scale shale gas production sites as nationally significant infrastructure projects thus removing any Local Authority control and community involvement in decision making.

Consultation had begun in July 2018, although a Report by a cross-party Committee had warned that Mineral Planning Authorities were best placed to understand the local area and how fracking could best take place.

The Town Council were committed to the principles of localism and the involvement of local communities in decisions that effect their environment, their health and safety and their well being. The Town Council took the view that moving decisions about fracking, which had huge implications for local communities, to a national level would contradict the principles of localism. This also implied that moving the category to “permitted development” would similarly have wide reaching implications for local communities and climate change. The Town Council maintained the opinion that Local Authorities were best placed to continue to make decisions through the planning process for shale gas exploration, drilling, appraisal and production, and therefore **RESOLVED** to respond to the forthcoming Government Consultation with the views set out in the Paper submitted to Members and to share this response with the Members of Parliament for Somerset and relevant Government Ministers.

The meeting finished at 8.35 pm

Signed
Chair