



## Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of Bridgwater Town Council held on Thursday 18 June 2020 at 19:00hrs

### Present - Councillors

T Heywood – (Mayor)	M Lerry
S Aujla	R Lilley
G Burrows	D Loveridge
M Cresswell	L Redman
J Cordiner	D Rodrigues
L Gibson	G Slocombe
G Granter	B Smedley
L Leavy	

### In Attendance:

David Mears PSLCC – Town Clerk, PCSO Mizon and Carleton Lord and Gary Perrett representing Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign. There were no members of the press in attendance.

Gary Perrett gave an overview of the Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign, the cycle auditing project, liaison with SCC, SDC and the Town Council, and the three phases for Bridgwater - Phase 1, extensive mapping of Bridgwater (completed); Phase 2, ideal routes added to google maps (completed); Phase 3, looking forward to mapping and signage.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Council support the activities of the Bridgwater Area Cycling Campaign

No questions were received from the public in advance of the meeting.

Police Report - PCSO Mizon gave an update to councillors on the situation in the Town Centre with regard to begging, youth presence, and police presence during the lockdown period, and also explained that the Hub in SDC was temporarily closed during Covid-19. The Town Clerk offered use of the Town Hall as a temporary base and this was gratefully accepted.

**TC2020/39 To receive Apologies for Absence and to approve the reasons given** (LGA 1972 s85 (1))

Apologies were received from Cllr K Pearce – who has a conflicting engagement.

**RESOLVED** – to accept the apology and to approve the reason given.

**TC2020/40 Declarations of interests** - Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any prior requests from members for Dispensations that accord with Localism Act 2011 s33(b-e) (NB this does not preclude any later declarations)

There were no interests declared.

**TC2020/41 Standing Orders** – to reinstate Standing Orders with recommended amendments for virtual meetings

**RESOLVED** – to reinstate with the Town Clerk’s suggested amendments.

**TC2020/42 Mayor Announcements**

The Mayor gave thanks to people in the NHS, caring profession, essential services, volunteers, the excellent work in care homes, the food bank and those who have suffered during the pandemic.

The Mayor informed councillors that due to his planned memory walk on 26 April being cancelled, he had tentatively agreed the date of 21 September 2020, subject to COVID guidance.

**TC2020/43 Town Council Leader** – Cllr Smedley to update members on matters of interest and forward plan *(N.B. no decisions can be taken<sup>1</sup>)*

Cllr Smedley presented the updated forward plan which will be reviewed month by month due to Covid-19 lockdown.

**TC2020/44 Town Clerk’s Oral Report** – update on progress since the last meeting and items of information *(N.B no decisions can be taken<sup>1</sup>)*

The Town Clerk thanked Town Council staff for their support during the pandemic, and updated councillors on the current position with the cemeteries which is working very well. Financially, the Town Council is losing a significant amount of income - the Museum will remain closed for the rest of the year, and the rental properties and retail units have been given a rent break until 30 September. An analysis of obligated expenditure for the rest of the financial year is currently being worked on and a revised will be presented at the next full council meeting. The second tranche of the precept has been transferred early by Sedgemoor District Council, reserves in the property fund have been frozen, but cash flow is currently ok. The Town Centre is now open and a one-way system has been put in place, with a few issues which are being rectified.

**TC2020/45 Portfolio Holders – to receive written reports (if any) from Portfolio Holders** *(N.B no decisions can be taken<sup>1</sup>)*

Cllr Lerry presented a written report on the Town Centre economy and staffing portfolio.

Cllr Burrows presented a written report on the transport portfolio.

In the absence of Cllr Pearce, Cllr Smedley presented the written report on the community portfolio.

Cllr Gibson was not able to present her portfolio on climate and ecology due to internet connection difficulties.

**TC2020/45i Sustainable Transport Policy for Bridgwater** – to adopt the attached proposed Sustainable Transport Policy for Bridgwater from the Transport Forum

**RESOLVED** – subject to the word “policy” being substituted with the word “plan”, to adopt the Sustainable Transport Plan for Bridgwater

**TC2020/46 Financial Regulations** – to reinstate Financial Regulations with no amendments

**RESOLVED** – to reinstate Financial Regulations with no amendments.

**TC2020/47 Virtual Meeting Policy** – to adopt the attached Virtual Meeting Policy

**RESOLVED** – to adopt the Virtual Meeting Policy with the amendment of a visible raising of hand.

**TC2020/48 Local Government Reorganisation in Somerset** –

- I. to receive the attached report, commissioned by the Somerset Branch of SLCC and SALC and to agree the recommendations contained therein; and
- II. to agree a response to the One Somerset survey

Cllr Slocombe requested a recorded vote

**RESOLVED** –

- I. to agree the recommendations contained within the report commissioned by the Somerset Branch of SLCC and SALC;

For: Councillors; Burrows, Cordiner, Gibson, Leavy, Lerry, Loveridge, Redman and Smedley

Against: Councillors; Aujla, Cresswell, Lilley, Rodrigues and Slocombe.

Abstention: Cllr Granter

and

- II. to agree a response to the One Somerset survey

**RESOLVED** –

- We can't see Somerset County Council acting as a joined-up authority and has a record of failure at a strategic level however, this review presents an opportunity to take more responsibility locally. Locally we can do better.
- We believe that the creation of 'District Councils' during the 1974 LG review reduced the powers of successful and progressive Borough councils, such as here in Bridgwater and declines of towns such as ours has been as a result of those geographical changes
- We are excited by the possibility of restoring the maximum power to the most local level,- To this end we see the proposed LCN (Local Community Networks) as a way of creating local hubs for service delivery at the correct size.
- We recognise that whichever authority/authorities will be in place once LGR has concluded we will want greater local decision making in strong and relevant community networks.
- We are worried at the speed that this is being rushed though and that this might all be about saving money and not about improving local services and democracy.
- We would also be concerned that the One Somerset position might just be a green light for a new unitary authority to just do statutory stuff and leave the rest to be picked up randomly

- BTC would like to engage in this process and also be involved in the development of the business case. Towns and Parishes should work together
- Towns and Parishes should determine which services should be delivered, which assets should be transferred, and which resources should be managed, and which decisions should be taken where and effectively taking control of every element to lowest level.

For: Councillors; Burrows, Cordiner, Gibson, Granter, Leavy, Lerry, Loveridge, Redman and Smedley

Against: Councillors; Aujla, Cresswell, Lilley, Rodrigues and Slocombe.

**TC2020/49 Delegated Authority Arrangements** – that this council reverts to the previous scheme of delegation, with the following exceptions:

- I. That the Town Clerk in conjunction with Cllr Lerry continues to have full delegated authority over the cemeteries subject to financial regulations and standing orders governing the regulation of contracts (for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic); and
- II. Until face to face meetings can be resumed, all responses to planning applications be dealt with by the Town Clerk in conjunction with Cllr Lerry, with a period of consultation with town ward councillors

**RESOLVED** – to revert to the previous scheme of delegation with the exceptions of I and II above.

**TC2020/50 Finance** – to note the Year to Date Budget as of 11 June 2020

**RESOLVED** – to note the Year to Date Budget as of 11 June 2020

**TC2020/51 Finance** – Accounts for Payment and Income – to note items of expenditure as approved under delegated authority and income for March, April and May 2020

**RESOLVED** – to note the items of expenditure and income for March, April and May 2020

**TC2020/52 To resolve to exclude members of the press and public – To agree that agenda item TC2020/53 and 54 be dealt with after the public (including the press) have been excluded as publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960**

**RESOLVED** – that the public have been excluded for agenda items TC2020 53 and 54

Members of the public left meeting at 21.00

**TC2020/53 Staffing in confidence**

The Town Clerk updated councillors on the current position with a previous member of staff.

**TC2020/54 Bridgwater Allotments and lease**

Cllr Smedley informed councillors about a situation that had presented itself between the allotment holders and the chair and committee of the Allotment Association, and the position the Town Council would be taking in the future.

With no further business the meeting closed at 21.16

Signed ..... Date .....