

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Lichfield City Council held remotely via 'Zoom' on Tuesday 22 September 2020 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs D Baker (Mayor), J Anketell, H Ashton, C Ball, Mrs G Boyle, J Checkland, Mrs J Eagland, M Field, Mrs J Greaves, P Jones, Miss J Marks, T Matthews, S Pritchard, C Rapley, P Ray, D Robertson, A Smith, J Smith, C Spruce, M Trent, M Warfield and R Yardley.

APOLOGIES: Councillors C Greatorex, I Jackson and P McDermott.

A MINUTES SILENCE WAS HELD IN MEMORY OF MR DAVID LEIGHTON BAILEY, SHERIFF 1993/4 AND MAYOR 1995/6, WHO DIED ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2020.

42 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported that she had attended several virtual engagements via Zoom. These included the Staffordshire Scouts, Johnson Society and the Canals Trust AGM. She informed members that the Civic Officer was working hard to maintain the City's traditions such as the Sheriff's Ride and Remembrance Sunday albeit in a much-reduced capacity due to the restrictions of Covid -19. The Mayor also extended the best wishes of the Council to the Town Crier, Ken Knowles, who is in hospital.

43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

None

44 COUNCIL MINUTES

The Town Clerk stated that he had been advised of an error in the Minutes in that Cllr M Field was not included on the attendance list.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 28 July 2020 (Nos 30-41), be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the addition of Councillor M Field on the attendance list

45 MATTERS ARISING

None

46 PLANNING COMMITTEE (DELEGATED AUTHORITY)

RESOLVED: That comments submitted to Lichfield District Council for the period 19 June 2020 to 9 September 2020, and made in the name of LCC via delegated authority as agreed by Council on 11 May 2020, be received.

THE MEETING ADJOURNED FOR PUBLIC FORUM

A member of the public addressed the Council regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the opportunity to link the changes brought about by the response to COVID-19 to the climate emergency. The City Council was asked to explain how it can play its part in this process through current policies, encouraging and developing new ideas, and working across the political divide within the Council and with colleagues at District and County levels.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that a written response would be provided as soon as was practicable. There then followed comments from several Councillors; Cllr M Trent thanked the member of the public and agreed with his comments but pointed out the limitations of a parish council; Cllr D Robertson emphasised that sequestering carbon was a potential area that the City Council could lead on locally. Cllr J Anketell also conveyed his agreement with the content of the statement, and Cllr Mrs Eagland advised that the new Leader of Staffordshire County Council, Councillor Alan White, has created a Cabinet post to lead on the county wide response to climate change.

THE MEETING WAS RECONVENED

47 OFFICERS' REPORT

Councillors Warfield and Anketell commended Officers for a high quality and informative report. Councillor Mrs J Eagland confirmed that the Officers report would once again be passed to the talking newspapers for the blind. Councillor Trent commented how well organised the scaled down version of the Sheriff's Ride was and thanked the Civic Officer for keeping everyone socially distanced and adhering to the current legislation. Councillor Ashton thanked all those concerned for their swift action following the unauthorised Traveller encampment on City Council owned open space at Netherstowe and the subsequent installation of an earth bund and bollards.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

48 FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT – 1 APRIL to 31 JULY 2020

Members considered the four-month financial progress report, which highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on City Council income and expenditure. Cllr D Robertson asked whether the Council should now be looking to invest in money markets in order to generate revenue; Cllr C Spruce stated that investment in money markets carried an inherent risk to public money and was concerned about possible financial loss. Cllr Robertson also urged members to explore alternative energy as a source of revenue; further discussions to be held between Cllr Robertson, Cllr Spruce and the Town Clerk.

Cllr Robertson also urged the council to guard against any significant precept rises to cover budget deficits. Cllr C Spruce referred to the healthy revenue reserves held by the council and stated that they are there to be used in times such as these, but the council must aim to return to a balanced budget within the next two years.

Cllr P Ray asked whether any grant funding for principal authorities had filtered down to the parishes and also referred to possible funding streams mentioned at the recent parish forum. Both Cllr Spruce and the Town Clerk confirmed they were unaware of any central government funding for parishes as a result of COVID-19 and Cllr H Ashton clarified that he believed the funding at the Parish Forum meeting was available to charitable bodies, such as the Birthplace Museum, rather than LCC directly.

RESOLVED: That the Financial progress Report be noted.

49 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW

Members considered the Deputy Town Clerk's review of the City Council's Financial Regulations, and the proposed amendment to regulation 5.3 which has arisen as a result of COVID-19. The proposed amendment allows for payment lists to be authorised through electronic means, such as an email response from the appropriately designated individual, rather than relying on the physical signing of an authorisation sheet.

Councillor D Robertson urged that such authorisation should only be acceptable if sent from an LCC email account; it was confirmed that this would be made clear. Cllr H Ashton advised that he had been trialling an authentication system that could be of use to the Council in this

regard, further discussions to be held between the Leader, Cllr Ashton, Cllr Spruce and the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: That the review of the City Council's Financial Regulations be noted, and that regulation 5.3 be amended as set out in the agenda report.

50 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDER 18

Following discussions at the July meeting of the Council, Members considered the proposed amendment that aims to strengthen the provision of Standing Order 18 (Extraordinary Meetings of the Council, Committees and Sub-Committees).

RESOLVED: That Standing Order 18 be amended in line with the draft text as contained within the Town Clerk's agenda report.

51 VACANCY – STOWE WARD

Members considered the vacancy that had arisen in Stowe ward following the resignation of Councillor R Rathbone. It was noted that the Notice of Vacancy had been published and a valid request to hold a by election (signed by the required 10 residents) had been received by the Returning Officer. The by election though now called, cannot take place until May 2021 due to Regulation 6 of The Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

RESOLVED: That the vacancy and associated update be noted.

52 VACANCY – FRIENDS OF LICHFIELD HISTORIC PARKS GROUP

Members considered the above vacancy that has arisen following the resignation of Councillor R Rathbone. It was proposed by Councillor M Trent, seconded by Councillor C Rapley and;

RESOLVED: That Councillor H Ashton be appointed as the City Council representative on Lichfield Historic Parks Group to replace former Councillor R Rathbone.

53 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

RESOLVED: That payment of accounts be approved and confirmed as listed in Agenda Appendix 3 for the periods:

- a) 1 June 2020 to 30 June 2020 in the sum of £85,905.74 General Account, and £350.70 Imprest Account.***
- b) 1 July 2020 to 31 July 2020 in the sum of £84,993.15 General Account, and £66.97 Imprest Account.***

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS THE MAYOR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7.25 PM

MAYOR