

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Lichfield City Council held remotely via 'Zoom' on Monday 7 December 2020 at 6.30pm

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor C Rapley.

**A MINUTES SILENCE WAS HELD IN MEMORY OF MR KEN KNOWLES, TOWN CRIER AND
SWORDBEARER OF THE CITY, WHO DIED ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2020**

54 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported that she had attended a number of virtual meetings and celebrations such as the Girl Guides award evening and thanked the Civic Officer for her work, especially as arrangements for civic functions have been changed at the last minute due to changing guidelines and legislation. The Mayor reminded members that the deadline for Grant Applications was 4 January.

55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

Cllr Mrs D Baker and Cllr Mrs G Boyle declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 23 – Project Funding Enquiry – and left the meeting during discussion and voting thereon. Cllrs D Dundas and I Jackson and C Greateorex also declared an interest in this item as members of LHCRT.

Cllr C Greateorex declared an interest in Agenda Item 18 – Lichfield Municipal Charities – due to his relationship with the candidate to be proposed, and left the meeting during discussion and voting thereon.

Councillor Mrs J Greaves declared an interest in agenda item 12 – Grants Committee – as she is a member of Lichfield Litter Legends.

56 COUNCIL MINUTES

Cllr M Trent requested an addition to the minutes, namely that during the public forum at the September meeting he had mentioned that the City Council had passed a 'climate emergency' motion; this was not included in the draft minutes.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22 September 2020 (Nos 42-53), be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the addition of the above information.

57 MATTERS ARISING

Cllr Ashton stated that the further discussions regarding the authentication system he had raised (minute 49) had not taken place. The Town Clerk agreed to forward the most recent communications.

58 PLANNING COMMITTEE (DELEGATED AUTHORITY)

RESOLVED: That comments submitted to Lichfield District Council for the period 10 September 2020 to 4 November 2020, and made in the name of LCC via delegated authority as agreed by Council on 11 May 2020, be received.

59 NOTICE OF MOTION

Members considered the following motion, proposed by Cllr M Trent and seconded by Cllr P Ray:

"This Council recognises the significant benefits that video conferencing technology has brought to LCC business during the Coronavirus pandemic, enabling officers and Councillors to remain connected and helping Council business to run smoothly during challenging times.

This Council resolves to explore continued use of video conferencing throughout and then beyond the pandemic once restrictions are lifted. Council recognises that, whilst physical meetings will remain essential, regular use of virtual meetings has significant potential benefits. These include:

- *modernising the way that LCC connects with its residents*
- *increasing LCC engagement with diverse sections of the community*
- *attracting a more diverse range of candidates for Council, ensuring that LCC remains representative of the whole of the community which it serves."*

Considerable discussion followed. Cllr C Greatorex stated that the motion was political grandstanding as it referred to legislation enacted by central government as a result of COVID-19 and required extension by central government to continue beyond May 2021; the action within the motion therefore not being within LCC's gift.

A proposal for a significant amendment was made by Cllr D Robertson to include recording and publishing of meetings and lobbying of the MP to extend the existing legislation. The Mayor ruled that the proposed amendments were in conflict with standing orders due to the extent of the proposed changes. Cllr Lax commented that the amendments were extremely difficult to follow in a virtual meeting and with no prior notice of the proposal, and that the intentions of the amendment were good but they could not be appropriately considered.

Following further discussion it was proposed by Cllr M Warfield and seconded by Cllr C Spruce that the question now be put. The Mayor proceeded to the vote where the motion was declared lost.

60 MARKETS WORKING GROUP

Members considered the Minutes of the Markets Working Group meeting held on 2 October 2020.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Markets Working Group meeting be received.

61 JOHNSON BIRTHPLACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JBAC)

Members considered the minutes and recommendations of the JBAC meeting held on 3 November 2020. Members' particular attention was drawn to the recommendations to council contained at minute numbers 8 and 11.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes and recommendations of the JBAC meeting held on 3 November be adopted.

62 AUDIT COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes and recommendations of the Audit Committee meeting held on 3 December 2020, including the recommendation to Council at Minute number 9 regarding the appointment and scope of the Internal Auditor.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Audit Committee be adopted.

63 GRANTS COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes and recommendations of the Grants Committee meeting held on 12 October 2020; the recommendation from the meeting being a grant of £1,000.00 to Lichfield Litter Legends following their grant request submitted in September 2020.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes and recommendation of the Grants Committee be adopted.

64 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN IMPLEMENTATION WORKING PARTY

Members considered the minutes and recommendations of the NPIWP meeting held on 25 November 2020.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting be adopted.

65 FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT – 1 APRIL to 31 SEPTEMBER 2020

Members considered the six-month financial progress report, which highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on City Council income and expenditure. Cllr D Robertson commented that a 7% overspend figure was a positive outcome given the impact of COVID-19 on the City Council's income streams. Cllr Robertson then spoke about the relatively low interest income and suggested the matter should be looked into further to see whether the City Council's reserves could generate additional income. Cllr C Spruce urged caution as higher potential dividend is usually the result of taking a higher risk. Cllr D Robertson highlighted the approach of the District Council to its financial investments as opposed to those of the City Council. Cllr Spruce and the Town Clerk agreed to look into the matter further.

RESOLVED: That the Financial progress Report be noted.

66 OFFICERS' REPORT

Councillor Mrs Eagland commended officers for an informative report. Cllr C Greatorex stated that the Open Spaces report illustrated the possibility that further benches and cycle racks may be required in future, and that it would perhaps be an opportune time to plan for these given the increased local exercise taken by people as a result of COVID-19. Cllr Greatorex also suggested additional coloured bulbs could be added to the Christmas light fixtures to replace the predominantly white colour of the existing display. Cllr Mrs Boyle praised the work of the Johnson Birthplace Museum team and their efforts to keep the public profile of the museum high during lockdown. Cllr J Anketell thanked officers for a clear and full report. The Mayor asked for her thanks to the Mace Bearer, Richard Hunt, to be recorded, notably for his efforts during the Remembrance Sunday commemorations.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

67 AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20

Members considered the Town Clerk's agenda report, confirming the positive outcome of the external audit, and that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been published. Members noted the two minor points that were raised, namely the typographical error on line 9 of the Annual Return that was returned for correction, and the provision of an appointment letter for the Internal Auditor (the latter having been addressed via the Minutes and recommendations of the Audit Committee at its meeting of 3 December 2020). Cllr C Spruce stated that a 'clean' report from the external auditor should not be taken for granted and reflected the excellent financial controls that are in place.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

68 VACANCY – GRANTS COMMITTEE

Following the resignation of Cllr R Rathbone, the resulting vacancy on the City Council's Grants Committee was considered.

RESOLVED: That Councillor M Trent be appointed to the City Council's Grants Committee to replace former Councillor R Rathbone.

69 VACANCY – LICHFIELD MUNICIPAL CHARITIES

Having been advised that Mrs Doris English has not sought reappointment following the expiry of her four year term as LCC representative on Lichfield Municipal Charities, the City Council was asked to appoint a replacement.

RESOLVED: That Mrs Donna Greatorex be nominated by the City Council to fill the vacant position on Municipal Charities; and the best thanks of the Council be conveyed to Mrs Doris English for her exemplary service.

70 PAYMENTS BY DIRECT DEBIT

Members considered the request for an additional Direct Debit to be added to the approved list.

RESOLVED: the City Council resolve to enter into a Direct Debit arrangement with Frankotyp-Postalia Ltd to provide services associated with the City Council's postage system; this new account to be added to the list of Direct Debits that will be reconsidered at the June 2021 meeting of the City Council.

71 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

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

- 1 August 2020 to 31 August 2020 in the sum of £110,803.92 General Account, and £13.71 Imprest Account.***
- 1 September 2020 to 30 September 2020 in the sum of £76,175.14 General Account, and £293.42 Imprest Account.***

72. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, by reason of the confidential nature of the business next to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting.

73. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 5 November 2020. Members' particular attention was drawn to the recommendations to Council as contained at Minute numbers ten, eleven, twelve and fourteen.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Staffing Committee be adopted.

Having declared a pecuniary interest in the following item the Mayor left the meeting.

The Deputy Mayor took the Chair.

74. PROJECT FUNDING ENQUIRY – LICHFIELD AND HATHERTON CANALS RESTORATION TRUST

Members considered the Town Clerk's confidential agenda report and the request for clarification on the City Council's position as contained therein. Several members spoke on this matter, with some feeling that the proposed funding amount should be varied or subject to match funding conditions. However, it was agreed that the amount was an 'in principle' indication that could be taken back to the Trust to allow further discussions as to what could be achievable with that sum; the matter to be returned to Council when more detail was available.

RESOLVED:

- 1. The City Council wishes – in principle – to make a capital contribution to support the project to restore and rewater the canal along St John's Reach and Gallows Reach to the planned bridge at chainage 160***
- 2. Any 'in principle' funding decision be shared with the Trust on the understanding that it does not constitute a contract with the Trust, nor place any obligation upon the City Council. The 'in principle' decision is for the purpose of establishing the overall viability of the project and to inform further discussions with LHCRT as appropriate.***
- 3. An indicative funding amount be conveyed to the Trust; that amount to fall between £20,000 and £40,000, and be subject to further discussions as appropriate.***

The Mayor returned to the meeting and took the Chair.

75. CIVIC SILVER

Members considered the Town Clerk's agenda report and the associated list of items selected for display at St Mary's on the Market Square.

RESOLVED: That the valuation of the Civic Silver be noted, and the draft list of items to be displayed at St Mary's be approved, subject to the completion of the loan agreement.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS THE MAYOR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7.40 PM

MAYOR