

**DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL**

**MONDAY 18h MAY 2020 HELD REMOTELY USING ZOOM**

## Present: Councillors J Hodgson (Chair), P Paine, V Trow, M Adams, E Price, C Allford, D Matthews, G Allen, C Luker, R Hendriksen, B Piper and L Webberley.

## Apologies: Councillor S Skinner.

## In Attendance: C Marlton (Town Clerk), C Bewley (minutes), District Councillor Rose, District Councillor Sweett, District Councillor Birch, press x 1, and 5 members of the public.

### **To receive apologies and vote on whether to agree.**

Apologies were received from Cllr S Skinner.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the apologies.

1. **The Mayor will request confirmation that all Members have completed or made any necessary amendments to their Declaration of Interests.**

Confirmed.

1. **To remind participants on the virtual meeting protocol.**

Noted.

1. ***The Council will adjourn for the following items*:**

**Reports from County and District Councillors**

**Police Report (if present)**

It was **RESOLVED** to suspend standing orders.

D.Cllr Sweet gave a verbal report. Considering safety on the High St with shops re-opening.

D.Cllr Birch circulated a report. Reiterated that the proposal for safe shopping is only temporary to address the issue of social distancing. It is not proposed as a permanent arrangement. The County Council are receiving funding of £250m from central government to address these issues of making arrangements for social distancing and therefore TTC should put forward the proposal to request a share of the funding. The proposed temporary road closure will ultimately need approval by DCC Highways. Cllr Adams reminded the Council about the historic court cases where the judgment was reached that the High St must be kept open to traffic. Cllr Luker requested that D.Cllr Birch, as Chair of the SHDC Scrutiny Committee, ask questions about the recruitment by SHDC of a planning officer to look at Baker Estate planning applications and whose salary is being funded by Baker Estates, which appears to be a conflict of interest for that Officer. D.Cllr Birch said he would take it up with the Chief Planning Officer. Cllr Hodgson advised that she has already e-mailed the Chief Planning Officer and made a FOI requested about this issue but has not yet had a reply.

D.Cllr Rose gave a verbal report. SHDC are considering how to manage the next phase. He agrees in principle with D.Cllr Birch’s proposal for the High St. and highlighted that the Government are putting up money to increase walking & cycling. TTC could therefore obtain funding for any projects involving the provision of new walking or cycling routes. He also reported that SHDC are about to put out a press release recommending the weekly network meetings being held by Totnes as a good example of community support and encouraging other areas to replicate the model.

C.Cllr Hodgson gave a verbal report. To clarify on the funding available, the £2.5m is specifically for social distancing arrangements and Totnes is under review for some of this money. It’s unclear however how the funding will be split across the County. There is separate funding from Government for improving walking and cycling routes and is in relation to the Climate Emergency. There has been an increase in cycling and walking during the pandemic and this could be used as evidence to attract funding for permanent improvements. Enforcement at the moment is going to be more in relation to visitors rather than fining local people. Recycling Centres have opened in the last week. To note that Devon Climate Emergency Response Group have set up a weekly newsletter which is on the DCC website. Cllr Allen asked how we ask for the cycling and walking funding. C.Cllr Hodgson suggested putting together priorities lists for walking and cycling and one for social distancing to put forward for funding. Work has already been done on proposals so these just need prioritising through a brain-storming session. Cllr Paine highlighted the risk to the safety of cyclists on the roads as the roads return to the normal level of traffic.

Police report received and noted. Cllr Adams reported that there is a meeting being held on the 19th June about the house where the death occurred as this is the 2nd death that has occurred there. Cllr Piper raised concerns that the Police are classing the travellers encampment on Steamer Quay as an illegal site as SHDC set up the facilities for the travellers there.

***The Council will convene.***

The Council reconvened.

1. **To approve and sign the Minutes of the following Meetings:**

***(Please note confidential minutes can be agreed but any discussion must be held in Part 2):***

1. **Full Council 14th April 2020.**
2. **Extraordinary Full Council 4th May 2020.**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve and sign the Minutes of the following meetings:

1. Full Council 14th April 2020.
2. Extraordinary Full Council 4th May 2020.
3. **To consider any matters arising from the Minutes and to approve any recommendations from Committees**

***(Please note confidential recommendations can be agreed but any discussion must be held in Part 2):***

1. **Full Council 14th April 2020.**
2. **Extraordinary Full Council 4th May 2020.**
3. Full Council 14th April 2020.

Item 10 – No update available on WHSmith’s car park. Cllr Allen has taken photos and written to the Tree Officer. She is awaiting a reply.

1. Extraordinary Full Council 4th May 2020.

None.

1. **To review any update on the democratic process of SHDC (standing item).**

Cllr Allen requested that Cllr Hodgson raise the decision made by the Town Council to vote for caution over the current arrangements when she attends the SHDC Planning Committee meeting. Cllr Hodgson agreed and reported that the next meeting is a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the Planning Committee. There are two planning applications in for Dartington area which could impact on Totnes. The Planning Officer has decided that no environmental impact assessment is needed. We were assured no important planning applications would go through in this period while the emergency powers are in place but these are two important ones that will effect Totnes. There is a lot of public concern.

Also the Planning Officer for Baker Estates has been employed during this emergency period and has been employed for a year which is a concern as his salary is being paid for by Baker Estates who have lots of land holdings across the south west.

Cllr Webberley requested that the Council revisits the decision on the vote of confidence in SHDC in a couple of months time as she is unhappy with the process they have put in place where D.Cllrs cannot bring forward emergency motions. Cllr Hodgson asked that D.Cllr bring these concerns to the attention of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

SHDC made the decision not to hire out the market square. Cllr Hodgson is concerned that SHDC Cllrs have acted beyond their remit in making this unilateral decision.

1. **To receive an update on the NP (standing item).**

A report has been sent round by Cllr Luker. Cllr Allen asked if a NP Working Group meeting would be taking place soon and Cllr Luker advised that this will probably be arranged for July. Comments from the Consultants are not expected back until the end of this month and then maps will need to be updated, so a document won’t be available for discussion at a Working Group meeting until the beginning of July. Cllr Hodgson agreed a meeting was needed to ensure everyone feels included as it is a community plan.

No response has been received yet from the request to Dartington to share their plan. It was suggested Sara could be asked to arrange a meeting with them. Cllr Hodgson advised that some sites on the boundary have not been included in either plan. Cllr Luker agreed that it needs to be clarified what they are and are not including in their plan. An invitation to a zoom meeting will be sent and should be followed by a letter.

It was noted that Cllr Allford has resigned from the NP Working Group.

1. **To consider a draft proposal for a phased return to virtual committee and working group meetings (including a proposed calendar of dates for June and July).**

The Clerk gave an explanation of the gradual plan for returning to a full calendar of meetings over the next 2 months with the aim of returning to the normal programme of meetings by September. All will be virtual meetings except for the Cemetery Working Group meeting which will be on-site in the open air. The Planning Committee are not yet allowed to do site meetings.

Cllrs Adams and Luker are opposed to opening the office so soon.

Cllr Piper was concerned at the proposed date for the next Arts Working Group meetings and felt opportunities could be missed. The Clerk advised that she has concentrated on putting in place arrangements that are essential and critical. Cllr can still have conversations with staff on any issues they wish to raise.

Cllr Webberly was concerned that no Town Matters Committee meetings are included in the schedule. The Clerk advised that they are normally 2 monthly meetings and with the August recess the next one would be in September. She raised concerns about returning to a full programme of meetings too soon when regular meetings are already taking place for managing the COVID-19 crisis. At the moment there are no items for a Town Matters meeting agenda. She proposed including a meeting for the 27th July and holding an extraordinary meeting on any specific issues that are urgent which arise. Cllr Piper, Chair of Town Matters, felt the issue with the High St. closure proposal and social distancing arrangements for the town is a Town Matters Committee issue.

Cllr Hodgson suggested having a virtual Traffic & Transport Forum meeting which all Councillors and the public could attend to discuss the town social distancing proposal as soon as possible and the minutes are then brought to the FC meeting on 15th June. If further discussion is then needed a Town Matters Committee meeting can be called for Monday 22nd June. Cllr Hodgson confirmed that the Traffic & Transport Forum is an advisory body for the Council.

Cllr Webberley left the meeting.

Cllr Luker reminded councillors that we have a Totnes Transport Policy that was voted on. He asked that we review how staff and the offices work rather than just returning to how things were done before. He asked that the office is not opened to the public until the 1st July for the safety of staff.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the proposal for a phased return to virtual committee and working group meetings with the additions noted above. Cllr Matthews was absent for the vote.

1. **To consider a date for the co-option to the 3 Councillor vacancies to take place.**

The Clerk gave a verbal update. In person meetings will not be possible until at the earliest September. We have 6 applicants so far for the 3 vacancies. It has been suggested that the applicants are asked to attend a zoom meeting prior to the June Full Council meeting to enable the existing councillors and applicants for the vacancies to talk and ask questions.

Cllr Price suggested a hustings for the applicants to speak to the councillors.

Cllr Adams feels the appointments should be deferred until September when the applicants can meet the Council in person.

Cllr Webberley asked to see written statements from the applicants, which the Clerk confirmed are already held, and to hold a hustings.

Cllr Allen suggested a question time for the applicants to ask the councillors questions rather than grilling the applicants.

Cllr Piper wants the new Cllrs brought on-board as soon as possible.

The Clerk confirmed that there is an induction pack for new councillors and she would hold zoom meetings with them. The Clerk suggested identifying another councillor as a mentor.

It was **RESOLVED** to invite the prospective Cllrs to join one of the weekly Councillor meetings in the week prior to the June FC meeting and then for them to attend the public session prior to the June FC meeting to take part in a hustings where questions could be asked by both sides. There written statements will be circulated to all councillors in advance. The vote will then take place in the June FC meeting.

1. **To consider a draft protocol for reopening the offices from 1st June 2020.**

Following the discussions held under item 9 it was **RESOLVED** that a soft opening of the offices would take place with staff returning on a rota basis from 8th June and opening to the public on 1st July.

1. **To consider a recruitment timelines for current staff vacancies.**

The recruitment of a Community Fundraisers was discussed.

It was **RESOLVED** to agree the timeline as presented.

1. **To consider any emergency funding requests.**

The Clerk explained the s137 implications for the two funding requests that have been received. She explained that there is a set annual allowance for s137 funding.

Request A was discussed and the possibility of another organisation providing the service was suggested. It was **RESOLVED** to ask the organisation to explore other options and bring it back to Full Council if that fails.

Request B was discussed and it was **RESOLVED** to refuse the request. It was suggested that the Community Fundraiser, when appointed, works with the applicant to assist them in raising funds.

1. **To take a decision on whether to proceed with a proposal to enable a limited number of food stalls to operate (under strict COVID-19 guidelines) in the market square 2 days per week until SHDC reopens its Friday and Saturday markets.**

SHDC have refused to allow a market to go ahead in the Market Square. Possible alternative locations for stalls were discussed.

Cllr Hodgson proposed that the decision is deferred to the next FC meeting as the SHDC information has only just been received. It was **RESOLVED** to defer the decision to the next meeting.

1. **To consider any planning applications required (standing item).**

None.

1. **To note the Year end figures and updated budget monitor.**

Noted.

1. **To note the new format for Council agendas and minutes in the future in order to comply with accessibility requirements.**

Noted

1. **To consider a face mask design competition.**

Cllr Hodgson suggested offering a prize. The Clerk suggested the Events Officer is tasked with looking into costings and putting th and this was agreed.

1. **To consider previous expenditure under S137.**

The Clerk advised that this expenditure needs to be approved as s137 funding in retrospect.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the expenditure as s137 funding.

*The Council* ***RESOLVED*** *to exclude the press and public “by reason of the confidential nature of the business” to be discussed and in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.*

***Councillors logged out of the Zoom meeting and back into a separate secure meeting link.***

1. **To discuss any confidential items from committee minutes *(CONFIDENTIAL by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council).***
2. **To receive a staffing update from the Town Clerk.**
3. **To consider how to respond to the latest communication around unreturned equipment.**
4. **To note the date and time of the next meeting: Monday 15th June 2020. Public session from 6.30pm via Zoom.**

Noted.

Meeting ended at

Jacqi Hodgson

Mayor