

## STROUD TOWN COUNCIL

### **Minutes of the meeting of COUNCIL 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 7.30pm Online meeting via Zoom**

#### **Present**

Cllrs Simon Arundel, Kevin Cranston (Chair), Laurie Davies, Susan Fenton, Rob Green, Camilla Hale, John Marjoram, Steven Naumann, Stella Parkes, Alan Sage, Lucas Schoemaker, Haydn Sutton and Chas Townley.

#### **In attendance**

Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Kate Montgomery (Deputy Clerk), Stroud District Councillor Simon Pickering and one member of the public.

#### **Absent**

Cllrs John Bloxsom and Vanessa Price

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Geoffrey Andrews and Jess McQuail (personal) and from Gloucestershire County Councillor Eva Ward.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest or Requests for dispensations**

No interests were declared. There were no requests for dispensations.

#### **3. Minutes of meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

The minutes of the council meeting on 1st March 2021 were **approved** by the members present and will be signed as a correct record by the Chair at the next possible opportunity.

#### **4. Mayor's remarks**

The Mayor noted that this was the final Council meeting of the civic year and thanked retiring councillors for their service.

Special thanks were given to Cllr John Marjoram who would be retiring after 31 years' service, having been one of the first councillors elected when the Council was formed in 1990. It was noted that the presentation to Cllr Marjoram of the Freedom of Stroud, which has been delayed because of Covid-19 restrictions, would be made at the Annual Town Meeting.

#### **5. Questions from members of the public**

No questions were received.

#### **6. Verbal reports from District and County Councillors**

District Cllr Sutton reported that cycle tracks were under discussion at Stroud District Council and expressed concern about the number of new houses required by the new Local Plan.

Cllr Townley reported that the new Local Plan was due to be signed off by Stroud District Council on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. He noted that the housing requirement was slightly lower than

previously feared, but there remained pressure to put forward land for development. The draft Local Plan had a strong focus on carbon neutrality and mixed housing.

Cllr Pickering reported that Stroud District Council would be adopting a Tree Strategy, based on Gloucestershire County Council's targets. He also reported on the potential to develop a local recycling sorting facility, which could provide additional revenue. With regard to housing numbers he noted that sites can only be allocated if land owners put them forward and that demand for housing was growing because the number of households was increasing as a result of family breakdowns. If adopted he felt that the new Local Plan would be a cutting edge document.

Cllr Pickering also reported that household waste levels were up and some collections were being reorganised to support increased demand. It had been agreed to provide additional waste and recycling bags to support community litter pickers.

The Mayor thanked District Councillors Marjoram, Pickering and Townley, who were not standing for re-election, for their long service to the town.

Cllr Davies asked about overflowing bins in the town centre and was advised to report them direct to Stroud District Council.

## **7. Clerk's Report**

The Town Clerk's report was noted.

## **8. Civic calendar**

Dates for Council and Committee meetings for 2021-22 were **approved**.

## **9. Standing Orders**

The Clerk introduced a report recommending a minor change to Standing Orders to include text in the updated NALC template as recommended by the Council's Internal Auditor. Concern was expressed that the ability to use local suppliers could be compromised by including framework agreements. The Clerk explained that any such proposal would require Committee scrutiny, which would allow an opportunity to consider this.

It was **resolved** to adopt updated Standing Orders.

## **10. Internal audit report for 2020-21**

The internal auditor's report was noted. The Clerk reported on progress with actioning the auditor's recommendations.

## **11. Updated risk assessment**

It was **agreed** to approve an updated Risk Assessment as recommended by the Finance and Policy Committee.

## **12. Temporary changes to delegation arrangements**

The Clerk reported that the Covid-19 pandemic emergency legislation, which allowed Council and Committee meetings to be held virtually, was due to expire on 7<sup>th</sup> May, unless a High Court challenge on 21<sup>st</sup> April was successful. The Court was due to deliver its verdict by 30<sup>th</sup> April.

It was **resolved** that if the High Court challenge fails, from 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021 the following temporary changes would be made until such time as a risk assessment, reviewed by the Council's Health and Safety Working Group, confirms that face-to-face meetings can reasonably be held:

- responsibilities currently delegated to Committees to be delegated to the Town Clerk,
- Committees to meet remotely as advisory groups to support and advise the Clerk,
- Full Council to meet physically, but only to deal with business which cannot legally be delegated to the Clerk or which is required to be conducted at the Annual Council meeting:
  - election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Council
  - signing off annual accounts and AGAR
  - raising loans and setting the precept
  - incurring capital expenditure not specifically included in the Council's approved estimates of expenditure for the time being
  - the appointment or dismissal of the Town Clerk/RFO
  - appointment of Committees, Chairs and Deputy Chairs thereof
  - appointment of Representatives on Outside Bodies
  - annual Subscriptions
  - Standing Orders and Financial Regulations as to the conduct of the Council's business
  - the Committee Structure including terms of reference, membership and voting rights
  - confirming eligibility to use the General Power of Competence
- District and County Councillors, who would normally present verbal reports to Full Council to be requested to submit written reports in advance of meetings.
- The Town Clerk to keep a log of all decisions made under delegation, which will be reported to Full Council.

#### **Actions:**

Town Clerk to:

- investigate and if possible put in place live streaming of physical meetings, including the potential to receive virtual reports from District and County Councillors
- take advice from the Council's H&S advisors regarding arrangements for face to face meetings.
- seek alternative venues for Council meetings to allow for social distancing.

#### **13. Arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting**

It was noted that the rules about meeting in person also applied to the Annual Town Meeting, which under normal circumstances should be held between 1st March and the 1st June.

In view of the risk to health of holding a meeting at this time it was **resolved** to postpone the Annual Town (or parish) Meeting until after Covid19 restrictions are due to be lifted, i.e. not before 21<sup>st</sup> June.

**Action:**

Town Clerk to book a suitable venue to allow for social distancing.

**14. Election**

Notices of election, Statements of Persons Nominated and post nomination processes for the Town Council election on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 were noted.

**15. Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils request for AGM resolutions**

No resolutions were proposed.

**16. Committee reports**

The following reports, previously circulated, were received.

Consultations & Highways:	8 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
Community:	15 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
Finance and Policy:	22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2021
Environment:	30 <sup>th</sup> March 2021

The meeting ended at 20.30pm.

Chair.....

Date.....