

STROUD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of COUNCIL Monday, 9th March 2020, at 7.30pm

Present

Cllrs Geoffrey Andrews, Alice Campbell, Kevin Cranston (Chair), Steve Dechan, Rob Green, Camilla Hale, John Marjoram, Steven Naumann, Margaret Poulton, Vanessa Price, Alan Sage, Lucas Schoemaker, Haydn Sutton and Chas Townley.

Absent

Cllr Lunnon

In attendance

District Councillor Simon Pickering, Marianne Sweet (STC Communications), Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Kate Montgomery (Deputy Clerk), two representative from Earth Protector Towns, one member of the public and two members of the press

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Arundel, Bloxsom and Davies.

The Clerk advised that as Cllr Lunnon had not attended any meetings for 6 months she would automatically be disqualified from membership of the Council on 24th March 2020 unless the Council approved her continuing absence. No approval was granted.

2. Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations

None

3. Gifts and hospitality

None

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the council meeting on 13th January were **approved** by the members present and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

5. Mayor's remarks

The Mayor reported that he had attended some canal meetings and three councillor recruitment events. He had opened a new toy shop and attended a climate action conference at Hawkwood College. He had also met with Stroud police officers to see them using a new speed radar device that the Council had recently purchased for them.

As this was the last meeting of the civic year the Mayor thanked members for their service to the town, especially those not planning to stand for re-election. Cllr Cranston was thanked by members for his service to the Council as Mayor.

6. Questions from members of the public

None received.

7. District and County Councillors' reports

District Councillor Pickering reported that the council's budget had been approved. The District Council's Environment Committee had joined the informal Gloucestershire Joint Waste Committee. A 99.7% bin collection accuracy rate was reported, thanks to residents putting their rubbish out properly. A recent assessment had demonstrated that there are still high levels of food waste in residual waste. Further guidance on what plastics can be recycled is planned.

District Councillor Townley reported that the majority of council house repairs, (other than planned repairs) will be managed in house from April 2020.

Councillor Townley reported that a budget of £100,000 had been set for investigating the renewal of brownfield sites in the district, with the aim of easing pressure on greenfield sites. It was noted that the District Council's Strategy and Resources Committee would be considering a proposal from Stroud Preservation Trust for the Chapels at Stroud Cemetery in April.

District Councillor Sutton reported that the Council had bought a fleet of electric vehicles.

District Councillor Marjoram expressed his concern about the potential for councillors' role in planning decisions being restricted in future.

8. Clerk's report

The Clerk's report was noted.

The Clerk additionally reported that interviews for the Project Officer vacancy had been completed and the new Council website was now live.

9. Meeting dates for 2020-21

Dates for Council and Committee meetings were **approved**.

Action: Clerk

10. Earth Protector Towns Progress report

Representatives from the Earth Protector team were invited to present a verbal report. The Deputy Clerk and Cllr Green were thanked for their support and their involvement in establishing the Stroud CAN, (Community Action Network on climate and ecology), which would fulfil the role of a town steering group set out in the original proposal, and had already set out its principles and aims. Work on developing the Earth Protector Towns framework was ongoing.

Cllr Green reported that the Stroud CAN had met twice. Lots of actions had been completed by the Council and a growing list of projects was emerging. Relationships with neighbouring parishes, the District Council and the wider community were being

explored. It was felt that this work would grow in importance and more support for projects would be required.

In response to questions from members it was noted that: a report on divestment from fossils fuels from the Local Government Pension Scheme would be presented at the next Finance and Policy Committee meeting; there are separate strands of work relating to education and health; 5G is not under discussion; and further progress reports will be presented to the Environment Committee.

11. Expenditure from Carbon Reduction Fund

It was reported that there had been an underspend of £5,000 from the Carbon Reduction Fund, which could potentially be used to support the development of the Stroud CAN. It was **resolved** to delegate expenditure from the remaining budget to the Clerk, either to be spent before the end of the financial 2020-21 year, or placed in an earmarked reserve for future carbon reduction projects.

Action: Clerk

12. Committee reports

Reports of the following meetings, having been previously been circulated were received:

Community	27 th January 2020
Environment	20 th January 2020 and 3 rd March 2020
Consultations & Highways	3 rd February 2020 and 2 nd March 2020
Regeneration	13 th February 2020

13. Exclusion of members of the public

In view of the confidential nature of the remaining business, it was **resolved** to exclude members of the press and public for the remainder of the meeting.

It was then **resolved** to suspend the meeting in order to allow an extraordinary meeting to be held in the presence of the press and public.

The meeting reconvened to discuss the following item.

14. Report on the Stroud Subscription Rooms

The Clerk reported that a confidential report circulated with the meeting agenda was now out of date and explained progress made in the interim period. It was noted that the Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust were looking at a temporary closure to enable them to reconfigure their business plan in order to make significant costs savings to secure the future of the venue. It was further noted that government action in response to the coronavirus pandemic could potentially have a significant impact on the Subscription Rooms financial viability.

To cover the potential for the lease be surrendered it was **agreed** to authorise the Clerk to take action to secure the building if necessary. The Sub Rooms Working

Group were asked to explore options and costs for future use in this eventuality and report back to the Finance and Policy Committee or Full Council.

Action: Clerk

It was **agreed** that officers would continue to support the Trust and pursue funding opportunities.

Action: Clerk

The meeting closed at 9.00pm

Chair

Date