

STROUD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

MEETING OF COUNCIL

Monday, 9th December 2019, at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs **Geoffrey Andrews** (from item 2), **Simon Arundel**, **Alice Campbell**, **Kevin Cranston (Chair)**, **Steve Dechan**, **Rob Green**, **Camilla Hale**, **John Marjoram** (from item 7), **Steven Naumann**, **Margaret Poulton**, **Alan Sage**, **Lucas Schoemaker** and **Chas Townley**

Absent: Cllrs Lunnon and Price

In attendance: Gloucestershire County Councillor Eva Ward, Marianne Sweet (STC Communications), Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), two representatives of Lansdown Hall and Gallery and one member of the public

Action

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bloxsom, Davies and Sutton

2. Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations

None

Cllr Andrews arrived during this item

3. Gifts and hospitality

None

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the extraordinary council meeting on 20th November 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 recently joined local police officers for a night time "ride along". He had been impressed by the professionalism of the officers he met and shocked by how few officers were available to respond to incidents in the Stroud area and the amount of time they were having to spend dealing with social and mental health issues. He had also attended an event hosted by the PCC and Chief Constable in Stroud.

The Mayor had opened the Town Council organised hustings and attended a Christmas event at Hawkwood College, where he had met a

charity which supports former services personnel through building renovation projects.

6. Questions from members of the public

None received.

7. District and County Councillors' reports

District Councillor Townley reported that the District Council are looking at how to speed up the process of improving the energy efficiency of local housing stock, both council and privately owned properties. It was noted that about 30,000 properties will need to be improved to achieve a minimum level C rating.

Cllr Marjoram arrived during this item, but had nothing to report.

County Councillor Ward reported that she had joined a new public participation task group, which she hoped would lead to more meaningful dialogue.

Cllr Ward thanked the Council's project officer for her support on road safety.

Cllr Ward reported that a motion to Gloucestershire County Council about divestment from fossil fuels had not been entirely successful, but she had been impressed by the approach being taken by the Brunel Partnership towards pension fund investments.

Cllr Ward reflected on the demand for care home and extra care spaces in Stroud following the closure of Gloucestershire County Council homes. It was noted that a project to provide supportive lodgings for care leavers is being piloted.

8. Clerk's report

The Clerk's report was noted.

Some members were critical of the format of the Town Council organised hustings, questioned the Council's role in organising it and suggested that it had been politically biased. It was noted that promoting democratic engagement forms part of the Council's draft strategy and that the questions submitted by members of the public had been independently vetted and filtered by the Clerk and the neutral chair of the event.

The agenda was reordered as follows.

10. Development works at Lansdown Hall

A proposal to progress improvement works at Lansdown Hall had been referred to full Council by the Finance, Community and Policy Committee. An updated business plan and notes on fundraising had

been provided by the Lansdown Hall and Gallery trust at the request of the Committee.

The Committee had also requested further information on the potential carbon footprint of the project. The Clerk relayed information provided by the Council's project managers, CBRE, which concluded that a BREEAM/sustainability consultant would be required. The Clerk noted that SWEA had previously reported on the building, before earlier works had been completed and would be asked to update their recommendations.

Clerk

There was a general discussion about the benefits of the project including: making the building more sustainable in terms of community use; improving access and safety; and making the building more financially viable.

The complementary nature of Lansdown Hall and the Subscription Rooms was considered and it was suggested that there may be opportunities for the two Trusts to collaborate more.

The Clerk expressed concern about the likelihood of securing listed building consent and raising all of the funds in time to commence work in the summer of 2020; it was felt that 2021 would be more likely. Representatives of Lansdown Hall and Gallery were invited to comment on the timetable and it was noted that an early decision on the programme would be needed to help them manage bookings.

It was **resolved** to approve a budget for the project and to progress a listed building and planning application. It was noted that the application would also need to include new lighting and railings in Bank Gardens.

Clerk

It was **resolved** to delegate approval of the project programme to the Clerk in consultation with the Lansdown Hall Working Group.

Clerk

9. 5-year Strategy

Subject to a few minor corrections to the draft, a 5-year strategy was **approved**.

Clerk

11. Draft budget for 2020–21

A paper correcting some data relating to the NDP reserve was tabled by the Clerk.

It was noted that in preparing the draft, assumptions had been made about the national pay settlement and the tax base, which would potentially be resolved before the budget and precept would need to be finalised in January 2020. Potential relocation costs and the outcome of a staff review, which was due to be considered by the Personnel Committee, would all have to be considered when finalising the budget.

The Clerk was asked to review the budget for elections and NDP projects for consideration at the January meeting. A general desire to minimise any increase in the precept was expressed.

Clerk

It was **agreed** to consult residents on the current draft budget. The Clerk was asked to prepare a consultation document, in consultation with the Mayors and Committee Chairs, to be published after the General Election.

Clerk

Cllr Townley reported that The Door Youth Project had been publicly critical of the Council's decision to stop funding their organisation on equality grounds. The Clerk reported that a proposal for a participatory budgeting project for youth activities is currently being drawn up, as requested by the Finance, Community and Policy Committee.

12. Committees Terms of Reference

Subject to a few minor changes to the draft, updated Committee Terms of Reference were **approved**.

Clerk

13. Updates to Standing Orders

Updated Standing Orders, taking into account the new Committee Terms of Reference were **approved**.

Clerk

14. Updated calendar for Committee meetings up to May 2020

An updated calendar was **approved**. It was noted that it might be necessary to change the date of the Annual Council meeting in May 2020, if the election date is changed to take account of an additional bank holiday commemorating the anniversary of VE day.

Clerk

15. Grant for volunteer co-ordinator role

Cllr Hale introduced a proposal for a volunteering project, which had been considered by the Sub Rooms Working Group and recommended by the Finance, Community and Policy Committee. It was noted that some preliminary work on volunteering had been done by the Book Festival.

It was noted that the purpose of the role would be to develop volunteering in community venues and at arts and cultural events, starting off at the Subscription Rooms. The grant would fund the salary/PAYE and pension contributions for a volunteer co-ordinator post for 6 months, volunteer training and IT equipment if required.

A grant of £10,000 to the Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust for a trial project on volunteer recruitment and development was **approved**.

Clerk

It was further **agreed** that a project steering group would be set up including Cllr Hale and representatives from the Subscription Rooms and Lansdown Hall. The group would be required to provide a written progress report to the new Community Committee after 4 months, to enable consideration of further funding beyond the first 6 months.

Clerk

16. Exclusion of members of the public

In view of the confidential nature of the remaining business, it was **resolved** to exclude members of the public for item 12.

12. Potential office relocation

The Clerk reported that an offer had been made on a property in Stroud, but not yet accepted. It was **resolved** to authorise the Clerk to negotiate on the offer if necessary, up to an agreed ceiling, in consultation with the Mayor and the Chair of the Finance, Community and Policy Committee, subject to survey and due diligence and to refer back to full Council with a detailed financial plan for final approval.

Clerk

The Clerk was requested to continue to research alternatives, including potential remodelling of Thanet House.

Clerk

The meeting closed at 9.25pm

Chair

Date