



Tuesday 27th April 2021

Remotely via Zoom

7pm

Present

Cllrs Mosson (Chairman), Allan, Allen, Ashley-Higgins, Briggs, Cairns, Cooper, Cummins, Ellis, Griffin, Hodgins, Horrocks, Jolley, Mackey, Parmar, Pears, Pocock, Raut, K Ward, S Ward and Wood.

In Attendance

Olive O'Sullivan –Chief Executive Officer, Mary Watkins-Finance Manager and Natalia Gorman – Senior Administrator & Projects Officer.

There were three members of the public and two members of press present.

Members of the public were invited to ask their questions.

Liz Parry asked for an outline of restrictions that will be in place for attendance to the Annual Town Meeting and what arrangements will be made if too many people wish to attend.

The CEO responded that attendance would comply with Government restrictions on indoor public gatherings. Restrictions set out under step three of the Governments roadmap out of lockdown, include 50% capacity limits and social distancing. Officers are meeting with staff at the Trinity Centre next week to discuss the room set up and adherence to Government guidance and any restrictions that may be set out from the Diocese. In order to manage the numbers attending, people will be asked to register their attendance in advance and places will be limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

84 Apologies for Absence

The CEO reported apologies from Cllrs Puri and Simper.

Resolved to accept the apologies.

85 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

86 Mayors Announcements

The Mayor reported that she had hosted a workshop with local women, who shared their stories, to celebrate international women's day and marked the national day of reflection on the 23rd March.

87 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council held on 23rd February 2021 be signed as a true record.

88 Matters Arising

The CEO updated Council that the land surrounding Walmley War Memorial has now been transferred and that the contract opportunity for the improvement works is now advertised on the Town Council website and Government contract finder website.

89 Questions from Members

Cllr Wood stated that in 2022, the Queen is set to celebrate 70 years on the throne and asked if there any special arrangements the Council will make to celebrate her platinum jubilee.

The CEO asked if there were any ideas that could be explored via the Britain in Bloom working group. Cllr Wood confirmed that the Bloom working group could consider options and suggested that Vesey Gardens could be a centre piece with an installation of a sculpture or floral decoration to celebrate. Other ideas included tree planting along the avenue and installation of benches with the Queens Crest. Cllr K Ward suggested that as the Queen visited Sutton Coldfield for the Scouting jubilee, Birmingham City Council could be approached for permission to plant a tree by the jubilee stone in the park.

Cllr Pocock asked for an update on the Town Council office lease, and what options there may now be for relocating to a more publicly accessible office possibly in the town centre.

The CEO stated that in July 2020, Strategy and Resources Committee approved that the rented office space be extended. Discussions are taking place with the landlord about taking that additional space on the 1st July 2021 and to extend the office lease to end of June 2023 with a rolling 6 month rent clause. The Council remains committed to finding a suitable, permanent home for the Town Council.

Cllr Pocock asked for an update on what the proposal is for future meetings of the Town Council, on the presumption that we need to follow legislation and continue in person meetings from the 7th May 2021. He also asked what the technical options are, should Council wish to adopt a policy for livestreaming, to livestream meetings or record and place videos on the website for later viewing.

The CEO confirmed that while awaiting the outcome of the court case last week, that seeks clarification of the Local Government Act 1972, arrangements for in person meetings are going ahead. As the Town Hall is currently being used as a Vaccination Centre, meetings will take place primarily at the Trinity Centre and will ask for advance registration of attendance to ensure adherence to restrictions in place. In order to Livestream or record meetings in a professional and appropriate way, there are a number of practical and resource considerations. This would include purchase of equipment, software, license, staff and technical support, in addition it would require a stable and high speed internet connection at the meeting venue and more bandwidth on the Town Council's website to broadcast. A business case would have to be prepared before this service could be procured.

Cllr Mackey spoke to provide some background and clarified when the country went into lockdown a Regulation was passed that gave provision for Councils to meet remotely until the 7th May 2021. There has been no new legislation around Council meetings and the interpretation of attendance and place of Council meetings in the Local Government Act 1972, which predates the internet, is being challenged in the high court, this challenge is supported by Government.



90 Minutes of Committees

a) **Planning and Highways** held on 2nd March 2021

c) **Planning and Highways** held on 6th April 2021

Resolved to note the minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee.

b) **Amenities, Leisure and Community Services** held on 11th March 2021

Resolved to note the minutes of the Amenities, Leisure and Community Grant Committee.

d) **Strategy and Resources Committee** held on 20th April 2021

Cllr S Ward informed Council that Committee had reviewed the Internal Audit report for financial year 2020/21.

Resolved to note the final report from the internal auditors and the signed internal Audit section of the annual return for financial year 2020/21.

91 Annual Town Meeting and Council Meetings

The Annual Meeting of Electors and Annual Meeting of the Town Council are scheduled to take place on 18th May 2021.

92 Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

The CEO explained the Annual Audit Process and set out the responsibilities of Council in approving the Statements. The Annual Accounts (Section 2 of the annual return) sets out headline figures and full details have been reported to Strategy and Resources Committee. The public inspection of accounts period will commence on 3rd June 2021.

By approving the Annual Governance Statement, Council are confirming it has:

- Prepared its accounting statement in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulation;
- made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge;
- only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper practices in doing so;
- has given all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about the Council's accounts;
- Considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly;
- Arranged for a competent independent person to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of the Council;
- Responded to any matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit;
- Disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the end if relevant.

Resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement (section 1 of the annual return) and that this be signed by the Mayor and the CEO on behalf of the Council.

It was noted that arrangements would be made for the CEO to sign the Annual Governance Statement after the meeting.



93 Annual Accounts 2020/21

Resolved to approve the Annual Accounting Statement (section 2 of the annual return) and that this be signed by the Mayor on behalf of the Council.

94 Use of Chief Executive Officer's Delegated Powers

No use of delegated powers was reported.

95 Accounts for Payment

Resolved to approve the accounts for payments, note the payments made using delegated powers and that Cllrs Pears and S Ward be appointed to complete authorisation.

96 Working Groups

Cllr Pocock asked for clarification around the Health and Wellbeing Partnership. The CEO confirmed that it was initially proposed that it would be a Sub-Committee but following further discussions at Amenities Committee and Council it was set up as a partnership. The CEO confirmed that the partnership was established by the Council and minutes were reported directly to the Amenities Committee.

There was a discussion around disbanding the dormant Neighbourhood Planning Working Group. The CEO confirmed the working group, that was established in 2016, was looking at a Neighbourhood Plan Strategy for Sutton Coldfield as a whole. A masterplan has now been produced for the Town Centre which is soon to be adopted by Birmingham City Council as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Cllr Pocock raised concerns that the update did not give notice to Council to consider disbanding the working group and asked that it be deferred to the Planning and Highways Committee.

Cllrs Horrocks spoke in support of disbanding it now as the working group had not met for several years and, as three members of the group are no longer Councillors, a meeting could not be convened as it would not be quorate. She stated that disbanding the dormant group was just a formality.

The CEO advised that the Council could note the update and take a resolution to disband the dormant group and that this does not preclude a new proposal coming forward in the future for a working group to convene to consider Neighbourhood Planning.

Resolved to note the update Working Group update and disband the Neighbourhood Planning Working Group.

97 Future Meeting Dates

Resolved to approve the meeting dates timetable for 2021/22.

The meeting ended at 7:45pm.