

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FULL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 29th APRIL 2020 AT 6.00PM
Due to current government regulations this meeting was held remotely
using video conferencing

Present: Councillor

Graham Titterington
Matthew Bayliss
Ginny Boxall
Suzie Burns
Gideon Cristofoli
Paul Crossley
Sharon Cullen
Amanda Durley
Graham Hill
Pam Jones
Christopher Lawrence
Richard Platt

Town Mayor

In attendance:

Leah Coney
Patricia Harris
Natalie Beckell
County Councillor Andrew Joy
District Councillors Steve Hunt
Lisa Hilan – The Kings Arms
3 Members of the public
1 Member of the Press

Town Clerk
Finance & Admin Manager
Community Officer

277 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Pam Bradford.

278 Town Mayor's Announcements

Prior to the Town Mayor's Announcements, the Mayor reminded councillors that if they wish to speak, they must raise their hand.

The Town Mayor made the following announcements:

1. Welcome everyone to the meeting, including the public. All questions from members of the public will be called under item 7 of the agenda. All members wishing to speak should raise their hands visibly and I will call you one at a time. Please mute your computers when not speaking, using the "Alt A" key
2. Thanks to ATC staff for their extraordinary efforts during the COVID19 crisis. In addition I would like to thank all councillors for the work they are doing to help their communities
3. Thanks to all volunteers in Alton working on COVID19 relief projects, and the people of

Alton for their observance of social distancing restrictions.

4. As members of the council are aware one member of the grounds team was very ill in hospital with Covid 19 but is now back home recovering and we wish him and his family all the very best. As a result of this illness, several other members of staff had to go into isolation but I am happy to report that they are all well and are now back at work.
5. In particular I would like to thank Bushy Leaze and the Kings Arms for their excellent work in difficult circumstances. The proceeds of the Mayor's charity appeal over the last 12 months will be distributed to them at the end of May, irrespective of what we decide at item 8 of this evening's agenda. If I am confirmed as Mayor, I will retain these two charities for my appeal over the coming year.
6. Review - since the last full council meeting we have held the Pancake race, the Civic Service, and the Electors' Meeting (under strict social distancing regulations). All ATC meetings and committee meetings are now proceeding as planned using video conferencing, but please check each meeting notice for the precise starting time.

279 **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader made the following announcements:

1. We are meeting under extremely unusual circumstances tonight and the fact we are able to have this meeting at all is due entirely to the tireless work of our staff. We offer them our heartfelt thanks; their ability to adapt to continually changing government guidelines has been exemplary.
2. Many organisations are feeling the pinch during the lockdown and the Town Council is no exception. While Government have offered extra funding for local authorities this does not include Town and Parish Councils. The Clerk, in her Covid-19 update report, indicates that we are looking at a loss of income of about £41,000. We are fortunate we have reserves but that still means we will have to look carefully at the absolute necessity of incurring any extra costs.
3. As Chair of Open Spaces, I have called an Extraordinary meeting for Wednesday, 6th May at 11.00am, which will be a virtual meeting like tonight. This has been prompted by a variety of concerns raised by members of the public, including the closure of the Public Gardens. As this is not on the agenda tonight, I would respectfully request that all discussion is held over until the Open Spaces meeting next week.
4. A concern had been raised about the use of the Community Hospital for Covid-19 patients, I wrote to Nick Broughton, the CEO of Southern Health ... his response was included on our week 5 edition of the Weekly Altonian.
5. I must commend all those local people who have responded in a variety of ways to support the staff at the hospital with gifts, ranging from food, and toiletries to home sewn PPE. I personally would also like to thank those organisations who have provided portable defibrillators for local GPs following a call on social media.

280 **Minutes of Last Meetings**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2020 were approved and will be signed by the Mayor at a later date due to current restrictions in place.

281 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

Councillor Gideon Cristofoli declared a personal interest in Agenda item 10 (Grant Application – Alton Mutual Aid but stated he would partake in the discussion and voting before Council as this was not a pecuniary interest.

282 Changes to Standing Orders

In recognition of the problem of holding and attending meetings, the Government included s.78 in the Coronavirus Act 2020. This section gave the Secretary of State the power to make Regulations to make provisions for the holding of meetings. As a result, the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) came in to force on 4 April 2020, enabling the Town Council to alter its Standing Orders to set out how these regulations would apply locally. As a result, a new Section 29 has been included in Standing Orders (a full copy is contained in the agenda papers) for Member approval.

On the proposal of Councillor Pam Jones, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED

To approve the amended Standing Orders which will remain in place until May 2021.

The motion was carried unanimously.

283 Questions to the Council from Members of the Public

1. Mr. Dodd clarified that the Public Gardens and Kings Pond will be on the Agenda for the Extra-ordinary meeting of the Open Spaces Committee called for Wednesday, 6th May at 11.00 a.m. and whether he would be entitled to speak at that meeting or was he required to put his questions in writing prior to the Town Clerk. It was confirmed that he could do both and the Town Clerk would send him the meeting details in order that he could participate. (Mr Dodd then left the meeting)
2. Penny Hames spoke in support of Agenda Item 10 (Grant Application: Alton Mutual Aid) and responded to a number of questions put forward by councillors.

284 Postponement of the Annual Meeting of the Council in May

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) came in to force on 4 April 2020 and will remain until 7 May 2021, unless further changes are required.

Town and Parish councils in England are included within the definition of “local authority” in the 2020 Regulations. Importantly, though, the Annual Meeting of the Council is not included within the definition and, as such, there is nothing permitting it to meet remotely. In line with the current Government guidance this therefore means that the Annual Meeting should not take place in person.

Regulation 4 – Provides that where an appointment would otherwise be made or is required to be made at an annual meeting of a local authority, the appointment continues until the next annual meeting of the authority or until such time as that authority may determine (Regulation 4 (2)). This would apply to the election of the chairman, the first business at the annual council meeting.

On that basis the Mayor and Deputy Mayor confirmed that they were both content to remain in their respective posts as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council until the annual meeting is held in 2021. In addition it is proposed that the composition and membership of committees also remain as is currently in place, for the next 12 months until May 2021.

On the proposal of Councillor Pam Jones, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED

To approve the deferment of the May 2020 Annual Meeting of the Council for 12 months, with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and all other postholders and committee membership structure to continue unchanged until the Annual Meeting in 2021.

The motion was carried unanimously.

285 Covid 19 update including Budget adjustments 2020/21

The Town Clerk tabled a detailed Covid 19 update report to the Council for their information and confirmed that there is currently no cash flow issue, nor do we foresee one and the council remains solvent and fully operational. In response to a councillor requesting full details of the savings made due to cancelling events the Town Clerk prepared a response which would be circulated to councillors after the meeting and would be included in any further report figures submitted to the Council.

NOTED

286 Grant Application – Alton Mutual Aid

The grant application submitted by Alton Mutual Aid for £750 was debated at length with a resultant amended motion to approve a grant of up to £750 payable in 2 tranches being tabled. On the proposal of Councillor Graham Titterington, seconded by Councillor Pam Jones it was

RESOLVED

To approve a grant up to £750 to Alton Mutual Aid payable in 2 tranches upon production of mileage receipts and expenses paid to volunteers for mileage.

The motion was carried 9:3 (in favour Councillors Titterington, Boxall, Burns, Crossley, Cullen, Durley, Jones, Lawrence & Platt: against Councillors Bayliss, Cristofoli and Hill).

Therefore, on the proposal of Councillor Graham Titterington, seconded by Councillor Pam Jones the amended resolution was placed before Members. It was

RESOLVED

To approve a grant up to £750 to Alton Mutual Aid payable in 2 tranches upon production of mileage receipts and expenses paid to volunteers for mileage.

287 Youth Project – Update Report by Lisa Hilan

A comprehensive report accompanied the Agenda papers for Full Council and Councillors thanked Lisa Hilan for an informative and uplifting report on the activities of the Kings Arms.

NOTED**288 Internal Auditors Report for Financial Year End and Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit**

Councillors thanked the Town Clerk for the comprehensive reports contained within the Agenda Supplementary Papers.

- 1) The final 2019/20 report from the Internal Auditor covering the period to the 31st March 2020 is enclosed within Members bundles. Members are requested to receive the report and approve its content.
- 2) The review of effectiveness of internal audit is enclosed in Councillor bundles.

On the proposal of Councillor Sharon Cullen, seconded by Councillor Ginny Boxall it was

RESOLVED**To approve:**

- 1. the content of the Internal Auditor's report.**
- 2. review of effectiveness of internal audit**

289 Statement of Governance 2019/20

Members were required to read the statement of governance and satisfy themselves that there is a sound system of internal control including the preparation of the accounting statements.

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Titterington, seconded by Councillor Pam Jones it was

RESOLVED

That Councillors confirmed their positive agreement to the completion of boxes 1 – 9 on the Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) with the “Yes” box being ticked to each of the nine questions before them.

290 Statement of Accounts to Financial Year end 31st March 2020

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2020

The balance sheet was presented for sign off by the Chairman of the Council and the RFO (Responsible Financial Officer, Mrs Leah Coney – Town Clerk).

Income & Expenditure

The Income and Expenditure Report for the Year Ended 31st March 2020 was presented for approval; this illustrates the Operating Income and Expenditure for the council's financial year ending 31st March 2020 against the 2019 figures for the same period.

Bank Reconciliation Statement as at 31st March 2020

The Bank Reconciliation Statements were presented with a closing balance of £63,249.03 (Unity), £444,605.04 (CCLA) and £157.07 (Petty cash) which requires signing off on behalf of the council that the figures presented reconcile with the original bank statement which will be given to the Chairman on the night.

Payments over £500

A report for all payments over £500, issued between 1st January 2020 and 31st March 2020 in respect of invoices and grant cheques was tabled.

Asset Register

The Asset Register was tabled for approval

Accountability and Governance Annual Return (AGAR) Section 2

The completed section 2 of the AGAR was presented for approval.

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Titterington, seconded by Councillor Ginny Boxall it was

RESOLVED to approve

- 1) The balance sheet dated 31st March 2020**
- 2) The Income and Expenditure account to 31st March 2020**
- 3) The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit Account**
- 4) The Payments over £500 covering 1st January to the 31st March 2020**
- 5) The updated Asset Register for 31st March 2020**
- 6) The Accountability & Governance Annual Return Section 2**

291 Appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2020/21

Town Clerk recommended continuing with the current internal audit regime; however, given that the LightaTouch have been appointed to undertake audit services for the Town Council for the last six years, an independent third party will be asked to attend and scrutinise the year end audit visit to ensure the processes undertaken by the internal auditors remains effective. (This was due to be undertaken as part of the audit process for year end 2019/20 but due to current restrictions was not possible)

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Titterington, seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley it was

RESOLVED

To approve the re-appointment of LightaTouch at a cost of £1,725 for the forthcoming financial year.

292 To receive a report from and ask questions of the District and County Council Representatives

County Council Report:

Councillor Andrew Joy presented the following report:

Preparation of this report to Alton TC's Meeting on 29 April 2020 has continued to be affected by rapidly evolving Govt guidance and policy. As such it represents a snapshot in a moving picture. This report therefore focuses primarily on those headline aspects of significance to the County as a whole. Specific local matters can be addressed through questions either as part of the meeting or in subsequent written responses.

Pandemic Working Arrangements

Furlough arrangements do not apply to Local Govt. The vast majority of HCC Staff are working remotely from home but remaining in video conference and/or phone contact with Depts. Some staff have been redeployed to priority tasks. The Corporate and Departmental Management Teams continue to function with sharp and agile focus on Covid19 related demands.

HCC is a first response part of Hampshire's Local Resilience Forum (LRF) alongside Fire & Rescue, the Police,

The Council's Emergency Planning Dept has had a constantly evolving programme of contingency plan development and testing. This included a pandemic, resulting in well-understood and robust changes of focus and organisation.

HCC's Cabinet has continued to be briefed and meets regularly in video conference.

Formal and Public Meetings such as Cabinet and Full Council continue to be planned under video broadcast arrangements approved by Govt.

Funding

The second £1.6Bn tranche of additional Covid-19 Local Govt Funding has resulted in a changed distribution to the first, HCC receiving £24.3m compared with £29.6m. The additional costs of Social Care, support for Community Transport, loss of Business Income etc will still result in a substantial shortfall. HCC remains committed to previously agreed transformational change programmes.

Members' Devolved Community Support Budgets have been maintained at £8k per Cllr, supplemented by a further £2k from other funding streams in recognition of increased local pressures.

Social Care

The Govt's 'lockdown' continues. The consequent social pressures of isolation and social distancing continue to create substantial demands for Community Support. HCC operates a highly efficient HantsHelp4Vulnerable helpline and is working closely with communities through District/Borough 'Hubs' to ensure that all vulnerable or 'isolated' residents are

supported with access to food, medical and welfare needs. These hubs interact with local charities and volunteer organisations and groups which are proving remarkably effective in providing community cohesion.

The Council's Care homes are understandably under significant pressure with reduced staffing working in demanding conditions requiring PPE. Supplies of appropriate PPE have been maintained.

Highways

During a period of materials supply shortages and with a quieter road network, Hants Highways has undertaken a substantial programme of attending to emergency repairs using specialist machinery with redeployed crews. Now that material supplies are improving the Dept is beginning to resume construction and infrastructure schemes. The opportunity has been taken to line paint appreciation and warning messages on roads adjacent to NHS and Care facilities.

Household Waste & Recycling Centres (HWRCs)

Household waste and recyclables weekly collections have largely continued under arrangements contracted by Districts and Boroughs. Hampshire's HWRCs currently remain closed to conform with formal Govt policy and guidance. HCC and contractors, Veolia, have developed contingency plans to allow for reopening selected HWRCs on a controlled socially distanced basis once Govt legislation allows. It is understood that this legal change may soon be made but is anticipated to take up to 14 days to implement. Any reopening is expected to allow for only a limited range of materials, a single visit per day and no staff assistance. Vehicles will still need to be registered for Hampshire HWRC access.

District Council Report:

District Councillor Steve Hunt presented the following report stating that a number of items had already been covered by County Councillor Andrew Joy and he would, therefore, not repeat them.

County & District Cabinet Meetings

The two councils are operating differently. Hampshire County Council are still holding their Cabinet Meetings virtually whereas EHDC are not. He has put in writing his concerns as to why District are not holding their Cabinet meetings virtually and a response is awaited.

Government Grants

EHDC are to be commended on their prompt payment of Government grants to all eligible businesses and charitable organisations.

Environmental Health

With no visits being undertaken due to current restrictions, it is difficult to provide advice to residents who are acting against guidelines and lighting bonfires. Whilst a slight increase of 4 has been recorded in incidents of reported fly tipping in the district it may well be that due to social distancing and lock-down, other incidents may not, as yet, been reported.

District Finances

In raising questions with the Leader of the District Council as well as the Financial Officer he had been informed that he must wait until Cabinet meet at the end of May.

The Chairman thanked both County Councillor Andrew Joy and District Councillor Steve Hunt for their attendance.

Councillor Joy added that VE Day next week cannot be celebrated in the way that it was envisaged, however, County are showing a commemorative film which will be broadcast on line. He will ensure that details are provided to the Town Clerk for circulation.

NOTED

293 **To receive the Minutes from the following Committees**

The Minutes of the following committees were received and noted without comment:

Open Spaces Committee – 12th February 2020

Community Committee – 19th February 2020

Planning & Transport – 26th February, 25th March and 22nd April 2020

Councillor Graham Hill sought confirmation from the Chair of Planning & Transport that when two major planning applications come to the Council, namely the Veolia Processing Plant at Froyle and Molson Coors that these are considered by Full Council and not the Planning & Transport Committee. Councillor Graham Titterington confirmed that the Veolia application will be considered by Full Council, but that the Molson Coors was still “*under consideration*” and councillors would be advised in due course.

NOTED

The meeting finished at 7.52 p.m.