

Present:	Councillor Pam Jones	Town Mayor
	Ginny Boxall	
	Paul Crossley	
	Sharon Cullen	
	Graham Hill	
	Lewis Jones	
	Richard Platt	
	Graham Titterington	

In attendance: County Councillor Andrew Joy
Lisa Hillan (The King's Arms)
Leah Coney - Town Clerk
Pat Harris – Finance & Administration Manager

240 **Apologies for Absence**

241 Town Mayor's Announcements

1. Please turn off or silence your mobile phones.
2. I was delighted to attend the virtual Kings Arms AGM on Saturday and to meet all those supporting our young people. I look forward to hearing more from Lisa later in the meeting.
3. I am holding a Civic service at Alton Methodist Church on Sunday 20th March at 3.00pm. Invitations will be sent out soon.

242 Leader's Announcements

The Leader, Councillor Graham Titterington, made the following announcements:

1. Thanked the Officers of the council for their excellent work in maintaining the finances of the council and preparing next year's budget.
2. The Palace Cinema has made a major contribution to the social and cultural life of Alton for many years. I would like to thank Raj on behalf of the council for what has been a labour of love for much of this time. He has promised to try to maintain the cinema until the new

cinema in Farnham opens in the summer. There has been a lot of talk in the town about maintaining a local cinema. I am sure we wish those people who are trying to provide ongoing local access to films well, but this is not a project that ATC has the resources or specialist skills to participate in.

243 **Minutes of the last meetings held on 28th October 2021**

The Minutes of the meetings held on the 28th October 2021 were approved and were signed by the Town Mayor.

244 **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

The Town Clerk granted Dispensations to all Town Councillors in respect of Agenda Item 8 Budget and Precept request 2022/23 for ratification.

Councillor Sharon Cullen declared a personal interest in Agenda item 9 - Battle of Alton 2022 as her husband is one of the organisers. Councillor Lewis Jones also declared a personal interest in the same item as Alton Rugby Club is also involved with the event. The Town Clerk confirmed that they could both remain in the room and take part in any discussion and also vote on the resolution before the Council.

245 **Questions to the Council from Members of the Public**

None received.

246 **To ratify the Community Grant applications over £5,000**

Members were requested to ratify those grants over £5,000 for the 2022/23 financial year which had been approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 19th January 2022 payable in two tranches on 1st April 2022 and 1st October 2022.

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

RESOLVED to ratify the following Community Grant applications over £5,000 (five thousand pounds) each payable in two tranches of the same amount on 1st April 2022 and 1st October 2022:

Alton Community Association £8,000 (eight thousand pounds) payable in two tranches of £4,000 each

Homestart Hampshire £6,000 (six thousand pounds) payable in two tranches of £3,000 each

Bushy Leaze £9,000 (nine thousand pounds) payable in two tranches of £4,500 each

247 **Budget and Precept 2022/23**

The draft budget and precept request for 2022/23 (updated following the budget workshop on 12th January and the Policy and Resources Committee on the 19th January) were included in Members bundles. Members were advised that the figures presented for approval have been amended from those presented on the 19th January to take account of a £273 income line omission indicated by Councillor Christopher Lawrence which has now been corrected. No other changes have been made.

Also included within the spreadsheet was the mid-year revised budget for 2021/22 and an indicative budget for 2023/24 and 2024/25 along with an explanations sheet and a copy of the current balance sheet. A single option which amounts to a 4.5% increase in precept was presented for approval.

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

RESOLVED to ratify

- 1. The budget and precept request for 2022/23 in the amount of £781,194.85**
- 2. Approve the revised budget for 2021/22 to enable the appropriate virements to be actioned**

248 **Battle of Alton**

Members were requested to decide, on the information before them, whether to agree to the staging of the Battle of Alton Re-enactment in May of this year or whether to postpone it for a further year. The event was postponed in 2020 and 2021 due to covid restrictions.

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

RESOLVED

Approval of this event for May 2022

Members requested that a map of where the events were taking place would be appropriate given the number of visitors anticipated to the town.

249 **Machinery Purchase**

Members received quotations for an ex-hire mower, requested by the Grounds Team to aid with cut and collect work on the council's open spaces sites. The machine is a 2021 Ex-Hire Amazone GHS2100 Drive Flail which cuts and collects the grass, mounted on the back of our main tractor. Members learned that this additional piece of machinery will give added flexibility to their routine cutting on larger open spaces and will also be specifically used for the mowing regime on the newly acquired Will Hall Farm Meadow.

The funds for the purchase were recommended to be taken from Will Hall Meadow commuted sum, leaving £139,758 funds remaining.

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

RESOLVED

To approve the use of £20,950 from the Will Hall Meadow commuted sum to purchase the cut and collect device as detailed.

250 **Town Council Insurance 2022-2024**

Following the publication of an Invitation to Tender for the Town Council Insurance 2022-2024 with effect from 1st April 2022 the tender was submitted to four insurers which offer to the local council sector and two responses were received. Comparison details together with an evaluation sheet were presented to councillors in their bundles.

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

RESOLVED

To approve Zurich to provide the Town Council insurance policy for the next 3 years with the option for a further 2-year extension at £21,990.78 per annum

251 **Pot Hole repairs at Anstey Park (Capital Reserve)**

Following the budget workshop, Members indicated that whilst a full resurfacing of Anstey Park remains an aspiration, at this time interim remedial works should be undertaken, limited only to those required under Health and Safety. Whilst the majority are currently minor defects only, if repaired now, they will not develop into more significant and/or potentially dangerous defects over the coming months.

Of the three contractors invited to quote, Company A returned a price of £9,400, Company B a price of £15,500 and there was no response from Company C – quotations were included in Members bundles.

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

RESOLVED

To approve the appointment of Westmoreland at a cost of £9,400 subject to references being taken up and for the funds to be taken from the Capital Reserve to repair all of the pot holes currently evident at Anstey Park.

Members requested that a 12-month defect guarantee against workmanship be required from the approved contractor.

252 **Youth Project – updated report by Lisa Hillan**

The report by Lisa Hillan was tabled with Members having the opportunity to ask questions of Lisa. Councillors congratulated The Kings Arms on what they have achieved in just over 2 years of establishing the Alton facility. For those councillors who had attended the AGM on 29th January they had had the opportunity of viewing a video that had been produced which provided an insight into the work of The Kings Arms but for those who had not, Lisa confirmed

that this would shortly be uploaded to their website. The report was noted by Members with the Chair thanking Lisa for her attendance and answering questions.

NOTED

253 **Alton and District Community Resilience Fund**

The Alton & District Community Resilience Fund Panel report was tabled which detailed that 47 applications for assistance had been received since the launch of the fund back in July 2020. Donations have continued to be made to the fund and a balance of £9,165 remains in the account. The Rev Andrew Micklefield had stepped down as a member of the Panel and Lisa Hillan had joined the group. The Town Council's representative on the panel is Councillor Christopher Lawrence.

NOTED

254 **Statement of Accounts to 31st December 2021, including Asset Register**

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

RESOLVED to approve:

1. The Income and Expenditure account to 31st December 2021
2. The balance sheet dated 31st December 2021
3. The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit Account
4. The Payments over £500 covering 30th September to 31st December 2021
5. The Asset Register dated 1st February 2022

255 **Covid Risk Assessment Update**

i)An update to the Covid Risk Assessment was tabled following the lifting of Government restrictions. The Town Hall is to be re-opened to the Public: the reception screen will remain in place and those entering will be requested to wear a face covering until further notice. Sanitiser will continue to be provided for visitors and regular contract cleaning of the Town Hall remains.

Full Council as well as committee/sub-committee meetings will revert back to the Chamber with no reduction in capacity as social distancing will not be required. However, it will be advised that masks be worn and the Chamber will remain well ventilated to help lower the risk of covid infection. The public are now able to attend meetings in person.

Staff and Councillors will continue to take lateral flow tests as appropriate and will not attend meetings in person should they have any covid/cold or flu like symptoms.

Members confirmed that all other day to day meetings for officers and non-decision councillor meetings should continue to be held via Zoom.

Should any further restrictions be introduced, this will once again be reviewed.

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

RESOLVED to

1) Approve the revised measures for the Council and use of the Town Hall for all decision-making council meetings

ii) Members were also requested to review the virtual “hybrid” offering which has been in place at Council and Committee meetings since last summer. The resolution before the Council was to confirm the continuation of hybrid meetings offering a “virtual” alternative for attendees at Council or Committee meetings (other than councillors who are legally required to attend in person.)

Members debated this item and agreed that with covid restrictions now relaxed, there was no need to offer a hybrid version of meetings. It was noted that whilst virtual meetings are a very useful tool, the hybrid offer, being a mixture of in person and on-line attendance would require a significant investment in the technology needed to make this work seamlessly and with virtual attendance very low this was not something that could be justified at this time. The virtual attendees were asked to comment on their experience and both responded that the meeting was difficult to follow as the sound was low despite being on full volume with the “Owl”.

The motion tabled for approval was unable to secure a proposer and so failed. Hybrid meetings will therefore be discontinued at this time with the chamber fully reopened for public in-person attendance at Council and Committee Meetings.

256 **To receive a report from the County/District Council**

County Councillor Andrew Joy apologised that a written report had not been submitted but gave a verbal update report as follows and answered questions as they were posed:

- He had chaired the 2nd Liaison Panel meeting re the former Waltet site which was now operated by Grey Fox and another company has re-located but the current Environment permit does not cover another company to operate. Noise issues remain but there are issues between the Environment Agency (who are not equipped to deal with noise) and EHDC (who are but cannot take over the Environment Agency responsibility) but the situation continues to be scrutinised. District & Town Councillor Suzie Burns also sits on the Liaison Panel
- The Police Commissioner had been held to account by the Police & Crime Panel in respect of the budget requested last week. The budget recommended was for a £10 p.a. increase for a Band D (an increase a shade over 4.5%) and the reason for this had been to “get topside” on anti-social behaviour across the region to enable the police to be equipped with the tools to do the job.
- Gave a brief update on the Alton Strategy meeting which had been held on Tuesday, 1st February on the topic of the High Street with several of the town councillors attending.
– Councillors felt that the time for talking shop had gone and they wanted to see outcomes. There was a degree of frustration at the elongated processes that slow down even the most basic of projects and gave Station Forecourt as a prime example.

- Town Mayor, Councillor Pam Jones requested an update of County's position on a town wide 20mph scheme. Councillor Andrew Joy advised that a meeting had been held last Thursday to progress – however, no further details other than it had been agreed to “register” the project!
- Councillor Ginny Boxall asked what is happening in respect of the dead yew trees that had been planted in The Butts roundabout which was an utter disgrace given it is a gateway to the town. Councillor Joy advised that the roundabout has yet to be adopted by County and insisted that the details of the planning permission be interrogated in order to establish responsibility for maintaining this area and ensuring that the matter be resolved as a “matter of urgency” and not left in abeyance which seems to have happened. Planning Compliance will be contacted by the Town Clerk as requested by Councillors.

The Mayor, Councillor Pam Jones thanked County Councillor Andrew Joy for his attendance at the meeting, for answering questions and providing the update.

District Councillor Dolan had tendered his apologies but had not submitted a written report so no district council update was given.

257 **To receive the Minutes from the following Committees:**

Members received the Minutes of the following meetings which were noted.

Open Spaces Committee – 24th November 2021

Planning & Transport Committee – 3rd November, 1st December 2021 and 26th January 2022 (including the Planning List for 29th December 2021)

Policy & Resources Committee – 19th January 2022

NOTED

The meeting finished at 8.07pm.