

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**HELD AT BRAUNSTONE CIVIC CENTRE AND USING ZOOM VIDEO AND WEB
CONFERENCING SOFTWARE**

THURSDAY 22nd APRIL 2021 AT 7.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Nick Brown (Chair) and Councillors Anthea Ambrose, Shabbir Aslam, Leanne Lee, Sam Maxwell, Phil Moitt, Satindra Sangha, Tracey Shepherd and Robert Waterton.

Officers in Attendance: Darren Tilley, Executive Officer & Town Clerk.

Also in attendance was Councillor Christiane Startin-Lorent. There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

189. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Amanda Hack.

190. Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of any Disclosable Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary Interests by members.

191. Public Participation

In accordance with Standing Order 3.6, members of the public may attend the meeting for the purpose of making representations, giving evidence or answering questions in respect of any item of business included on the agenda.

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

192. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2021 (item 4a on the agenda) and the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 8th April 2021 (item 4b on the agenda) were circulated.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2021 and the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 8th April 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

193. Shakespeare Park - Improvement & Development

The Committee received a progress report on the pavilion and site improvement works and project financing for Shakespeare Park; along with an update on arrangements for future management of the pavilion and site (item 5 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that progress with the Project: *Pavilion and Site Works, Future Management Arrangements and Playground and Tennis Courts improvements*; as set out in the relevant section of the report, be noted;
2. that the current savings of £30,164 on the *Site and Pavilion Improvements Project Costs*, as set out in the relevant section of the report, be noted; and
3. that the revised timescales for the project, attached at Appendix 2, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure that the project, which would enable an increase in sport participation and improve recreation and play facilities in a Ward which had high rankings of multiple deprivation across a range of domains, including income, employment and education and had the worst proportion of overweight or obese children in the County of Leicestershire, was delivered efficiently and effectively.*
2. *To note that the largest capital project commissioned by the Town Council had been delivered within budget.*
3. *To provide a guide for the progression of the project, which could be amended accordingly as appropriate.*

194. Review of arrangements for responding to Covid-19

The Committee received an update and reviewed implementation of the Council's response to the Covid-19 restrictions and Roadmap out of lockdown; and received an update on, and considered arrangements for, Council and Committee meetings after 7th May 2021 (item 6 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the review of the implementation of the Council's response to the Covid-19 restrictions and Roadmap out of lockdown, as set out in the report, be received and noted; and
2. that it be noted that the regulations permitting remote access to Council & Committee Meetings end on 7th May 2021 and that a High Court judge was due to determine whether the place of a meeting, as defined under Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, could include an online / virtual place;
3. that ongoing access to meetings by the public, press, external contributors, councillors in an observing capacity and any officer (other than the officer undertaking the proper officer role) continue to be offered both at the meeting venue and remotely via Zoom video and web conferencing software; and
4. that in the event that the High Court judge rules that the place of a meeting under Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 may include an online / virtual place, then the Town Council continue with the arrangements where all participants and attendees have the option of attending the meeting at the meeting venue or via Zoom video and web conferencing software.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To continue to meet the requirements to respond to the impact of Covid-19 through the spring in terms of delivering corporate and service responsibilities, recovery of services, health and safety requirements and priority projects and to ensure that the situation was kept under review, taking into account experience and operations alongside updated Covid-19 Secure Guidance and Regulations.*
2. *To recognise that in the absence of the extension of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, that after 7th May 2021 attendance at meetings should be in person at the meeting venue unless a court rules that the Local Government Act 1972 could be interpreted to permit attendance by remote means.*
3. *To provide flexibility for observers and contributors to continue to attend meetings remotely should they wish to do so; increasing accessibility of the Town Council's meetings and supporting the Climate Change agenda to reduce travel.*
4. *To provide flexibility for Town Councillors to continue to attend meetings remotely should they wish to do so; increasing attendance levels and supporting the Climate Change agenda to reduce travel.*

195. Annual Report 2019 - 2021

The Committee received the draft Annual Report 2019/2020 - 2020/2021 for recommending to the Annual Meeting of the Full Council for adoption (item 7 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the Members Allowances section be updated to include all Councillors who served during 2020/2021 and references to the *Plans & Environment Committee* be updated to *Planning & Environment Committee*;
2. that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer and Town Clerk to include final data and information and to finalise the presentation and formatting to the proposed Annual Report 2019 - 2021; and
3. that subject to 1 and 2 above, THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO ANNUAL COUNCIL that the Annual Report 2019 – 2021 (included as item 7 on the agenda), be received and adopted.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure that the report was comprehensive and consistent.*
2. *To enable the inclusion of the provisional year end accounts and ensure that the document would be finalised and presented for public consumption.*
3. *To report on the Town Council's achievements and to set out its priorities for the forthcoming year.*

196. Community Centres Working Group

The Committee considered a request from the Community Centres Working Group to amend the Group's Terms of Reference to take account the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the facilities and the community (item 8 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the *Proposed Revised Terms of Reference* of the Community Centres Working Group, as set out in the relevant section of the report, be approved.

Reason for Decision

To recognise that since the Group had been established and the Terms and Conditions were originally set, the Covid-19 Pandemic had resulted in the facilities either being closed or the permitted activities being significantly limited. The impact on the facilities and the community needed to be considered as part of the Group's work.

197. Response to the Recommendations of the Report of Independent Investigator on the handling of Internal Disputes

The Committee received the report setting out proposals for the Council's response to the findings and recommendations of the independent investigation into the handling of internal disputes (item 9 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the proposed actions in response to the findings and recommendations of an independent investigation into the handling of internal disputes, as set out at Appendix 1, be approved;
2. that the Report of Independent Investigator be available to the other parties named by the investigator from 11th May 2021; and
3. that agreement be sought with the Independent Investigator to release into the public domain a summary version of the report, without the confidential details which would identify individuals.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure that the policy framework was up to date and fit for purpose, to build conflict resilience, to use past events as a catalyst for change, and to avoid history repeating itself.*
2. *To enable the individuals who contributed to the investigation to receive a copy of the investigation report, should they request it, in a timely manner following local elections.*
3. *To enable the public to broadly understand the background to the issues behind the actions agreed as the Council's response.*

198. Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegation and Member Code of Conduct

The Committee reviewed the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, scheme of delegation and Member Code of Conduct in order to make recommendations to the Annual Council Meeting to adopt changes (item 10 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk to include provisions in the Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation to Committees to provide for Councillors who serve on School Governing Bodies to report to the relevant Standing Committee on their activities;
2. that should the new Member Code of Conduct be adopted, then training on the code and its provisions be offered to Councillors;

THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

3. that, in the event that a court judge rules that a Council in determining the place of a meeting under Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 would be able to include an online / virtual place, then the *fixed term addendum to the Standing Orders* (whether it has lapsed or not), adopted by the Council on 25th June 2020, be incorporated into the respective sections of the Standing Orders;
4. that the proposed amendments to the Council's Standing Orders, as set out in the report, be approved;
5. that the *Fixed term Amendments to Financial Regulations*, attached at Appendix 1 and adopted by the Council on 25th June 2020, be incorporated into the Financial Regulations, as set out in the relevant section of the report and as amended;
6. that that the proposed amendments to the Council's Financial Regulations, as set out in the report, be approved;
7. that the proposed new Braunstone Town Council Councillor Code of Conduct, attached at Appendix 2, be adopted to replace the Council's current Members' Code of Conduct; and
8. that, as a result of 1 to 5 above, delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk to renumber paragraphs and update cross-references accordingly.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To provide an opportunity for Councillors to engage in the work of local schools.*
2. *To ensure that Councillors would be aware of the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role.*
3. *If permitted to do so, to enable the Town Council to continue to facilitate remote attendance at its meetings should individuals wish to do so; increasing accessibility of the Town Council's meetings, attendance and supporting the Climate Change agenda to reduce travel.*
4. *To give clarity to intended meaning and to provide for better*

discussion and engagement with the business of the Council and its Committees.

5. *The processes set out have several advantages for remote working, efficiency and payments in a world where less people were using cash.*
6. *To accommodate provisions identified by the internal audit and to update references to reflect current policy.*
7. *The new Councillor Code of Conduct was based on the new LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct; it would be clearer and more robust in areas which were the subject of recent internal disputes and addressed matters identified in the recommendations of an independent investigator into the internal disputes.*
8. *To enable the administrative changes resulting from the agreed additions and amendments to be applied to ensure consistency and accuracy.*

199. Draft Schedule of Meetings

The Committee received a draft Schedule of Meetings for 2021/2022 for recommendation to Full Council for adoption (item 11 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the meeting date 20th May be amended to a Thursday; and
2. that subject to 1 above, THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that the proposed schedule of Council and Committee Meetings for 2021/2022 be approved.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To correct the day and avoid misunderstanding.*
2. *To enable the Town Council to undertake its business and meet its statutory obligations.*

200. Blaby District Parish Councils Group

The Committee received feedback from the Blaby District Parish Councils Group in order to identify any issues to be raised at future meetings (item 12 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason for Decision

To keep up to date with the discussions and work of the Group and to provide an opportunity to raise any relevant issues.

201. End of Quarter Financial Position - Cashbook and Reserves

The Committee received a summary of the Council's Cash and Reserves for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 (item 13 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the end of quarter financial position be noted.

Reason for Decision

There were no issues of concern with the management of the Council's Finances.

202. Financial Comparisons

The Committee received Financial Comparisons for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 (item 14 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Reason for Decision

There were no issues of concern with income and expenditure against the budget for 2020/2021.

203. Approval of Accounts

The Committee considered payments from 17th February 2021 until 31st March 2021 (item 15 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the list of Approved Expenditure Transactions for the period 17th February 2021 until 31st March 2021 be approved.

Reason for Decision

To authorise payments in accordance with the Accounts & Audit Regulations and the Council's Financial Regulations.

204. Shakespeare Park Tennis Courts Improvements

RESOLVED that in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press/public be excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 3.5 and 3.7 apply). *Reason for exception – Commercial Interest.*

The Committee considered revisions to the tender and determined arrangements for scheduling the work, dependent upon the availability of funding (item 16 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the assessment of the courts and the proposed handover arrangements, as set out in the relevant section of the report be noted, and supported;
2. that the additional works recommended to install additional foundations and a geotextile membrane, as detailed in the report at a cost of £20,340, be incorporated into the Tennis Courts improvements works;
3. that the Shakespeare Play/Tennis Earmarked Reserve be increased by £30,000 giving a total balance of £34,000; and

4. that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk to liaise with the contractors to
 - (a) determine the detailed arrangements, timings and work schedules, and
 - (b) make minor modifications to the design and installation proposals, including requesting additional supplies and options within the delegated spending limits allowed under paragraph 11.1i of the Financial Regulations.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To note that a plan was in place to transfer the tennis courts from the Site & Pavilion Works Contractor (who was using it as a site compound) upon completion of their work to the tennis courts contractor avoiding duplication of work and undue delay.*
2. *Following use as a plant compound; the existing tennis court surface was not deemed suitable to lay a new macadam surface onto and therefore required rebuilding; there was a provision in the Pavilion and Site Contract works for resurfacing the tennis courts, which could be used towards these additional costs.*
3. *To ensure funding would be available for the improvement works needed to provide an improved tennis courts facility at Shakespeare Park for use by residents without delay.*
4. *To allow detailed arrangements for the work to be negotiated, practical modifications to be made and additional miscellaneous items to be incorporated where necessary.*

205. Civic Centre Facilities Improvements

RESOLVED that in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press/public be excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 3.5 and 3.7 apply). *Reason for exception – Commercial Interest.*

The Committee determined the specification and tender documentation for the refurbishment of the Civic Centre Toilets and Civic Centre Bar/Café kitchen; along with identifying whether finance would be available for the project (item 17 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the plans, layouts, sections, schedules and specifications, attached to the report at Appendices 1 – 7, be approved;
2. that the documents referred to in 1 above be the basis of the tender package; and that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk to finalise the Form of Tender, General Specification and Bill of Quantities and make minor alterations and corrections to the Tender Documentation to ensure compliance and consistency and to invite tenders;
3. that the costs and funding for the projects, as set out in the relevant section of the report, and at Appendices 8 and 9, be approved; and
4. that the indicative timescales for the project, as set out in the relevant section of the report, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To modernise the Civic Centre toilet facilities ensuring that they were fully accessible; and to provide a café service, utilising the Bar Lounge more effectively and providing a wider community social space.*
2. *To ensure that the tender package was complete and provided all necessary plans and technical specifications and that the tender process would be undertaken in compliance with legislation and financial regulations.*
3. *To provide a framework for obtaining and allocating funding towards the projects.*
4. *To provide a guide for the progression of the project, which could be amended accordingly as appropriate.*

206. Staffing Organisation Review

RESOLVED that in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press/public be excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 3.5 and 3.7 apply). *Reason for exception – Personal Information.*

The Committee considered future arrangements for staffing in the context of changes to Services and the impact of Covid-19, following consultation and job evaluation (item 18 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the Staff Organisation Review Proposals, structure, job roles, salary grades and employment contract, enclosed as Appendices 1 – 7, be approved and adopted;
2. that the implementation arrangements, including the timescales, set out in the report and at Appendix 1, be approved; and
3. that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk to implement the proposals, including the new Employment Contract, and determine the staff appeal timescales.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure that the Council had a flexible, resilient, knowledgeable and skilled workforce following service and staff changes and recovery from Covid-19.*
2. *To provide a clear framework and timescales for implementation.*
3. *To ensure implementation was in accordance with employment law.*

207. Additional Pension Costs – Early Retirement through Redundancy

RESOLVED that in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press/public be excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 3.5 and 3.7 apply). *Reason for exception – Personal Information.*

The Committee received details of additional pension costs as a result of early retirement through redundancy (item 19 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the matter set out in the Report be referred to the Council's Employing Committee to determine whether any further investigation and action should be taken.

Reasons for Decision

To provide an opportunity for further investigation and scrutiny, to identify lessons learnt avoiding future occurrences.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.

NOTE:

CRIME & DISORDER ACT 1998 (SECTION 17) – The Council has an obligation to consider Crime & Disorder implications of all its activities and to do all that it can to prevent Crime and Disorder in its area.

EQUALITIES ACT 2010

Braunstone Town Council has a duty in carrying out its functions to have due regard to:-

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and;
- foster good relations between different groups

To ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment on the basis of race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity.

These issues were considered in connection with each of the above decisions. Unless otherwise stated under each item of this report, there were no implications.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____