



EMERSONS GREEN
TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of Full Council

9 April 2020

held via Skype due to COVID-19 restrictions

Present: Councillors S Budd (Chairman), R Hunt, R Nichols, C Johnson, S Bassett, J Hunt and P Morgan

Attendees: Kath MacConnachie (Clerk)

159. Apologies

Apologies were received from councillors Adams and Hill.

160. Declarations of Interest under the Localism Act 2011

There were no declarations of interest.

161. Public participation

No members of the public joined the Skype meeting.

162. To approve the Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 12 March 2020

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2020 were a true and accurate record of the meeting and that these would be signed by the Chairman at the next opportunity.

163. Outstanding Items from these Minutes

Councillor R Hunt noted that she was still awaiting details of the littering education initiatives offered by South Gloucestershire Council in local schools.

164. Covid-19 Town Council arrangements and plans

Councillor R Hunt reported that South Gloucestershire Council MAF funding had been used to fund the Lyde Green Community Association (LGCA) COVID-19 information fliers.

Councillor Budd noted that LDCA had requested funding to help resource them to continue their COVID-19 response work within the Emersons Green and Lyde Green area.

Councillor R Hunt said that the council should work with LDCA to understand what was being funded by whom and to assist them with getting a grant application submitted to the Finance Committee.

Councillor R Hunt asked whether there were any other opportunities for the Town Council to help with the COVID-19 response within the community. She acknowledged that the Town Council had limited powers, but that grant funding might be something the Town Council could help with, noting that there were a number of organisations and groups within the locality who would likely have financial difficulties at the end of this period. She particularly noted that there was potential for duplication between South Gloucestershire Council and the various online COVID-19 support groups, so the Town Council would want to assist without duplicating effort.

Councillor Budd reported that the local food bank was still doing well with a good level of donations still from Sainsburys shoppers and that local Scout groups were all in good positions.

It was suggested that Mangotsfield Cricket Club and Pomphrey Hill Community Sports Association may struggle, as they had all the usual maintenance costs with no income. It was suggested that information about EGTC grant funding should be put on Facebook and the website. Councillor R Hunt questioned whether the Town Council should have a set approach to COVID-19 requests and whether the agreed approach should be included on the information communicated. Councillor J Hunt suggested asking groups to contact the Town Council for information in advance and that connections should be made with other groups to ensure there was not crossover.

It was **Resolved** to put information on the website and Facebook pages asking local groups to get in touch with the Town Council if they were struggling financially within the current crisis, with a view to potential grant applications, where appropriate.

Action: Clerk

165. Financial Regulations

Councillors considered whether they wished to amend the Financial Regulations, which had been circulated, in light of the Covid-19 situation, to allow the Town Council to be more responsive in case of urgent funding requests. The example was given of the recent short-notice request to fund Covid-19 information leaflets, and the inability of the Town Council to help in this instance, due to the timescales for listing items for on agendas for consideration at formal meetings. There was some discussion around this.

It was **Resolved**, by unanimous vote, to include a COVID-19 emergency response provision within the Financial Regulations. It was agreed that this would be for urgent, relatively small expenditure, including that which would fall under the auspices of S137 funding, where the need was considered to give benefit to the local community. The decision to fund was delegated to email decision, which would require the agreement of a minimum of six councillors, in line with the number of councillors required for quoracy at a Full Council meeting. The funding limit was set at £500. Where any such funding requests were identified, these were to be emailed to the Clerk for forwarding to all councillors for consideration, as long as the request was within the Town Councils powers to fund.

Action: Clerk

166. Goodman Nash Business Rates Review

The Clerk drew attention to the information that had been forwarded on the Goodman Nash proposal received to undertake a Business Rates Review at the Town Council. This item had been included on the previous Finance Committee 'online vote', but there had been one vote against. Given the nature of the online vote and the inability therefore for councillors to air their concerns and discuss these, the Clerk had decided to bring the item to this meeting for discussion. The Clerk had secured an extension to the previous deadline of the end of March 2020, so that there would be no additional charges should the council decide to proceed at this point.

The councillors discussed the proposal. There was a unanimous vote not to proceed with the Goodman Nash proposal.

Action: Clerk

167. Any updates from subcommittees

- **Finance Committee:** The recent online vote was noted, which involved items including the authorisation of payments. The outcome of this vote had been circulated to all councillors.
- **Open Spaces Committee:** The Clerk mentioned that the Brandon Trust was unable to undertake its work for the council, due to the COVID-19 situation and the need to protect their employees.

Councillor Budd noted that he had seen lots of people around the pond area and other open spaces, and that it was nice to see them being enjoyed as part of people's daily exercise.

Councillor Bassett had received an enquiry about allotment availability. Councillor Bassett was informed that there was a waiting list and that the interested party should contact Richard Hull, Assistant Clerk.

Councillor Nichols enquired as to whether the allotments should be open. The Clerk explained that the council was working with all the available guidance, including that issued by the National Allotments Association. The Clerk noted that there was a sign on the gate giving guidance, that tenants had been asked to leave the gate open (just one opening in the morning and one closing in the evening) to minimise infection risk and that the portaloo that had been booked for the site had been cancelled for now.

- **Planning Committee:** The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 14 April on Skype.

168. Items from Members to Report

Councillor R Hunt questioned whether the Town Council should continue to pay Youth Works for the youth workers whilst the COVID-19 restrictions meant they were unable to meet. She explained that organisations were going to suffer or lose staff and questioned

whether there was a cost/benefit analysis of supporting them versus losing local providers and having to find new ones.

There was discussion around whether these organisations could access government funding and whether the Town Council may want to fund a proportion of usual costs.

The Clerk noted that consideration should be given to all regular suppliers in the same way, to ensure fairness, and suggested that whatever was agreed would need to be fair and equitable to.

Councillors discussed the need to consider value for public money, but also the Town Council powers to spend where it was in the benefit of the local community.

It was **Resolved** to take this item to the next Finance Committee for them to take a decision.

169. Next Meeting

19:00 on 14 May 2020 via Skype