



**Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council
held on Monday 13th January 2020 at 7.00pm
in the Stonehouse Community Centre, Stonehouse**

Present:

Councillors: Neil Gibbs Chairman, Gwen Atkinson, Debbie Curtis, Vice Chair
Carol Kambites, Michael Davis, Tim Jackson, Kevin Parsons,
Sally Pickering, Jennie Smith, Pam Swain, David Thorpe,
Theresa Watt, John Parker, Leigh Binns

In Attendance: Ward Cllrs Mattie Ross and Gary Powell and County Cllr Lesley
Williams

*Attendees were reminded that the Proceedings of the meeting could be filmed,
photographed or recorded.*

A presentation was to be given by County Cllr Lesley Williams on Gloucestershire
County Council's draft 2020/21 budget at the start of the meeting but was delayed
by agreement to coincide with Agenda TC2333

A G E N D A

TC2330 To receive apologies

There were no apologies. All Town Councillors were in attendance

TC2331 To receive declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest

**TC2332 To approve the minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Town
Council held on 9th December 2019**

The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the
meeting and duly signed by the Chairman

TC2333 To receive a report from the County Councillor.

Chair of the meeting, Cllr Gibbs, by agreement brought forward agenda item TC2235 as information relating to this item was to be presented by Cllr Lesley Williams.

Cllr Williams provided a brief overview of the budget situation within GCC; there was a 1% overspend in services overall; there was also an overspend Children Services - the reason given was under investment in previous years and children having to be placed out of county due to complex needs. The proposed budget includes a growth item of £4.1M for Children's services

Cllr Williams stated that Council tax would be affected by a proposed 1.99% increase plus a 2% levy on social services.

In answer to Cllr Sally Pickering's emailed questions, Cllr Williams commented that the work on the A417 was directly funded by Central Government and, that the new incinerator was now under the direct control of Urbaser Balfour Beatty UBB and not GCC.

Cllrs generally considered that the County's strategy places Climate Change very low on its list of priorities and the council felt that, that typified GCC's approach to climate change as a whole. Examples of this include the way Highway trees are managed in the future ie damaged trees not being replaced

Therefore, Council **AGREED** to respond to the county's consultation exercise on its proposed budget for the financial year 2020/21, by highlighting the need to reprioritise climate change within the authority's objectives and to consider the impacts of climate change in all its future decisions, as a standard approach.

Cllr Williams asked for feedback on the changes to LED lighting in Stonehouse - general comments were that it was not well received ie residents suffering from migraines, light spill etc. Cllrs to direct all further comments to Cllr Williams directly.

Cllr Mattie Ross enquired about a past initiative of turning off every other street light. Cllr Williams to report back

TC2334 To receive a report from the District Councillors.

Ward Cllr Gary Powell confirmed that the Willow Road Sheltered Housing Unit is scheduled to be refurbished in the 2020/21 financial year

Ward Cllr Mattie Ross welcomed attendance by Town Cllrs at a forthcoming Youth Council presentation at Ebley Mill on 23rd January. She also highlighted renewal of the Stratford Park Leisure Contract - a brief was being put together for a consultant to review the leisure

needs of the District. Cllr Ross commented on the fact that she did not feel the meeting used in the Community Centre was large enough to house members of the public wishing to attend TC meetings

Cllr Sally Pickering congratulated Cllr Ross on the successful outcome of the District Council's annual satisfaction survey - this was supported by all Cllrs at the meeting.

TC2335 To consider feedback on Gloucestershire County Council's draft annual budget consultation for financial year 2020/21

See agenda item TC22333 above

TC2336 To receive brief reports from Members on external meetings attended.

Cllr Binns had attended the last of the Intensive Engagement Meetings chaired by the Neighbourhood Warden Service. She highlighted her disappointment at the fact that it was the last meeting but that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had expected the meetings to continue but without their direct support. Cllr Binns explained the exercise appeared to be set up without a sense of strategy or objectives and that the three outcomes clearly demonstrated the lack of understanding the group had of the local problems. The outcomes included:-

- The need for increased litter picks
- Provide the youth with information about the Bus Timetable
- PCSO's to explain to residents that they can direct concerns to Crimestoppers

The feeling was shared by several Cllrs and it was **AGREED** that the clerk to the council write to the Chair of PCC, Colin Haye, expressing the council's deep regrets at how the engagement exercise was conducted, without a real purpose, strategy and clear objectives and that the whole exercise had been a misuse of public resources bearing in mind the number of Police representatives, other public sector officers and volunteers that attended.

Cllr Debbie Curtis attended a SHIPS meeting and confirmed that SHIPS were trying to arrange a meeting with Kathy O'Leary, as agreed.

TC2337 To receive RFO's report including the bank reconciliation for November and December 2019.

The council received and noted the RFOs monthly bank reconciliation for November and December 2019. In support of the Council's most up to date budget report (up to and including December 2019), the RFO highlighted the increased but scheduled spend on salaries, professional fees (Town Hall agreement), IT and the Youth Pod. An

unintended incident of damage to one of the window roller shutters resulted in repair cost of £1295.

Following discussion, Cllrs **AGREED** that the Town Council would bear the cost of the damage. It was also **AGREED** that the Clerk should consider making an insurance claim to recover some of the council's costs.

TC2338 To approve payments in accordance with the budget to date as listed.

Council **APPROVED** the payments as presented by the RFO. Cllr Theresa Watts asked for several copies of the payment list to be provided for Cllrs at the meeting

TC2339 To receive minutes of the Business Committee of the 6th January 2020

The council received and noted the minutes. There were no questions or comments

TC2340 To confirm the appointment of the present Clerk to Stonehouse Town Council following completion of his probationary period

The Chair highlighted the process undertaken to date following successful completion of the clerk's probationary period and recommended that the clerk's permanent appointment be agreed.

Council **RESOLVED** to permanently appoint the new clerk including his position as Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) to the town council following the successful completion of his probationary period

TC2341 To receive minutes of the Environment Committee of the 16th December 2019

The council received and noted the minutes. There were no questions or comments

TC2342 To consider, in conjunction with recommendations from both Business Committee and Environment Committee, the Council's Budget requirements for the Financial Year 2020/21

Chair presented this agenda item highlighting that it had received detailed discussions by both Environment and Business Committees with both recommending the Precept detailed in the budget papers provided to TC. It was highlighted that the increase of 30 pence per property per week reflected, in large proportion, elements that would help the town council deliver a list of positive actions.

Council **RESOLVED** set the town council's Budget requirements for the financial year 2020/21 at £339,573.

TC2343 To consider the Council's Precept requirements for the Financial Year 2020/21

Following discussion, Council **RESOLVED** to set a Precept level for the 2020/21 Financial Year of £339,573

TC2344 To consider a recommendation made by a local resident, for Stonehouse Town Council to allocate the 'Vicky Wakefield-Heath Young Person of the Year' Award to the older group of young people within the Stonehouse community at its Annual Civic Awards Ceremony and give a brand new award for the younger age group

There was general support by Cllrs that the original intent of the 'Vicky Wakefield-Heath Young Person Award should continue to be respected. It was felt that with the number of nominations received in recent years, the situation did not warrant the introduction of an additional award. However, should this change, the matter could be reconsidered.

Council **RESOLVED** for the Clerk to respond to the resident raising this issue on the basis discussed above. The issue of the relatively low number of nominations to be raised with the council's Events Group for ideas on how this can be increased including asking for nominations to be made online.

TC2345 To consider a) passing a motion in support of the Local Electricity Bill produced by a Not for Profit organisation 'Power for People' by signing up to its Model Resolution and b) signing up to its national campaign

Cllrs discussed the matter and whilst it was generally accepted that any decision made by the council to support the Resolution would not necessarily carry much weight nationally, it was suggested that it would be a positive action.

Council **RESOLVED** to support the Local Electricity Bill and in doing so would a) sign up to the Model Resolution and b) sign up to its national campaign.

TC2346 To reconsider the decision made by Business Committee on 18th November 2019 under Agenda Item B/63 - NOT to remove a Willow tree from the Rest Garden - and to consider the removal of two further willows in the same location to enable an improved grant funded garden enhancement scheme including additional tree planting

The Clerk to the council included this item on the agenda as a result of him receiving a request from three Town Cllrs (Cllrs Pam Swain, Debbie Curtis and Tim Jackson). All Cllrs at the meeting agreed to discuss the item.

Cllr Debbie Curtis highlighted the need to reconsider the original proposal to remove the Willow Tree next to the path at the top of the Rest Garden; the design for the development of the Rest Garden is based on providing improved access and a considered tree planting scheme that would greatly enhance the area. Cllr John Parker supported this move commenting that both the tree in question alongside the two other adjacent willow trees (one which is leaning heavily and the other affected by rot) should also be removed. He stated that this should be done openly and Officers should at least place notices on each of the trees to make the public aware of what is happening and why.

Council **RESOLVED** to remove all three Willow Trees from the top end of the Rest garden in support of the new, more accessible landscape.

TC2347 To receive an update from the Climate Change Action Group

A Standish Cllr and a number of non Cllrs attended Stonehouse Town Council's Climate Change Group meeting recently. A Climate Information Fair has been arranged for 9th Feb 2020 at the Community Centre - stalls will be set up covering a variety of issues. In the longer term, separate work groups will be set up with each being encouraged to focus on various initiatives.

Cllr Sally Pickering highlighted the latest initiative by Transition Stroud called Stroud Valleys Action on Plastic. Members of the public can leave either a 'Thankyou' slip for those shops that provide plastic free products and a 'Please' slip for those shops that provide plastic packaging asking them to not do so in the future if they valued the future custom.

TC2348 To consider undertaking public consultation on the future use of Stagholt Playing Field

Cllr Neil Gibbs requested this item to be placed on the agenda explaining that Stagholt Playing Field was essentially an unusable space due to ongoing draining issues. Also SDC would not consider in any future land deals.

It was suggested that residents should be consulted on future uses of the land to include an Orchard, allocating space to the allotments, an adventure playground/play space. The principle of local consultation was agreed by all. There was a suggestion that the playing field should be cut less often

Council **RESOLVED** to conduct public consultation on the future use of Stagholt Playing Fields.

TC2349 To consider ratification of the Town Clerk's contract of employment, to include his position as the council's Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)

See Agenda Item TC2340 above

TC2350 To consider the purchase of an 'Off the Shelf' accounting package to administer the Council's day to day Finance transactions and budget management process.

The Clerk talked Cllrs through his report accentuating that the current system used to manage the council's finances was not fit for purpose in that it is time consuming to update and reconcile and provided little by way of useful management information. In addition, the Council has limited systems in terms of managing the condition of its assets and their hiring, including play equipment.

Cllrs generally agreed that a Council of Stonehouse's size should be using a more appropriate system to manage its finances and assets but at present, it recognised that the report relied on prices received by a neighbouring authority.

Council **AGREED** to reconsider the issue at its next Business Committee when the council has received full quotations from the two leading software suppliers

TC2351 To note the date of the next Town Council Meeting.

Monday 17th February 2020