



DRAFT

**Minutes of a (Virtual) meeting of the Town Council
held on Monday 14th December 2020 at 7.00pm using
'Microsoft Teams'**

Present:

Councillors: (Chair) Cllrs Neil Gibbs, (Vice Chair) Carol Kambites, Debbie Curtis, Michael Davis, Tim Jackson, John Parker, Sally Pickering, Jennie Smith, Pam Swain, David Thorpe and Theresa Watt

In Attendance: Carlos Novoth - Town Clerk, County Cllr Lesley Williams and a member of the public.

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

Nick Housedon attended the meeting on behalf of the Bridge Academy soon to be based at the old Lloyds Bank on the Stonehouse High street and provided an overview of his new café and other business activities around the county. He explained the café was for families (parents and children) but also provides activities for children as part of the cafe experience he and his team are providing. The café would also provide work experience for children not suited to mainstream education. Mr Housedon highlighted that funding was primarily from his football academy business and through the café; they were not considering having to charge subscriptions to the premises but could not rule this out in the future. Mr Housedon commented that he had been approached by local residents re use of the rear garden. He stated that this would be merely an extension to the café but may include some children's activities. Mr Housedon does not yet know what time the café would be open but it would probably be closed by 6pm during winter months and later during the summer.

AGENDA

TC2514 To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Leigh Binns and Kevin Parsons.

TC2515 To receive declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest

TC2516 To approve the minutes of the Town Council held on 16th November 2020

Council **ACCEPTED** the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting; the minutes to be duly signed by the Chair at a later date.

TC2517 To receive an update on the recruitment of the post left by Gwen Atkinson resignation

The Clerk stated that the Town Hall had not received any interest from local residents to be considered for co-option to the council since the Notice of Vacancy had been erected on the town's notice board in November. Adverts will therefore be placed on social media, the town council's website and an article would be sent to the SNJ.

Council **NOTED** the Clerk's actions

TC2518 To consider the need to balance out membership of the council's committees

Following discussion, to ensure each committee was adequately provided for, Cllr John Parker was moved by agreement from Business Committee to Environment Committee with immediate effect.

TC2519 To receive reports from Chair of Town Council and town councillors

Cllr Gibbs met with Nick Housedon from Bridge Academy
Cllr Kambites attended meetings regarding the GAPTC AGM, the Stroudwater Railway Station, Parish Paths.
Cllr Thorpe visited Bridge Academy
Cllr Pickering highlighted that no one attended the recent Market Town's Forum meeting - this was due to unusual circumstances.

TC2520 To receive reports from County and District Councillors

Ward Cllr Mattie Ross offered her apologies for the meeting
County Cllr Lesley Williams highlighted that the County Council had now published its budget for 2021/22 which showed an 4.75% increase; the majority of this will be spent on children's care services. This increase in spend places GCC on par with the better performing councils for this service. Cllr Williams to send the town council a more detailed report for distribution.

Cllr Williams also highlighted that funding for those children receiving free school meals would continue during Christmas holidays, Half term and Easter

- TC2521 To receive RFO's budget report including the bank reconciliation for November 2020**
The Clerk presented the budget report for the period up to 30th November 2020 (Actual Net Inc £362,333.37 and Exp £201,665.52) along with the Bank reconciliation for November '20. He highlighted a problem with energy spend for the pavilion and suggested that the council may wish to consider the installation of Solar Panels in the future. A question was raised about the purchase of a TV; the Clerk stated that the council purchased the TV but that it would be reimbursed by GCC as part of the Town Hall refurbishment project - the TV was to be used during Committee and Council meetings. Also provided was the bank reconciliation for Nov 2020 showing a closing balance of £314,620.89)

Committee **NOTED** the reports

- TC2522 To approve payments in accordance with the budget to date as listed**
Council **APPROVED** Gross payments totalling £13,189.62. Comment was made about the current payment list being very similar to the payment list presented for approval at Environment Committee on the 7th December; this was due to the fact that the payment report system lists any outstanding payments not yet authorised at the time the report was produced. There was concern that payments could be duplicated. The Clerk stated that this was not the case. This situation is rare in that payments are normally authorised by the signatories very quickly.

- TC2523 To consider feedback from both Business and Environment Committees regarding Precept levels for financial year 2021/22.**

The Clerk stated that both Committees have now viewed the adjustments made by the Clerk to find £10,000 from within the projected standstill budget for a part time temporary post to cover work generated by the Canal rejuvenation project. Cllrs have also been forwarded the latest update of the Strategic Action Plan. Cllrs were encouraged to provide comments on the action plan prior to both committees meeting in the new year.

Council **NOTED** the update

- TC2524 To approve Council and Committee meeting dates for the 2021/22 calendar year**

Council **APPROVED** the 2021/22 Calendar meeting dates with one amendment

TC2525 To consider an amendment to the Council's Grant Policy

Council **APPROVED** the latest Grant Policy amendment

TC2526 To consider a proposal by the Communications Working Group to improve council communications

Cllr Smith provided members with an overview of a recent Communications Working Group meeting highlighting the need to gather feedback from the Stonehouse Community on the nature, timing, method and other important features of the council's current communications. Comments made at this point ranged from the need to market Stonehouse as a canal town, the need to ensure at least one newsletter was to be printed in hard copy (preferably to reflect the Council's Annual Report) and, that there would in all likely hood be financial implications arising from the survey.

Council **AGREED** for the working group to design a suitable survey questionnaire (seeking views of all Members) to present to Business Committee for approval in the new year

TC2527 To receive minutes of Business Committee held on 30th November 2020 and consider any recommendations

Council **NOTED** the minutes. There were no recommendations for consideration

TC2528 To receive minutes of Environment Committee held on 7th December 2020 and consider any recommendations

Council **NOTED** the Minutes of the meeting
It is suggested that the Town Council could agree to a further additional comment on the consultation to reinforce the link between continued development pressure and the need for a direct rail link to Bristol from Stroudwater (Bristol Road) Station, Stonehouse. SDC are running the Additional Housing Options consultation as national government is proposing that all Local Plans will be expected to increase the housing supply, so SDC want to prepare for this and are consulting on how additional housing should be allocated throughout the District as well as some specific sites.

PROPOSED ADDITIONAL COMMENT:

There should be a strong emphasis on improvements to rail services to support housing and employment growth. An additional station at Stonehouse Bristol Road as part of an improved regional

rail service between Bristol and Gloucester would support spatial Options A & B for additional housing.

Council **RESOLVED** to submit the proposed additional comment highlighted in bold type to Stroud District Council, as feedback to its 'Additional Housing Options' Consultation.

TC2529 To consider the cost of shotblasting and powder coating the Town Hall's main gates

There was discussion about whether the gates should be re-erected. It was noted however that GCC were funding the main repairs to, and erection of the gates as part of the Town Hall refurbishment - funding would not extend to improving the aesthetics of the gates. It was thought that since the gates were to be re-installed, they should look in keeping with the rest of the refurbishment.

Council **APPROVED** the spend of £452.65 plus vat for the professional shotblast and powder coating of the gates.

TC2530 To receive an update from the 'Support Stonehouse' working group and consider its recommendations

Cllr Parker provided an overview of the arrangements made by the working group in support of the Stonehouse Community.

- 500 Children's books had now been labelled, packaged and were about to be presented to the Park Infant, Park Junior and Shrubberies schools. They are to be distributed to all school children this week. Total cost was £892.
- Toiletries to the value of £1450.16 have also been purchased to date. Further toiletries and cleaning products have also been identified as being needed by APT.

TC2531 To consider annual subscription to the Cotswold Canals Trust

Council **APPROVED** continued annual subscription of £100 to the Cotswolds Canals Trust for 2021/22

TC2532 To receive the Clerk's latest update

Council **NOTED** the Clerk's report

TC2533 To note the date of the next Town Council Meeting: 25th January 2021