



Petworth Town Council

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A MEETING OF PETWORTH TOWN COUNCIL TOOK PLACE ON THURSDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 7PM VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING

MINUTES

PRESENT

Cllr E. Singleton (Chairwoman)	Cllr D. Burden
Cllr A. Copus (Vice Chairman)	Cllr H. Desai
Cllr J. Thorpe	Cllr C. Sproson
Cllr J. Scallon	Cllr M. Peet
Cllr S. Atkins	Cllr C. Kemp
Cllr N. Fox	Cllr C. Smith
Cllr P. Hewlett	

Also present was Laura Smith (Town Clerk), Cllr E. Lintill (Chichester District Council Leader) & Cllr J. Duncton (West Sussex County Council Chairman) from 7.47pm.

130/20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman congratulated the Petworth In Bloom team for being awarded gold in the Small Town category of the South and South East In Bloom competition. She thanked the volunteers for their efforts, particularly Cllr Hewlett who led the team to this year's success following their silver award in 2019.

131/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr J. Fynes.

132/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors declared no disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any item of business on the agenda.

133/20 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Upon the proposal of Cllr Kemp, seconded by Cllr Thorpe, the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 20th August 2020 were approved as an accurate record and signed as such by the Chairman.

134/20 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the minutes of 20th August that were not covered elsewhere in the agenda.

135/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

136/20 REPORT FROM DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

In the absence of Cllr J Dunton, the Clerk read out the following written report:

“We agreed the July Council and then put in an extra one for September which is taking place on the 18th September. It meant that because of the proximity of the October Council we would look for a new date so the October Council is cancelled and the new date will be 6th November giving us more space from the extra September date.

Well it’s September and in a normal year it would be back to business as usual. There is nothing normal about 2020 and it continues in that vain.

Members at County of course want to be kept informed every step of the way and we are doing our best. Back in July we had what I can only describe as a truncated full Council but it had a purpose and the purpose was to keep all members who are not so heavily involved up to speed with what the County had been doing in many areas because despite Covid19 the rest of our business has to continue.

I am pleased to say that the new Highway’s contract is now let and been divided into 4 different parts with different Contractors taking on specific parts of the contract. So far so good.

Probably the most important item of business is the improvements being made in our Children’s Services. Two weeks ago John Coughlin who is Chief Executive for Hampshire County Council and is the Commissioner appointed by Government to guide us in getting our Children’s Services on a higher level. We still have some way to go to get excellent from the OFSTED Inspectors but in John’s opinion things are going in the right direction and plans being gradually put in place are definitely what he would want to see before our next Inspection. The downside is though that in his opinion, which I don’t doubt, we still have some way to go. I can assure residents all Councillors are behind the improvements we need to make.

I don’t think I need to say anything about the wonderful West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service have been attended to Inspector criticisms and each criticism sorted. The main concern was how far behind they had fallen with some 2000 plus residents on the waiting list for safety checks and help. We have been told that this number is reduced to ‘0’.

On the Fire and Rescue our excellent deputy Chief Fire Office Neil Stocker is leaving us after many years’ service in West Sussex and a new deputy has been appointed from East Sussex.

I obviously can’t give you an up to date account of Covid19 as you won’t read this until October but early in September there had been 139 cases in the past 2 weeks. They were mainly in clusters in Worthing and Crawly with some in Mid Sussex.

My life as Chairman of the County has not resumed to anything like normal with things like the Citizenship Ceremonies still not taking place and I think, sadly for those achieving Citizenship all they get now apart from congratulating is their certificate in the post which I am sure they are glad to receive but in normal times myself and one of the deputy Lord Lieutenants would join them to hand out the certificates and the DL would tell them a little of the history of the County and Lieutenancy. We then meet them over tea, coffee and a biscuit but most of all it’s nice to talk with them. I can’t wait to get that back to normal.

Of course the Southdowns National Park has also been working and although not in the Offices is working almost as usual although of course meetings etc are still virtual and take ages but Planning etc is being continued.

We now have our new members from the Secretary of State and our new Chairman Ian Phillips is handling everything well. I now sit on the Planning Committee which is time consuming because of course we can’t just get on a Bus in Midhurst and go to look at sites together. We have to try and get to sites ourselves.

Please don’t think I am using this page to be Political but I think it is of interest to all looking at the Planning White paper that seems to be loading many more houses in the South East of England that our MP Andrew Griffiths secured an adjournment debate on the 7th September which was televised to discuss the intolerable situation of the South East having to take so much development. I guess he spoke for a good half an hour and what an inspiring speech it was. When he finished other MP’s especially from the coastal area gave excellent speeches themselves in support of Andrew. I only hope someone in Government was listening.

We are going ahead to build a new Fire Station and training centre at Horsham well Broadbridge Heath really and we have also gained a Gold award for our Armed Forces Covenant which is something to be proud of.

Don't forget I am always keen when we can to visit events in the Parishes and in the meantime it's janet.dunton@westsussex.gov.uk or jdunton@chichester.gov.uk. Home telephone 01798 344914 or mobile 07979152898. Happy for residents to contact if they have a problem they would like to discuss.
Keep safe everyone."

Cllr E Lintill reported that Petworth Town Council's request for a review of the proposed rent of the unit at the Old Bakery was looked at kindly and the rent is remaining as was during the previous lease period. She advised that as the Government are providing more money to the District Council, the deficit at the end of the year is likely to be in the region of £3 million. Cllr Lintill asked what the Town Council's plans were for the Christmas Event and Cllr Singleton advised that subject to a resolution later in the meeting, the Event will be cancelled however plans are being developed to ensure there is a festive feel in the Town during December. Cllr Kemp asked Cllr Lintill if the District Council has any plans to encourage local shopping in December and Cllr Lintill suggested the Clerk contact Officers at the District Council to find out more details regarding their plans.

137/20 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Upon the proposal of Cllr Copus, seconded by Cllr Kemp, the minutes of the F&GP Committee meetings held on 18th August 2020 were accepted.

Cllr Copus reported that excluding Coronavirus expenditure, the Council is currently spending below the budgeted run rate. He advised that the Council is likely to have a small loss at the end of the 2020/2021 financial year as the grant awarded by the Sussex Community Foundation was for £5,000 rather than the £10,000 the Council had requested. He reported that the cancellation of the Christmas Event will result in no income from stall holders which will have a further impact on the accounts. He reported that the Committee is using a good forecasting mechanism and he advised that no unbudgeted expenditure or grants have been requested since last month's Council meeting.

138/20 HIGHWAYS, TRAFFIC AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Upon the proposal of Cllr Kemp, seconded by Cllr Hewlett, the minutes of the Highways, Traffic & Planning Committee meeting held on 12th August 2020 were accepted.

Cllr Atkins reported that the developers of the Square Fields site presented an update at the Planning Committee on 9th September 2020. He advised that there are some complicated connections around the site which the developers are looking at further. Cllr Atkins reported that the Government are currently consulting on Changes to the Current Planning System. He advised that currently, schemes of more than 10 dwellings typically provide affordable housing however should the proposed changes be implemented, this threshold will temporarily increase to either 40 or 50 dwellings. Cllr Atkins reported that the proposed changes would also result in an increase from 753 dwellings per annum for the whole District to 1,120 dwellings per annum.

Cllr Atkins reported that the Clerk has reported the changes made recently to the external wall at The Angel to the Planning Officers for investigation. The Clerk advised that she has been informed that the Planning Officers have investigated the case and advised that they have determined no further action is needed. The Clerk reported that she is expecting a written report regarding this investigation which she will circulate to Councillors when it has been received.

139/20 OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Upon the proposal of Cllr Scallon, seconded by Cllr Atkins, the minutes of the Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 5th August 2020 were accepted.

Cllr Peet reported that at the Open Spaces Committee meeting on 2nd September 2020, the Committee resolved to retain the fencing around the towers at Hampers Common Play Area. He advised that there has been some vandalism of the fencing and thanked Cllr Copus for fixing the damage. Cllr Peet reported that due to the cost of addressing the surfacing issue at Rosemary Gardens Play Area, the Committee resolved not to take any action at this stage given that no reports have been received from Parishioners. He advised that following the recent letter sent to all allotment holders at Grove Street, no further complaints have been received. Cllr Peet reported that the winter planting costs have been approved by the Open Spaces Committee and will be taken to the Finance & General Purposes Committee in October 2020.

140/20 FARMERS MARKET

Under the proposal of Cllr Scallon, seconded by Cllr Copus, the recommendations of the Farmers Market Working Group were accepted. The Clerk asked how the changes will be communicated to those currently involved in co-ordinating the Farmers Market and Cllr Kemp suggested the Councillors on the Farmers Market Working Group discuss this further outside of the Council meeting. The Clerk reported that the license to use Pound Street Car Park for the Farmers Market is in place up to and including December 2020.

141/20 COMMUNITY HUB

Cllr Desai presented a report detailing the Working Group's thoughts on how to extend the Help Desk project into a sustainable Community Hub. She advised that the concept has been developed following conversations with colleagues at Chichester District Council and at a similar project in Selsea. Cllrs Scallon, Burden & Thorpe expressed their support in keeping the Help Desk open given that infection rates are rising. Discussion took place with regards to whether the Council should employ paid staff to maintain a consistent, professional service within the Help Desk and to expand it's offering or whether to explore if volunteers could be utilised. Cllr Singleton reported that following a recent meeting with representatives of West Sussex County Council, it is likely that the Town Council could relocate to office space within Petworth Library where a Community Hub could also be developed. She advised that the Police are expected to vacate the two offices they currently use in the Library which would free up space that could be available to the Town Council however this will be confirmed in the near future.

142/20 REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Royal British Legion's arrangements for Remembrance & the Poppy Appeal 2020 were noted.

143/20 SPORT ENGLAND GRANT

The Council reviewed the offer of a grant to the value of £15,000 for the installation of a 2 lane cricket net facility at Petworth Park Sports Ground. It was resolved that acceptance of the grant could only take place subject to confirmation from Petworth Park Cricket Club that the remaining funds required to deliver the project are in place. Cllr Thorpe offered to follow up with Mr A Rees, Chairman of Petworth Park Cricket Club.

144/20 TO RECEIVE UPDATES FROM WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE GROUPS

- a) **Petworth Business Association (PBA)** – Cllr Desai advised that the PBA will be having an Emergency General Meeting in the near future which will enable changes to their Constitution. She also reported that Chichester District Council have provided some banners to support the recovery of the Town Centre which she will put up in the near future.
- b) **Traffic Calming working group** – Cllr Scallon reported that the proposal and application for a 20mph zone within the Town Centre has now been prepared. He advised that consultation regarding the proposal has been included in the Autumn edition of Petworth Pages, inviting residents' comments. Cllr Scallon reported that the consultation regarding the pelican crossing on the A272 Tillington Road is now complete and he advised that he has requested an update from Mr C Stark at West Sussex County Council.
- c) **Petworth Sports** – Cllr Thorpe reported that the Sports & Physical Activity Working Group have met a number of times and are currently addressing governance issues, health and safety and hygiene requirements of the pavilion.
- d) **Petworth Visitors** – Cllr Singleton reported that she and the Clerk are meeting Mr A Hastie of the National Trust on the 28th September 2020.
- e) **New Premises** – Cllr Singleton advised that the lease for the Old Bakery is in the office for signing. She asked the Clerk to follow up on the recent meeting regarding Petworth Library to identify whether the Police are vacating the office space which could be utilised by the Town Council.

- f) **Community Hub** – No update.
- g) **Planting & Horticulture** – Cllr Hewlett reported that the winter planting has been ordered at a third of the cost of last year’s scheme.
- h) **Infrastructure Business Plan** – Cllr Atkins reported that Terms of Reference for the Infrastructure Business Plan Working Group have been drafted and will be circulated to Councillors in the near future. He advised that the Chichester City Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will be discussed at the Open Spaces Committee.
- i) **Farmers Market** – No update.
- j) **Christmas Event** – Cllr Singleton advised that the Christmas Event Working Group recommend cancelling the Christmas Event this year. This recommendation was unanimously supported by the Council. Cllr Singleton asked the Clerk to circulate the notes from the Working Group meeting to all Councillors so they are aware of the ways in which it is hoped a festive feel can be developed in Petworth during December.

145/20 HAMPERS COMMON HIRE ENQUIRY

The Clerk advised that she has received a request to hire Hampers Common from 28th September to 5th October. It was unanimously agreed that the request to hire is declined given the current Government guidelines and concerns with regards to rising rates of infection.

146/20 NEXT FULL COUNCIL MEETING (Information Only)

The next Full Council meeting will be held on Thursday 22nd October. Cllr Fox gave his apologies for the October Full Council meeting.

Meeting closed 9.04pm.

Signed
Chairman

Date.....