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CHIPPING NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

At the Council Meeting held remotely due to restrictions imposed by government because of the COVID-19 pandemic, pursuant to notice on Monday 21 September 2020 at 7.15pm via Zoom, the following members were present: -

 Cllr G Mazower, Town Mayor

Cllr S Coleman, Deputy Mayor

Cllr R Benfield

 Cllr N Bradley

 Cllr L Carter

 Cllr J Graves

 Cllr D Heyes

 Cllr M Jarratt

 Cllr R Poole

 Cllr L Tuckwell

 Cllr M Tysoe

Cllr M Walker

OCC Cllr H Biles

WODC Cllr M Cahill

WODC Cllr L Carter

WODC Cllr G Saul

 Officers: Janet Eustace, Locum Town Clerk

 Louise Steele, LCRC

K Linnington, Deputy Town Clerk

 Others: Inspector Hookham and Amanda Ponsonby, High Sheriff (item 7493) and 7 Members of the Public

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. She expressed her thanks to Janine Sparrowhawk who had recently tendered her resignation as Town Clerk and offered her and her family all good wishes. She also thanked the other Guildhall staff for their continued commitment during recent weeks. The Mayor welcomed the High Sheriff, Amanda Ponsonby to the meeting.

7492The minutes of the meeting held on the 20 July 2020 – were approved as a correct record, subject to the addition of WODC Cllr Cahill and OCC Cllr Biles to the names of those present. The minutes will be signed by the Mayor at the next face to face meeting.

7493 Alleged Public Order Offences

 The Mayor welcomed Inspector Hookham to the meeting. District and Town Councillors spoke of their concerns about the absence of policing in the town. They said residents did not feel safe, that the population of the town was increasing and that the police were

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inaccessible. In replying Inspector Hookham said that the Area Commander would shortly be responding to concerns about resourcing. At a local level the Inspector confirmed that

 Chipping Norton would be a priority for resources. He was aware of specific problems and was working to resolved them. There would be additional support for the Community Police Officer and it was important for residents to report criminal incidents. He emphasised the importance of partnership working and said that the police were working with the Registered Social Landlord who had a duty to control their tenants. The Inspector undertook to come to the next Council meeting to provide an update. Councillors thanked the Inspector for his assurances and said that they looked forward to working together closely in coming months.

 Inspector Hook and the High Sheriff left the meeting at 19.40.

7494 Public Participation

 Marcus Simmons gave a presentation on possible cycling initiatives for Chipping Norton emphasising the major benefits of promoting cycling within the town. Councillors expressed their support for the proposals and it was agreed that Mr Simmons and Cllr Coleman would work together to draw up some more detailed proposals. Cllr Tuckwell would also be involved. Cllr Graves proposed that this work should come under the auspices of the Traffic Advisory Committee.

7495 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr. E. Coles and Cllr D Davidson.

7496 Declarations of Interest

 Cllr Graves expressed an interest in item 7504 as a non-voting trustee of the theatre.

7497 Committee Structure

Cllr Coleman introduced her paper on the review of the Council’s Committee Structure. Cllrs Tysoe and Jarrett expressed concerns about the need for such a review. Cllrs Tuckwell and Bradley emphasised the need to fully understand the work of the Council before making changes and the need to retain those things which had worked well. It was RESOLVED that Cllr Coleman Chair the review with Cllrs Carter, Graves, Poole and Tuckwell being members.

7498 Six month rule

Council RESOLVED to accept Apologies for Absence from all Town Councillors in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 s85(1) for long term absence due to the restrictions from Coronavirus up until 7th May 2021.

7499 Town Clerk Recruitment

The Council received a report from Louise Steele, LGRC consultant setting out details for the recruitment of a new Town Clerk. Councillors considered proposals to increase the hours to a full time post and to increase the pay scale to LC3. It was emphasised that the higher pay scale was more likely to attract a stronger candidate. There was discussion about the need to employ an experienced Clerk and Mrs Steele urged the Council not to rule out

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inexperienced people provided they had the right skills. Council RESOLVED to accept the recommendations set out in the report and for a panel comprising the Mayor, Cllrs Davidson, Carter and Poole and Mrs Steele to form the selection panel.

7500 East Chipping Norton Working Group

Cllr Heyes commented on the distribution of the leaflet across the town and to satellite villages (Lidstone, Over Norton, Churchill, Taston, Chadlington, Spelsbury and Dean). He was dismayed by the lack of contact between the County and Town Councils. He said that despite statements to the contrary OCC where, with the approval of the Secretary of State, able to sell land at less than best price where it would promote and improve (i) economic wellbeing (ii) social wellbeing and (iii) environmental wellbeing. Referring to the Town Council minutes of 16.09.19, The Mayor read that the Leader of OCC had promised to work with the Town Council "OCC will be consulting with the Council and will appoint an Officer as a point of contact” - but there had been no contact of any kind with OCC. The Mayor suggested a meeting with a RIBA consultant to discuss place making forums and design review to help inform future discussion with OCC. Council RESOLVED that such a meeting take place.

7501 Local Cycling initiatives

 See item 7494 above.

7502 Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr Biles reported that action on the Tank Farm Master Plan rested with officers at WODC who were preparing supplementary planning guidance. Unfortunately officers had been reallocated due to COVID and some delays had occurred. She believed the Plan would be out to consultation in late October or November. She said that she thought that the Vision Statement was very similar in content to the Local Plan and that the Council should secure most of its wishes. Cllr Biles also reported on the budget cuts at OCC, the County’s performance on recycling, unconscious bias training and the latest COVIS news. She supported the cycling initiative and said the OCCs cycling champion would be able to offer her assistance in working up proposals.

7503 West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr Saul had provided the meeting with a report covering consultation on Government White Paper “Planning for the future” and on Changes to the Current Planning System. He said that he was particularly worried about the amount of control that will be relinquished by local authorities and local communities if the proposals were taken forward. He reported on the White paper proposals that the current system of planning obligations (Section 106) and CIL be scrapped, even though CIL had not yet been adopted in West Oxfordshire. The proposal was to replace it with a new, nationally set charge. This would run counter to the ability to set local priorities and tariffs. He also talked about changes which could markedly reduce the availability of affordable housing.

Cllr Carter reported on a recent meeting of the Social and Economic Committee where she had pressed for more police resource for Chipping Norton. She mentioned to Council’s

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COVID 19 recovery plan and that evictions had been paused until the end of September. TVP and WODC were working together on raising awareness of domestic violence.

Cllr Cahill mentioned that WODC also had a cycling champion who was working with SUSTRANS on a route from Chipping Norton to Kingham. He had attended an excellent series of webinars on rural issues. He and Cllr Coles had succeeded in getting the name of a local development changed to ‘Willow Gardens’.

7504 Planning

1. The Council received the list of applications and comments discussed by email due to the Coronavirus situation during August/September 2020.
2. Decisions: None Notified.

The Mayor reported on pre application discussions held with developers and their agents to consider their planning application for the old Harpers building. Council noted with concern the possible impact of this scheme on the viability of the theatre. It was agreed that the theatre was a crucial part of the town and that efforts must be made to secure its future. John Terry said that he was have a further meeting with the developers later in the week and that he would keep the Council informed of developments. He was concerned about a number of inaccuracies contained within the proposal. It was noted that the application had already been submitted to WODC and would be out to consultation by early October.

7505 Standing Orders. The Council RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue beyond 9.15 pm.

7506 Town Hall re-opening

The Mayor proposed that a project to establish the steps needed to open the Town Hall in line with current COVID restrictions. It was agreed that the Deputy Town Clerk and Mrs Steele should work on this together.

7507 Bus shelters

The Mayor reported that a site meeting had been arranged with Highways and Stagecoach to consider options for a new bus shelter in Walterbush Road. The Clerk reported the claim for damage to the shelters in London Road and Cornish Road was still with the Council’s insurers who required a second estimate for repairs. She would try to organise this as soon as possible.

7508 Cornish Road Play Area

The Council had received details of a piece of new play equipment for the Cornish Road playground. Cllr Poole reported that the existing equipment needed to be replaced. Consultation had taken place prior to lockdown and the Kanope Multi play unit had proved to be the most popular at a cost of £13, 865 plus associated installation costs and safety matting. The Clerk advised that once a piece of play equipment had been chosen it was not possible to get competitive quotes on a like for like basis.

Council RESOLVED to accept the quotation. Cllrs Tysoe and Jarrett were not in favour.

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7509 Christmas Market, Lights and Remembrance

The Mayor reported on the RBLs proposals for marking Remembrance Sunday. The procession would be much smaller and shorter to comply with COVID restrictions and there would be no reception at the Town Hall. The Deputy Clerk and Mrs Steele were asked to consider what steps would need to be taken to ensure COVID 19 compliance. It was noted that WODC had asked to be informed of all such events and that a detailed risk assessment, which the RBL said they were working on, would be needed.

The Mayor had been in touch with Blachere about some additional Christmas lights in the town. It was RESOLVED that for £2,100 + VAT a festoon of lights should be added to Middle Row and an additional tree wrapped. It was noted that the lights should not be too bright to avoid disturbing residents.

The Mayor reported on proposals from Ian Nolan for a scheme to Illuminate Chipping Nolan which would involve lighting the front of buildings and providing street performers. Mr Nolan is a very experienced event planner and would ensure that the event was COVID compliant. He would be seeking sponsorship but would be looking for a contribution of £3,500 from the Town Council. Councillor expressed enthusiasm for such an event which they felt was much needed given all the current problems. There were however some doubts about whether such an event could go ahead given the further restrictions that were expected to be imposed in the very near future. It was agreed that the Mayor should have further discussions with Mr Nolan to establish the timetable for final decisions, cancellation plans and a possible reduced plan.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.