

## **BANBURY TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of Banbury Town Council held as a virtual meeting on Tuesday, 13 April 2021 at 6.30pm.

Present: Councillor Colegrave (Town Mayor)  
Councillors: Beverly, Bignell, Cherry, Clarke, Dhesi, Fatemian, Hussain, Harrison, Illott, Kilsby, Mallon, Richards, Ross and Woodcock.

Officers: Mark Recchia (Town Clerk)  
Mark Hassall (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO)

### **C.59/20 Minutes Silence**

The Town Mayor drew Members' attention to the death of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh.

A Minute's silence was held in memory of Prince Philip.

### **C.60/20 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Banfield, Beere, Mephram, Milne Home and Wren.

### **C.61/20 Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **C.62/20 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

**IT WAS RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 09 February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

### **C.63/20 Communications**

The Town Mayor paid tribute to the following Councillors who were standing down and would not be seeking re-election in the forthcoming local elections:

Nick Harrison – Calthorpe North – Elected 2008  
Colin Clarke – Calthorpe South – Elected 2004  
Tony Mephram – Calthorpe South – Elected 2018  
Tina Wren – Easington North – Elected 2006  
Lucy Donaldson – Hardwick West – Elected 2016  
Nathan Bignell – Hardwick West – Elected 2019  
Surinder Dhesi – Neithrop North – Elected 2012  
Alastair Milne Home – Neithrop South – Elected 2001  
Gordon Ross – Ruscote – Elected 2012  
Hannah Banfield – Town Centre – Elected 2016

### **C.64/20 Questions - Elected Members and Members of the Public**

None.

### **C.65/20 General Services Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Harrison and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the General Services Committee meeting held on 23 March 2021 be received.

In response to a Member's question regarding lack of elected member input into the revised planning application for the Café/Kiosk development in People's Park, the Town Clerk reminded Members that a full discussion on a revised design and costings had taken place at the last Council Meeting (Minute C.58/20 refers), and delegated authority had been given to obtain any necessary additional planning consent for the revised design.

**C.66/20 Return to Physical Meetings**

The Council considered a report prepared by the Town Clerk informing Members of the expiry of the Regulations allowing Virtual Meetings and asking Council to consider options and agree arrangements for the Annual Council Meeting and beyond.

The Town Clerk advised members that the regulations that currently allowed local authorities to hold meetings remotely until 06 May 2021 would not be extended by the Government, and so face-to-face meetings would need to resume from 07 May. This was especially problematic during the period up to 21 June prior to which Covid restrictions remained in place.

Luke Hall MP, Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government, had sent a letter to principal council leaders. The letter explained that the government, despite extensive lobbying, was not able to roll the Regulations over for another year, due to a very full parliamentary timetable, together with a belief that primary legislation was needed. The letter went on to state that if the council was concerned about holding physical meetings it may want to consider resuming these after 17 May, at which point it was anticipated that a much greater range of indoor activity could resume in line with the Roadmap, such as allowing up to 1,000 people to attend performances or sporting events in indoor venues, or up to half-capacity (whichever was lower). The Council's Annual meeting had been set for 18 May.

Members noted that NALC's position remained that all local councils should continue to meet remotely while the regulations were in force, but had written guidance to help local councils prepare for remote council meetings being unlawful from 07 May 2021. It was understood that both CDC and OCC would be holding face to face Annual meetings, but would be hiring larger venues to accommodate this. The town council was fortunate to manage its own large hall, which was of a sufficient size to achieve the social distancing space requirements for members and officers to meet. However, the Town Clerk advised Members that if a face to face Annual Meeting were to be held this should not include the normal "pomp and ceremony", with invited guests, that Mayor-making normally involved. It should be a business only meeting and should limit the attendance by the public to the capacity remaining after members and officer space requirements were accounted for. A separate "reception" could be held later in the year.

The Council held a full discussion of the various options open to them for holding both the Annual Meeting and subsequent meetings. There was a general consensus that a return to holding face to face meetings, with a range of Covid mitigation measures, was the preferred option. This would remain the case notwithstanding any potential extension to the virtual meeting provisions that might come about as a result of a pending Court case. However, it was accepted that the Annual Meeting should be a business only meeting and that the ceremonial aspects of Mayor-making could be addressed at a separate reception after 21 June.

**RESOLVED** that the Council returns to physical meetings in the Town Hall with effect from the Annual Meeting scheduled for 18 May 2021.

The meeting ended at 6.55pm