

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING – 2021/01/11 – 48

Minutes of the meeting held via Zoom¹ on Monday 11th January 2021 at 7.01pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs W Leach (Mayor and Chairman of the meeting), J Carr, J Greenwood, A Harley, R Holmes, S Holmes, R Kemsley, P Macklin, A Preest and S Stockham

District Cllr C Vaughan
District Cllr M Topping
Ten members of the public
Mr S Holley, Town Clerk
Miss C Wheeler, Assistant Clerk (Minute Taker)

1. **APOLOGIES**

None

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

Cllr Preest expressed concern that the resignation of a Councillor would be an agenda item for the Confidential section of the meeting. The Chairman advised that this would enable all Councillors to discuss the situation fully.

3. **OPEN FORUM**

A member of the public questioned why the Council had resolved to award each member of staff a £500 bonus when members of its electorate were facing numerous financial, social and mental health challenges. They felt that a number of staff had been able to work from home; that no reduction in the staffing level had been viewed; that the decision to award the sum had been against the advice from the Clerk regarding the amount available to cover the cost. Cllr Harley responded that the cost of the award had been covered by an underspend in the budget; that over the course of the year staff had undertaken work over and above their job descriptions and had adapted to the different working practices of a number of different Clerks; that the Council believed in recognising and appreciating its staff and expressed regret that other employers did not adopt the same principle.

A member of the public questioned the payment which had been made to Lydney Hub; the number of families which had been helped as a result of the initiative; how the money had been spent; and sought information on the relationship of Cllr Macklin to the Hub. The Chairman advised that funding had been allocated to the Hub to contribute towards Christmas meals for the elderly and also free meals for young people. It was explained that Cllr Macklin had been appointed as the Council's representative to the Hub.

A member of the public noted that the Council had awarded its litter and grass cutting contracts at its last meeting, however, the Council did not publish a list detailing its contracts, their value and end dates on its website. The Clerk gave a commitment to publish said information on the website.

Action by – the Clerk

¹ The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

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4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14th December 2020 were Proposed by the Chairman and unanimously APPROVED as a correct record.

5. **FLOODING**

The Chairman expressed thanks to members of the public and Councillors who had helped to fill sandbags during the recent period of flooding. Thanks were also expressed to Severnside Sand and Gravel for their generous donation of a quantity of sand and sandbags.

The Chairman then provided the Council with an update on action which had been taken since the event. It was noted that discussions had taken place with representatives from Gloucestershire County Council and the Environment Agency and thanks were expressed to Joe Baker at Gloucestershire County Council for his efforts. The Chairman advised that additional monitoring stations would be installed by the Environment Agency along the Lyd in order to record the flow of water and Severn Trent would also be undertaking a survey.

Due to the public perception that opening the flood gates helped to alleviate flooding, the Environment Agency had offered to demonstrate the operation of the gates when it was safe to do so and, if the opening of the flood gates made a difference, the Environment Agency would formulate a plan for such. Cllr Kemsley stressed the need for as much local knowledge concerning flooding in Lydney to be passed to himself and the Chairman in order that it may be fed back.

Speaking in his capacity of County Councillor, Cllr Preest expressed thanks to the Chairman and Cllr Kemsley for their efforts and advised that he was working with his fellow County Councillors to form a county-wide seminar to look at flooding issues. Cllr Preest also felt that investigations should take place into clearing areas of land between Norchard and Middle Forge which could be used as attenuation areas.

A number of Councillors suggested that consideration be given towards a redesign of the Town Council's Telephone Tree for sandbags, because not all Councillors had been contacted during the recent event. It was suggested that the Council adopt a pro-active approach to ensure that sandbags were filled and distributed in advance when it was felt that flooding may occur. The Chairman advised that responsibility for flood response lay with the District Council; the Town Council only held a limited quantity of sand and sandbags in order to offer an immediate facility to residents at imminent risk of flooding.

6. **RESPONSE TO COVID LOCKDOWN**

The Clerk advised that the Lydney Community Support had been contacted on the latest Lockdown restrictions and had confirmed that no assistance was required from the Town Council.

The Clerk was requested to ascertain if any assistance could be provided to local youth groups (e.g. Scouts/Guides/etc) by Forest of Dean District Council/Gloucestershire County Council as children it was felt that children were facing a particularly difficult time.

Action by – the Clerk

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Concern was expressed that some members of the public were not observing social distancing and questions were raised regarding the continued opening of some retail premises. It was noted that the Town Council was not responsible for enforcing the regulations; it was suggested that representation could be made to Government in order to define the 'essential' products for which retailers were permitted to remain open so that they may be offered for sale to the public.

Cllr Preest left the meeting at this point.

Speaking in her capacity as the District Council's Cabinet Member for Housing, Cllr Vaughan advised that hand sanitisers had been installed in the town and encouraged the Town Council to publicise their locations. Town Centre meetings were also held regularly.

It was suggested that the Police could engage with members of the public and encourage social distancing. It was also noted that the Police had recently undertaken patrols in visitor attractions within the Forest to dissuade visitors from travelling to the Forest of Dean from outside the area.

7. **REVIEW OF THE NEWSLETTER**

The Council was requested to consider a report on the costs associated with increasing the number of printed versions of the newsletter in order that a larger area of the town could be covered.

It was felt that the map provided by the supplier to illustrate the areas the December Newsletter had been distributed to had been inadequate with insufficient detail. The Clerk reminded the Council that the initial print run of 4,015 had been based on the quantity which the Council had previously been able to distribute; however, as the new distributor was able to cover a larger area the Council would need to increase the number of newsletters which were printed. Accordingly, the Clerk suggested that the printed quantity be increased to 5,500 to cover the number of dwellings in the Town, along with a further quantity for distribution by the Town Council. This would incur an additional cost of £1,000 which had not, as yet, been included in the draft 2021/22 budget. Cllr R Holmes highlighted the need to advertise the Council's Grants Scheme in the newsletter, which he had requested at a previous meeting.

The Chairman Proposed that the Council would increase its print run to 5,500 copies and that it may need to consider reducing one of its 2021/22 budget headings by £1,000 to cover the additional expenditure. Unanimously AGREED.

The harbour development, cycle paths and environmental projects were suggested as content for future editions.

8. **BUDGET AND PRECEPT FOR 2021/22**

The Council was requested to consider a proposed Budget report produced by the Clerk / RFO and also a copy of the draft Budget for 2021/22.

The Chairman reminded all present that work on the Budget had commenced in September/October and that each of the Council's Committees had met to consider their draft budgets. Furthermore, the Council had already agreed that it wished to keep its

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Precept at the 2019/20 level. The Chairman also advised that, because the Precept would be shared across a greater number of households it would result in an estimated reduction on Band D of £9.49, based on the Tax Base figures provided by Forest of Dean District Council. The Clerk advised that the draft Budget provided for a number of projects to be undertaken (e.g. Covid recovery, environmental, etc) and that £19,317 had been allocated for General Reserves. However, due to the decision taken earlier in the meeting concerning the newsletter, £1,000 would be taken from said budget heading, resulting in £18,317 being allocated for General Reserves. The Clerk advised that the Budget would be the focus of a Press Release and stressed that final Tax Base figures needed to be confirmed by Forest of Dean District Council.

It was Proposed by the Chairman that the Council would accept draft budget for 2021/22 of £598,252 as shown, together with the recommendation regarding the reallocation of £1,000 to the newsletter budget heading. Unanimously AGREED.

It was Proposed by the Chairman that the Council's Precept for 2021/22 would amount to £579,240; resulting in an estimated decrease in Band D of £9.49. Unanimously AGREED.

Thanks were expressed to the Clerk and the Council's staff for their efforts.

9. **FINANCIAL MATTERS/RFO REPORT**

9.1 **Payments**

The Council was requested to approve the circulated list of accounts for payment, including a payment of £487 to Forest of Dean District Council which had been deferred from the last meeting due to a request for further information. It had been established that the payment would be covered by a grant to the Town Council for Re-opening The High Streets Safely.

Ratification of the circulated list of payments made after the December meeting (Appendix I) was Proposed by Cllr Carr, Seconded by Cllr S Holmes and unanimously AGREED.

Approval of the list of payments circulated for approval at the meeting (Appendix II) was Proposed by Cllr Harley, Seconded by Cllr S Holmes and unanimously AGREED.

9.2 **Income and Expenditure Report/Balance Sheet/Bank Reconciliations**

The Council NOTED the above financial reports for Month 9.

9.3 **Appointment of Internal Auditor**

The Clerk advised that he had previously suggested the Council undertake a procurement exercise as part of its process to appoint an Internal Auditor. Whilst discussions had commenced with some organisations the Clerk advised that 'in person' interviews could not currently take place. Accordingly, the Clerk suggested that the Council may wish to re-appoint Wildin & Co as its Internal Auditor for 2020/21, with a procurement exercise undertaken for 2021/22 when circumstances permitted.

It was Proposed by Cllr R Holmes, Seconded by Cllr Kemsley that the Council would appoint Wildin & Co as its Internal Auditor for 2021/22. Unanimously APPROVED, subject to a procurement exercise being undertaken to appoint an Internal Auditor for 2021/22.

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10. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

10.1 **Burial Committee**

Cllr Stockham advised that the Committee still awaited a report on the Table Top Tombs in St Mary's Churchyard and was still seeking land for a possible new Cemetery.

10.2 **Dean Forest Greenway**

Cllr Greenway reported that West Dean Parish Council had submitted a formal planning application for the route; that he, together with Cllr Stockham, would attend a Steering Group meeting later in the week; and that gaining planning consent for the route would be a key element for future funding bids.

10.3 **Yorkley Court Farm Community Fund**

Cllr Kemsley advised that he, together with Cllr Greenwood, had attended a meeting of the Community Fund Group during which funding had been recommended for seven applications.

11. **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk expressed thanks to the Council's staff for their continued hard work and outlined the impact that Covid had had on them.

12. **CORRESPONDENCE**

None.

13. **REPORTS**

The Chairman apologised for not bringing forward the item concerning District Councillor reports and requested that the Clerk ensure the item was moved further up the agenda for the February meeting.

Action by – the Clerk

14. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Council NOTED that its next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday 8th February 2021 at 7.00 pm, via Zoom.

15. **MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

The Council resolved to continue in 'Closed Session' under the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as the following business to be conducted was considered to be of a confidential nature.

Note: The following Minutes are made available to the Public for openness and transparency. The Council approves Confidential Minutes with substantially the same content, but with the inclusion of names of individuals or other parties when appropriate. Other Confidential business (such as legal matters and employment issues) may appear in the Public Minutes only as an Agenda /Minute heading.

16. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

It was noted that the work to amend the website to provide a facility to review such minutes had been completed earlier in the day, and the short notice meant that not all Councillors had had the opportunity to review the minutes. It was Proposed by the Chairman that approval of the minutes be deferred until the next meeting. Unanimously AGREED.

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17. **RESIGNATION OF A COUNCILLOR**

After an extensive discussion, the resignation of Cllr Turner was duly noted by the Council and regret was expressed.

18. **STAFF MATTERS**

The Council was requested to consider a report from the Clerk which contained a number of recommendations in response to the latest Lockdown restrictions: -

(i) The Council was requested to confirm that it was satisfied that its staff were working safely under arrangements that had been checked by a professional Health and Safety consultant. However, due to the impact of Covid on Groundstaff it had been suggested they observe a short ‘circuit-breaker’ which would be managed by the Clerk. Essential services would continue on a rota basis and the whole team would remain available for emergencies such as flooding. Proposed by Cllr Stockham, Seconded by Cllr Carr and unanimously AGREED.

(ii) The Council was requested to consider returning to ‘basic’ Agendas for its meetings and to cancel all non-essential Committee meetings. Any urgent Committee business would be added to the Agendas for meetings of the Council. Proposed by the Chairman and unanimously AGREED.

(iii) In view of the previous decision, the Council was requested to delegate the progress of existing projects, activities and payments to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, or relevant Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs as appropriate, with this arrangement to be reviewed at every subsequent meeting. Proposed by the Chairman and unanimously AGREED.

(iv) The Council was requested to confirm that it was willing to wait for the remaining Staff Appraisals until a safer working environment permitted. It was noted that this was the preference of the staff concerned. Proposed by the Chairman and unanimously AGREED.

(v) The Council was requested to give its commitment to all members of staff that the Council would not penalise (or dismiss) staff dealing with personal Covid-related problems. Proposed by Cllr Harley, Seconded by Cllr R Holmes and unanimously AGREED.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Chairman

Date

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Appendix 1

07/01/2021		Lydney Town Council								Page 41	
13:15		PURCHASE DAYBOOK								User: CEHW	
Purchase Ledger for Month No 9				Order by Invoices Entered				Invoices entered by CEHW Posted by CEHW			
Nominal Ledger Analysis											
Invoice Date	Invoice Number	Order No	Supplier A/c Name	Supplier A/c Code	Net Value	VAT	Invoice Total	A/C	Centre	Amount	Analysis Description
25/11/2020	001	119	DIRECT FLYER	DIR001	245.00	0.00	245.00	4125	150	245.00	Distribution 5000 Newsletters
09/12/2020	4802	118	GRAPHICS SHACK LTD	GRA001	494.20	0.00	494.20	4125	150	494.20	Newsletters
11/12/2020	29426	24	RIALTAS	RIA001	200.00	40.00	240.00	4060	100	200.00	Training AC
15/12/2020	AM		EXPENSES	EXP001	13.99	0.00	13.99	4185	150	13.99	Flu Vaccination AM
30/11/2020	1857	123	ALPHA WEBSITE	ALP001	500.00	0.00	500.00	4130	150	500.00	New Set up on website
16/12/2020	491	120	PROMO PRO	PRO001	12.00	2.40	14.40	4185	150	12.00	4 Embroider on 2 Jkts
17/12/2020	RB		EXPENSES	EXP001	13.99	0.00	13.99	4185	150	13.99	Flu Vaccination RB
TOTAL INVOICES					1,479.18	42.40	1,521.58			1,479.18	
VAT ANALYSISCODE NRS @ 0.00%					500.00	0.00	500.00				
VAT ANALYSISCODE S @ 20.00%					212.00	42.40	254.40				
VAT ANALYSISCODE Z @ 0.00%					767.18	0.00	767.18				
TOTALS					1,479.18	42.40	1,521.58				

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Appendix II

07/01/2021		Lydney Town Council		Page 45							
14:28		PRELIMINARY PURCHASE DAYBOOK		User: CEHW							
Purchase Ledger for Month No 10			Order by Invoices Entered								
			Nominal Ledger Analysis								
Invoice Date	Invoice Number	Order No	Supplier A/c Name	Supplier A/c Code	Net Value	VAT	Invoice Total	A/C	Centre	Amount	Analysis Description
21/12/2020	A/C M/2257W	86	PHILIP BLATCHLY	BLA001	375.00	75.00	450.00	4305	200	375.00	Cemetery Plaque - M King
27/11/2020	0712	121	DUNCAN MATTHEWS	DUN001	155.00	0.00	155.00	4630	160	20.00	UTV Oil
								4200	160	112.50	Replacement Battery
								4200	160	20.00	Labour Battery
								4200	160	2.50	Additional Battery Charge
15/12/2020	3595	41	MAXINSON	MAK001	57.00	11.40	68.40	4055	100	57.00	Dec Payroll Costs
06/01/2021	18051		REVILL	REV001	999.42	199.89	1,199.31	4515	400	999.42	Machinery Annual Services
01/01/2021	MEM232544	46	SLCC	SLC001	317.00	0.00	317.00	4160	150	317.00	SLCC Annual Subscription SH
01/01/2021	19185	71	TATE	TAT001	82.00	16.40	98.40	4130	150	82.00	Mthly Mailbox Charges
25/12/2020	400042524		TINDLE NEWSPAPERS	TIN001	30.00	6.00	36.00	4100	150	30.00	Christmas Advert
05/01/2021	0856 AHE118	124	TRAVIS PERKINS	TRA001	135.58	27.12	162.70	4410	600	135.58	Sand/Bags Flood Defences
TOTAL INVOICES					2,151.00	335.81	2,486.81			2,151.00	
VAT ANALYSISCODE NRS @ 0.00%					155.00	0.00	155.00				
VAT ANALYSISCODE S @ 20.00%					1,679.00	335.81	2,014.81				
VAT ANALYSISCODE Z @ 0.00%					317.00	0.00	317.00				
TOTALS					2,151.00	335.81	2,486.81				