

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT 7PM ON WEDNESDAY 15th APRIL 2020 (THIS WAS A VIRTUAL MEETING HELD THROUGH ZOOM)

PRESENT:

Councillors: Cllr Cocking (Acting Chair), J Draper, B Parkes, C Parkes, C Atkins, S Harpley, R Hughes, G Lewis, P Roper, P Kimber, D Thurston and L Saunders

IN ATTENDANCE: 2 members of the public

001/20 Chair's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this the first virtual Full Council Meeting.

002/20 Prayers

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, the Chair led the meeting in a moment of reflection.

003/20 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Flack and West.

004/20 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received from Councillors or Officers.

005/20 To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 11th March 2020

With the exception of the following amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

- a. Cllr Hughes requested that it be noted that minute 4058 be amended to show that the plan for the Community Garden also included an allotment.

006/20 Minute Update and Matters Arising

No matters arising

007/20 Democratic Public Half Hour Open Forum

- a. Mr Snow wished to raise a question relating to the extension of the public toilet cleaning contract and asked that he be allowed to raise this question at the appropriate time; during the discussion of Item 11b (ii) – Extension of the Toilet Cleaning Contract. The Chair agreed that this be allowed.
- b. Mr Matthews drew the Councillors attention to an update concerning the potential referendum dates for the Neighbourhood Plan. Legislation introduced in regard to the Coronavirus pandemic meant that any referendum was to be delayed until at latest May 2021. However, associated regulations issued, now allowed for the Plan, given its current position, to carry more material weight on planning matters. A full statement would be recorded at the April Planning and Highways meeting.

008/20 Chair's Update

The Chair advised that given the current health crisis she would not be providing a Chair's update; she felt, she said that 'everyone was working hard to deliver support to the community during these difficult times and this remained the focus.'

009/20 Town Mayor's Announcements

All Mayoral events have been cancelled due to the covid-19 pandemic, and as such there was no report to make.

010/20 Receive written reports from and County Councillors

The Chair advised that no written reports had been received from County Councillors but advised that Dorset Council were providing regular weekly updates to Dorset Councillors.

011/20 Financial Matters

- a. Payments for Authorisation – A list of payments totalling £22,093.03 was submitted for authorisation. The list of payments had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) answered a series of questions from Councillors on the payments listed. (A copy of the list of payments is held at **Annex A** to these minutes).

Authorisation of the payments was unanimously approved.

- b. Retrospective approval was requested for the following:
 - i. A six-month extension to the Toilet Cleaning Contract – Mr Snow raised the question as to why a six-month extension had been agreed when the toilets were all closed due to the current health crisis? Cllr Kimber responded that there were various reasons why the submission requesting the toilet cleaning contract be extended had been supported by the Councillors. Primarily, he said ‘this had not only been to ensure that the toilets were maintained sufficiently to allow them to be opened quickly once the rules on social distancing had been relaxed, but also to allow the toilets at Yeates to be opened to support a number of people, currently living in vans at New Ground Car Park, access to basic facilities.’ It was generally agreed by the Councillors that the Council had a duty to ensure that all residents of Portland be given the necessary support during this crisis, including those that had been provided with authority to remain in the New Ground Car Park. A vote was taken, and a majority decision returned that retrospective approval for the extension of the toilet cleaning contract be given.
 - ii. Purchase of equipment for the Gardeners for use in the Cemetery. A business case had been raised and sent to all Councillors setting out the reasons for the required purchase of a generator and breaker. Following a majority response in support of the action the equipment had been purchased. Cllr Hughes suggested that, given the value of the equipment that it should be marked in some way to show that it was the property of Portland Town Council. A vote was taken with a majority vote being returned that retrospective approval for the purchase of equipment for use in the cemetery to support the digging of graves be provided.
Resolved that marking of the equipment be investigated and undertaken.
 - iii. Extension of support agreement with Weymouth Crematorium – The Clerk explained that the current agreement whereby the Staff at Weymouth Crematorium provided administrative support for burials to be undertaken at Portland cemetery had expired on the 31st March 2020. Following a meeting with the Manager of the Crematorium it had been deemed that the support should continue for a further period of six-months; during which time PTC would look to identify resource to receive training such that the service could be brought in house. It was noted by the RFO that in the last month burials had increased significantly, and their support had been invaluable. Based on last year’s cost it was estimated that the cost for six-months would be less than £2,000 which was within the limit approved by the P&R Committee for the Clerk to approve.

- c. The RFO directed the Councillors to the fourth quarter report together with the end of year report. He added that both had been issued to all Councillors prior to the meeting and for which he now sought to answer any questions. Cllr Kimber felt that given some of the problems and issues that PTC were now facing had been impossible to predict a few weeks ago and asked whether the RFO had any concerns. The RFO responded saying that ‘because of the current situation less money was being spent but wished to re-assure everyone that the precept would still be available later in the year for projects which, through necessity had been postponed.’ Cllr Hughes added that it had

been his intention to seek support from local businesses for the Christmas lights, but that was not now appropriate given the financial pressures being felt by them. Given this, he wished to make it known now that he would be seeking funds from the Council later in the year to support this project.

A vote was taken on whether to accept both the fourth quarter report and the end of year report with a unanimous decision being returned for both.

Resolved that the end of year report provides a true and accurate reflection of the Councils finances.

012/20 – Appointment of Mayor of Portland for 2020/2021

The Clerk explained that only one nomination for the appointment of Mayor had been received – Cllr Sandy West. She then asked each Councillor in turn to vote on the appointment. A recorded, named vote was undertaken which returned unanimous support for Cllr West to be appointed as Mayor for the year 2020/2021.

Resolved that Cllr West be appointed as Mayor of Portland for the year 2020/2021.

013/20 – Appointment of Deputy Mayor of Portland for 2020/2021

The Clerk explained that only one nomination for the appointment of Deputy Mayor had been received – Cllr Cathy Atkins. She then asked each Councillor in turn to vote on the appointment. A recorded, named vote was undertaken returning unanimous support for Cllr Atkins to be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the year 2020/2021.

Resolved that Cllr Atkins be appointed as Deputy Mayor of Portland for the year 2020/2021.

014/20 – Appointment of Chair of Portland Town Council for 2020/2021

The Clerk advised that two nominations had been received for the appointment of Chair, Cllr C Parkes and Cllr C Flack. The Clerk asked each Councillor in turn to vote for one of the nominations and recorded the vote. The final vote returned 7 votes for Cllr C Parkes and 4 votes for Cllr C Flack, there were no abstentions. (The candidates did not vote and there was one other Cllr who was absent). Following the vote Cllr C Parkes is to be appointed Chair of Portland Town Council for the year 2020/2021. Cllr C Parkes wished it to be noted that she expressed a vote of thanks to Cllr Flack for all his hard work during the previous year.

Resolved that Cllr B Parkes be appointed as Chair of Portland Town Council for the year 2020/2021.

015/20 – Update on the progress of the Portland Resilience Plan (Cllr Roper)

Cllr Roper provided an update on the work of the Portland Resilience Committee and the work that they were undertaking in drawing a plan together that would support the residents of Portland during the current health crisis. He explained the background of how the committee had come together adding that the aims of the committee were to ensure that 'nobody slipped through the net', whether that be through age, disability or vulnerability. He added that a number of different voluntary services were being offered from collecting prescriptions and delivering food (from Portland Foodbank) through to the provision of pastoral care to support mental health and wellbeing. He further explained that a leaflet had been produced by the committee which was being distributed throughout the community and which was, he had heard, being well received. He stated that the committee's thoughts were now focusing on to how the service could be sustained in the coming months. A general discussion ensued on the work of the committee and Cllr C Parkes concluded the matter by asking that a vote of thanks be noted to all of those Councillors who are working to ensure that the residents of Portland were supported in this time of crisis.

016/20 Exclusion of Press & Public (discretionary)

There were no matters to discuss which required the exclusion of the Press or Public

017/20 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee's next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 13th May 2020 and will be a virtual meeting.

The meeting ended at 20.20.

Signed Dated.....
Chairman