



Seaford Town Council

MINUTES of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Full Council held via Zoom on Tuesday 27th April 2021 at 7.00pm.

Present:

Councillors R Reed (Mayor) and J Cash (Deputy Mayor).

Councillors N Adil, D Argent, L Boorman, M Brown, J Edson, M Everden, O Honeyman, R Honeyman, J Lord, J Meek and L Wallraven.

Adam Chugg, Town Clerk

Georgia Raeburn, Executive Support Officer

There was one member of the public.

C110/04/20 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Dunn.

C111/04/20 Disclosure of Interests

Councillor R Reed declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5.

C112/04/20 Public Participation

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| <i>Resident A</i> | <p><i>Expressed how taken aback they were by local councils having to meet physically. Questioned which government department is responsible, whether the local MP is aware of this and has she commented, are the media aware of this and why authorities are having to spend taxpayers money taking court action against their own government.</i></p> <p><i>Feels strongly that the government is making a mockery of its own rules; lockdown is still in force on 7th May and this is going against it. Not all people are vaccinated and there is still a risk.</i></p> <p><i>Feels that it is common sense to continue with Zoom meetings as it is much better for people to participate.</i></p> |
| Town Council Response | <p>Reassured that Council Officers have tried to make meetings as safe as they possibly can within the proposals in the report but understands the residents' concerns. The Town Council is therefore having to identify the safest way to operate legally from 7th May.</p> <p>Confirmed that the local MP is aware; the MP assisted with lobbying the Government to try and get a decision to enable local authorities to operate.</p> <p>Confirmed that the Town Council is unable to comment on which aspects of government policy the media picks up more than others but does wonder if the outcome of the High Court case may provide more media interest. Confirmed that the judgment of this is awaited following the case being heard on 21st April.</p> <p>Was not completely if one specific government department is responsible for not taking action to extend the ability for local authorities to meet remotely.</p> <p>Thanked the resident for their participation.</p> |

C113/04/20 Town Clerk's Update Report

The Town Council considered report 174/40 updating the Council on key Council work and work priorities for the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk highlighted some key points surrounding the climate emergency and rewilding, 'staycation' 2021 plans, budget setting and monitoring processes, The View reopening and kiosk and the Assets Working Group.

Members express their gratitude to the approach the Town Clerk is taking with the role and the level of feedback provided. Members discussed the rewilding plans and Lewes District Council's Land Availability Assessment and any effect of this on the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Council thanked the Town Clerk for his update report.

(7.22pm – Cllr R Honeyman exited the meeting)

C114/04/20 Return to Physical Council / Committee Meetings

The Town Council considered report 173/20 updating the Council with the plans for the return to physical meetings and the decisions which Council are being asked to take surrounding this.

The Town Clerk took members through the process to be undertaken at the meeting and the individual recommendations made within the report to address the various elements of being obliged to return to physical meetings. That being possible venues, meeting dates, public access to meetings, public participation at meetings, amendments to the Town Council's Public Participation Policy, councillor safety at physical meetings, inability of Members to vote remotely and additional health and safety measures through covid-testing prior to attending meetings.

The Town Clerk also updated on the ongoing High Court case seeking a review of the Government not taking action to allow for continued remote meetings by local authorities. This court case could change the meeting arrangements for local authorities, including the date at which physical meetings must restart.

Members discussed the content of the report in great depth, making comments and raising some strong concerns on:

- If councillors are unable to be there in person whether there is an exception/provision for them to vote remotely.
- The necessity of asking physical meeting participants to do lateral flow tests if they have been vaccinated.
- Plans for confidential sessions of meetings if these were held in Seaford Baptist Church's auditorium.
- This lack of action by the Government resulting in an undemocratic situation for local authorities, as this has removed the voting rights of some councillors to represent their electorate.
- The focus of the High Court case and what is being determined.

(7.42pm – Councillor N Adil joined the meeting)

- The comparative costs of purchasing equipment to enable the Town Council to hold its meeting at The View.
- The measures within the report being interim measures that are to be reviewed at the Full Council meeting on 24th June.
- Any cancellation fee Seaford Baptist Church would charge/notice period required if the meetings couldn't go ahead or were changed.
- Councillors want the Town Clerk to formally write to the relevant individuals/departments to express the Town Council's strong objection to exclusion of some councillors and members of the public from local authority meetings as a result of this lack of action. This will also form

part of the Town Council's response to the government consultation surrounding remote meetings.

- The Town Council's success with virtual meetings over the last year and the ease of and increase in public participation.

C114.1 It was **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** to working with Seaford Baptist Church to hold Town Council meetings in the Church auditorium until 29th July 2021; if not possible, meetings would be facilitated at The View.

C114.2 It was **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the change in meeting dates as set out within 2.11 of the report.

C114.3 It was **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** to invite members of the public to attend meetings by watching via live streaming to the internet but not in person, until at least the 24th June 2021.

C114.4 It was **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** to instruct Council Officers to temporarily amend the Town Councils' Public Participation Policy to reflect;

- a) Provision for members of the public to submit statements in writing at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting, to be read out loud by a Council Officer during the public participation section of the meeting.
- b) Provision of a virtual meeting for the relevant sections of meetings to enable members of the public to participate in person, albeit remotely.
- c) All other policy rules remain unchanged i.e. time allowed for statements, relation of content to an agenda item etc.
- d) That these amendments to the policy are in place temporarily until 24th June 2021.

C114.5 It was **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** that where a councillor feels unable to physically attend a meeting, that they submit their apologies (arranging a substitute, where relevant), are invited to attend the virtual meeting to participate during public participation should they wish to and are encouraged to watch the livestream or recording in order to keep abreast with the meeting decisions and discussions.

C114.6 It was **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** that councillors and officers attending physical meetings are requested to take a coronavirus lateral flow test within 24 hours of the meeting and if a positive result is received, to not attend the meeting and follow Government guidelines accordingly for a positive lateral flow test.

C114.7 It was **PROPOSED** to **AGREE** that in the event that the current court case results in a change to the date when physical meetings are required, the Council gives delegated authority to the Town Clerk and the Councillors who are members of the CCMG to determine an alternative date for the changes in this motion to take effect.

C114.8 The Council discussed the key points to form a response to the Government's call for evidence regarding virtual meetings, it was **RESOLVED** to **NOTE** that the final response will be agreed at the next Full Council meeting on 20th May 2021.

The meeting closed at 7.53pm.


Councillor Rodney Reed
Mayor of Seaford

