



TORPOINT TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **VIRTUAL** meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee held **via Zoom** on Monday 1st June 2020 at 6.30pm via the Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81540714429?pwd=YVVBaU1nYkk5cnRQdTl0aHV6MVgwdz09>

Meeting ID: 815 4071 4429, Password: 382226

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Virtually PRESENT: - Councillor Mrs. C E Goodman (Town Mayor), Councillor Miss R A Tanner BEM (Deputy Town Mayor), Councillors Mrs. K Brownhill, S J Corbidge MBE, Mrs. J M Martin, T J Gulley OBE, J Tivnan BEM plus the Town Clerk & RFO (Clerk) and the Town Council Support Officer in attendance.

	ACTION
<p>1-20F&P Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors G J Davis and Mrs. R A Southworth.</p>	
<p>2-20F&P Election of Chairman for Civic Year 2020 – 21 The Town Mayor called for nominations for the position of Chairman for the Civic Year 2020-21. Councillor J Tivnan BEM proposed that Councillor S J Corbidge MBE is elected to serve at Chairman for the Civic Year 2020-21. Councillor Mrs. K Brownhill seconded the proposition. The Town Mayor called for any further nominations for the position of Chairman for the Civic Year 2020-21. The Deputy Mayor proposed that Councillor Mrs. J M Martin is elected to serve as Chairman for the Civic Year 2020-21. Councillor T J Gulley OBE seconded the proposition.</p> <p>The Town Mayor called (in alphabetical order) votes FOR Councillor S J Corbidge MBE for Chairman, who received three votes. The Town Mayor called votes FOR Councillor Mrs. J M Martin, who received four votes. There were no abstentions. Councillor Mrs. J M Martin having received the majority of votes was duly elected Chairman for the Civic Year 2020-21.</p>	
<p>3-20F&P Election of Vice Chairman Civic Year 2020- 21 The Chairman called for nominations for the position of Vice Chairman for the Civic Year 2020-21. The Deputy Mayor proposed that Councillor S J Corbidge MBE is elected to serve as Vice Chairman for the Civic Year 2020-21. Councillor Mrs. K Brownhill seconded the proposition and there being no other nominations the motion was put and Councillor S J Corbidge MBE was duly elected Vice Chairman for the Civic Year 2020-21.</p>	
<p>4-20F&P Declarations of Interest relating to items on the Agenda a) None.</p>	
<p>5-20F&P Matters Arising from the minutes: - The Clerk asked the Chairman to bring forward agenda item 7.f) (VAT) to enable the Town Council Support Officer to present an update on this matter, the Chairman agreed to take this agenda item at this point.</p>	



The Town Council Support Officer explained that following previous questions concerning VAT registration, it is confirmed that prior to May 2020 the process was handled correctly as Local Councils are permitted under Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 to reclaim all VAT paid for non-business or exempt activities. Prior to the council taking over the Library the levels of income received, outside of the precept, would have been within these permitted levels.

Prior to the Library being devolved from Cornwall Council, it was not clear how much income would be generated by the Library and it would seem the previous Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) proposed and implemented registration for VAT as a safeguard to ensure the council did not fall foul of the relevant criteria.

Having registered for VAT the previous RFO may not have been aware, that the council should have changed the way it submitted VAT returns under the 'Making Tax Digital' requirement. This requires suitable accounting software to record all accounts data and the information is then submitted digitally direct from the software. This is part of a HMRC upgrade for it to be the most accurate and technologically advanced tax system in the world, in addition to mitigating non-payment of taxes.

The previous method of recording the council accounts did not allow for this, however can advise that due to the recent implementation of Xero, this council is now able to comply with Making Tax Digital and the latest VAT return for the period February – April 2020, was submitted digitally and on time.

There were added complications regarding the changes to the Xero accounting system. Previously the RFO has operated on a 'receipts and payments system' with everything being recorded on receipt of income and payment of bills. Xero operates on an 'income and expenditure' basis with the date of invoices and bills being relevant, instead of the date actually paid.

With help from the Financial Consultant the records have been adjusted to correctly show both VAT payable and reclaimable and going forward with the use of Xero this will be far more straightforward.

The transition to an income and expenditure system has also been taken into account for the Year-end accounts and calculations. Whilst this has increased the time taken to arrive at the correct calculations, it is envisaged this as a one-off and am confident future submissions will be far more straightforward.

The Chairman thanked the Town Council Support Officer for this comprehensive update.

(The Town Council Support Officer left the meeting at this point.)

6-20F&P Committee Terms of Reference.

The Chairman proposed the following statement is included in the Finance and Personnel Committee Terms of Reference: "Overall responsibility for the organisational design of the Council staffing structure", seconded by the Vice Chairman and it is **recommended** to approve the Finance and Personnel Committee Terms of Reference with this statement added.

Council

7-20F&P Minutes of the previous meeting

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on Monday 2nd March 2020 were taken as read, confirmed and will be signed by the Chairman in due course.

8-20F&P Matters arising from the minutes

a) Town Council Organisation structure/design: -

Pursuant to minute 107-19F&P (a) the Clerk explained the Operations Manager position has now been filled and during Covid-19 the employee commenced employment (1st April 2020). The Clerk explained a detailed staffing update will be provided under agenda item 7.c). Council Staffing Report. The Clerk continued that the infrastructure for the Operations Manager and the Clerk to move to Room 3 is now moving forward with British Telecom recently being in contact about the installation work needed.

b) Accounting / financial software: -

Pursuant to minute 107-19F&P (b) the Clerk highlighted the suggestion to pursue investigating a variety of accounting packages (suggested by Councillor G J Davis at a Committee meeting held in 2019) was a wise one as the Xero accounting package is certainly very beneficial for this council. The Clerk added there is certainly much more to learn on Xero, suggesting it no longer needs to be discussed at future Committee meetings, to which members agreed.

c) Council Staffing Report: -

The Clerk reported having prepared a detailed update on council staffing and activities undertaken during the lockdown period, explaining the report had just been finalised in advance of this meeting.

At the socially distanced Council meeting held in March, the Clerk explained the decision to close Torpoint Library and Community Hub from Saturday 21st March. As you are aware having considered the risks to members of the public as well as the risks to the staff, this enabled a carefully considered and planned closure before the Government enforcement. Subsequently on the evening of Monday 23rd March the Government announced the lockdown due to COVID-19. All three Officers were immediately advised not to travel to work the next day and virtually working (from home) was enabled.

Over the next week it was agreed to continue with the appointment / start date for the Operations Manager, who started employment, albeit virtually, on 1st April 2020. The cleaning staff immediately ceased working on site and the Caretakers were tasked with continued checks of the buildings, weekly fire checks, monthly legionella testing together with intermittent cleaning of the two public conveniences left open (one at Bénodet Park and the disabled toilet at Antony Road). The three Library and Support Assistants were unable to undertake any virtual working at home and the Library and Community Hub Manager, has maintained regular contact with the staff throughout lockdown.

Having reviewed Government information and guidance as well as the same from CALC, it soon became clear that 'furloughing staff' was an option. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme was considered and having consulted with the delegated Executive group of four Councillors,

this seemed impractical for the Town Council as the predicted loss in income, due to COVID-19 was minimal. The precept income will cover the cost of the annual salary expenditure. The latest Cornwall Council bulletin recognises councils may wish to bring forward the September tranche of the precept, this council does not need to take up this offer.

With now four Officers employed and working virtually, it took a while to settle into working from home with the implementation of remote computer access and hard copy files as necessary. The Clerk set up and arranged virtual meetings with the Mayor on a daily basis, as well as a twice weekly virtual update with Miss R. A Tanner BEM (Local Community Markets) regarding the volunteering efforts and (Cornwall) Councillor G J Davis. These briefings have continued throughout the lockdown period. The Clerk commenced a daily end of the day update for Members, summarising information about progress and information sharing.

There have been many challenges, personal and work related for all council staff over the last two months. The suggestion to trial the use of Skype, which then led to a trial on Zoom, which is now the preferred council virtual technology, has been difficult at times. A lot of time has been spent 'inducting' users and guiding everyone, including the Clerk, into the use of a variety of technology. One of the problems has been that members and Officers are using their own home internet connection and this can be tricky with several (home) users at peak times of the day.

The work with the Local Community Markets to set up the satellite Distribution Centre, working with Liskeard and Looe Foodbank has been positive and a unique endeavour. The Library and Community Hub Manager is to be commended for this project, working in partnership with the volunteers proved successful and it is 'good news' that the service is continuing to support those in need.

The setting up of a 'Community Kitchen', using the Council Chambers kitchen, has not yet reached fruition, although the infrastructure is there should the service be rolled out in the community.

The council suggestion to produce and subsequently hand deliver a leaflet to over 3,500 homes, showed the dedication from the council employees, who worked over the weekend, supported by local volunteers, to ensure a timely distribution to all homes.

Production of the council Annual Year-End accounts has been delayed, with the delay now permitted in legislation. The Town Council Support Officer has spent many hours, including working during the weekends, understanding the new professional financial software package and has worked closely with the Financial Consultant. This has enabled the completion of works towards the production of the Year End Accounts. As indicated at the May council meeting, communication with the Internal Auditor will ensure these will be completed in a timely fashion, under very challenging circumstances.

The appointment of the Operations Manager is timely, as the council continues to progress the devolution of services/activities from Cornwall Council and the recruitment of a part time Caretaker/Enforcement Officer can now commence. With an agreed timeline, the successful

candidate could be appointed by the end of June 2020.

In late April the council received an email highlighting an opportunity to sign up to the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Services from Cornwall Council. During these difficult times with a variety of uncertainties, for a one-off discounted payment of £500 for the 2020/2021 financial year the following services were offered:

- 2 x ill health referrals (usually £300 each)
- 1 x Insight Counselling referral of 6 sessions (usually £400)
- 3 x Pre-employment Health Assessment Questionnaires (usually £40 each)
- Plus, the retainer fee of £100

The usual total cost would be £1,220 on a 'Pay as your go' (PAYG) basis. Any additional services to the above will be charged at the PAYG price. The delegated Executive group approved this and has signed up to the services for this financial year. It is anticipated that should the rates remain at a similar price then this would be continued for the benefit of all.

The WhatsApp informal messaging platform has at times caused frustration and discontentment.

The Officers have since Tuesday 12th May commenced working towards returning to 'business as usual.'. It is anticipated the Officers will maintain the flexibility of virtual and office working for the foreseeable future.

Annual leave

Employees have a number of days' annual leave which were not taken during 2019/2020. Under Government guidelines this leave does not need to be taken until the end of March 2022. Staff are now being encouraged to take annual leave as since 1st April 2020, employees have not taken any annual leave this year.

Training

- All staff, except the Clerk and one Cleaner, completed on-line Fire Marshal training.
- Support Officer undertaking on-the-job Xero training, to familiarise with software.
- Operations Manager is completing on-line Legionella training.
- LGPS Webinar attended via Zoom by Clerk and the Chairman.
- CCLA Investment update Webinar attended via Zoom by Clerk.

NALC/CALC

The information circulated from CALC and Cornwall Council during the crisis has been invaluable. It is strongly suggested for this council to consider joining the Association, to benefit from the ongoing support and services available as part of a subscription. Membership of the Association will ensure that the council remains well-informed and has access to a wide range of documents and templates developed to give support.

They offer:

- Access to qualified staff to give support and legal advice.
- Access to specialist advisors including HR and VAT.
- Legal Support and access to the National Association of Local Councils' team of solicitors

for more in-depth interpretations.

- Training in a variety of formats, from short evening sessions to full-day courses and distance learning qualifications.
- Summaries, support and advice on changing legislation and new legal requirements.
- Representation of the sector to inform and advise on the role of parish and town councils at county, regional and national level.
- Access to the membership area of our modern, comprehensive website with model documents, legal topic notes, briefings and items of interest.
- Conference with speakers and training sessions of interest to your members and Clerks.

CALC pride themselves on providing a flexible service to their members, focusing on developing new services wherever possible to meet requirements. If the council does decide to join, the subscription for the year 2020/21 would be **£2208.46, which includes a NALC subscription of £488.40.**

NHS Test and Trace

The new NHS Test and Trace service has launched. Anyone who tests positive for coronavirus will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and will need to share information about their recent interactions. This could include household members, people with whom they have been in direct contact, or within 2 metres, for more than 15 minutes. People identified as having been in close contact with someone who have a positive test must stay at home for 14 days, even if they do not have symptoms, to stop unknowingly spreading the virus. It is the Clerk's responsibility to ensure this instruction is passed to all council employees.

The Chairman proposed and the Vice Chairman seconded the proposition, it was **resolved** that due to the sensitivity of further staff discussions this item would also be considered with Public and Press excluded [see minute 16-20F&P below].

d) Civic Functions: -

Pursuant to minute 107-19F&P (d) the Mayor re-iterated the announcement that the planned Civic Parade and Service (July 2020) would not be able to proceed in the current format and it is hoped that another event can be planned in the not too distant future.

e) Council Investment Strategy: -

Pursuant to minute 197-19F&P (e) the Clerk reported the funds as agreed by Council have now been invested in the CCLA - Public Sector Deposit Fund. The Vice Chairman requested the current interest rate, Clerk to circulate to Committee members.

f) VAT: -

See minute 05-20F&P.

g) Research alternative suppliers and costs for waste removal and disposal: -

The Clerk explained the research is on the lists of actions.

h) Insurance renewal: -

The Clerk explained the council insurance has been renewed for 2020-21 with WPS Insurance.

Clerk

<p>9-20F&P Items Referred to this Committee None.</p>																									
<p>10-20F&P Policies Reviewed by this Committee The Committee discussed a way forward to 'share the review of policies with all members' and it was agreed that the Clerk circulates the policy list inviting members' to select a policy/policies for review. A deadline for this piece of work was not agreed. The Clerk explained the end goal is to publish all council adopted/agreed policies on the website.</p>	Clerk/ All members																								
<p>11-20F&P To consider the Council Business Risk Management a) Overtime Report: - Noted. b) Creditors / Debtors Report: - Noted. c) Budget Monitoring – Finance Committee Responsibilities: - The Committee considered the March 2020 financial comparison (as circulated) and the items relevant to this Committee. The Clerk provided an update on Library and Community Hub income, advising that £2,114.67 was banked last week. This figure represents takings over the last quarter of the financial year 2019-20. Due to the lockdown there was a delay in banking, this has now been reconciled. The income is from the café, fines/charges, photocopying, sale of donated goods as well as a £40.00 donation for finding a car key.</p>																									
<p>12-20F&P Correspondence None.</p>																									
<p>13-20F&P Planning Applications None.</p>																									
<p>14-20F&P Accounts for payment</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="126 1213 1352 1419"> <thead> <tr> <th>PAYEE</th> <th>REF NO</th> <th>REASON</th> <th>GROS S</th> <th>(VAT)</th> <th>NETT</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>ITEC</td> <td>Prints</td> <td>329206</td> <td>54.66</td> <td>9.11</td> <td>45.55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Complete Weed Control</td> <td>1st Treatment 2020</td> <td>SW-2906</td> <td>1480.80</td> <td>246.80</td> <td>1234.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vent-Clenz</td> <td>Kitchen Extraction Annual</td> <td>902421</td> <td>456.00</td> <td>76.00</td> <td>380.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	PAYEE	REF NO	REASON	GROS S	(VAT)	NETT	ITEC	Prints	329206	54.66	9.11	45.55	Complete Weed Control	1st Treatment 2020	SW-2906	1480.80	246.80	1234.00	Vent-Clenz	Kitchen Extraction Annual	902421	456.00	76.00	380.00	
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<p>15-20F&P Date of next VIRTUAL meeting Monday 29th June 2020.</p>																									
<p>16-20F&P It was resolved the information to be considered is of a sensitive nature, these items are considered with the public and press excluded and is contained in the confidential annex to these minutes (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 1(2)).</p>																									
<p>17-20F&P Any Business that has been disclosed to the Chairman and members prior to the meeting. ➤ The Mayor reported receipt of a written request from Councillor K J Moon to join the Finance and Personnel Committee – members agree the proposal and it is recommended Cllr Moon becomes a member of this Committee.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 7.38pm _____ Chairman</p>	Council																								