

Middlewich Town Council
Victoria Building
Lewin Street
Middlewich
CW10 9AS
Telephone – 01606 833434
Email – Clerk@middlewich.org.uk



Minutes of the Five Hundred and Twenty First Meeting of Middlewich Town Council, held via Zoom video conferencing on Monday 20th July 2020, commencing at 7.15 pm

PART ONE

Present

Councillors Mike Hunter (Chairman), Jonathan Parry, Sean Boyle, Graham Orme, Carol Bulman, Gareth Williams, Vicky Perez, Pauline Hickey and David Latham.

In attendance:

Lisa Benskin - Town Clerk

Nicola Antony – Deputy Town Clerk

1. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Chris Jones (Personal Business)

2. To note any declarations of Members' Interests on any agenda item¹

Councillor Orme declared a personal interest as his wife is employed by the Police and Crime Commissioner and he is a member of the ANSA liaison group.

Councillors Parry, Bulman and Hunter declared personal interests as members of Cheshire East Council (CEC). Cllrs Hunter and Parry declared interests by virtue of their positions as Directors of ANSA and TSS respectively.

Cllr Hickey declared an interest as a resident of Kitfield Drive.

Cllr Latham declared an interest as a member of the ANSA Liaison Committee and Working group, a local building contractor and the owner of a residential property portfolio within the Town.

¹ Cllr Orme left the meeting during this item (00.04.06 on recording).

With the permission of the Chairman, Cllr Latham then went on to advise that he would like to make a public apology:

“During item 21 of the last Town Council Meeting in June many items were discussed with regards to the ANSA site and indeed many councillors spoke at length on all matters arising. Within the said item I duly acknowledge that I wrongfully named an individual aiming my comments at the same rather than at ANSA as a Company. This individual was firstly named as a Mr Keith Melling, and it was subsequently then changed by the chair to Mr Kevin Melling, to which I agreed. Mr Kevin Melling is the MD of ANSA. In naming Mr Kevin Melling, I do now acknowledge and see how my comments could have been portrayed as concerning the same individual. This apology is made unreservedly to Mr Kevin Melling with regards to my comments that were made. These comments were never meant to be directed personally at any individual and for that I sincerely apologise this evening. I apologise for any harm or insult caused to Mr Kevin Melling unreservedly.”

3. To receive any announcements to be made by the Chairman

Cllr Hunter advised that Cllr Orme had got in contact with him regarding detritus that had been left on Darlington Street. Having contacted CEC enforcement Cllr Hunter advised that he had learnt that the works on the Wheelock Street site should not have started yet as they have not agreed the works agenda with Planning Officers. CEC Enforcement will now be acting on the matter.

FEEDBACK AND REPORTS

4. Public Participation

It was noted that the resident who had put forward questions in advance of the meeting was not in attendance. In accordance with the Public Questions Policy a written response would therefore be provided to these questions.

None of the residents attending the meeting wished to raise a question.

Cllr Hunter noted that there was a backlog of public questions forming, not due to the fault of the staff but the workload they were under. As a result, a log of public questions, raised at Council meetings that require responding to, would be produced. This will be circulated around the Councillors to assist with the responses. Those submitting the questions would then get a direct response and the Public Questions Log would then also be added to the website. Cllr Hunter reiterated that this was not a reflection on the staff who had been instructed by the Council to prioritise legal and financial matters.

5. To receive and adopt the Minutes of the Five Hundred and Nineteenth Meeting of Middlewich Town Council held on Monday 15th June 2020

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8365 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th May 2020 be received and confirmed as a true record.

6. To note the minutes of committees which have taken place since the previous ordinary meeting

The minutes were noted. The Town Clerk highlighted that the minutes of the extra External Meeting held on 17th June had not been included, as the agenda pack was prepared prior to the meeting taking place.

7. To consider the 'Covid Secure' Risk Assessments and approve the purchase of measures required to allow the Council Offices and Victoria Hall to reopen ²

8366 It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) Members were happy for the building to reopen and for staff to return to the office from the 7th September 2020.
- b) Members considered and approved the Risk Assessments provided. Cllr Hickey suggested that in addition to the measures highlighted in the Risk Assessment, locks should be placed on the external toilet doors to restrict the number of users to one at a time, and that the cleaners should be provided with litter pickers to avoid using their hands.
- c) Members approved the purchases recommended by the Town Clerk in part 3 of the report for the Sanitiser stations, Reception Desk Screen and signage.
- d) Members provided delegated authority for the Town Clerk to continue to source PPE, cleaning products and Sanitiser gel as required, to ensure compliance with the Risk Assessments and maintain safety levels for staff and members of the public.

8. To consider whether to reopen Southway Public Toilets based on the 'Covid Secure' Risk Assessment and additional staffing requirements

8367 It was **RESOLVED** that the opening of Southway Toilets be delayed whilst the issues highlighted in report F2023 were resolved with Cheshire East Council. Members noted that the ventilation problems would be a particular problem given the Covid 19 requirements for Public Toilets to reopen.

9. To consider an upgrade to the Victoria Buildings and Hall Alarm System

8368 It was **RESOLVED** that the improvements to the Alarm system detailed in report F2024 at a cost of £520 plus VAT be approved.

² Cllr Orme returned to the meeting during this item (00:13:39 on recording)

10. To consider a response to the Cheshire East Consultation on a revised Vulnerable and Older Persons' Housing Strategy

8369 It was **RESOLVED** that the following response be submitted to the consultation:

Middlewich Town Council notes the very detailed and through report but considers that more evidence is required from vulnerable people themselves as to what they need and want. It is also important that Cheshire East Council encourages and promotes the building of social not just affordable housing as in most cases, the 'affordable' housing is not affordable to those that need accommodation.

11. To consider any Members' Items previously submitted in writing
None

12. To receive verbal reports from Members of Cheshire East Council

Cllr Bulman advised that she had been attending meetings as part of her roles with Children a Families, Corporate Parenting, Health and Social care and their respective scrutiny committees. She has also had a meeting regarding the Cheshire Pension Fund where she learnt more about their green and ethical investments. Cllr Bulman had also been working on obtaining quotes for the Town Christmas Lights, attending various training and has been part of the interview panel for the new Monitoring Officer. Cllr Bulman noted that the focus in all areas was on Covid and how to protect the vulnerable.

Cllr Parry advised that he had attended the cabinet meeting via video conferencing and noted that the Eastern Bypass has moved to the next stage as Cabinet had provided the Compulsory Purchase order approval. Cllr Parry has requested that CEC provide regular updates to residents on the project. Cllr Parry advised that he had been assured that the project was going ahead and was due to open in 2023.

Cllr Hunter advised that he had spent the majority of his time dealing with Strategic and Southern Planning Committees, especially relating to a major application call in, in Alsager. Alongside this he has also been dealing with resident queries.

13. To receive updates from any Members appointed to External Bodies

Cllr Orme advised that he was awaiting a report from the MCRUA and would circulate it when received.

14. To review the Resolutions Log

Cllr Hunter asked the Town Clerk to continue to chase the contractor for the Kitfield Avenue tree works and a date that the works would commence. Cllr Latham indicated he has been advised by the contractor last week that the works would commence at the end of September.

15. Member questions to the Clerk

None

FINANCE

16. To consider the Council's Income and Expenditure to date

The Town Clerk apologised that the reports were unfortunately not available to present to the Councillors due to an issue with the server this week and her workload. It was noted that they would be added to the August agenda for a full review and if available earlier would be emailed to Councillors and placed on the Town Council website for the public to view.

17. To consider and approve invoices due for payment

8370 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the items due for payment.

18. To note payments made

Members reviewed and noted the payments made.

ENVIRONMENT

19. To consider and approve the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Air Quality Working Group

8371 It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference be approved as drafted. It was noted that if the Working Group thought changes were necessary these could be referred to the External Committee. It was noted that Cllr Orme and the Deputy Clerk needed to arrange a date for the first meeting.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

20. To note dates of forthcoming meetings

Members noted the dates.

PART 2

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21. To consider the Job Advert, Job Description and Person Specification for the recruitment of an Administration Assistant

8372 It was **RESOLVED** that the documents be approved as drafted and uploaded to the Council website and Facebook page as soon as possible.

It was further **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk and three Councillors from Cllr Perez, Cllr Orme, Cllr Williams and Cllr Latham interview the candidates in order to recommend the candidate to be appointed to the Internal Committee.

22. To consider any staffing items arising

The Town Clerk provided an update on current staffing matters and grievances.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Parry be appointed, as Chairman of the Internal Committee, to speak to the staff members involved in the Informal Grievance and try and resolve the same.

DRAFT