

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

HELD ONLINE USING VIDEO CONFERENCING TECHNOLOGY

ON MONDAY 27<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2020 at 6.00PM

PRESENT:- COUN T DUFFY (CHAIR)

Mesdames:- L Fenwick, K Hawley, K J Duffy, M A Cartwright, D Howarth,  
S McDonnell & K Liddell

Messrs:- S Miles, C Watkins, S McGlen, R Moore & G Carne

160. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were offered and accepted from Councillors R Kyle & S Kirkup.

161. Public Participation Session

One member of the public was in attendance at the meeting. He did not raise any issues in the public participation session.

162. Mayor's/Chair's Report

The Mayor advised as he was observing the Government's lockdown requirements Mayoral activities had been substantially curtailed and he did not have a report to make.

163. Internal Audit

(i)Annual Internal Audit Report 2019/20

(ii)Internal Audit Progress Report & (iii) outstanding actions quarter ended March 2020

The Chair welcomed Mr Stephen Carter, Internal Audit Manager from Durham County Council, to the meeting to present the Internal Audit annual report and Q4 progress report.

Members considered the content of the Annual Internal Audit Report and the overall 'Substantial' assurance opinion provided on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment for 2019/20.

Within the Annual Report it was noted the Council's Strategic Risk Management arrangements were reviewed in the year and confirmed the responsibilities for risk management had been appropriately assigned: that a Risk Register was in place and was in the appropriate format; that arrangements were in place to identify new/emerging risks; that risks had been scored consistently and assigned to appropriate officers and were being monitored for implementation.

The report concluded with a substantial overall opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control operating across the Council in 2019/20.

Members considered the internal audit progress report on work undertaken between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. It was noted in 2019/20 the work undertaken provided the Council with its first substantial assurance opinion in this key area and was a reflection on control improvements in operation. Members were asked to consider the outturn position on progress made in delivering the internal audit plan for 2019/20 together with that made by managers in responding to the work of internal audit to gain assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control environment.

Members thanked the Clerk for the hard work and effort demonstrated to achieve the substantial audit opinion and he commented it had been a Team effort with Officers and Members all playing their part.

The Chair thanked Mr Carter for his work and for delivering his reports.

**RESOLVED the reports be accepted and their contents noted.**

164. To receive declarations of interest

Members were reminded of the need to disclose any interests in items on this agenda, whether pecuniary or otherwise, none were offered.

165. To Approve the Minutes of the last meeting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting were attached for consideration and were approved as a true and correct record, with the Clerk signing the minutes, to be countersigned by the Chair when possible.

166. Co-option of Casual Vacancy

The Town Clerk reported receipt of one application to join the Town Council as a co opted Member for the Passfield Ward following a resignation. Details of the applicant were

provided at the meeting and members had been circulated with a copy of the personal statement submitted, prior to the meeting. **RESOLVED Mr George Johnson's application to be a co-opted Members of Peterlee Town Council for the Passfield Ward, be accepted.**

167. Risk Management Policy

Members considered the report from the Town Clerk on the development of a new Risk Management Policy a copy of which had been circulated prior to the meeting. **RESOLVED the Risk Management Policy be approved and adopted by the Town Council.**

168. Special Leave Policy

Council were asked to consider and approve the contents of a new Special Leave policy that would formalise the council's approach to issues such as parental, compassionate, and dependents leave as well as the treatment of leave relating to public duties, a copy of which had been circulated prior to the meeting. **RESOLVED the Special Leave Policy be approved and adopted by the Town Council.**

169. COVID-19 Update

Council received a verbal update from the Town Clerk on the Council's response to the COVID-19 situation and considered any appropriate action by the Town Council including potential provision of financial or other forms of assistance. The Clerk reported on the phone befriending service with PACES and Taste Buddy members, the on-line classes being offered by the Sport and Well Being Department, and the contribution that the Parks department was making to a local food bank service. He advised he had met recently with his Strategic Management Team on a plan to return to normal operations as soon as practicable. He asked Council to consider the Peterlee Show and there was a lengthy discussion on this and he referred to the cancellation/postponement clause in the contract at 90 days' notice. Following consideration it was **RESOLVED this item be deferred for consideration at the next meeting and in the meantime the Clerk issue a holding statement via social media.**

A Local Member reported issues with anti-social behaviour in Woodhouse Park and asked the Clerk to contact the Police Neighbourhood Inspector for their support.

Councillors Hawley, McDonnell and Liddell offered their support with funds allocated to them through their DCC Neighbourhood Fund towards a project they proposed to run in conjunction with PTC. The proposal had been drafted by the Town Clerk and was provided

for Member's consideration as a Shielding Support Service. Following discussion on the proposed elements of the service It was agreed the Town Council could match fund the grant support if successful from DCC for this project. It was stressed there were not infinite funds and this was support during this pandemic period whilst it was appreciated this may be for some time. **RESOLVED agreement be given in principle to the PTC Shielding Support Service being launched, subject to grant approval from DCC Members Neighbourhood Budget and match funding by PTC.**

There were two items relating to NEP grant funding and it was agreed that these applications be considered at the next meeting.

170. Future Council meetings

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update on the enactment of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020 (NALC briefing note, attached) and asked Council to approve the following recommended resolutions:

- To continue with the monthly online meeting of full Council, using the virtual meeting technology that has been successfully trialed to date; and
- To postpone the holding of the Annual Meeting due for May 2020 until September 2020, with the current arrangements for Committees and Chairs effectively 'rolling over' until then. **RESOLVED this be agreed.**

171. Spokesperson of the North East Party's Report

Councillor K J Duffy thanked the Town Clerk and all Council staff for keeping things going and expressed her thanks to all of the members of the public volunteering and for their simple acts of kindness and community spirit. She hoped everyone would stay safe and well.

172. Spokesperson of the Labour Political Party's Report

Councillor L Fenwick thanked everyone especially for looking after their vulnerable neighbours, the foodbanks and volunteers in the community. She expressed her gratitude to those workers in shops, key workers and NHS staff. She felt the Government had a difficult task and that clear guidance was needed as and when measures were relaxed.

It was generally agreed none could have foreseen this epidemic and everyone was doing the best they could in difficult circumstances.

In closing the Chair congratulated Councillor Johnson on being co opted onto the Town Council.