

## SOUTHBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Virtual Full Council meeting of Southborough Town Council held on Thursday 30 July 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillors Lewis (Chairman), Ms Hill (Deputy Chair), Backhouse, Blackwell, Bullion, Clay, Elliott, Francis, Harris, Kinghorn, Lane, Lewis- Grey, Munn, Prance, Poile and Wharton.

**OFFICER PRESENT:** Tracy Kelly (Town Clerk)

- 1. APOLOGIES AND REASON FOR ABSENCE** – Councillors Evans (internet connection issues) and Mrs Kinghorn (ill health)
- 2. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS** – No interests were declared.
- 3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION** – No Public or Press were present
- 4. MINUTES** -The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 25 June 2020 and the Extra ordinary Full Council held on 15 July 2020 were approved.
- 5. COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS** – Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes from the following meetings.

Planning and Transportation

EO 13 July 2020

Finance and General Purposes

23 July 2020

- 6. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS** – Members approved the annual accounts and **RESOLVED** that the Audit form be signed and submitted.
- 7. SECTION 137 GRANTS POLICY**– Members **RESOLVED** to approve the Section 137 Grants Policy with the additional clearer explanation surrounding running costs. Running costs would be allowed to form part of the grant if the applicant were supplying services to the local community set out in the S137 legislation.
- 8. SOUTHBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL EMERGENCY PLAN** – Members discussed the setting up of an emergency plan for the Town Council. Members **AGREED** that the Town Clerk put together a working document that could then be sent to all Members for their input and would be continually updated as and when new requirements became evident.
- 9. SOUTHBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN** – Members discussed the setting up of a neighbourhood plan for the Town. Members **AGREED** they accepted the principal of a local plan and to take this forward with the Borough Council and others for the relevant advice to work towards producing a Neighbourhood Plan for Southborough and High Brooms.

**A recorded vote was requested for the vote to accept the proposed working towards a Neighbourhood Plan in principle**

**For the setting up in principle of a Neighbourhood Plan** Cllrs Lewis (Chairman), Blackwell, Bullion, Clay, Francis, Ms Hill (Deputy Chairman), Lane, Munn, Prance, Poile and Wharton.

**Against the setting up in principle up of a Neighbourhood Plan** Cllr Backhouse, Elliott, Harris, Kinghorn and Lewis- Grey

**Abstentions:** 0

**The vote was carried**

- 10. BURIAL FEES** –Members discussed the report from the Town Clerk surrounding the current Council policy that residents who have moved outside the Parish through no fault of their own are charged double fees for all burial services including plot purchase and grave digging. Members **RESOLVED** to accept the following into its policy:

“Double fees will not be charged in the following situation up to a period of 5 years absence from the Parish subject to proof being provided. Former residents who due to circumstances beyond their control have had to move out of the Parish into a care or nursing home or to live with relatives for the last few years of their lives”

- 11. HOLDEN POND – FUTURE PLANS** - Members discussed the report from the Town Clerk surrounding possible future proposals for Holden Pond. Members **AGREED** to revisit various options including possible removal of the larger fish when the Pond was next desilted and after the Council Offices has returned to Southborough when a better monitoring of the permits could hopefully be maintained.
- 12. LITTER ISSUES – NEW SIGNS** Members discussed the previously attached poster and whilst it was felt it clearly put over the message it would not be suitable to be used in many areas. It was felt important that members of the public should accept responsibility for their own litter and to find the right way to convey that message. It was agreed the Town Clerk would find some alternative proposals and supply these to members for consideration
- 13. PLAY AREAS REOPENING – REVIEW –** Members **NOTED** the Town Clerks verbal update and the matter would remain under constant review during the current crisis.
- 14. SOUTHBOROUGH COMMUNITY HUB UPDATE** - Councillor Blackwell verbally updated the meeting with the following:

**Hub Progress Build Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

Currently 7.7% ahead of contract programme. A six-week extension time was granted to cover the period lost due to the site closure due to COVID19. Baxall are expecting to hit their original March handover date subject to there being no further delays due to COVID.

The supplier of solar panels has changed to SAS Energy.

TK raised concerns over the council offices layout due to social distancing guidelines. GT advised power around the wall and floor sockets allows flexibility for the movement of the desks

I have requested power and a data point for an information screen in the main entrance area. GT confirmed a power point and data socket could be added to the wall in front of the storeroom that faces out to the main reception. GT to confirm whether Change Control required.

No further items were raised on the Design Review with all previously issues having been addressed.

There are additional charges for 600 mm of topsoil to the town square area due to risk of contamination from the fuel tank that previously served the RVH. This was at the insistence of TWBC planning.

Next meeting is Wednesday 26th August 2020 10:00 – 11:30am

## Hub Board Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Cllr Francis presented her paper to the board explaining the changes to the head lease with NHS E for the medical centre and how this will adversely impact the finances of all the Hub tenants who we will be obliged to tax, including the NHS. STC is now financially obliged to meet all the ongoing maintenance charges for the medical centre for the duration of the 63-year lease on a flat £20 k. This council has expressed the opinion that this position is not sustainable in the long term. The Board's attention was drawn to the fact that the tax mitigation mechanism which the board took advice on was taken solely to benefit KCC which was at odds with the aims of the Collaboration Agreement. The subsequent departure from this, under the Deed of Variation, has unfairly, we felt, placed a greater financial burden on our council and was taken without recourse to STC or the changes in the position being communicated by our previous Hub Board representative.

The other Board members have requested additional time to consider the concerns raised and to formulate a response. I have asked for a meeting in August at the earliest opportunity to resolve the issue.

We also received conflicting anecdotal advice on the need to levy VAT which is at odds with the advice received from PS Tax.

Cllr Francis is writing to the Hub board to clarify some of the misconceptions that were raised in the meeting.

We agreed the need to generate as much publicity in the six-month countdown to opening. A press release will be prepared each month to support this.

I updated the board on the work being undertaken by the HAG and the Ops group in respect of the operations and business plan. Once we have reliable estimates for the Service Charge, we will organise a meeting with officers at TWBC and KCC to develop this.

We agreed that the board, from September onwards, will meet at least once a month.

We discussed the ongoing retention of funds by Crest and the need to secure this money which is the contingency fund.

I raised my concerns about what I consider to be an insufficient contingency fund and that essential features and provisions risk being cut from the build if we are to balance the books. Although some of these items are nice-to-haves and will enhance the specification these also include the kitchen fit out, external signage, town square redesign and power to the town square. These need to be closed out by 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

Some of the areas within the budget have been generously apportioned and it hoped that once some of these fees can be fixed then any excess can be reallocated into other areas. As of now there is a freeze on any additional spending.

The kitchen design which was included with the original FFE was budgeted at 16k – the redesign comes in at £36k. We are now only able to install an electric cooker rather than gas despite the preferences of the HAG group as the gas supply and extraction were not considered early enough in the project.

The power to the town square is costed at £9k.

Two proposals for the FFE have been presented but at present these do not give a detailed breakdown on costings or the composition of the furniture. The tables and chairs for the hall/theatre and the workman's accommodation have not been included and will need to be added.

I am concerned in the current VA scheme that the STC areas have been reduced by approx. 17% whereas KCC/Libraries have been reduced by approx. 9%.

No work has been completed on the layout of the library to take consideration of the new COVID restrictions. STC have already fed back on the changes needed within the office space.

We have asked that requirements for additional cleaning, one-way systems and social distancing being given further thought when developing this element. I have requested that the colour palette of the furniture and fittings is adjusted to take account of the new interior finishes produced by HMY and that we move away from

the lime green, purple and magenta for the soft furnishings. It was also commented on that the current proposals already look dated.

The town square redesign is being followed up by JW with TWBC and HMY. We are aiming to reach a compromise and agree a grid design using the same combination of materials as the consented scheme which will be acceptable to Planning and which will incur minimal costs.

We discussed the need to use social media to promote awareness, between now and the opening of the Hub, of which the Board were broadly supportive of. This is an area that our council will need to address in the near future.

### **Operations Group Meeting with Mark Johnson-Brown, Mycenae House, Blackheath 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

This will be reported more fully via the Ops Group. For my part I felt this was an extremely useful and insightful presentation from Mark and he was able to give address in detail all the questions that we raised and flagged up areas that we had not yet considered. He was generous with his time and has offered to respond to any further queries we might have.

His comments about establishing the right ethos for the building and how we engage with our community is I think vital for us to get right and something we will address over the coming weeks.

Thanks too to Rebecca Clow from the HAG who runs classes at Mycenae House and who was able to secure Mark to come and speak with our Working Group. It was useful to be able to have the perspective from someone who has the experience of working in a range of community settings and what she felt made for a successful user experience and how we could apply this to our Hub.

There are a number of areas which will come back to but the most pressing is probably storage for regular hirers which we will pick up at the FFE meeting.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

We are awaiting confirmation of a date with Rosemary Jones to run through the figures for the Service Charge element

Phil Dowding, KCC Libraries to go through the fixtures and fittings on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August

Hub Site Meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020

Meeting with Tom Stickland from the Theatres Trust to advise on the Operations Management and the Business Plan, Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> 2020

**The Chairman called to extend the meeting at 9pm for a further 30 minutes.**

### **15. SOUTHBOROUGH COMMUNITY HUB – HUB OPENING WORKING GROUP –**

Members discussed the possible setting up of working group to deal with plans for an opening ceremony. Members **AGREED** to revisit this area when the Hub Working Group had completed its original purpose and could then move towards changing its membership to include other Members and outside organisations to plan for an opening ceremony.

### **16. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

It was proposed that during the consideration of the following items, the public and press shall be temporarily excluded (Standing Order 3 (c)): -

These items are considered confidential for the following reason(s)  
Information relating to the financial and personnel affairs of the Council.

- a) **Confidential Council and Committee Proceedings** – Members **RESOLVED** to approve the following confidential minutes: -

Full Council Meetings	25 June and 15 July 2020
Finance and General Purposes	23 July 2020

- b) **Ridgeway Fields drainage** – Members discussed the report previously supplied to and the associated recommendations. Members **AGREED** to return the report to the Councils Insurers for their requirements and to seek further advice.

**The Chairman called to extend the meeting at 9.30 pm for a further 30 minutes.**

- c) **Southborough Community Hub Confidential Matters** – Members **NOTED** the ongoing issues with Crest Nicholson.
- d) **Southborough Hub Finances** - Members discussed the ongoing finances surrounding the Hub Project. Members **AGREED** to the additional expenditure required for the provision of a semi-professional kitchen within the hub at an additional cost of £19,000. Members further **AGREED** to the additional expenditure required for the provision exterior power sources in the Town square at an additional cost of £9,000.
- e) **Internal Audit** – Members **NOTED** the report from the end of year internal audit for 2019-20

The Chairman thanked Members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 21.59 pm

**CHAIRMAN**