

NORTHWICH TOWN COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 9th NOVEMBER, 2020 VIA ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCING

Present: Cllr. K. Rimmer Town Mayor

Councillors: Cllr. D . Bowden Cllr. Mrs. L. Nelson
Cllr. A . Cooper Cllr. Miss G Edwards
Cllr. Mrs. J Illidge Cllr. S. Naylor
Cllr. Mrs. A Lockett Cllr. G. Emmett
Cllr. A. Stott Cllr. Miss C. Fox
Cllr. Ms. J. Thomas Cllr. Ms H. Rowlands
Cllr. T Melville joined the meeting at 6.10 p.m. and left at 6.20 p.m.
Cllr. M. McNamee joined the meeting at 7.10 p.m.

Also present: Chris Shaw - Town Clerk
Liza Clansey - Assistant Town Clerk
Theresa Cash - Council Secretary/Mayor's P.A.

NTC 20/51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE OR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Gerrard. Cllrs. Eastwood, and Rowley did not attend.

NTC 20/52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any interest under the following categories:

- Pecuniary Interest
- Outside Bodies Interest
- Family, Friend or Close Associate interest

Cllr. S. Naylor declared an interest in any matters relating to Cheshire West and Chester Council
Cllr. A. Cooper declared an interest in any matters relating to Cheshire West and Chester Council,

NTC 20/53 OPEN FORUM

There were no speakers

NTC 20/54 SIGNING OF THE MINUTES

- 4.1 The minutes of Town Council Meeting held on Monday 5TH October, 2020 be confirmed and approved as a true and accurate record.
Proposed by Cllr. Nelson, seconded by Cllr. Illidge. Minutes to be signed by the Mayor. All in favour.

Date.....

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Cllr. K. Rimmer
Town Mayor

NTC 20/55 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

- 5.1 To note Planning and Environment Committee meeting held on Tuesday 20th October, 2020
Noted by Cllr. Stott.
- 5.2 To note Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 20th October 2020. Noted by Cllr. Nelson.

NTC 20/56 TOWN MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor attended the following event during October.. COVID19 restrictions were adhered to.

Wednesday 21 st	NTC	Official opening of refurbished Play area at Verdin Park
Saturday 24 th	RBL Riders	Poppy Appeal launch and wreath laying

NTC20/57 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

1.0 Remembrance

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the Government lockdown, we had to unfortunately cancel our plans to hold the Service of Remembrance in St. Helen's Church. The Town Mayor, Deputy Lord Lieutenant and our M.P.laid wreaths previously purchased from us at the Cenotaph at 9.00 a.m. on Sunday. The two minutes silence was observed at the time. Video footage is available on our website. The Mayor will also lay a wreath at 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday 11th November at the Cenotaph. Residents still assembled around the Cenotaph at 11.00 a.m. but not in large numbers. NTC has placed over 100 large poppies on lampposts throughout the town and were also placed on behalf of Victoria Road Residents Committee at their request.

2.0 Town Bridge and St Helen's Church lighting

We also arranged for Town Bridge to be illuminated for Remembrance and a large . Cllr. Nelson mentioned the very positive responsepoppy was directed via lazer light onto St Helen;s Church, which will stay for the rest of the week, when it will be replaced by a star for Christmas. Town Bridge will also be illuminated in Christmas colours. Cllr Naylor commented that he had over 1000 positive responses to the pictures placed on Northwich Life. Wished to thank NTC for the pristine condition of the Cenotaph.

3.0 COVID-19 Lockdown

We continue to work with our partners to support the ocal community and businesses where we can. We are woerking closely with CW&C, Northwich BID and Brons Quay to come up with ideas to support the Town Centte during Christmas.

Date.....

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Cllr. K. Rimmer
Town Mayor

4.0 Christmas Lights and Trees

All Christmas lights will be placed in the town next week and will include the installation of 4 Christmas Trees in the town centre.

5.0 St Luke's Hospice

This year we have been supporting St. Luke's with their Christmas Tree and lights. Working in partnership and shared costs with Middlewich Town Council, Winsford Town Council and D & R Fabrications we shall be supplying the tree socket, a 25ft Christmas tree and full installation of lights.

4.0 Verdin Park Play Area

The new play area at Verdin Park is now fully completed and open. Very favourable and positive comments received from the community. The Play area was officially opened by the Town mayor and representatives of the Play Manufacturer. Three new picnic benches constructed of steel will be installed over the coming weeks.

5.0 Verdin Park Gates and Piers

Gates will be repaired and installed before Christmas.

6.0 Vickersway Park Kiosk

The kiosk located within the Park will be closed over the winter period. Cllr Bowden commented he had observed a good number of people enjoying the park.

7.0 Artisan Market

Due to current lockdown restrictions the Artisan Market will not take place in November. A Christmas market is still being planned for December subject to Government guidelines after 2nd December when the present lockdown comes to an end.

NTC20/58 ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT FOR WEBSITE

ATC explained the background to a report already distributed among Councillors prior to this meeting. It was proposed by Cllr. Cooper and seconded by Cllr. Fox to accept the conditions. All in favour.

Resolved

Date.....

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**Cllr. K. Rimmer
Town Mayor**

NTC 20/59 CW&C AND COUNCILLOR UPDATES

Cllr.Naylor attended the Pandemic Strategy meeting, the North West Regeneration Forum and the Waterways Strategy meeting. He is currently working with Cllr. Edwards to look for alternative premises to rehouse Mid Cheshire Community Sheds, (previously known as Men In Sheds).

Cllr. Edwards also mentioned that the issue regarding closure of Sandiway Surgery is going to the Scrutiny Committee which is being postponed until February 2021.

Cllr.Cooper gave an informative update on the launch of the CW&C Budget Consultation, explaining how the Council has to make drastic and significant savings between 2021-25 which will see a reduction in budget of £23.6m.. The financial shortfall could be in excess of £80m. CWA&C's total budget is £800m. It is not known what the permanent impact could be as a result of this. A Green Paper on Adult Social Care has been delayed. A graph illustrated the funding gaps. The Consultation document has been sent to Councillors and it is suggested that it is studied. Cllr .Naylor added that services not up to standard have seen cuts. Also mentioned that in 2010 CW&C employed 8000 staff, due to job cuts this is now reduced to 3000.

Cllr. Bowden enquired if there is any access to data from other authorities for comparison. Cllr. Cooper advised there is none available at present. Cllr. Rimmer mentioned a further 180 job cuts within CW&C. Need to come up with alternative funding as it is vital to protect Adult Social and Child Care with ever increasing costs. Once services are lost it is difficult if not impossible to regain. Cllr Cooper concluded by stating that NTC will shortly be setting their budget for the next year when hopefully they can choose to lessen the burden on Council Tax Payers and enhance services. Cllr. Emmett asked if it is possible for NTC to take over responsibilities for certain services and increase our precept. Town Clerk advised that we could move services from CW&C but no additional monies are attached to this. Cllr. Cooper added that Services not protected such as Childcare/Vulnerable adults, other services are more likely to be cut within the context of what CW&C proposals are.

NTC 20/60 OUTSIDE BODIES

No specific updates. Cllr. Rimmer advised that the local PCSO for Greenbank and surrounding areas has now moved on to pastures new. PCSO's play a very important role within the community, and it seems a pity that these Officers only seem to stay approx. 2 years in the area, as they make a massive difference to community life.

NTC20/ DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of the next Full Council Meeting (Zoom Virtual) will be held on Monday 7th December 2020 at 6.00pm. Usual details will be sent prior to this meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.05 p.m.

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**Cllr. K. Rimmer
Town Mayor**

PART B

In accordance with the Local Government Act – Public Admission to Meetings Act 1960, the following agenda item is to be considered in the absence of press or public.

Staffing Policy

Co-option Policy

Co-option Applications

Christmas Staff Holidays.

It was proposed by Cllr. Rimmer and seconded by Cllr. Cooper to proceed to Part B.

Date.....

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**Cllr. K. Rimmer
Town Mayor**

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PART B – APPENDIX 132

PART B

NTC 20/61 STAFFING POLICY

ATC gave background to report which had been distributed among Councillors prior to this meeting. Cllr. Bowden asked if the phrase in relation to selective testing had been removed from the policy. It was confirmed the phrase has been removed. Proposed to accept by Cllr. Illidge, seconded by Cllr. Nelson. All in favour.

Approved.

NTC 20/62 CO-OPTION POLICY

Cllr. Rowland wished to speak on this subject and asked that members should take additional actions to ensure that members of under represented groups are encouraged to apply for the role of Councillor. Cllr. Stott asked how did Cllr. Rowlands propose to do this. Cllr. Rowlands suggested that the Town Mayor and Deputy do an interview on Northwich Radio in order to reach a wider section of the public, to explain what the role involves. Cllr Nelson asked to clarify if this was for consideration of current applications received or want the suggestion going forward. Cllr. Rowlands having read the applications would request halting the current co-options until applications are received from a wider section of the community. Cllr. Fox agreed a good idea to widen the sector. People should be encouraged to join and participate in political life and not to exclude diverse sections. Cllr. Rowlands is an advocate of disabled people becoming included and we should be seeking to co-opt this sector onto the Town Council. Cllr Bowden commented that it is impossible to disagree with the principal of widening the contribution to the Council, but in the short term we are short of three Councillors and have received 5 applications, and we need to respect these. In the long term alternatives can be considered. TC agreed he would be happy to work with Cllr. Rowlands on an appropriate strategy. It was proposed by Cllr Cooper and seconded by Cllr Fox to improve Co-option policy for the future.

Resolved

On a second point Cllr. Rowlands respects outcome of Members should be explored. Cllr Rowlands wants encouragement for people in their 20's who usually just want more information on the role. More outreach to raise awareness. Cllr. Bowdon mentioned the NNP, and he personally presented to schools and colleges to explain the role of the Council and Councillors. This proved very responsive and Cllr Rowlands asked if he would be prepared to repeat this again, Cllr Bowden felt his was possibly not the right person to do this at the moment. Cllr. Illidge considered it could take months of advertising for further applications for Co-options, and agrees with Cllr. Bowden that we need Councillors now in the short term.

Date.....

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**Cllr. K. Rimmer
Town Mayor**

NTC 20/63 CO-OPTION APPLICATIONS

Cllr Rimmer raised concerns and asked if any Councillor had been approached advising them to vote for a particular candidate. Cllr. Naylor had received a communication from the Labour Party requesting members to disregard a certain candidate, and should not be voted for. He replied sending the current policy implemented, and this is not a matter for NTC to resolve. The purpose being to keep politics out of this process. Several other Councillors had been approached. Cllr Rimmer said it is unfair to tout for particular candidates. Councillors Nelson and Rimmer met to discuss candidates confidentially, as they were on the selection panel, but they did not speak to anyone outside of this. Cllr. Bowden is worried about the direction this is taking. The aim is to fill Councillor vacancies. Nobody has the right to put pressure as to how one votes. The need now is to agree who is to be selected for Councillors. Town Clerk advised that it is up to the selection panel to recommend suitable candidates. Several Councillors voiced their preferences. Cllr. Nelson added it appeared that Bob Cernik doesn't want to be on the Council and Kate Cernik is not committed, the other candidates have no experience of the role of Councillor. Cllr. Rimmer considers NTC is well represented already with CW&C Councillors. Mentioned Bob and Kate's lack of commitment and NTC meetings possibly clashing with CWA&C's. NTC already struggles with reaching quorate on some Committee meetings. No disrespect, but feels 3 CWAC Councillors are adequate on NTC. Cllr. Bowden wished to thank the selection panel for their time, thoughts and sincerity. On a personal view feels that links to CWAC are a vitally important dimension, and weren't always so. NTC receives improved information and a voice to influence CW&C. Stronger links can only be good for the town and Mr & Mrs Cernik would enhance this. Town Clerk confirmed that unsuccessful applicants will receive letters. Candidate Erlam showed more inclusivity within diverse section. Would bring an extra dimension and the opportunity to be inclusive. Cllr. Edwards added that Councillors should be based on individual applications only.. Cllr. Rowlands view is that this is potentially exposing accusation of cronyism if Mr & Mrs Cernik are selected as they are personal friends and known to other Councillors. Cllr. Illidge commented that everyone is there in their own right, and agreed that links are vitally important, and doesn't have a problem with more CW&C Councillors joining NTC. Cllr. Fox commented that Mr Erlam presents diversity, and Mr & Mrs Cernik lead on Health Care agenda on CW&C Council, links would achieve positivity.. A compromise would be to take either Mr or Mrs Cernik. Mr Erlam comes out more strongly on diversity. Cllr. Cooper declared he will not be voting. Cllr. Thomas added that CW&C Councillors should not be disregarded due to other commitments they may have. Cllr. McNamee considers that all candidates have applied in good faith and an element of compromise is needed. Cllr. Bowden added he is impressed with the discussions taken place, concerns voiced in an open and honest forum.

Prior to a vote taking place, the Town Clerk advised that all Councillors have 3 votes. Cllr. Stott asked regarding a secret ballot – this is not possible due to the nature of Zoom technology. Voting will be by a show of hands. The successful candidates selected will become Councillors in the Winnington and Castle Ward.

Voting then took place with the results as follows:-

Date.....

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**Cllr. K. Rimmer
Town Mayor**

Gavin Erlam 11 votes - co-opted onto NTC Council
Bob Cernik 8 votes- co-opted onto NTC Council
Kate Cernik 9 votes - co-opted onto NTC Council
Lee Siddall 4 votes
Martin Henry 1 vote

NTC 20/64 CHRISTMAS STAFF HOLIDAYS

ATC gave background previously distributed among members. In past years a half day holiday has been granted to staff to enable staff to join for a Christmas lunch before Christmas. Due to current COVID restrictions, this is not possible this year. The staff have worked exceptionally hard during this difficult time for many months. Therefore , we would like to grant the half days holiday in any case as a thank you for their hard work. Closing at 12.30 p.m. on Friday 18th December.

Staff wil take their holidays over the Christmas period with a skeleton staff attending to essential routine works. The outside and office staff will finish for the Christmas Holidays at noon on 24th December. Proposed by Cllr. Bowden, seconded by Cllr. Fox. All in favour.

Approved

Date.....

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Cllr. K. Rimmer
Town Mayor