

**LEEK TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held remotely**  
**on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020 at 7.00pm**

**Chairman:** Cllr. L. Swindlehurst

**Present:** Cllrs: Benefer, Cawley, Coleman, Johnson, Molson, Ottewell, M. Swindlehurst,  
Wales & Worthington

**Apologies:** Cllrs. Emery & Wood

Three members of the public were present.

**10. Minutes of the General Purposes Meeting** held 2<sup>nd</sup> June were received for Chairman's signature.

*There was no Public Participation Session*

**11. Matters Arising** The Sunday Supplement market will take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, but the town council gazebos will not be needed as there will be no gazebos in Sheep Market and Stanley Street.

**12. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Interests and consideration for the granting of Dispensations** None.

**13. Monthly reports/updates:**

- i) Mayor's Report – Cllr. Wales. The Mayor welcomed members of the public, especially former councillor Barry Cowie who now lives in Canada.  
The Mayor and Deputy Mayors of Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle had met with Cllr. Ralphs, the Leader of SMDC and it was agreed that there would be up to 3 hours of free parking during August. A request had been made for a 3 month suspension of parking charges. The temporary pedestrian areas in Derby Street are proving to be effective. It was requested that pedestrian zones are introduced and for 10 additional parking spaces. The use of the Trestle market has also been requested. Clarity is needed from SMDC about holding events. Another meeting will be held in late August.  
The town council office is currently closed but socially distanced meetings of up to 3 people are taking place.
- ii) Allotments – Cllr. Coleman's report was received. Springbank Fencing would be replacing part of a boundary fence, from a donation made by Leek Allotment and Gardeners' Association. Repairs will shortly be carried out on the Beggars Lane track. Judging for the best allotments had taken place and the winners notified. The tenants on Cheadle Road who have untidy plots have been notified. Some tenants have not cultivated their plots as they have been shielding.  
The police had dealt with a complaint of lewd behaviour from a friend of one of the allotment tenants. There are 60 people on the waiting list.  
Cllr. Benefer stated that a large number of plots on Cheadle Road have been abandoned, some tenants have created parking spaces on their plots and some have erected large structures, which will make it difficult for new tenants to clear. Comments made included:  
  
It had been agreed that no inspections would take place during the coronavirus crisis. Some tenants are just returning to their allotments. The allotments are good for older tenants and for general mental health.  
Another skip on Cheadle Road will be needed.  
An inspection of Cheadle Road was recently carried out by Tony Lafford and the tenants who are not cultivating their plots have been contacted.  
Some of the half plots that have been unlet for a number of years have new tenants.
- iii) Events – Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst. The Leek Covid - 19 group will be holding a town treasure hunt on Saturday and they will borrow a couple of gazebos. A meeting had been held with SMDC regarding Remembrance Sunday. A wreath laying ceremony would probably take place but a parade will be more problematic. Cllr. Swindlehurst will speak to Revd. Irons about the possibility of holding a church service with restricted numbers.  
The Christmas lights will be put up, but the parade may not take place.  
Guidance is needed from SMDC regarding the types of events that are possible.

- iv) Friends of the Nicholson War Memorial – Cllr. Benefer. The group has not met since the coronavirus outbreak. Leek Royal British Legion are waiting for national guidance regarding Remembrance Sunday. Banners will be needed for VJ Day 75.
- v) Climate Change – Cllr. Benefer – A member of the group who has an allotment on Beggars Lane is involved with a project called Gift Garden, which encourages people to donate produce to people suffering from food poverty. The group hopes to work with other town councils and get involved with wild flower and tree planting. The town council may have land that could be used.

As Cllr. Benefer is stepping down as chairman, Cllr. Cawley, who is currently the vice chairman was voted in as the new chairman. A vice chair would probably be elected from Moorlands Climate Action Group. The chair of that group had requested a representative from the town council. Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst thanked Cllr. Benefer for all his hard work.

#### 14. **Finance/Audit**

- a) **Financial Statement** The financial statement for the 3 months to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 was received.
- b) **Payment Schedule** - In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 section 5 (150), the following were accepted for payment. The total approved was £39,393.37.
- c) **Internal Audit** – The Internal Audit Report 2019/2020 was received. The auditor has reported that the council's system of internal controls are in place and adequate for the purpose intended and effective.

The following was resolved:

- A Purchase Order system would be established.
- The Council's Financial Regulations regarding the threshold for 3 quotes would be changed from £1,000 to £3,000, which is the level set in the National Association of Local Council's (NALC's) model Financial Regulations.
- The cost would be established of increasing the fidelity insurance cover from £100,000 to £135,000.

#### d) **Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20**

- i) Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement was considered and approved.
- ii) Section 2 – Accounting Statements was considered and approved.

#### 15. **Office Renovation** – The following was considered under confidential. The underspend on budget expenditure that would not be needed due to coronavirus would be used.

##### i) **Phase 1**

It was resolved to:

Decorate the office, kitchen, toilet and entrance way. Three quotes have been received and the lowest quote of £1,650.00 was approved.

Sixteen new office chairs for £400.00 would be purchased.

An automated entry system will be installed for £1,180.

##### ii) **Phase 2**

It was resolved to:

Purchase two desks and two office chairs and an office partition.

Investigate the cost of window blinds or coverings to reduce the glare and heat.

#### 16. **Code of Conduct** A revised Code of Conduct adopted by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council was approved.

#### 17. **Licence** An application was received for the variation of a Premises Licence for The Valiant, Stanley Street, Leek

The application is seeking to licence the outside rear area to utilise a bar. A copy of the application can be viewed at:- <https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/article/443/Current-licence-applications>

The following comment would be made to SMDC Licensing: An external bar would create noise disturbance to nearby residents.

**18. To receive items for information** Matters for information not on the agenda and items for future agendas:

- i) The latest crime statistics for Leek were:
  - Crime – down by 11%
  - Drug offences – down by 36%
  - Vehicle theft - down by 25%
  - Burglaries – down by 17%
  - Thefts – down by 6%
  - Public order offences – an increase of 2%
  - Violence offences – an increase of 8%It was stated that domestic violence nationally has increased by 60%.

- ii) It was noted that the “Save Leek Hospital” banners have been renewed.

**19. Exclusion of the Public** - The Chairman moved: “That in accordance with section 19 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by reason of the confidential nature of the business next to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting”.

**20. Confidential**  
Bank House was discussed.

Chairman.....

Date.....