

**LEEK TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held**  
**on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**Chairman:** Cllr. Lyn Swindlehurst

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

One member of the public was present.

**30. Minutes of the General Purposes Meeting** held 15<sup>th</sup> September were received for Chairman's signature.

**31. Matters Arising** Cllr. Johnson will contact the Chief executive of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council regarding extending the opening hours of the bus station toilets. Cllr. Johnson will also request that the parking fines paid during the free parking period in August are reimbursed.

*Public participation session*

*Ann Sharratt asked why the Newton House car park, which is being used for covid testing, has not been cordoned off from the nearby Cheadle Road allotment holders?*

*It was stated that all the concerns have now been raised with the organisers of the testing centre. There are now 2 security guards on site and people are requested to remain in their cars.*

*Ann Sharratt also asked if the clients of the Kniveden have been reassured that the facilities will remain at Kniveden, as they had been informed that the site would not be available. Councillors made the following comments:*

*Cllr. Wood is still corresponding with Combined Healthcare.*

*The clients have not returned to the site and just receive a weekly phone call.*

*There is an attempt to degrade the importance of the services.*

*These services are needed more than ever due to the effects of long covid.*

*The site is owned by Staffordshire County Council and it is in the Local Plan for housing.*

*It will probably be sold by the end of next year.*

*The Kniveden project will be needed, even if it is in a different location.*

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

**33. Monthly reports/updates:**

i) Mayor's Report – Cllr. Wales reported that he had been honoured to attend Norman Corden's funeral. The Mayor, with Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst and the town clerk had met with Support Staffordshire regarding Bank House and attended the AGM of Staffordshire Moorlands' Scouts. Cllr. Wales had presented a 5 years' service award to Bill Lomas, Leek Town Crier in the Market Place, which had been well attended with councillors and past Mayors.

ii) Allotments – Cllr. Coleman is posting the covid testing dates at Newton House on the Cheadle Road notice boards.  
Over the weekend, vandals had damaged greenhouses on a plot on Peggs Field, which the tenant had reported to the police. An alarm has been given to the tenant and a skip for the glass will be delivered.

Organised visits to allotment sites for councillors will be arranged in the Spring.

iii) Events – Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst – A Safety Advisory Group meeting for Remembrance Sunday had taken place with representatives from the police, licensing and the towns of Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle. It was decided no parades will take place, but there will be small- scale private services at the war memorials. Organisations could leave wreaths at the town council offices, which Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst and Cllr. Molson will lay on their behalf.

Poppies will be on sale in the Trestle Market leading up to Remembrance Sunday.

Remembrance banners will be displayed at all the Leek war memorials.

Councillors made the following comments:

The Royal British Legion view is that there should be no parade and Remembrance should be carried out on an individual basis. Some local authorities, as well as the Royal British Legion organise Remembrance Sunday.

The Christmas decorations will be installed in the next couple of weeks. Some repairs and new bulbs were needed and an additional festoon would be installed at the bottom of Derby Street (the 3 year contract price to install the decorations will remain the same).

Protech would be requested to extend the time the lights were on.

It is hoped that the town council's gazebos will be needed at the Sunday Supplement markets from Spring. Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst has produced a risk assessment, including covid guidelines, which will be given to the district council.

iv) Friends of the Nicholson War Memorial – No report.

v) Climate Change – Cllr. Cawley – A meeting has been arranged with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to discuss managing and maintaining some sites around the town. The use of pesticides and weedkiller by Leek Town Council will need to be considered.

Ruby Sufi who has an allotment, has grown and donated good quality food to the Foodbank.

SMDC Planning is working with Leek Cycle shop regarding setting up a repair station in Market Place.

Councillors comments included the following:

Cllr. Johnson will be planting 140 trees on his land.

The town council allotment tenancy agreement states that organic gardening is encouraged.

Leek Allotment Holders are encouraging people to donate excess produce to Leek Foodbank.

vi) Leek Health Campaign

Moorlands Partnership Foundation Trust have stated that they will reopen the Minor Injuries

Department when it is safe to do so. It was stated that the delay is caused by a failure to recruit staff.

People should be encouraged to keep using the available services at Leek Moorlands Hospital, such as blood tests.

#### 34. **Finance/Audit**

a) **Payment of Accounts** In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 section 5 (150), the following were accepted for payment. The payments total is £19,520.37.

b) **Financial Statement** The financial statement and financial report for the 6 months to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 were received.

c) **Banking** i) Safeguarding and financial controls will need to be in place before online banking is considered. The procedures and protocols used by other town councils will be investigated.  
ii) It was resolved to remove former councillors John Fisher and Paul Robinson from the banking mandate.

d) **Grant Application** Once the accounts have been received, it was resolved to donate £200 to 60 (Leek) Squadron Royal Air Force towards the cost of a flight simulator.

e) **Request for a Memorial bench on the Mount**

A request for a memorial bench on Mount Road was considered. Permission would be needed from Staffordshire County Council and a licence fee of £109.00 is required. This fee and the cost of future maintenance will be paid for by the applicant.

The applicant would be asked to provide the design and the specification for the bench.

Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst will draw up a draft maintenance schedule for all the town council benches.

It was also stated that the town's post boxes are in a poor condition.

35. **Office Renovation** – To note that the office intercom has now been installed. Thanks were given to Cllr. Lyn and Matt Swindlehurst for compiling a comprehensive inventory of the store room artefacts, which councillors were welcome to view. The meeting room table, 16 chairs, office, desk and chair will be ordered and the cost is £1,380.00.  
 The town clerk is producing a risk assessment regarding the use of the office during covid. Meetings with the clerk will need to be made in advance and a maximum of 4 people will allowed in the office.  
 Councillors comments included the following:  
 Could the next meeting be held in the council chamber or the function room at the Foxlowe.  
 Remote meetings are not good.  
 The council has done well with the Zoom meetings.  
 One councillor will not attend any in person meeting during covid.  
 A request for hybrid meetings has been made to SMDC.
36. **Social media** – To consider a social media policy for Leek Town Council. This item was deferred.
37. **Correspondence**
- a) **Staffordshire Smart Alert** – It was noted that Staffordshire Smart Alert has launched a free community email messaging service, providing updates from the police team about local crime, news, engagement events and crime prevention advice. To register go to: [www.staffordshiresmartalert.co.uk](http://www.staffordshiresmartalert.co.uk)
38. **To receive items for information** To report matters for information not on the agenda and to raise items for future agendas.
- i) Congratulations were given to Grace Buckley for being awarded the government’s Points of Lights award for 'Survive Together', a community platform connecting those in need in Leek and the Staffordshire Moorlands.
- ii) It was resolved that Cllr. Benefer and Cllr. Matt Swindlehurst would produce a short paper regarding the likely effects of covid on the town. For example, unemployment, holiday hunger and mental health issues. It was also suggested working with SMDC, SCC and Biddulph and Cheadle.
39. **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”.
40. **Confidential** - Bank House and employment matters were discussed.

Chairman..... Date.....