

HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

An extra-ordinary meeting of Huntingdon Town Council was held on Tuesday 26th October 2021 in Huntingdon Town Hall at 6:30pm.

Present: Councillors: A Blackwell; J Cole; C Doyle; S Gifford, M Kadewere: P Kadewere; P Kennington; B Luckham; A McAdam; S McAdam; P Pearce; T Sanderson; and K Webb (Mayor).

Absent: Councillor S Sweek

23. STANDING ORDERS

Members were asked to approve the suspension of Standing Order 5.g. (wearing of robes) as per Standing Order 26.d. It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the suspension of Standing Order 5.g. (wearing of robes).

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Baker, A Beevor and P Brown.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

26. COVID-19

Members discussed whether to continue holding council meetings in person, or to revert to virtual meetings.

It was noted that local COVID-19 case numbers were rising and were likely to continue to increase throughout winter. Some councillors and members of staff had raised safety concerns regarding attending in person meetings.

The Town Clerk explained that there had been no updated legislation allow virtual meetings to return. This would mean that Members could not vote or have their attendance recorded virtually, but could discuss agenda items, and decisions would be actioned by the Town Clerk using delegated powers. It was suggested that full council meetings were held in person to allow Members to comply with the 6-month attendance rule, and also to officially approve any decisions made during virtual meetings. It was pointed out that council staff were not legally required to attend meetings in person.

Some Members noted that with COVID cases both nationally and locally increasing, they did not feel safe attending in person. It was noted that some members were within very high-risk demographics, and also may have elderly/high risk relatives at home. It was pointed out that provisions should be made for councillors who feel unable to attend in-person meetings in line with the Equality Act.

Other Members noted that while they did not want staff or other Members to feel uncomfortable, they felt the council operated better at in-person meetings, and also felt that the council should be seen to be active by the public. It was also pointed out that everyone was vaccinated, and the hospitalisations were largely among unvaccinated people. Members questioned when in-person meetings would return if the council reverted to virtual meetings, and it was explained this would be subject to future guidance and review of the COVID-19 cases. It was noted that the recommendation was that virtual meetings would take place until 28th February 2022.

Members questioned if a hybrid meeting set up would work, to allow those who felt uncomfortable attending in person to join virtually. It was explained this was possible, but that Members who attended virtually could join discussions but would be unable to vote.

It was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to rescind the resolution of 19th August, agenda item No.4 to return to full face to-face meetings, and

RESOLVED for all committees and sub-committees to be held as hybrid meetings from 27th October 2021 until 28th February 2022, and all full Town Council meetings to be held fully face-to-face.

27. **COVID-19 MEETING CALENDAR**

Members had before them copies of the proposed COVID-19 meeting calendar to cover the period of 27th October 2021 until 28th February 2022. It was noted that following the resolution in item 26, the meetings listed as virtual would now be hybrid meetings.

It was also noted that the Planning Committee meeting listed as 11th November 2021 would now be held on 4th November 2021 due to the deadline for planning comments.

It was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve the proposed meeting calendar.

28. **DELEGATED POWERS OF AUTHORITY**

Members were invited to extend the Powers of Delegated Authority to the Town Clerk to cover the period up to 30th June 2022. It was explained that not only would this allow the council to continue to function in the event of meetings being prevented by COVID-19, but would also allow items to be actioned in other occasions where the council is unable to meet, such as the mourning period in the event of the death of HM the Queen. It was then proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to extend the Powers of Delegated Authority to the Town Clerk to cover the period up to 31st May 2022.

29. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next was noted as Thursday 11th November 2021.

MAYOR