

**EXTRA ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Friday, 20 March 2020

At 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor D Enright (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	A McMahon
	T Ashby	A Prosser
	D Butterfield	R Smith
	V Gwatkin	D Temple
	A D Harvey	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
Others:	none	

109 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Ashbourne, Bolger, Collins, Duncan, Eaglestone, Jones, and King.

110 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

111 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

112 **CONTINGENCY PLAN TO KEEP THE COUNCIL FUNCTIONING AS FAR AS POSSIBLE DURING COVID-19**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and a confidential appendix, circulated earlier.

The Town Clerk advised that the senior management team had been working through a contingency plan and it was clear that burials would be and would remain a priority over the coming weeks. Staff would be working from home when possible. Keeping 2 or 3 members of staff in the office.

Obviously, the halls were not being used which would leave a drop in income but this could be looked at in the budget later in the year.

NALC had advised that government guidelines should be followed and that if Councils didn't follow rules of the Annual Council meeting it would be highly unlikely to be challenged in law. Guidelines may change towards "virtual meetings" but if they did there was the question of how well equipped the Council would be for this.

With regard to dealing with Planning Consultations, the Town Clerk pointed out that whilst delegations to the Committee were already in place she suggested that agreement be given to dealing with planning matters via email in the first instance (to save face to face meetings) with the Democratic Services Officer providing a weekly schedule of plans, so that she can pull together responses to be overseen and agreed by the Chair & Vice Chair of the Committee, in consultation with the Town Clerk.

Members proceeded to ask questions and discuss the Town's Clerk's report, with all members supporting the recommendations made.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report and that the Council's position in respect of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic be noted;
2. that emergency measures be agreed that if it is not possible to convene a meeting of the Council or Committee in reasonable time or where restrictions are in place, the Town Clerk (or in her absence the Office Manager & Operations & Estates Officer) shall have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of the Council where such decision cannot be reasonably deferred and must be made in order to comply with a commercial or statutory deadline. The delegation does not extend to matters expressly reserved to the council in legislation or in its Standing Orders or Financial Regulations. Any decision made under this delegation must be recorded in writing and must be published in accordance with the relevant regulations;
3. that the Council reaffirms the Town Clerk/Proper Officer's delegations as set out in statute, and within the Council's Standing Orders (SO 26 applies) for dealing with urgent and routine matters, along with the delegations agreed last year;
4. that the Council agrees the process for continuing dealing with planning and licensing applications in the Council's role of consultee via email as detailed above;
5. that the Council agrees to set up an emergency committee with delegated responsibility to deal with any urgent matters generally dealt with by Committees and Full Council, which cannot be dealt with under recommendation 1 above;
6. that this committee is made up of the members of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee;
7. that the requests as set out in the confidential appendix be noted.

The meeting closed at: 6.50 pm

Chair