

BARNSTAPLE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of The Town Council Meeting

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 at 7.00pm By Video Conference Call.

Present: Councillors:

Cllr A Rennles (Town Mayor & Chairman), V Elkins (Deputy Mayor & Vice-Chair), V Monk, A Windsor, I Roome, J Hunt, R Knight, J Phillips, J Carter, J Wilsher, M Lovering, L York, P Leaver, A Shah, S Yusef, V Nel, J Slee, R Mack, J Coates, J Orange, G Marchewka & M Fowler.

Also in attendance:

Mr Robert Ward (Town Clerk),

S Petters (Assistant Town Clerk)

L Clarke (ND Journal)

Members of the Public: 1

**97. Apologies for absence**

were received from Councillor E George (work), reasons were considered and approved by councillors. (NC)

Apologies also received from Cllr J Mathews (Devon County Council) and Inspector A Wills (Devon and Cornwall Police)

**98. Dispensations and Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Cllrs I Roome, J Hunt, J Phillips, M Lovering, L York, R Mack & J Orange as members of North Devon District Council, have a dispensation under SO66 to discuss and vote on any item on the agenda unless the item refers to a financial or legal agreement or dispute between the two authorities.

**99. Minutes of the last meeting**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2020, are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (NC)

**100. Mayor's Announcements**

All mayoral duties for the last month have been cancelled, because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**101. Report from Devon & Cornwall Constabulary**

A Police report was circulated to Councillors as part of the agenda pack (Appendix one).

**RESOLVED:** That the reports from Devon & Cornwall Police be received and noted (Appendix One). (24 for and 1 abstention).

**102. Reports from Devon County and North Devon District Councillors.**

Devon County Council

Cllr J Mathews

- Report provided as part of the agenda pack (Appendix Two).

North Devon Council

Cllr I Roome

- Excited to see that North Devon Council are proposing a major investment in the town in conjunction with the Future High Street Funds grant of £6.5M, the district council potentially making this up to £10.5M. A great opportunity for the town and for the Town Council to partner in the project.

Cllr Knight asked if it was possible for a presentation to the Town Council by the appropriate NDC Lead Member on these developments.

Cllr Roome explained that the final submission to secure the Future High Street Fund grant is going in this week and there will be further briefings for councillors once this is completed.

**RESOLVED:** That the reports from the County and District Councillors be noted.  
(NC)

**103. Committee Minutes**

Committee	Date	Page Numbers
Planning & Transportation	14 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	62 to 64
Environment	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	69 to 71
Planning & Transportation	28 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	72 to 74
Finance & General Purposes	8 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	75 to 77
Planning & Transportation	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	78 to 80

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Committee meetings and the resolutions contained therein be received and adopted in accordance Standing Order 24  
(NC).

**104. To consider reports from Town Council representatives to outside bodies and determine any actions arising.**

Cllr R Mack reported

**The Tarka Line Forum** – Are programmed to have their first meeting soon, since the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions started in March 2020.

Cllr I Roome asked if it was possible to ask about the potential for direct trains from Barnstaple to London to be raised again to alleviate the need for car use to Tiverton Parkway to then catch the train.

Cllr Mack responded by saying that the December 2019 timetable improved connections to the London trains with the Barnstaple line, but he also felt the need for a bus service between Barnstaple and Tiverton Parkway to help reduce the need for car use.

Cllr P Leaver reported

**One Barnstaple Active Travel Group** – received a presentation about the Bikeability programme that delivers cycling training to children, particularly through schools. They have a problem of a shortage of instructors, particularly in this area and one of the problems is that Instructors have to fund themselves through the programme at a significant cost.

Cllr P Leaver also reported

About the Combe Rail Group proposal to the Department for Transport for a light railway along the existing Barnstaple to Braunton section of the Tarka Trail to include the retention of the coast path and cycleway.

**RESOLVED:** To note the Councillor reports. (NC)

**105. Nominations to outside bodies**

**RESOLVED:** To nominate Cllrs J Hunt and R Knight to represent the Town Council on the Barnstaple Twinning Association (NC).

The Town Clerk reported that the Twinning Association has regular contact with Barnstable USA, Susa Italy and Uelzen Germany.

**106. Motion from Cllr Leaver about Flooding in Barnstaple.**

Cllr Leaver provided a written motion (Appendix three) highlighting the impact of flooding on Barnstaple residents and the need for measures to alleviate the problem.

Devon County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has prioritised Barnstaple identifying that works are needed.

Cllr Leaver stressed that there is a need for Town Councillors to keep lobbying for schemes to be developed and delivered for the town to help stop residents suffering from distress and uncertainty of their home being vulnerable to flooding.

**RESOLVED:** To note the report (NC)

**107. Motion from Cllr Knight about Electoral Reform.**

Cllr Knight provided a written motion (Appendix four) and gave a verbal summary of the motion.

Cllr I Roome responded by saying that this is national policy for his party and that he supports the motion.

Cllr Mack added that other local and district councils have also passed similar motions.

Cllr Leaver stated that forms of proportional representation already exist with the United Kingdom and that it is important to take every step to increase participation in local democracy, improving on poor turnouts to local elections.

**RESOLVED:** to support the motion to promote the case for electoral reform (NC)

**108. Questions – Standing Orders 25 and 85**

No questions had been received from members of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 25, or from public registered electors in the town in accordance with Standing Order 85.

Meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Chairman.

Signed: .....

Dated: .....

## APPENDIX ONE

### Police Report for Barnstaple Town Council

Meeting Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 at 7pm

The Neighbourhood policing team have continued to be very busy over the past month in addressing local safeguarding matters whilst still engaging with the general public in attempts to engage, explain and educate prior to any Covid-19 enforcement considerations.

Being based at Seven Brethren and close to ND Leisure Centre, it has been pleasing to see the well planned and efficient vaccination centre up and running with regular days in which sections of our local population have managed to secure their vaccinations against Covid-19.

### Tap for North Devon

Since the instigation of the Tap for North Devon scheme was introduced, the donations given have amounted to around a £1000. This shows a healthy start to the campaign and the early signs from this are promising given that town centre footfall is still light given the public restrictions and limited retail premises / town centre businesses currently open. As a reminder the current two pay points are placed at:

- The window of Boston Tea party (junction of Tuly Street and Holland Walk)
- Tesco Express, High Street

The window displays for Banbury's and Green Lanes are also nearing completion and will hopefully be implemented over the next few weeks, which hopefully will tie in with some positive news from the Government around the timescales for lifting some of the current restrictions. As a further reminder, these machines will see donated funds split between charities, Freedom Centre and Encompass both of whom work with members of the street attached community.

### PSPO

I'm pleased to confirm that the new Barnstaple PSPO has now been approved. We now await the official and correct signage to be produced and implemented within the town centre area to enable correct enforcement. As an interim measure and to raise awareness of this, temporary signs as detailed below have now been affixed in the following areas:

- Tuly Street by the public toilets
- The corner of Joy Street and High Street (by Poundland)
- The corner of Bear Street and Boutport Street (by Londis)
- At the entrance to the churchyard from Boutport Street and also from High Street.
- On the Strand by Queen Anne's Cafe
- And at the bottom of High Street by Trio.



By raising awareness with these signs, the public can be aware of these restrictions and this in turn will hopefully support people in reporting matters when they are observed being breached. Once the official signage is implemented then a media release can be distributed in order to fulfil the legal obligations to be considered before enforcement action can be taken.

### **Good News**

A positive result for the neighbourhood policing team was the recent conviction of another local female who has been a prolific shoplifter in Barnstaple town centre over the past few months and was given a 20-week custodial sentence for a number of offences this week.

Keep safe and thanks for your continued support.

DRAFT

## APPENDIX TWO

### Devon County Council

Councillor John Mathews has sent his apologies for the meeting.

His report for the meeting is as follows:

1. Repairs to the road surface in South Street Barnstaple have been completed. They did extend the works slightly and covered the roundabout by the entrance to Park School.
2. I have put in for repairs to be done in Hollowtree Rd on the approach to the Western Power Roundabout. This is not the part that was done a few months ago but a different piece.

3. The Iron Bridge.

I have passed on to the Town Clerk the latest Press Release but have not seen anything in the press. What they want to do is lift off the top, crossing iron work, and repair the columns that are in the water, and then replace the top. The present concern is that the columns cannot support the iron work that goes across, due to their condition.

4. Barnstaple Floods

Cllr Brian Greenslade asked a question on this matter at the last Cabinet Meeting and received a written reply. I have pointed this out to the Clerk, and he has seen all the details from the DCC report on that meeting.

[Link to Devon County Council Cabinet Document](#)

I have nothing else to report that covers the Barnstaple Town Council area

## APPENDIX: THREE

### Motion on Flooding in Barnstaple

Councillors will be well aware of the devastation that the floods in August last year brought homes in Barnstaple. What is perhaps less well known is that in some parts of town, the effects of regular flooding and near misses are taking a huge toll on the financial, mental and physical health of families.

The costs of flood damage repair and replacement of ruined possessions is not always covered by insurance, especially after the third or fourth flood in a year. I have spoken to people who have spent their entire savings on re decorating and carpeting – to find that everything is ruined just a few weeks later when sewage mixed with flood water came up through the living room floor. Councillors will know of families still in temporary accommodation because their private landlords are under insured and so their homes have not been repaired after the floods in August. For owner occupiers, finding they are in an area well known for flooding can reduce the value of their house and can even make it unsaleable (*it is for that reason that this motion does not name individual streets or areas affected by regular flooding*).

Councillors will be aware of the damage to physical health as a result of living in damp conditions or in unsuitable accommodation. What we have seen over the last 6 months, though, is the pressure put on people's mental health by regular flooding. Councillors will know of individual cases where a pensioner can't sleep because of the fear of sewage coming into their kitchen again. Or of the despair of a daughter having to explain to her father with dementia why he has to move into temporary accommodation yet again as the flood waters rise.

In these circumstances, the perceived inaction of agencies responsible can seem callous. But the truth is that the causes are multitudinous and not always easy to solve. So it seems to residents that the issues around flooding are being ignored, while new building development, putting additional pressure on the towns sewerage system, carries on unchecked.

The determination of some of my fellow councillors on the town and district has kept the issue of flooding at the top of the agenda. Local councillor intervention on resident's behalf has forced agencies like South West Water and North Devon Homes to address some localised issues. There remains a problem, though, that for a significant minority of homes in Barnstaple surface water and sewage flooding is a constant blight on their lives.

It is against this background that the Council supports the move by Devon County Council to take flooding in Barnstaple seriously at last and to move the town up the priority list. The Council is concerned that even as the announcement was made last week, County Councillors sought to lower expectations by saying that flood alleviation measures could take "many years" to be installed. The Council urges Devon, as the lead flood authority, to act quickly to find solutions to some of the worst instances of regular flooding. The Council offers its experience and councillors strong links to affected communities to support the actions of the County Council. It is hoped that, working together, councils and agencies can find a long term, sustainable solution to the flooding problems that beset the town.

## **APPENDIX: FOUR**

### **Electoral Reform motion to Barnstaple Town Council**

#### **Motion**

Full council notes that:

The electoral system used for local elections in England and Wales, First Past the Post (FPTP), is not a fair system, because it means that votes do not have equal weight and many votes are wasted. This leads to voter apathy and a feeling of disconnection from local democracy.

1. The alternative to FPTP is a system of proportional representation (PR), where votes cast for parties translates more or less directly into seats won. There are many variants of PR. The Single Transferable Vote system (STV) variant of PR is already in use for local elections in Scotland and Northern Ireland. With this system, voters rank candidates and those who receive the most backing (including second and subsequent choices) are elected to serve in multi-member wards.
2. North Devon Council and Barnstaple Town Council (in common with most other district and larger town/parish councils) already has multi-member wards and thus the transfer to a similar system would be easier than if the wards were single-member.
3. The Welsh Assembly has just agreed legislation to allow local authorities to choose to change their voting system to the proportional Single Transferable Vote system, which is already used for local elections in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
4. The introduction of PR for local elections in Scotland has led to an increase in turnout, which was 47% at the last elections, held in 2017. In contrast, turnout for Barnstaple was 31% in the 2019 local District elections.

Full council believes that a move to the use of proportional representation for local elections would boost turn-out, make the council more representative of the political make-up of its residents, and improve the quality of its decision-making processes, thereby benefiting all North Devon residents.

This council welcomes the new legislation allowing Welsh councils to choose the fairest and most appropriate voting system for their local elections.

This council therefore requests that the Government bring forward legislation to allow local elections in England to be run by a proportionally representative voting system (PR).

This council will work with North Devon Council and the Electoral Commission to agree upon and choose the most appropriate electoral system for Barnstaple and North Devon.

#### **Note on the Single Transferable Vote.**

The system of PR used for local elections in Scotland and Northern Ireland, is the Single Transferable Vote (STV).

In this system, voters rank candidates in order of preference.

They can rank as many or as few candidates as they like.

To get elected, a candidate needs a set amount of votes, known as the **quota**.

The quota depends on the number of vacancies and the number of votes cast.

Any candidate who has more 'number one' votes than the quota is elected. But, rather than ignore extra votes a candidate received after the amount they need to win, these votes move to each voter's second favourite candidate.

If no one reaches the quota, the 'tellers' remove the least popular candidate.

People who voted for them have their votes moved to their second favourite candidate.

This process continues until every vacancy is filled.

People often object to this system on the grounds that it's too complicated.

However, this system is used widely. A form of STV is used in the House of Commons to elect a new speaker. If MPs can use it without

their brains getting frazzled, so can ordinary members of the public.

It needs to be added that existing 'free' well-developed software renders any perceived complications at the 'Count' straightforward and relatively quick.