

CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held virtually via Zoom on 7th July 2020 at 7.00pm

Present Cllr Stephen Henderson
Cllr Mick Lucas (Vice Chair)
Cllr Kevin Small (Chair)
Cllr Paul Exell
Cllr Steph Exell
Cllr John Ballman
Cllr Ray Ballman
Cllr Dave Patey

Officers Andy Reeves (Parish Clerk)
Andrew Briggs (Estates Manager)

Public None

74 **Apologies**
None

75 **Declarations of Interest & Applications for Dispensation**

Cllr J Ballman asked the committee why item 9 is to be discussed without public or press.

Cllr K Small advised that due to the nature of the advice being of a legal nature, the conversation must be kept confidential.

76 **Officer Member Protocol**

Cllr S Henderson asked to bring this item for consideration; the intent to set the tone as new Councillors commence service.

Cllr S Henderson went on to explain the need for a sustainability of a culture which goes for the best outcome in relationships. It is intended to set a framework in which to work in the future.

Cllr J Ballman asked what was wrong with the current framework around Councillor Codes of Conduct.

Cllr S Henderson responded that Councillors arrive from various perspectives and not everybody is familiar with the culture and etiquette of what it means to be in community service. This cannot always be captured through a Code of Conduct.

Cllr J Ballman raised concerns about the impact of layering one set of rules upon another.

Cllr S Exell advised she sits on standards panels at SBC and one of the key elements that's always asked for is; should there be any disputes of any kind, is whether or not a Parish Council has a member/officer protocol. Cllr S Exell reiterated the need to have a framework that is consistent to all Councillors.

Cllr M Lucas agreed with the requirement but suggested in item (2.2) that Councillors have more than four main responsibilities.

Cllr K Small reminded those Borough Councillors present, that if Parish Councillors act as a Borough Councillor then the parish member protocol has no bearing on our conduct if we are dealing with things as a Borough Councillor,

Cllr P Exell, advised he is in favour of any proposal that deals with how members, councillors and officers interact with mutual respect and trust within the Parish.

Cllr K Small recommended that the document is used as a starting place for the process and proposes that the report is circulated to all members of the council for feedback.

RESOLVED that the report be circulated to all members for feedback.

77 Transaction Logs

Cllr S Exell confirms the April/May 2020 transaction logs have been reviewed.

78 Media Communications Protocol

The Clerk presented a visual report and explained that the current document from May 2017 is in place but is being refined to note the expanding media streams.

The Clerk advised the updated protocol focuses more on the changes in legislation to Parish Councils, it highlights the legislation and the need for us to engage positively with the media.

Cllr S Henderson responded he would like to include how social media can be used to communicate with the media. The new policy does govern an introduction to the benefits of engaging positively with the media and to ensure that we have the right lines of communication going.

The Clerk advised within social media, we have three officers that are permitted to update our two social media channels Facebook and Twitter, all posts have been well received and closely monitored.

Cllr S Exell again challenges the lack of use of gender fluid language with a reference to Chairman.

Cllr K Small suggested that the use of the word Chair is used in the future. The Clerk advised he is unable to change the wording when quoting official acts and reminded Councillors we do have a duty to ensure that everyone is included and that we should refrain from using that term if it makes people feel uncomfortable.

Cllr K Small agreed with the Clerks comment and points out the biased terminologies in (4.1) 2nd paragraph. And a reference to "Chairman" at (7.2)

Cllr K Small recommends that those terminologies be amended.

Cllr S Exell requested that more modern language is used within the Parishes Standing Orders.

Cllr K Small suggests that a discussion on changes to the language should be discussed at a future meeting.

Cllr S Henderson exclaimed that as a public sector body, we have a public sector equality duty and so it follows a worthy line to as far as we possibly can to make our language fair and inclusive and as respectful as possible.

Cllr J Ballman queried why Councillors need to pass any statements through the Parish Clerk for approval prior to being released to the press.

Cllr K Small explains that if you are communicating on behalf of the Parish Council there are protocols in place. As an individual you can say what you wish but you must make this clear to the organisation you are communicating with.

Cllr K Small suggested that item (4.5) be removed as it puts too much onus on the Parish Clerk to own the letter.

Cllr K Small also suggests that item (6.2) (Any officer/member may draft a press release however they must be issued by the Parish Clerk from agreement from the Council or relevant Committee to ensure that the principles outlined in section 3 are adhered to and that there is a consistency of style across the Council and that they are used so that the use of the press release can be monitored.) is also removed.

Cllr K Small asked if the Clerk could make the 2nd paragraph 4.6 and take out the wording “strongly advise to check the details with the Parish Clerk”.

RESOLVED That the Protocol is adopted with the changes identified.

79 **Moredon PWLB**

SBC are currently unable to provide the Parish Clerk with the final capital sum. The Parish Clerk will seek clarity and it is anticipated we'll have this information by September 2020.

80 **Exclusion of the Public & Press**

RESOLVED that in accordance with the provision of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations, the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following items on the basis of **Personal Staffing Issue**.

81 **Staffing Issue**

The Parish Clerk updated Councillors with the progress of the suspension and investigation relating to the Deputy Clerk.

The meeting closed at 8.31pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee