

WHITEHAVEN TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Virtual Extraordinary Council Meeting held on the Zoom Platform on 12th August 2020

Present: Councillor B O’Kane (Chairman); Councillor C Arrighi; Councillor E Dinsdale; Councillor G Dinsdale; Councillor R Gill; Councillor C Hayes; Councillor C Maudling; Councillor J Rayson; Councillor R Redmond; Councillor G Roberts; Councillor C Walmsley; Councillor L Walmsley

M. Jewell, Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

V. Gorley, Assistant Clerk

Members of the Public

Press

1586/20 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence

1587/20 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Roberts declared that he was a Trustee on the Board of Age UK.

Councillor E Dinsdale said it was not a Declaration of Interest but it was a request regarding the Agenda submitted as the Public Participation on the Agenda was the last item and asked if it would be possible to shuffle the Agenda and make it as it was. The Chairman said no as the Public Participation is at the early part of the Agenda and was structured to come after Declarations of Interest.

1588/20 Public Participation

A member of the public (LB) wished to speak and the Chairman asked the Deputy Chairman to take over the meeting while LB spoke. (LB) said he had seen a lot of hate from Councillors about stuff that he had done trying to help people and his question was what had Councillors been doing to help the people of Whitehaven. The Deputy Chairman asked if Councillors wanted to answer that, if they were prepared to say what help they had provided:

Councillor Hayes said he had collected PPE from Thomas Graham and delivered this to old folks' homes; he was a team leader in the Covid 19 Area 6 Group; he had been involved in Trinity Gardens; doing and delivering shopping for older people; delivering prescriptions to people

Councillor Dinsdale raised a point of order and said the normal procedure was that the public could make comments but Councillors didn't respond to any questions at the meeting and questioned whether Councillors should be involved in public participation.

Councillor Rayson referred this to Councillor O'Kane who said at the last meeting an issue had been debated for 11 minutes so it was only fair that we carry on. He then handed back the Chair to Councillor Rayson.

Councillor O'Kane said that as an asthmatic he had been self-isolating for a while and his attitude during the pandemic was to order as much PPE as possible and have it distributed and then when he decided to go out, he was driving to pick up the PPE equipment.

Councillor Roberts said he self-isolated for 12 weeks but as he was on the Board of Trustees for Age UK he had been mobilising officers to deliver food parcels, fielding telephone calls from residents and donating 150 sheets of acetate to a local school to make PPE visors

Councillor G Dinsdale said she had

- set up a small business support Copeland Group to ensure that anyone isolating had accessibility to safe and local produce if needed
- created a mental health matters group and page which she contributed to every day with her own personal experience in mental health
- created a paid for 5-minute anonymous message group that anyone suffering from mental health or suicide could contact 24 hours a day to be directed to support systems
- donated to a local charity doing things around suicide hotspots to support prevention of suicide and to support people with mental health issues
- Both herself and Councillor E Dinsdale posted on Corkickle Residents Group contact details needed for local Councillors so that they could supply support needed
- They also communicated with residents and directed them to the County Council hub which was providing PPE which they had been advised to do by CBC and WTC
- They were answering residents' complaints
- They supported the Justice for Ellie campaign
- They were both essential key workers working 2/3 days a week on Sellafeld site keeping it safe

Councillor Maudling said he had been in self isolation for 12 weeks but since the start of lockdown had been putting a live music show on every night for people and doing the same in the afternoons for children

Councillor Rayson said she had been dealing with: -

- resident issues and dealing with emails about bins
- Litter picking regularly in Jericho Play Park
- Dealt with a local homeless issue
- Helped with the Covid 19 area 6 group
- NHS Responder in dial in and chat, clocking almost 1000 hours
- Crotched 70 rainbows to give to children and NHS workers and also raised money from donations from these which were given to a WCH hospital ward
- Shopping twice a week for local residents and helping them out with electricity bills and computer problems and prescriptions

Councillor Gill said he had been self-isolating and had donated his ward grant of £1700 to the central fund for people in the town. He said he was supporting his wife who was working extra hours at WCH

Councillor Arrighi said 1 week before lockdown she had had a fire in her shop and had to move to her apartment at Greysouthen. She said had worked with the Greysouthen Village Hall and had set up a not for profit shop and delivered supplies and prescriptions to people. After 14 weeks she moved to her apartment in Glasgow where she had been working twice a week giving out food and drinks and blankets

Councillor Redmond said he had been delivering food parcels and then had to self-isolate following receiving a letter from the government

Councillors C and L Walmsley said they had been asked to be the lead for the covid group for Corkickle and Mirehouse and this was all documented on the Mirehouse Matters page.

Councillor O’Kane returned to the Chair

1589/20

Councillors E Dinsdale, G Dinsdale, C Arrighi, R Redmond Report of Concerns while working under The High Consequence Infectious Disease Policy

Councillor O’Kane then asked Councillor E Dinsdale to go through his report and asked if he could respond to what he said with a note. Councillor Dinsdale agreed.

Councillor Dinsdale thanked the Chairman and the Clerk for granting permission for the Extraordinary Council Meeting.

Councillor Dinsdale said within the report there were real key points namely: -

- Issues around inadequate PPE
- The Town Council relocated from the Civic Hall to the old Whitehaven News building without having a risk assessment on disability before moving into the premises on 8th July 2020
- Issues around WTC following procurement process for tendering
- Issue around paying over the odds for hand sanitiser (£270 for 5 litres)

- Issue around WTC chair who initially did not declare an interest for £1200 that was made to a family member
- There is no evidence to suggest that the taxpayer received any benefit from the money that was donated
- Issues around Carla Arrighi resigning who said that the process that we were following around delegated authority was not open and transparent
- A request was given in the report for receipts for certain numbered items and asked the Chairman to respond that the list was there and also a list of stakeholders
- Also, a request was given around delegated authority in general and asked if it was possible for the Clerks to let the meeting know how many Council know how many Councils in Copeland were working under delegated authority and also how many Councils in Cumbria

Councillor O’Kane said the public needed to know exactly what the HCID Policy was and how it occurred. He said these were not comments and were not for debate and he made the following points: -

- That himself and Councillor Arrighi discussed all the proposals and all decisions are co-signed and no decisions required a casting vote
- On 19/03/20 the office closed
- On 23/03/20 staff started working from home
- On 23/03/20 we adopted the HCID Policy to make delegated decisions on essential Council matters
- On 25/03/20 the presentation of the Annual Accounts was postponed
- No meeting was held on 26/03/20 and consequently a whole range of decisions were made by myself and Councillor Arrighi
- We were focussed on the day to day running of the Council but there was a real recognition that PPE supply was a real problem and the emails and the WhatsApp group support that and reveal that there were problems about the lack of supply and the delays in deliveries of PPE
- 08/04/20 I made contact with Thomas Graham to order some equipment to give to CHOC and the Community Nurses. As a result, the decision on the WhatsApp group between Councillors was that several had ward grant monies left and the decision was that this should be pooled for PPE. This meant that £4989.00 had been pooled. Not all Councillors agreed to pool as they had allocated their money to other projects
- 14/04/20 an email between myself and Councillor Arrighi where we discussed the possibility of the Whitehaven News building
- 24/04/20 there was an update from CALC on the use of the HCID Policy which they said was to cover day to day business and that decisions should only be made by the Chairman and Vice Chairman and that while other Councillors could be copied in, they should not be making comments on items. To take other Councillors’ views into account when making a

decision was not correct. Decisions have to be made by the Chairman and Vice Chairman and put on the website.

- On the next batch of decision made by myself and Councillor Arrighi were
 - The Mayor and Deputy Mayor and all Committees and Groups should continue until next Annual Meeting
 - Regulation 6 be approved
 - No remote meetings be held at present time
 - Council grant budget of £10,000 for 2020/2021 be allocated to coronavirus issues for present time
 - Remaining £2923 for ordinary grants for 2019/2020 be carried over to be used for coronavirus
 - Cut-off date for unused ward grants to be spent by 01/07/20
 - No successors be appointed for HCID policy for Chairman and deputy chairman but that should the Clerk become incapacitated that the Assistant Clerk will undertake the duties
 - 18/05/20 focussed on the upcoming health and safety guidelines where we discussed the idea of moving to the Whitehaven News office to give staff a safe environment
 - 04/06/20 resignation of Deputy Chairman and new Deputy Chairman voted in
 - Last decision under delegated authority where invoices and planning applications were decided was on 28/05/20
 - 10/07/20 was first Zoom Council Meeting and we were a week behind Workington in doing this.
 - Decision 1 - all previous decisions were presented to be ratified and all decisions made previously were approved.
 - Decision 2 was the Finance report. All invoices up to that date were fully approved including the cash book, income and expenditure all fully approved
 - S137 for purchasing PPE was fully approved
 - The relocation of the move to the Council office was noted and approved
 - Next meeting on 30/07/20 all Minutes for the previous meeting were approved.Councillor O’Kane then invited any comments from other Councillors

Councill Gill said he was surprised that Councillor Arrighi had raised exception to PPE for a pandemic as during her time as Chairman of the Whitehaven Town Council Regeneration Group in 2016 that she and the Town Clerk were given a budget of £2,000 to clean Lowther Street and all the work was given to a business which was owned by Councillor Arrighi’s sister’s partner. The bill came in for £12,000 and he took advice from CALC on this as there was no procurement, no paperwork. On advice half the money was paid. Councillor Arrighi said it was not her sister’s partner as they

had never lived together and he definitely hadn't been a family member. Councillor Arrighi said that she knew the person and had declared an interest and totally disagreed with Councillor Gill and couldn't understand why he was raising it after all this time. Councillor Rayson said she was under the understanding that this money went to someone and we got PPE – hand sanitizer.

The Chairman said he had to make a crucial point of order. He said the Council had Standing Orders and that if we adhere to our standing orders tonight then we are going to be unpopular. If we don't adhere to them, we will end up with complaints that we have acted illegally.

The meeting tonight is under Standing Order 6 and the Chairman read out Standing Order 7a and 7b and said that anything that had been discussed and decided upon can't be reopened. The Chairman said that he had checked this with CALC and had been told that anything that has already been decided upon and passed by Council has to be held by that Standing Order. So that discussions on any of those items – and there were discussions tonight that weren't in those items – that have already been proposed voted and passed cannot at this stage be either discussed or reopened. So, any decision already reached whether by HCID or the last two Council Meetings cannot be reopened, because they have already been completed.

At the moment we need to decide in the Report which items are open for discussion.

Councillor Arrighi said so you're not going to answer my questions and asked who Councillor O'Kane was going to give his next £1000 to.

Councillor Hayes referred to emails from several people and the Chairman stopped him and said if he had said there was no debate there was no debate.

Councillor O'Kane said they needed to go through the Agenda and work out the items that have not been put through already and discuss those items that have not been passed at the voting system. Councillor then referred back to Councillor E Dinsdale

Councillor E Dinsdale proposed that we move to Agenda Item 6 which was the vote on a proposal for an independent investigation into the concerns that have been raised during the Council being under delegated authority.

1590/20

Councillors to vote on the proposal into an Independent Investigation of the Concerns

Councillor E Dinsdale wished to make an amendment to the proposal and said

we

that if money was the issue to an investigation taking place, he requested that

put a shout out for anyone locally trained under ACAS to come forward and lead on an investigation at no cost to the Council and they can be provided with support and advice from CALC

This was seconded by Councillor G Dinsdale

Councillor Gill said he had dealt with ACAS but that it had no place in local Government. Councillor Gill asked for a recorded vote on the proposal and the Chairman said this was in order.

Councillor Arrighi said she thought it was pointless doing a vote because we knew exactly how it was going to go. It was an orchestrated meeting before it started and she wanted this noted.

Councillor Roberts said he had read the report and quite honestly there was nothing in this as it was speculative, it was presumption and perception and he was waiting to hear firm arguments and there were none.

Councillor Maudling said we have our own Auditor and we have CALC services and we don't want to use anyone else should it come to it.

Councillor G Dinsdale said that they had a hefty list of evidence and facts prepared to present to you to ask questions. But we have been told that we're not allowed to do that. We would like to make it clear that we would like to share it with you but have been told we can't because of item 7. If the investigation is going to be denied then the only thing that's going to happen is that it's going to be left for 6 months and said that she as a Councillor was completely sure and could promise that it will be brought forward and questions will be asked when legally allowed to do so. She said we have nothing to hide we are here to be open and transparent to the public and there is no reason why we shouldn't just allow a full investigation to go ahead to get it done and over with and give the community our full and complete stance that everything we have said is honest and that nothing unlawful has taken place.

Councillor Rayson said she agreed with Councillor Maudling and said whichever way the voting goes between now and when anyone wants to bring it back to the table can we not have any grudges any personal vendettas and move on with what's important for the town.

Councillor Arrighi wanted 2 points noted the first was that it would be nice if Councillor O'Kane could tell members to stop putting nasty things on Facebook and also, she had submitted an official complaint to the Monitoring Officer and in this complaint, she had said how the vote would go on this because prior to this there had been an orchestrated meeting.

Councillor O’Kane made a closing submission

- Like many Councils during the lockdown we had no face to face meetings and texts were the main means of our day to day communication;
- Our Council is a wide mixture of ages and health issues with many Councillors self-isolating;
- We were all and still are working in an emergency where people in our area are dying of a contagious disease and I applaud all the key workers risking their lives for others. Everyone came together to help those in need;
- As a Council we could either sit by and watch or we could do something. As a Council we are charged with working for our community;
- Rules went out of the window. However, my thought was that we have a public duty;
- Tonight, we should However, be celebrating every single thing that our staff and Councillors did to help others because an awful lot was done. There are many Councillors in the virtual room who did so much to help others and save lives;
- He said he was disgusted to be sitting here tonight when our Council is being attacked from within over things like transparency, staff working practices, purchasing PPE for distribution. We are transparent regarding our finances. Every month Councillors get a comprehensive breakdown of expenditure. Staff go above and beyond what is required of them every single week for us.
- We really worked hard to relocate as we had no choice and yet 4 Councillors have not set foot in the building. The last few weeks this Council should have been working with the Community. Instead we’re all in a mental lockdown preparing for tonight. Some Councillors have forgotten how they voted in the last 2 meetings. Councillor Redmond voted for the key financial report the one he now objects to. Councillor Arrighi left that part of the meeting despite me asking her to vote and 2 Councillors decided to use social media to develop their arguments.
- Arguments as a democratic Councillor are here – debate it in the room, vote on it and accept it. If you choose not to ask yourself what the outcome is. It could be the destruction of your own Council. Is it the desire to highlight your profile for the future?
- Mr Kirkbride stated the following recently “and so the next phase of the impeachment of O’Kane commences”.
- This Council is not about me, you or anybody else it’s every single one of us. We are supposed to be a team helping our community. Tonight, we should be celebrating not arguing.
- The quote asks not what your community can do for you but what you can do for your community. The key word is together.
- Some people have attempted to turn our Council into a laughing stock. I am laying a wreath on behalf of the Council at the cenotaph this Sunday

and this wreath is dedicated to people who gave their lives for us and here we are arguing like kids in a playground.

- I echo everything that Councillor Rayson has said we should be putting everything behind us and concentrating on tomorrow and everything we can do for our community

Councillor O’Kane asked that we move to the vote

Councillor E Dinsdale said that in his opinion Councillor O’Kane was in denial

Councillor Rayson wanted it noted that she had not had any meetings with anybody and had not spoken to other Councillors about this evenings meeting or the way my vote goes.

Councillor Dinsdale said that the wording of the proposal was that they were voting on an independent investigation into all the concerns that had been raised since the Council was working under the HCID Policy.

A recorded vote was held and the votes were as follows: -

Councillor O’Kane	Against
Councillor Rayson	Against
Councillor Arrighi	For
Councillor E Dinsdale	For
Councillor G Dinsdale	For
Councillor Gill	Against
Councillor Hayes	Against
Councillor Maudling	Against
Councillor Redmond	For
Councillor Roberts	Against
Councillor C Walmsley	Against
Councillor L Walmsley	Against

RESOLVED – That by a majority of 8 votes to 4 that an independent investigation into the concerns raised since the Council was operating under the HCID Policy be not carried out.

The Meeting closed at 7.10

Chairman

