

## **Extraordinary Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

### **Item 10 – Review of delegation arrangements agreed by Council on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 for managing Town Council business during covid-19 pandemic**

In response to the present pandemic the Town Council agreed to delegate all matters to the Town Clerk from 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (except for those reserved to the full Council by statute). At that time it was envisaged that these arrangements would remain in place until the annual meeting of the Town Council. However, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 have enabled the Council to delay the annual meeting which is now unlikely to take place prior to the autumn. Therefore, there is a requirement to review the current delegation arrangements.

A schedule of decisions made by the Town Clerk has been submitted under Agenda Item 19. Almost all of the 23 decisions were made after discussion with members of the management team, and in accordance with the delegation arrangements the mayor, deputy mayor or relevant committee chairman were also consulted in the majority of cases. Most of the decisions relate to the closing down of services due to the lockdown arrangements and their subsequent reopening. During the peak of the pandemic all Members were kept up to date by e-mail and a number of informal virtual councillor briefings were also held.

Fortunately, all councillors and senior officers have remained free of the virus throughout the crisis so that deputising arrangements haven't had to be put in place.

Now that Council is able to hold meetings remotely it would appear to be an appropriate time to reduce the scope of the Town Clerk's delegated powers. Clearly if there was a need to enter into a lease or licence, or authorise large scale expenditure on a non-urgent basis then this could now be considered to full Council.

The majority of Council services are now in an advanced stage of reopening. Decisions have been taken to re-open beach huts from 4<sup>th</sup> July with amended arrangements to encourage social distancing, as will be reported under agenda item 16. The government have announced that play areas can also re-open from that date and every effort will be made to ensure that that can be complied with. The Town Hall/Police reception desk remains closed, but a screen is going to be installed within the next two weeks after which it is planned that a phased re-opening will take place.

Members are asked to continue to delegate certain matters, including final arrangements for the reopening of Council services. This would enable managers to ensure that public health matters are properly addressed through risk assessments, that staff are fully consulted and that changes to visitor numbers or other factors can be quickly responded to. This delegation should also empower officers to respond to any guidance from Public Health Dorset should there be a local Covid-19 outbreak. Apart from the determination of these operational issues, the Town Clerk's delegated powers would revert to established custom and practice prior to 20<sup>th</sup> March.

A slimming down of delegation would require a return to committee meetings, primarily so that planning applications can be fully considered by the Planning and Consultation

Committee. It is envisaged that a full committee cycle would not take place until the autumn. However, the meetings schedule will be more fully considered under agenda item 17.

**Decisions required:**

To consider whether to bring an end to the delegation arrangements agreed by Council on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020, except as required to enable the Town Clerk to manage the re-opening of services and facilities, together with the Council's response to any future local outbreak of Covid-19.

Martin Ayres  
Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

June 2020