

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

### **Agenda Item 4: Coronavirus Emergency Measures**

Council is requested to consider and approve the measures below in response to the coronavirus emergency.

#### **Community Support**

***Recommendation 1: Provide information and guidance via a printed flyer delivered to all households so that those that might need support as well as those that wish to offer support at this time can be effectively signposted.***

#### **Background**

Whilst there is a wealth of information about the novel coronavirus, Covid-19, available online, some of our residents may not have internet access or know where to look online for approved advice or support. Similarly, many people will want to know how they can volunteer their support or donate resources to help others. Clear information from a trusted source would be valuable. The Flyerpress have quoted £757.50 to print and deliver 11,000 double-sided A4 leaflets to all households in Felixstowe.

#### **Proposed Resolution**

- (i) **that Felixstowe Town Council authorises funding of £757.50 from the Community Fund Earmarked Reserve to produce and deliver information to all households in Felixstowe providing reassurance and guidance to those than might need support as well as those that wish to offer support at this time.**

***Recommendation 2: Introduce a quick-decision process to the Council's grants scheme, utilising the Council's Occasional Grant fund, to support local organisations and charities which are carrying out beneficial work in the community.***

Council's Occasional Grants Scheme offers a total of £25,000 available to support community organisations which are able demonstrate a clear need for financial support and which contribute towards the vision and aims for Felixstowe. Projects and activities must have a specific benefit to residents of Felixstowe.

Currently, the Council – through its Civic & Community Committee – considers grants on a bi-annual basis. However, with the Committee unlikely to meet for the foreseeable future and with the expectation that there will be an increasing need to support eligible local organisations and charities the Council should consider how it can enable quick-decisions to be made to ensure appropriate funding support can be given swiftly.

#### **Proposed Resolution:**

- (ii) **that the Council delegate authority to the Clerk, in consultation with the Members of the Civic & Community Committee via email, to decide grant applications from eligible organisations within a week of receipt of application, utilising the Council's Occasional Grant fund, in order to support local organisations and charities which are carrying out beneficial work in the community.**

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

### ***Recommendation 3: To appoint two Trustees to the Felixstowe Relief Charity.***

From time to time the Town Council has been asked to appoint representatives to a number of charities. The Felixstowe Relief Charity (1182192) was set up in 2019 to be a successor charity to the Alexandrine De La Roche Relief In Need Charity (261597), the Felixstowe General Charity (270980), the Felixstowe War Memorial Cottages Charity (240325), the King George VI Coronation Memorial Homes For Old People Charity (211502) and the Widow's Charity Otherwise Known As The Poor's Estate (211504).

Currently the trustees of all these charities are the same. They are Cllr Margaret Morris, Mr Jon Garfield, Mrs Joan Sennington and Mr Norman Berry.

The Felixstowe Relief Charity requires a minimum of three trustees, and a maximum of 12. The Charity met on 20 March to consider how the Charity could respond to the current difficulties residents within the town of Felixstowe are experiencing as a result of the current Coronavirus crisis. The Charity agreed that a small committee of trustees be formed with the delegated authority to spend funds in any way it saw fit, in line with the Charity's objectives. Given that the Charity's Trustees were currently being advised to self-isolate in accordance with Government advice at this time, it was also agreed that the Town Council be invited to appoint two new trustees to the Charity, who would ideally not be in the higher-risk profile for Covid-19. The Trustees discussed the practicality of distributing funds via internet banking and agreed that the members of this committee, plus Debbie Frost who helped provide administrative support to the Charity, should be added as authorised signatories to the Charity's bank mandate. Subject to the Town Council accepting the request and appointing two further Trustees, it was agreed that these trustees and Margaret Morris form the committee.

The Charity made the following resolution:

- i) a Coronavirus Support Committee be formed with the delegated authority to spend Charity funds in any way it deems appropriate during the public health crisis at this time, subject to such expenditure being commensurate with the stated objectives of the Felixstowe Relief Charity;
- ii) the Town Council be requested to appoint two trustees to the Felixstowe Relief Charity;
- iii) these two Trustees and Margaret Morris be appointed to the Coronavirus Support Committee; and,
- iv) Members of the Coronavirus Support Committee, plus Mrs Debbie Frost as administrative support, be added as authorised signatories to the Charity's bank mandate and approved for internet banking.

Following a conversation with Cllr Mark Jepson and Cllr Darren Aitchison, who with Cllr Margaret Morris, are the Council's current Community Emergency Plan Coordinators, it is being recommended that these Members be invited to become Trustees to the Felixstowe Relief Charity.

### **Proposed Resolution:**

- (iii) that Cllr Mark Jepson and Cllr Darren Aitchison be invited to become Trustees to the Felixstowe Relief Charity.**

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

**Recommendation 4: To support the volunteer effort, donate £10,000 to the Felixstowe Relief Charity in order that the Charity may direct funds to those that need it most.**

The Felixstowe Relief Charity (1182192) was set up in 2019 with the objective to:

*provide relief to Beneficiaries who are in need by reason of their youth, age, ill health, disability, financial hardship, personal, social or economic circumstances, in such ways as the trustees shall from time to time think fit, including (but not by way of limitation) through the provision of grants items and services to such persons and/or charities, and/or other organisations working to prevent or relieve poverty.*

As such, the Charity is well-placed to help channel funds to individuals that need support in Felixstowe.

As outlined in Recommendation 3, above, the Trustees have set up a Coronavirus Virus Support Committee with the delegated authority to spend Charity funds in any way it deems appropriate during the public health crisis at this time. The Charity's constitution enables its Trustees to meet and make decisions remotely.

The Town Council's Community Fund exists to support projects and initiatives that benefit the community of Felixstowe.

To support the Charity's aims at this time, the Town Council is asked to donate £10,000 to the Felixstowe Relief Charity from the Community Fund Earmarked Reserve.

### **Proposed Resolution:**

- (iv) That Felixstowe Town Council donates £10,000, via the Community Fund Earmarked Reserve, to the Felixstowe Relief Charity in order that the Charity may direct funds to those that need it most.**

**Recommendation 5: Authorise funding of up to £10,000 to support any requirements identified and agreed by the Council's Community Emergency Plan Coordinators, with authority delegated to the Clerk to approve such expenditure via the Council's Community Fund Earmarked Reserve.**

### **Background:**

The Council's Community Emergency Plan (CEP) is designed to help Felixstowe prepare for an emergency and reduce its impact. It has been put together with guidance from the District Council's Emergency Planning Officer and Town Council's CEP Working Group, who took a practical approach to developing a CEP that could effectively support the community in the event of an emergency in Felixstowe. The plan takes a strategic approach, supporting the coordination of information and local resources that may be useful in an emergency; whilst acknowledging that an emergency of any significant scale would also elicit a wider response from the emergency services and other agencies.

The CEP was been prepared with the help from many local community groups and organisations. Felixstowe Town Council will take the lead in overseeing the Plan's use in an emergency so anyone in the community can get involved.

The CEP is the focus of the community's actions to become better prepared and details the steps the community will take before, during and after an emergency incident. The Plan helps Council to identify:

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

- What resources we have in the community, such as 4x4 vehicles, people with useful skills and local knowledge.
- Where to go to if there is an immediate need to provide shelter or accommodation;
- How to mobilise those resources and who to contact.

Given the current situation, the CEP Coordinators may be required to meet – albeit remotely – and make decisions at short-notice. It may be useful to have funding available to promptly assist with an emergency response.

### **Proposed Resolution:**

- (v) **That Felixstowe Town Council authorises funding of up to £10,000 to support any requirements identified and agreed by the Council's Community Emergency Plan Coordinators, with authority delegated to the Clerk to approve such expenditure via the Council's Community Fund Earmarked Reserve.**

### **Council Events and Services**

#### ***Recommendation 6: Review the delivery of Council services and events.***

#### **Background:**

In accordance with Government guidance and the advice of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in relation to the public health crisis, the Town Council should take action to ensure it can continue to provide key services whilst safeguarding Members, staff and the public.

NALC strongly encourages councillors and staff to follow government guidance on social distancing and self-isolation. This is particularly important if anyone is in an at-risk group as identified by the guidance. Local councils should consider if they need to hold scheduled meetings at all. The health and safety of councillors, staff and the public should be the primary concern. If local councils do follow government guidance on social distancing and social isolation and so they do not hold scheduled meetings, including annual council meetings, NALC's opinion is that the likelihood of a successful legal challenge is low.

It is therefore recommended that all public meetings should be suspended until further notice.

The Town Hall should be closed for counter enquiries – but can remain open for telephone calls and pre-booked appointments. The Town Clerk has reviewed on-site working to minimise the risk of contracting or transmitting the coronavirus. Face-to-face meetings have been minimised and office-based staff are being enabled to work from home wherever possible.

It is recommended that allotment inspections be suspended during this time as many allotment holders will be self-isolating and unable to tend to their plots.

It is recommended that all Mayoral engagements be cancelled until further notice.

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

It is recommended that all other Council-related events due to take place during the current Municipal Year be cancelled.

It is recommended that all other Council-related events be kept under review, with the default position being that these will also be cancelled, or at the very least postponed, unless the situation changes.

All floral baskets for Felixstowe in Flower have been already been ordered, with funds committed. However, with the closure of the schools and social limitations, the Felixstowe in Flower competitions should be cancelled this year. Floral baskets will still be installed around the town to bring much needed cheer. To support our local businesses, it is recommended that all the plaques recognising last year's sponsors should be re-installed this year at zero cost. Of the few sponsors that have paid early for 2020, this sponsorship should carry forward to 2021. If approved, this will be communicated to all sponsors.

### **Proposed Resolution:**

#### **That until further notice:**

- (vi) all public meetings of Felixstowe Town Council to be suspended in accordance with the advice of Government or the National Association of Local Councils;**
- (vii) the Town Hall be closed for counter enquiries, but remain open for telephone calls and pre-booked appointments;**
- (viii) allotment inspections be suspended;**
- (ix) all Mayoral engagements be cancelled;**
- (x) all Council-related events for the remainder of the 2019/20 Municipal Year to be cancelled;**
- (xi) all other Council-related events be kept under review, with the default position being that these will also be cancelled, or at the very least postponed unless guidance changes;**
- (xii) Felixstowe in Flower competitions be cancelled this year; and,**
- (xiii) all Felixstowe in Flower sponsors be advised that plaques recognising last year's sponsors will be re-installed this year at zero cost and any sponsorship received for 2020 will carry forward to 2021.**

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

***Recommendation 7: To note and approve the delegation arrangements of the Planning & Environment Committee.***

**Background:**

To safeguard its staff, Members and the public, East Suffolk Council have suspended all public meetings until further notice.

The planning authority have reiterated that all information connected with planning applications is available online and it is for town and parish Councils – and other interested parties - to determine their own arrangements and respond in a timely way. Any person who has an interest in any application is able to respond in the usual manner and all responses will be picked up by the team without delay and logged against the application.

While many town and parish councils do engage with the community and seek their views, such engagement is not necessary to enable consultation responses to be provided and individual members of the public should continue to be encouraged to respond individually to enable their view to be heard.

The Town Council's Planning & Environment Committee of 18 March 2020 made the following resolution, including delegation arrangements for responding to planning applications in lieu of continuing the current meeting schedule:

- i. All currently scheduled meetings of the Planning & Environment Committee to be suspended until further notice;
- ii. The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Cllr Kimberley Williams, be delegated the authority to submit recommendations to East Suffolk Council or other relevant authority, in respect of planning applications, or other proposals, that would usually be considered by a meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee, until the next time the Committee meets or as Council may otherwise determine;
- iii. To support Member engagement with the process, a weekly list of planning applications for consideration forming the Agenda will be circulated via email on a Thursday. This will also be published on the Council's website, with public comments invited. A summary of the applications, alongside any material planning matters that are perceived to be relevant, will then follow. Committee Members will then be invited to make any comments/observations and recommendations via email. The Clerk, Planning Administration Officer, Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Cllr Williams will review proposals and comments via conference call on a Wednesday morning; and,
- iv. A summary of recommendations submitted under this delegated authority will be circulated as Minutes, alongside the next Agenda, on a Thursday.

Given that the Planning & Environment Committee has suspended all future meetings until further notice, the Minutes of the meeting recording this resolution may not be confirmed for some time. Council is therefore requested to note and approve the arrangements.

**Proposed Resolution:**

- (xiv) **the delegation arrangements resolved by the Planning & Environment Committee be noted and approved.**

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

### **Emergency Scheme of Delegation**

***Recommendation 8:*** separately to the delegation in Recommendation 7 (above), extend the delegation of Council decisions to the Clerk during any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the Covid-19 virus to enable the Council to fulfil its responsibilities to its residents.

#### **Background:**

Local authorities are required to hold meetings to make decisions. The Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 requires Members to be physically present in order for a meeting to take place. This applies to councils in all tiers.

The SLCC have advised that, given these times are exceptional (and a declared pandemic should meet the test for this), most councils will cancel their usual meetings and these need to be replaced with alternative decision-making processes. The lawful way to do this is that a decision, that would otherwise have been on the agenda for a committee or Council, is now made by an officer. To ensure that this remains inclusive of elected Members, the officer is advised in their decision-making to seek the views of Members of the Committee/Council. This can be done remotely.

The officer cannot in law fetter (constrain) their discretion entirely, but that does not mean that they cannot give almost overwhelming weight to the views of Members responding remotely to a report and officers' advice, or even after seeing written submissions by members of the public in lieu of public access.

The SLCC advise that it may be desirable to formalise which Members are to be consulted e.g. Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Section 101 of the LGA 1972 gives specific statutory power to arrange for the discharge of a council's functions to a committee, sub-committee or an officer of the authority. This power is subject to any express provision within LGA 1972 or any subsequent Act.

#### **Proposed Resolution:**

- (xv) all functions of the Council, other than those matters specifically reserved by law to be determined by a meeting of the Council, to be delegated to the Clerk (as the Council's Proper Officer) in consultation with Mayor and Chairman of the appropriate relevant Committee (or the Deputy Mayor if usually Council) until the next Ordinary or Extraordinary Council meeting, at which time the delegation must be reviewed.**

### **Business Continuity Plan**

***Recommendation 9:*** Adopt the draft Business Continuity Plan

#### **Background:**

Producing and maintaining a Business Continuity Plan, for implementation in the event of disruptions to the day to day running of the Council, is important to ensure that it is prepared, as far as reasonably practical, to continue to provide functions/services in the event of a disruption by whatever cause.

A draft Business Continuity Plan for Felixstowe Town Council is attached.

#### **Proposed Resolution:**

- (xvi) the Business Continuity Plan be adopted.**

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

### **Annual Meetings and Annual Governance Accountability Return**

**Recommendation 10: Note the advice of NALC on the Council's statutory obligations for Annual meetings and Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR).**

#### **Background (from NALC):**

On 17 March the government produced an [outline of what will be covered by a Coronavirus Bill](#), which their aim is to introduce as new fast-tracked legislation. Some topics that local councils may find most relevant to their work are related to “managing the deceased with respect and dignity” if the local council is also a burial authority, and also “delaying and slowing the virus” has information regarding delays to elections.

NALC is engaging with Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) about audit and with the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as a matter of urgency on a range of issues. A summary of some of the issues we are raising with MHCLG is below:

- Holding of statutory meetings — such as annual parish meeting and the annual council meeting. We are communicating the concerns that councils have around their ability to hold meetings within the statutory deadlines.
- Audit deadlines — We are communicating the concerns that local councils have around their ability to hold meetings within the statutory deadlines.
- Elections — With the change of date around elections we are seeking clarification on the implications of this.
- Democratic decision-making (e.g. if councils are unable to be quorate for an extended period of time) — We are communicating the difficulties that councils are experiencing or expecting. This includes the question of phone/online attendance

On 16 March 2020, local government secretary Robert Jenrick MP addressed over 300 council leaders and sector bodies in a call on the government's response to coronavirus. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting councils to focus their efforts on the priority area of social care, providing vital support for vulnerable people and supporting their local economies — [read the full press release on MHCLG's website](#). NALC is awaiting confirmation that these changes will be applicable to local councils, plus legislation will need to be passed for this to come into effect and we are seeking clarification on the detail. In particular, the MHCLG press release states:

- The deadline for local government financial audits will be extended to 30 September 2020
- It will consider bringing forward legislation to remove the requirement for annual council meetings to take place in person
- It will consider bringing forward legislation to allow council committee meetings to be held virtually for a temporary period

We will provide further updates as we find them out.

#### **Financial Year End and AGAR**

After the completion of the accounts and AGAR at the close of the financial year (31 March), they must be certified by the responsible financial officer (RFO) of the authority, considered and approved by full council by no later than 29 June, published before 1 July to comply with the public rights period, with any external auditor report and certificate published by 30 September.

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

Local councils will start receiving their AGAR forms from auditors next week. We are confident that there will be government guidance soon on how the completion of accounts and AGAR can be conducted without the need for a physical council meeting. We will provide updates as soon as we know more.

### **Proposed Resolution:**

- (xvii) the advice of NALC on the Council's statutory obligations for Annual meetings and Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR) be noted.**

### **Summary of Recommendations:**

**1: Provide information and guidance via a printed flyer delivered to all households so that those that might need support as well as those that wish to offer support at this time can be effectively signposted.**

**2: Introduce a quick-decision grants scheme process to the Council's grants scheme, utilising the Council's Occasional Grant fund, to support local organisations and charities which are carrying out beneficial work in the community.**

**3: To appoint two Trustees to the Felixstowe Relief Charity.**

**4: To support the volunteer effort, donate £10,000 to the Felixstowe Relief Charity in order that the Charity may direct funds to those that need it most.**

**5: Authorise funding of up to £10,000 to support any requirements identified and agreed by the Council's Community Emergency Plan Coordinators, with authority delegated to the Clerk to approve such expenditure via the Council's Community Fund Earmarked Reserve.**

**6: Review the delivery of Council services and events.**

**7: To note and approve the delegation arrangements of the Planning & Environment Committee.**

**8: separately to the delegation in recommendation seven (above), extend the delegation of Council decisions to the Clerk during any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the Covid-19 virus to enable the Council to fulfil its responsibilities to its residents.**

**9: Adopt the draft Business Continuity Plan**

**10: Note the advice of NALC on the Council's statutory obligations for Annual meetings and Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR).**

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

Proposed Resolution to be considered by the Extraordinary Council Meeting of 24 March 2020:

Felixstowe Town Council RESOLVES that:

- (i) funding of £757.50 be authorised from the Community Fund Earmarked Reserve to produce and deliver information to all households in Felixstowe providing reassurance and guidance to those than might need support as well as those that wish to offer support at this time;
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with the Members of the Civic & Community Committee via email, to decide grant applications from eligible organisations within a week of receipt of application, utilising the Council's Occasional Grant fund, in order to support local organisations and charities which are carrying out beneficial work in the community;
- (iii) Cllr Mark Jepson and Cllr Darren Aitchison be nominated by the Town Council to be invited to become Trustees to the Felixstowe Relief Charity;
- (iv) £10,000 be donated, via the Community Fund Earmarked Reserve, to the Felixstowe Relief Charity in order that the Charity may direct funds to those that need it most;
- (v) funding of up to £10,000 be authorised to support any requirements identified and agreed by the Council's Community Emergency Plan Coordinators, with authority delegated to the Clerk to approve such expenditure via the Council's Community Fund Earmarked Reserve;
- (vi) all public meetings of Felixstowe Town Council to be suspended in accordance with the advice of Government or the National Association of Local Councils;
- (vii) the Town Hall be closed for counter enquiries, but remain open for telephone calls and pre-booked appointments;
- (viii) allotment inspections be suspended;
- (ix) all Mayoral engagements be cancelled;
- (x) all Council-related events for the remainder of the 2019/20 Municipal Year to be cancelled;
- (xi) all other Council-related events be kept under review, with the default position being that these will also be cancelled, or at the very least postponed unless guidance changes;
- (xii) Felixstowe in Flower competitions be cancelled this year;
- (xiii) all Felixstowe in Flower sponsors be advised that plaques recognising last year's sponsors will be re-installed this year at zero cost and any sponsorship received for 2020 will carry forward to 2021;
- (xiv) the delegation arrangements resolved by the Planning & Environment Committee be noted and approved;

## **Extraordinary Council 24 March 2020 – Appendix A**

- (xv) all functions of the Council, other than those matters specifically reserved by law to be determined by a meeting of the Council, to be delegated to the Clerk (as the Council's Proper Officer) in consultation with Mayor and Chairman of the appropriate relevant Committee (or the Deputy Mayor if usually Council) until the next Ordinary or Extraordinary Council meeting, at which time the delegation must be reviewed;
  - (xvi) the Business Continuity Plan be adopted; and,
  - (xvii) the advice of NALC on the Council's statutory obligations for Annual meetings and Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR) be noted.
-