



# CHIPPENHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Improving the quality of town life

## CHIPPENHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Town Council held virtually on Zoom, on Wednesday 15 July 2020 at 4.09pm.

<b>COUNCILLORS</b>	James Adman	Desna Allen	Pete Bishop
	Jenny Budgetell	Clare Cape	Bill Douglas
	Peter Hutton	Teresa Hutton	Ruth Lloyd
	Michael Merry	Mary Norton	Andy Phillips
	Nina Phillips	David Powell	Chris Ruck
	John Scragg	Melody Thompson	Sandie Webb

<b>OFFICERS</b>	Mark Smith (Chief Executive)
	Nick Rees (Director of Resources)
	Barry Pirie (Director of Community Resources)
	Daryl Jones (Business Support Manager)
	Heather Rae (Democratic Services Manager)
	Lynsey Nichols (Marketing and Communications Manager)
	Michael Weeks (Democratic and Civic Officer)
	Ann Chard (Administrative Services Officer - Planning)
	Andy Conroy (Planning Officer)
	Gillian Ballinger (Finance Manager)
	Will Tidmarsh (Head of Environmental Services)
Melissa Barnett (Head of Museum and Heritage Services)	
Paul Harvey (Head of Leisure Services)	
Helen Bywater (Corporate Support Officer)	

**PUBLIC PRESENT** There were 7 members of the public present

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS** There were 6 written and 2 verbal public questions appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX A**, responses post meeting are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX B**.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Richard Bambury and Nick Murry.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

3. **PLAY AREAS**

The Chief Executive presented the report regarding play areas to Councillors.

The Councillors debated the recommendations in the report that was presented to them highlighting concerns regarding the frequency of cleaning, the cost of cleaning, the impact on those families with children if the parks remained closed and the responsibility of parents to ensure the safety of their children.

Councillor Clare Cape left the meeting at 4:34pm

Councillor Peter Hutton proposed an amendment to recommendation B, which was seconded by Councillor Andy Phillips.

Councillor Mary Norton left the meeting at 5:17pm

**RESOLVED that**

With a recorded vote,

Yes	No	Abstained
James Adman		
Desna Allen		
Pete Bishop		
Jenny Budgell		
Bill Douglas		
Peter Hutton		
Teresa Hutton		
Ruth Lloyd		
Michael Merry		
Andy Phillips		
Nina Phillips		
David Powell		
Chris Ruck		
John Scragg		
Melody Thompson		
Sandie Webb		

With all in favour,

To re-open the Town Councils thirteen play areas and to delegate authority to the CEO to implement the Council's decision and for there to be a fortnightly review of the opening of the play areas to ensure any new guidance can be implemented or previous guidance be replaced and the costs are also reviewed, this should be in conjunction with discussion with the Chairman of the council and the Leader and deputy Leader of the council. To purchase the appropriate temporary signage and any additional equipment to promote and introduce the Governments current Covid 19 guidelines in relation to the opening of Play Areas. The expenditure will fall under the current spending limits in place for the CEO and should be clearly identified for further scrutiny under Covid 19 additional costs.

To ensure the town council can re-open the 13 play areas in a well-managed manner and to allow time for the temporary signage to be installed and any other temporary infrastructure measures to be in place, the 13 play areas should be made ready to open W/c Monday 27th July.

4. **ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION**

The Councillors requested that it was communicated about the proposed reopening of the towns 13 play areas on W/C 27 July 2020, and that this was decided unanimously by Council.

5. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next Full Council meeting will take place with an Extraordinary meeting on Wednesday 22 July 2020.

The meeting closed at 5.45pm.

These minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting.

Signed on behalf of the Town Council as a true record of the meeting.

Signature

Date

DRAFT

## APPENDIX A

### Public Comments and Questions

At the invitation of the Chairman a resident addressed the Council.

I am disappointed that I am here again talking about the lack of transparency and democracy and I want to refer to the answers that I have been given to the questions that I raised at the last full Town Council meeting.

That response refers to the agenda and meeting of the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, which didn't happen, so I would consider that I actually haven't received a response to my previous questions because I am completely baffled at the relevance of referring me to a meeting that's say's in your answer didn't happen, its bizarre.

There is another paragraph that talks about delegating important urgent decisions, but how can the Council decide, which is what it says in standing orders, that the matter is urgent, if the Council hasn't been involved. So I really don't understand this.

It's really disappointing that the largest Town Council in Wiltshire, has taken so long to get things organised, and the final paragraph tells me that everything that officers have done during the period of delegation, have been done in the best interests of the Council. I would like to remind the Council, that it's not the officers duty to act in the interest of the Council, it's their duty to act in the best interest of the public, referring to the Nolan principles, so as I don't feel like this question has been suitability answered, I would like to make a request under the freedom of information, for a comprehensive breakdown of every decision taken under delegated authority and evidence of the agreement that was obtained from the relevant Leader, Deputy Leader, Chair or Vice Chair of Committee or Sub Committee and I also ask for confirmation and evidence that now meetings are resuming again all decisions have been ratified, by the democratically elected officials, and if that isn't the case, I would like the plan for when that would happen and also be shared.

The Chairman replied that a response would be made in writing, this is attached as response 1 at **APPENDIX B**. (Not part of the meeting).

The following questions were received in advance, and read out by the Chief Executive on behalf of residents.

#### A

Thank you for sending the details regarding virtual meetings.

Having worked in the rail industry, I have become familiar with risk assessments and approaches taken. If likelihoods and controls are not rationalised appropriately some risk assessments result in disproportional severity resulting in over engineered mitigation measures.

Having not actually seen Chippenham Town Council risk assessment regarding opening play areas, it seems possibly and suggested control measures are excessive and consequently a more drain on town council resources and financial burden causing the decision of the play areas to remain closed?

The Health and Safety Executive doesn't expect gold standards regards to control risks, but reasonable and practical measures. In the agenda, item 3.2, there is a link to Association of Play Industries (API) Guidance for managing playgrounds and outdoor gyms, I personally

believe that it does comply with the government guidelines and wonder how the council has come to a different conclusion?

### The questions I wish to raise for the meeting on 15 July

1 - For what reason does the council consider that the API guidance document doesn't comply with the Government Guidelines or the measures that are presently being adopted by Wiltshire County Council other play areas?

Below is a community notice that has been issued by Wiltshire County Council elsewhere 'Our community matters'.

2nd July 2020, 2:35pm | By **Marc Read** |



Wiltshire Council's play areas will reopen from Saturday (4 July) and families are strongly advised to follow the social distancing measures in place to protect others and use the facilities safely.

The following measures will be in place to keep people as safe as possible:

- If anyone in the household is displaying COVID-19 symptoms then do not visit
- People should ensure they are social distancing – if this isn't possible because the park or certain equipment is being used by other people, they should please wait or visit another day
- Please try to only have one parent, guardian or carer with each child to limit the possible spread of infection
- Consider using a face covering, but Government guidance states they aren't to be used by children under the age of three
- All rubbish, including disposable face coverings or gloves, should be put in the litter bins or taken home to dispose of
- Wash hands or use hand sanitiser before and after visiting the park
- People should consider wiping or cleansing equipment before use
- People shouldn't eat or drink within the play area

Cllr Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Communities, said: "Play areas are a great place for children to get much-needed exercise and run off steam, especially during this lockdown period. We're glad we can reopen them but it is so important that families follow the guidance to protect themselves and others.

"We can all do our bit by maintaining social distancing, using sanitiser and wipes frequently and disposing of our rubbish or taking it home so these facilities can be enjoyed by all in the safest possible way.

Clear signage will be displayed in all Wiltshire Council play areas with the new guidelines and how people can use the facilities safely.

2 - Why has Chippenham Town Council concluded that parents / carers / guardians wouldn't abide to adequate control measures to ensure the safety of children?

I would have thought that suitable signage in place would be a sufficient control measure as it wouldn't be unreasonable to assume that users wouldn't adhere to the requirements as parents / carers / guardians are probably more considerate of child safety than the general public in shopping areas.

Additionally, if some users thought others were putting themselves at risk, then they would simply remove themselves from the risk?

It's not unreasonable to assume that each parent / carer / guardian is indeed taking the pandemic seriously and adopting good personal hygiene for at least their own child.

Irrespective of Covid-19, the town council wouldn't be expected to have the same equipment spotlessly clean before it could be used at any other time?

In comparison with play areas, the council hasn't removed benches from the high street, yet more of the general public are at risk compared with the number using playground equipment?

I would wish Chippenham Town Council to reconsider the decision to close the play areas and determine what is truly reasonable action, instead of being over cautious at the expense of what the play areas offer for the wellbeing of the children.

## B

To Whom It May Concern at Chippenham Council, I'm writing regarding the play parks in Chippenham remaining closed. I am aware that there is to be a virtual meeting on Wednesday where this is discussed further but as a Chippenham resident I would like to put forward a question for this meeting.

I understand that during this challenging time that many things have changed and safety is the priority at all times however, it is really sad to see that Chippenham are not reopening the play parks for children. I have just read the Gazette and Herald's article saying that the council would need to employ 13 more staff to maintain the play parks being opened but with other surrounding towns opening parks and managing this I'm not sure where this number has come from? This means that until Chippenham town council employ 13 more members of staff the play parks will remain closed indefinitely. It makes me really sad to see that our children can't do this but it's OK for adults to go and sit in the pub and after seeing photos over the weekend I think the children will obey the rules better than the adults... Our children are really suffering and play parks should be a priority to give them some structure and enjoyment back too.

I know parents would be sensible and happily keep up cleanliness and as with a lot of the government rules it has been done on a trust basis. Government guidelines state: Consideration should be given to: using signs and posters: to promote cleaning of equipment by users, parents, guardians and carers, particularly where there are clear touch points such as swing rockers, see saws, machine handles or exercise bars encouraging outdoor gym users to bring their own towel and hygiene products and wipe down equipment after use encouraging parents to bring hand sanitiser gel or wipes to clean their children's hands to encourage hand hygiene with including washing/sanitising hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and water or approved gel and foam sanitiser, particularly at the beginning and end of play to advise users (or parents of users) not to touch their faces, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue or arm when a tissue is not available to remind adults and children not to put their mouths on equipment or their hands in their mouths to promote and remind users, parents, guardians and carers of the need for social distancing

After all of this my question to Chippenham Town Council is why can they not open the playparks like every other surrounding town and village has now done?!

## C

Can you have them read out please I plan to attend but I am working so it may not be possible the I can attend the whole meeting.

Firstly I would like the justification for depriving the children of the facilities against government guidelines.

Secondly I would like a list of what each town councillor has voted in relation to this so that I can remind voters at the next election.

Thirdly how much Of a reduction in council tax will we all receive for loss of these facilities that we pay for, this includes the full shutting of John Coles public space at the beginning of the outbreak.

**D**

I have one question to put forward please for the meeting in relation to the opening of the playgrounds which I'm sure has already been raised:

'Can signage be used displaying rules of the playground instead of using members of staff? Springfield Park (next to the Leisure Centre) in Corsham is open and has rules and entry/exit gates.'

**E**

I understand you are having a meeting regarding the children's play parks in Chippenham and Wiltshire.

I strongly feel that they must now be opened as our children have had months with no school, park's and playing with friends. As parents we are more than willing to ensure that safe play is adhered to and we will use our own common sense when it comes to how busy the park maybe and we all carry hand sanitiser everywhere.

Please make the right decision and thank you for all you have done during the pandemic.

**F**

Could they not just open say 5 of the play areas, JCP, Pewsham, then 2 or three of the others, then the cost would be lower, and people in Chippenham would still be able to walk their children to a park play area.

The Chairman replied that a response would be made in writing to all those who sent questions in advance of the meeting regarding play areas, this is attached as response 2 at **APPENDIX B** (Not part of the meeting).

**Not part of the meeting**

**APPENDIX B**

Written responses to public questions asked at Extraordinary Full Council Meeting on 15 July 2020.

1. Thank you for your public question at the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held on 15 July 2020.

The relevance of referring to the scheduled Full Council meeting on 25 March 2020 was that a report was drafted and agreed with Group Leaders and the Chairman. The report addressed the planned activity in response to the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, including necessary delegation to officers and the suspension of meetings. As physical meetings could not take place safely before this report was agreed by Council, the recommendations of the report were followed in consultation with Group Leaders and the Chairman of Council due to the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. We do not accept your inference that the Town Council took too long to get organised, that is a matter of opinion, not fact.

Please note Freedom of Information requests need to be in writing, however I can confirm all decisions taken under delegated authority by the Chief Executive have been or are in the process of being reported back to the relevant Committee or Council meeting where they are ratified. These lists of delegated decisions have or will be included in agendas which are published on our website and available for all to view. We trust that this matter is now closed, as we consider that this latest question and all previous questions relating to the same matter have been answered.

2. Thank you for your public question at the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held on 15 July 2020.

At this meeting Councillors unanimously agreed to open all of Chippenham Town Councils 13 play areas during the week commencing 27 July 2020. We will now arrange the operational matters which are required to ensure the play areas will open safely at the agreed time. This will include daily sanitising of each play area and new signage to explain parental responsibilities for their children to use the play facilities safely.

DRAFT