**Minutes of Uppingham Town Council Extraordinary Council meeting,**

**held at Uppingham Town Hall on Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 7.00pm.**

Present, Cllrs Liz Clarke (Chair) David Ainslie, Trevor Colbourne, Lindsay Cooper, Pat Dalby, Christine Edwards, Mike Fish, Barry Hobbs, Godfrey Jennings, Peter Rees, Ron Simpson, Ray Sutton, Mark Shaw, Lindsay Cooper.

639/24 **Mayor’s Opening Remarks.**

The Mayor thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She said that it was an unusual situation in that we couldn’t call a normal Council Meeting in the absence of the Town Clerk and that was why an extraordinary meeting had been called instead using her powers as Chair of the Council. She spoke about the upcoming D-Day commemorations and thanked Cllr Fish for his research into this. She said that as soon as we were able to hold a formal Council Meeting this would be an agenda item. She also reported on the Annual Lent Fair coming to town next week and also upon the recent visit of the PCC Rupert Mathews to the Town Hall to formally mark the occasion of the installation of the Police Blue Light on the Beat Office. Finally, in the absence of any officers at the meeting it was proposed by Cllr Simpson and seconded by Cllr Edwards that Cllr Ainslie be asked to take the minutes of this meeting. **Proposed, seconded, and** **resolved unanimously.**

640/24 **To receive apologies for absence**.

There were no apologies for absence on the night but we were subsequently advised that Cllr Tom Johnson had indeed sent his apologies earlier in the day.

641/24 **Declarations of members’ interests and applications for dispensations**

Non-pecuniary declarations have previously been declared by:

Cllr Shaw – Dispensation for council term – Uppingham First, Uppingham Homes CLT and Beeches Residents Association.

Cllr Hobbs – Dispensation for council term – Uppingham Homes CLT

Cllr Colbourne - Dispensation for council term – Uppingham First

Cllr Ainslie - Dispensation for council term – Bloors Land

On this agenda non-pecuniary interests declared by Cllrs Simpson, Edwards, Shaw and Colbourne regarding Uppingham First and Cllrs Jennings, Fish, Dalby and Rees as unpaid volunteers for Late Night Shopping– all declarations related to agenda item 5.

642/24 **To consider the following resolution: “That, in view of the confidential nature of the following agenda items, the press and public be excluded from the meeting, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 section 1.”**

 Proposed by Cllr Rees, seconded by Cllr Edwards and resolved unanimously.

643/24 **To receive an update on an urgent staffing matter.**

The Mayor reported that a member of staff was signed off sick and was not likely to return to work for at least three weeks. She went on to say that Cllr Jennings had some matters that he wishes to bring to the attention of the councillors and that, as chair, she was going to allow that under this agenda item provided that staff confidentiality was respected.

 Cllr Simpson suggested that the Council send a letter and some flowers wishing the employee a speedy recovery. Cllr Jennings suggested that a card and flowers would be more appropriate. **This was formally proposed by Cllr Simpson, seconded by Cllr Shaw and resolved unanimously.**

 Cllr Jennings then said that there was quite a bit of concern about two complaints that had been made to the Council. One was from Step-in-Line and one from the co-ordinator of Late Night Shopping. His understanding was that the complaints were against the Council but he recognised that he was relatively new to the Council and its procedures. He also wanted to express his concern that an outside organisation had been corresponding with the complainant and this had left her very upset.

 Cllr Hobbs wanted to ask if this lady (the complainant) had received any response from the Council. Cllr Clarke replied that a response to say the complaint is being dealt with had been sent.

Cllr Hobbs then said that he was under the impression that the complaint from Step-in-Line had been resolved. Cllr Clarke replied that this was still an on-going issue and was being dealt with through the Staffing Committee and procedures.

Cllr Ainslie said that he wanted to remind all councillors that the Staffing Committee had no delegated powers and once they had completed their investigations etc any recommendations that they had would need to be brought back to Full Council.

Cllr Colbourne wanted to raise a question about the legal liability of both the Council and individual councillors in the event that any legal action was taken over these matters. Cllr Ainslie replied that in his belief the Council carried insurance that also covered individual councillors provided that they had not acted negligently.

Cllr Cooper asked if we had advised our insurers of the on-going situations and it was reported by Cllr Clarke that she was not aware that we had. All felt that this would be an appropriate thing to do (although no formal vote was taken on this).

Cllr Rees asked if having one of our councillors on the Board of LRALC affects the advice that organisation can give the Council. Cllr Simpson replied that Directors of LRALC are not allowed to get involved in operational decision making and advice giving by the organisation.

644/24 **To consider authorising the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to jointly take such action as is required to ensure the continuity of the day to day running of the council.**

 Cllr Rees proposed that such authority be given as drafted in the agenda item with the proviso that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor subsequently report all major decisions taken to the next Full Council meeting and that the power is revoked once a Locum Town Clerk is appointed. Seconded by Cllr Shaw. **Proposed, seconded, and** **resolved unanimously.**

**645/24 To consider the need to employ a locum Town Clerk for a period of 4 weeks to support council operations.**

Cllr Rees said that the Council should move heaven and earth to get Peter Leppard. He is the ideal person as he knows the council and the town.

 Cllr Ainslie reported that he had checked the availability of Peter Leppard and he was available for the period in question at a rate of £35 per hour.

 Cllr Simpson said that it was important to get a locum in place as it would help to ensure that other staff members were not put under pressure.

 Cllr Findlay discussed the costs of obtaining a locum and proposed that we offer the role to Peter Leppard for up to 24 hours per week, initially until 25th March 2024. This was seconded by Cllr Shaw and **resolved unanimously**.

 Cllr Fish proposed that in the event that Peter Leppard wasn’t available that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be authorised to appoint someone else. This was seconded by Cllr Rees and **resolved unanimously**.

The meeting closed at 19.40.

Signed…………………………………………………………………… Chair

Dated……………………………………………………………………