



WINCANTON TOWN COUNCIL

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Wincanton Town Council Public Statement - 2

9th November 2020

Dear Residents of Wincanton, colleagues and friends.

This is the second community information statement from your Town Council. Its purposes are to provide a response to questions verbally raised at our Town Council meetings and an ongoing dialogue with you on the numerous and exciting initiatives within Wincanton for the Future.

Let's start with the exciting projects under development in our Town. The first is a project within the Town Offer and Wincanton Ecological and Environmental Plan (WEEP). We are excited to share that a community fridge and larder is being sourced with 'free food'. This is produce from local shops which is close to its sell-by or Best Before dates. The funding for this project has come directly from our residents to support those in hardship in the Town and as part of our plan to be sustainable and our vision to reduce food waste and landfill. We are proud to say this is planned to be available very soon so look out for our press release and invitation for volunteers to help clean, organise and stock the fridge.

In recent months the Town Initiative Fund with approval from the Town Council has funded projects to support a youth group called The Hive, a Repair Café and environmental projects in the town green spaces. Again, we will share more on these and other projects as they are implemented.

Since March this year, the Covid pandemic has held many challenges for our residents and businesses. We have as a Town responded to this with our Town Offer, a service for all age groups which, supported by volunteers, has delivered food parcels, prescriptions and welfare calls. Although the Town Offer has reduced as we shape our new offer, the food bank in the community church remains and there are new opportunities for residents to be supported. We launched our Skatepark earlier this year and we are now working with charities, the police and experienced youth workers, exploring a holistic youth outreach group. This has the potential to grow into new learning opportunities and support for young people and adults. This year has been difficult for us all so it's important to work with young people to shape our offer.

Wincanton Town Council has experienced behaviour from some residents that is not

acceptable and has impacted on individuals and the Council as a whole. We recognise that residents may not have previously had experience of our historical and somewhat bureaucratic rules, policies and standing orders. However, discussing personnel issues in open Council meetings is just one topic that is confidential and in addition, the continual data breaches have saddened the Council. We are keen to improve our internal governance and systems so that we improve our productivity and with that, increase the value for money from our public funding and ultimately council taxes. Over the recent weeks Wincanton Town Council has received a number of questions within public participation which we now will provide a response to.

Responses to Public Questions

Question	Response
13 July 2020 Offer to Council as a mediator	Wincanton Town Council, Chairman and Deputy Chairman considered and respectfully declined three times prior to the 13 July 2020 council meeting, the offer to mediate. Council on the 13 th July 2020 declined the offer as it was felt the individual has not evidenced a qualification in mediation and is not unbiased or objective because of previous knowledge of members of council and the council staff.
27 July 2020 Why was the personnel committee dissolved?	Wincanton Town Council dissolved the personnel committee because the terms of reference were found to be out of date and in urgent need of amendment. This was in accordance with standing orders 4, d, xii. The council accessed advice and guidance from South West Councils, a professional Human Resources membership body. A range of policy documents including the terms of reference were reviewed and approved at Full Council to then reinstate the personnel committee and a complaints panel. The policies and the personnel terms of reference are available on http://www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk/council-legislation.html
Why was a councillor muted when she tried to bring up a complaint that had been made?	The councillor was muted due to concerns that the details within a complaint which are confidential to a member of staff were at risk of being shared in a public meeting. This would have been a breach of confidentiality of a member of staff and for the Councillor in question who was muted, a breach of the Member's Code of Conduct. Complaints against a Councillor/s are covered under the Code of Conduct Policy. Complaints, if they meet the Councillors Code of Conduct criteria, are investigated by the South Somerset District Council Monitoring Officer. Town/Parish Councils have no authority to investigate a complaint regarding a Councillor, only staff. Further information regarding this process is available on https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/compliments-comments-and-complaints/
Was the Locum Clerk pre-hired before the EGM?	A Locum Clerk had been identified, who held the qualifications, had experience of the role of a clerk and was invited to attend the meeting so that they could take the minutes if their hire was approved. If the Locum Clerk had not been approved, they would have been asked to leave

	<p>the meeting and a member of Council would have been asked to clerk the meeting instead.</p>
<p>Why is the council protecting the Mayor and potentially spending public money on legal fees?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council is a corporate body and has approved a number of policies one of which is Compliments, Complaints and Comments which is available on the Town Council website. http://www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk/</p> <p>5.2 g. In the event of a serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaint from a member of the public, the Council will consider taking legal advice before writing any letters to the complainant.</p>
<p>27 July 2020</p> <p>Will the council apologise to Councillors Greening and Thomas for mishandling the Christmas Light Bids?</p>	<p>The Town Council breached procedure under standing order 3, t, iii, v having been advised by staff. The advice given was not clear or explained to advise the Council.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council's view of the bids debated in the meeting was not affected by the procedural issue. However, one bid was then withdrawn due to social media activity thus reducing the Christmas Lights event to one school the 'blue' primary school.</p>
<p>Can we assume that in future correct procedures be followed?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council are committed to demonstrating they have adhered to our Standing Orders and Policies. Council are advised on these matters.</p> <p>Council have recognised that our Standing Orders, Policies and Procedures require a review and as such we are undertaking a Governance Review. The review is to include standing orders, policies and procedures. This will include a review of practice and process for staff and councillors.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council strive to follow correct procedure at all times.</p>
<p>27 July 2020</p> <p>Question about planning and Shatterwell planning application process and inclusion on the agenda for public engagement.</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council on this occasion did not include the planning application on the Town Council agenda and recognise it was included as a verbal item in the meeting and not good practice.</p> <p>The Town Council have investigated the error and as part of a review of planning processes and procedures a new planning committee has been established. The new committee will enable developers, residents and local businesses to discuss planning at the early stage, allow site visits and enable residents and businesses to discuss the planning application before going to Council.</p> <p>The terms of reference for this committee will be taken to Full Council for consideration and approval. Further training is being undertaken to ensure as a council we are in a position to respond to changes in planning procedures.</p> <p>Residents and Businesses should ensure comments are included on the District Council Planning site as the Town Council can only record comments and recommendations.</p>
<p>27 July 2020</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council has not previously had access to formal Occupational</p>

<p>What is the occupational health provision of the Town Council for its employees?</p>	<p>Health assessment for our staff.</p> <p>In July 2020, access to Occupational Health provision for its employees has been identified to implement as required on an ad hoc basis. Due to the small number of employees in the Town Council this is the most effective way to respond quickly to any requirement rather than a contract for an annual service. This will be part of our employment package for our current and future staff.</p>
<p>10 August 2020</p> <p>Do the town council have a policy relating to the bullying of employees?</p> <p>Will they release details to the public?</p> <p>Can the new policies also be released to the public?</p> <p>This includes Public Participation at Meetings</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council draw your attention to the Human Resources Policies available on our website and the Members Code of Conduct complaints on South Somerset District Council.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council have HR policies which are available on http://www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk/council-legislation.html</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council have available on our website current polices and those that are draft are taken to Full Council as developed. The most recent is the Absence Policy which will be taken to Full Council on the 9th November 2020. If there is a particular policy a member of the public wish to read and it is not on our website, please contact info@wincantontowncouncil.co.uk to request a copy.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council draw your attend to the Human Resources Policies and the Standing Orders 3, e, f, g, h, j, k, l and m, available on our website.</p> <p>This states members of the public can attend Public Participation, in accordance with standing order 3, e, f, g, h, j, k, l and m. Public Participation is for 3 minutes per person and no more than 20 minutes in total. Questions are addressed to Council and members of the public are not entitled to bully, verbally abuse or harass a Member of Council. When Public Participation is completed, members of the public are not to speak unless the Chair invites them to do so. The Chair is not required to respond, comments and questions can be noted and if appropriate a response is given in due course.</p>
<p>Why does the Mayor believe she has the right to make a statement as a resident at a meeting where no public participation took place?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council, is not aware of any reason why the Chairman cannot make a statement as a Councillor, Chairman and resident.</p> <p>To be elected as a Town Councillor you are required to be a resident in the Parish of Wincanton or live within 3 miles.</p> <p>Public Participation is not a requirement of Council and Council can chose for it not to be included or removed from the agenda. This is clearly stated in the Council Standing Orders under 3.</p>
<p>What is the Councils understanding of joint and several</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council is a corporate body.</p> <p>Council have taken advice from South West Council and its Insurers. It is understood that Council as a corporate body would be liable. However, the</p>

<p>liability?</p> <p>Do Councillors believe they would not be subject to joint and several liability and do they believe they are protected by their insurance policies?</p>	<p>advice provided to date is that liability, if proven, would be for the Council Insurers to respond at the earliest instance. It is understood the likelihood of liability for a Corporate body and its insurers is low or non-existent.</p> <p>Council is the Corporate body and if a case is proven would be liable. Whilst a Councillor can be named in a case but there is no evidence to support a claim against an individual councillor.</p>
<p>Does the Town Council have a plan for dealing with a potential lock-down and agree to meet with me as I have not heard from the town council in the last several months?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council has since March 2020 had a partnership agreement with The Balsam Centre, M.H.A Community South Somerset, Food Bank and referrals for parcels to the Town Hall.</p> <p>The Town offer was also supported by local businesses, donations from the public and an active volunteer network since March 2020. The Town Offer was published on the Town Council website, Facebook and the Wincanton Window amongst others.</p> <p>The Town Offer in partnership with Wincanton Health centre, the Police, Yeovil Job Centre, our Village Agent, CAB and local charities provided a support offer for our residents until lockdown was lifted.</p> <p>In September and in October the Town Council and partners completed a review of the Town Offer to include a Community Fridge and Larder to then prepare for the November to March 2021 Town Offer.</p> <p>The revised Town Offer has been released via social media, and will be discussed at Full Council on the 9th November. Details will be available on the Town Council website and also available through CAB, health centre and The Balsam Centre.</p> <p>The new Town Offer is a social offer which includes support for older residents, from the Community Church weekly food parcels and referrals, a community fridge and larder which will be launched in November 2020. Citizens Advice is a core aspect of the offer for wider support such as financial, welfare and food parcels. The local supermarkets are offering food share schemes, charitable donations and the village agent has offered fresh readymade meals.</p> <p>Further support to include a potential talking zoom to help reduce social isolation and loneliness, information on wider offers will be available in due course.</p>
<p>Questions from residents</p> <p>Can the council make a statement to the town clarifying the</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council have and will continue to support the cost of purchasing and the display of the poppies within the town with the local groups. This is the case for November 2020 and for the future working in partnership with local groups. Wincanton Town Council also lay a wreath for the remembrance, VJ day</p>

<p>council's position on the displaying of poppies?</p> <p>Can the Council confirm the decision to cut the sports ground funding?</p>	<p>and attend the Old Faithful on the 11-11 each year.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council have over many years through the annual grant application process supported the Sports Ground. This year discussion of the total precept meant a decision to reduce the Sports Ground funding from 15,000 to 10,000 paid over two instalments within the Grants Policy.</p> <p>Since 2016, an outstanding action for the Sports Ground was to move from a limited company incurring business rates of approx. £10,000 pa to be paid, has been outstanding. The Council made the representative of the Trustees aware at the precept meeting in December 2019 that the Council had limited resources and the grants fund is not appropriate to use to fund business rates but to provide services, activities and events for the town's residents. The first payment was released with a commitment to meet the requirements, provide assurance and meet the Grant Policy to release the second payment of £5.000k.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council have met with the Sports Ground Trustees and Operational management in October to discuss and agree the actions required to release the second payment. However, to reiterate, the Town Council do not have a formal agreement to fund the Sport Ground and it was discussed that although the Council agree the resource is welcome within the town it cannot agree to fund the Sports Ground above other charities or groups in the town. Therefore, grant applications will be considered annually, with clear aims and objectives for our town and its residents.</p>
<p>Has no connection to the private meeting with a property developer by the Chair?</p>	<p>This was recorded in a Public Meeting in the Town Hall chamber.</p> <p>In the role as Chair /Mayor it is appropriate to meet residents and businesses in the Town and outside of our community.</p> <p>In this instance this was an introductory meeting which was organised by the Town Hall and open to the Deputy Chairman who could not attend due to a work commitment. It was a productive and open conversation to invite a prominent employer in the Town to be part of the Stakeholder Group, Wincanton for the Future and Wincanton Ecological and Environmental Plan.</p> <p>Unfounded rumours and allegations for which there is no evidence do a disservice to our town and those who work to strengthen and build our community, economic prosperity and enable our town to thrive for residents.</p> <p>One key point to acknowledge is Wincanton Town Council do not own the Sports Ground or land.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council is forward focused with at its heart a commitment to build a thriving town for its residents who are welcome to voice and be heard in the Wincanton for the Future Plan, Wincanton Ecological Environmental Charter and a member of the South Somerset District Regeneration Plan for Wincanton.</p>

	<p>Those Councillors who have chosen to leave the Council have done so at a time of positive change for our town, its residents and businesses. We look forward to strengthening the Council with passionate and committed individuals dedicated to our Town and its vision for the future when we can hold a by-election in May 2021.</p>
<p>24 August 2020 Notification that due to resignation of councillor's council does not have the power of competence.</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council, has not enacted the Power of Competence although it can be enacted at any time, not just after the ordinary elections. The reason the GPC has not been adopted is because the council has never met the criteria of having a CiLCA qualified clerk.</p> <p>Section 137 enables the Town Council to act in response to grant funding for projects such as the Good Stuff Fund which is part of our Grants Policy.</p>
<p>14 September 2020 Can the Council update residents on the progress of organising the Town Meeting which has been requested?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council have discussed the Town Meeting in Full Council and responded as follows:</p> <p>'We refer to your letter dated 26th August 2020.</p> <p>Your request to hold a Town Meeting was discussed by Wincanton Town Council at their Full Council Meeting held on Monday 28th September 2020. The reply to this letter was made available to you on the 12 October 2020 and a further reply 26 October 2020.</p> <p>Under Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, it is the requirement of a Council to fund the venue for the meeting if held in person or via ZOOM.</p> <p>If you wish to use the Town Council Chamber for the Town Meeting this will require a COVID 19 risk assessment to take place as the Chamber is not currently being used for meetings. The assessment will be required to be undertaken by Council and any necessary actions completed prior to securing the venue for a gathering, to ensure it complies with national policy.</p> <p>Once you have secured the date and if you wish to use the Town Hall Chamber a risk assessment will be undertaken and the named resident organising the meeting will be made aware of the maximum number of attendees and any requirements they need to undertake as the host for those attending the meeting.</p> <p>An outside venue would require the members of the public who have requested the Town Meeting to book the venue and the request for payment would be taken</p>

to Full Council for authorisation.

The Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 states that Council ask the Clerk if they wish to take the minutes of the Town Meeting. Should the Clerk decide that they do not wish to participate in the meeting; the residents who have requested the Town Meeting must provide their own minute taker.

In your letter dated the 19 October 2020 two questions were posed and our response to these is

1. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman are at this time unable to confirm their attendance and await confirmation from the residents who are organising the Town Meeting of the date and venue. It states in the LGA Act 1972, if the Chairman or Deputy Chairman do not attend, the residents vote in the meeting to decide who will chair the meeting.
2. The LGA Act 1972 states that if councillors with the exception of the Chairman or Deputy Chairman wish to attend, they do so as residents.

Wincanton Town Council propose to budget in the 2021/22 precept to meet any expected spend that will have a direct impact on the taxes for our residents in 2021/22. The costs for the By-Election, Town Meeting and any Poll will be funded outside of reserves.

The budget will be proposed and, if supported by Councillors, fund the elections in 2021/22. The approximate cost of these, suggested by South Somerset District Council, is approx. £3,000 - £4,000. The costs for a Poll if agreed in the Town Meeting is suggested as up to £2,000 (subject to South Somerset District Council approval). We will also include the cost for an external venue or to ensure the Town Council Chamber complies with National Policy or the cost for a ZOOM meeting.

Residents should note the Poll is non-binding on the Town Council, if indeed it is supported by the District Council to take place. The By-Election is for six vacancies; as you are aware, the Town Council are unable to co-opt in the 2020/21 year.

Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England - statutory annual accounts and governance statements.

The process to sign the AGAR, requires an internal audit and external audit. The external audit does not happen until the AGAR has been approved by council and submitted to the external auditor.

However, due to comments recorded by the external auditor for 18/19 AGAR, this required investigation and to be resolved before completing the 19/20 AGAR. The Internal auditor and External Auditor were appointed for 19/20. The Internal

What is the process on signing off the AGAR?

<p>Why are the Council being asked to sign the Nolan Principles again when they have already done so and under what authority have, they been asked to do this?</p>	<p>Auditor has been replaced to undertake the 19/20 AGAR. Since the required submission date, the Council requested and secured an extension while the issues related to 18/19 and 19/20 were investigated. The final extension was the 9th November 2020. Somerset Association of Local Councils were made aware of the issues and actions as a council we are taking to resolve and submit the AGAR report for approval 18/19 and 19/20.</p> <p>Due to issues with completing the Internal Audit, the 9th November 2020 deadline will not be achieved. The Town Council has made the External Auditor and Somerset Association of Local Councils aware. This is a serious matter; however, we are unable to submit a section 1 and 2 for approval. A further motion is being taken to Full Council on the 9th November to appoint a specialist to investigate the reasons for the discrepancies. Further information will be shared in due course</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council and its Councillors have agreed and prepared the Nolan Principles statement. This was to demonstrate our commitment and belief in the principles that underpin public office as individuals elected to service our community and to act in the manner befitting the role.</p>
<p>Have my complaints been through the complaints committee?</p> <p>The letter I received was signed by all Councillors.</p> <p>Did all councillors agree the reply?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council draw your attention to the Complaints Policy for members of staff and the Members Code of Conduct held by South Somerset District Council. The complaints submitted were dealt with in accordance with our internal governance for complaints.</p> <p>Complaints against a councillor are required to be submitted to South Somerset District Council, Monitoring Officer. Complaints against a Councillor are not for a Town Council to investigate.</p> <p>Complaints submitted to Council in relation to a Councillor were responded to and were submitted to the Monitoring Officer This situation is dealt with in accordance with our Standing Orders and Policies. No complaints about Councillors go to our Personnel Committee or Complaints Panel this is only for staff.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council responded to each complaint or accusation in accordance with our internal policies and in a pragmatic way. Responses to Complaints or other statements are agreed by Council such as the Public Statement.</p> <p>Complaints are within the Clerk's role and nominated Councillors to respond in a timely manner. Responses are checked and authorised by a minimum of 5 Councillors prior to releasing a response.</p>

<p>Comments about accusations of Vagg accepting gifts.</p> <p>Are serving Councillors required to get the Mayors permission to take interest in subjects and activities that they want to be involved in?</p> <p>Will council make a public statement about what new interests new councillors are allowed to be involved in?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council have asked that you provide the evidence to support the accusations you have made as Councillor Vagg has not accepted gifts of more than £25 each in value nor in recognition of her role as Councillor. If you are able to provide such evidence, the Council will investigate further.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council's response to this statement is that Councillors have many interests and if there is a conflict with the declaration of interests this would be declared in a Full Council Meeting or annually.</p> <p>Note the statement above</p>
<p>Have the town council considered that there was a formal legislated agreement in 2007 where SSDC took responsibility for supporting the Sports Centre and Wincanton Town Council would be obligated to support the Sports Ground?</p> <p>Did the Balsam Centre have to provide accounts, bank statements etc before they got their grant?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council has no formal agreement in place. This has been the case since the one-year transitional payment between the District Council who supported the Sports Ground. The Town Council has not entered into a legal agreement with the Sports Ground to provide regular funding. The funding is awarded from the annual grant fund of approx. £30k and the Sports Ground is considered alongside all other organisations, charities and groups.</p> <p>Sometimes, the funding is reduced, not supported or if awarded at the funding request can be divided into two payments and release of the funds may be subject to delivery of the agreed objectives.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council, draw your attention to our Grants Policy and application process available on the Town Council website. Each application for Grant Funding is required to submit papers as denoted on the grant application form. The Clerk provides assurance all required evidence has been submitted when the Grant Funds are discussed in precept.</p>

<p>Does seconding a motion when you have not read the documentation make sense?</p>	<p>The Town Council confirm at the start of each meeting receipt of the papers and with that Councillors prepare for the meeting which includes reading the papers.</p>
<p>28 September 2020</p> <p>Chasing answers to previous questions.</p> <p>Can the council update the residents about the current progress of the Clerk?</p> <p>How can residents make contact with Council?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council, are compiling responses to the numerous questions posed and these will be responded to in this statement.</p> <p>It is inappropriate to comment on a member of staff and this would be a breach of confidentiality.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council can be contacted through our website, can telephone or write to the Council and if they wish, attend and pose questions in Public Participation in accordance with our standing orders. The Town Council also provide opportunities for resident and businesses to attend engagement events and our nominated councillors also attend meetings in the town where questions can be brought back to council for discussion</p>
<p>How are current financial decisions being made and can they be correct in the absence of the Responsible Financial Officer and do those decisions fit with policies?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council are taking advice regarding financial decisions to ensure we comply with financial governance, policies and procedures.</p> <p>To meet our requirements, Wincanton Town Council through the personnel committee have appointed an experienced locum clerk and an accountant for the management of the budgets.</p>
<p>The recent statement signed by all Councillors was not discussed at full council therefore how can it meet standing orders requirements?</p>	<p>The statement was prepared by Councillors and agreed before it was published.</p> <p>The statement was technically agreed by Council and did go to Council at the next meeting. The Town Council have agreed in Full Council to prepare and publish statements as appropriate and going forward these will be shared if on headed paper through Full Council.</p>

<p>Have you spoken to your council insurance company and their legal team to avoid having to take legal advice from other bodies at the public expense?</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council has spoken to its insurers and does so regularly. Our insurers provide advice, guidance and will not fund anything that is not included in our policy. In the event of a potential claim, our insurers will respond on the matter</p> <p>In addition, funding has been earmarked to access legal advice in accordance with our Human Resources Policy such as complaints.</p> <p>Other correspondence with bodies we are members of or purchase services through is considered to be of a confidential nature and therefore will not be disclosed.</p>
<p>12 October 2020</p> <p>When will previous questions I have raised be answered?</p> <p>Has the council considered that if the councillor elections in May will be on the same day as the County Council elections, there will be no cost to the Council?</p>	<p>This is the second statement to the public acknowledging the questions raised and responses</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council have taken advice and as such will ensure in the precept discussions that the cost of the election for the 6 vacancies will be included in the 2021/22 council taxes.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council propose to budget in the 2021/22 precept to meet any expected spend that will have a direct impact on the taxes for our residents in 2021/22. The costs for the By-Election, Town Meeting and any Poll will be funded outside of reserves.</p> <p>The budget will be proposed and, if supported by Councillors, will fund the elections in 2021/22. The approximate cost of these suggested by South Somerset District Council is approx. £3,000 - £4,000. The costs for a Poll if agreed in the Town Meeting is suggested as up to £2,000 (subject to South Somerset District Council approval). We will also include the cost for an external venue or to ensure the Town Council Chamber complies with National Policy or the cost for a ZOOM meeting.</p> <p>Residents should note the Poll is non-binding on the Town Council, if indeed it is supported by the District Council to take place. The By-Election is for six vacancies as you are aware, the Town Council are unable to co-opt in the 2020/21 year.</p>
<p>Does the Council intend to organise a Town Meeting? If we do organise</p>	<p>In your letter dated the 19 October 2020 two questions were posed and our response to these are</p> <p>1. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman are at this time unable to confirm their attendance and await confirmation from the residents who are organising the</p>

<p>it, where do you see the costs arising?</p>	<p>Town Meeting of the date and venue. It states in the LGA Act 1972, if the Chairman or Deputy Chairman do not attend, the residents vote in the meeting to decide who will chair the meeting.</p> <p>2. The LGA Act 1972 states that if councillors with the exception of the Chairman or Deputy Chairman wish to attend, they do so as residents.</p> <p>If you wish to use the Town Council Chamber for the Town Meeting this will require a COVID 19 risk assessment to take place as the Chamber is not currently being used for meetings. The assessment will be required to be completed by Council and any necessary actions completed prior to securing the venue for a gathering, to ensure it complies with national policy.</p> <p>Once you have secured the date and if you wish to use the Town Hall Chamber a risk assessment will be undertaken and the named resident organising the meeting will be made aware of the maximum number of attendees and any requirements they are required to meet as the host for those attending the meeting. An outside venue would require the members of the public who have requested the Town Meeting to book the venue and the request for payment would be taken to Full Council for authorisation.</p> <p>The Local Government Act (LGA) 1972 states that Council ask the Clerk if they wish to take the minutes of the Town Meeting. Should the Clerk decide that they do not wish to participate in the meeting; the residents who have requested the Town Meeting must provide their own minute taker.</p>
<p>Is the council trying to avoid having a town meeting?</p>	<p>Under Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12, it is the requirement of a Council to fund the venue for the meeting if held in person or via ZOOM</p>
<p>Is being in the Bear Inn a good enough reason to not attend a council meeting?</p> <p>How can the person who wasn't at meeting propose that minutes be accepted?</p> <p>Have COVID risk assessments been carried out and can these be shared?</p>	<p>Councillors are summoned to attend meetings however the Councillor in question planned to attend and was not in the Bear Inn but due to recent ill health did not attend the meeting and submitted an apology to Council.</p> <p>Councillors can access the Full Council Meeting on YOUTUBE and thus be prepared for the subsequent meeting.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council have completed a COVID risk assessment of the Community Office and Council Chamber. The results have been reported to Full Council on the 26 October 2020.</p>

<p>Is the Council aware that the Chair and Councillor Smith broke into a filing cabinet at the Town Hall containing personnel files?</p> <p>Is the Council aware that in the course of the week, various residents and some ex-councillors had their emails and face book pages hacked and an investigation on one of the laptops, showed a `rule` re-routing information to an email address for Wincanton Window.</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council, refute these allegations and ask that evidence to support these baseless accusations is provided to Council. Once in receipt of the evidence the Council will access legal advice to respond to this matter and if necessary if criminal engage the Police. If this is a malicious allegation then the legal advice will be to respond to the complainant.</p> <p>This is in accordance with our HR Policies available on the Town Council website.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council, refute these allegations and ask that evidence to support these baseless accusations is provided to Council.</p> <p>Once the Council is in receipt of the evidence to support this allegation, legal advice will be sought and an investigation undertaken.</p>
<p>On what authority did Councillor Smith change any passwords at the Town Hall?</p> <p>Where was this agreed as no minute of this can be found?</p> <p>There is a record that Councillor</p>	<p>Councillor Smith provides support to the council in the management of the website and systems within the Council. The business intelligence held on the computers is owned by the Town Council, not staff. To enable the Town Council to provide a service, it is entirely responsible for a person who supports the Council and its IT systems to access the systems.</p> <p>When we prepare a business continuity plan, which is not currently in place, access to the Town Council's business intelligence and systems will be included.</p> <p>Council agreed a rota to ensure the office was open and to enable the Council business to continue. A Business Continuity Plan was not available to Council so an agreement to meet the business need to access the Town Council systems was put into place. Messages were recorded and emails flagged to ensure on a daily basis that the work of the town hall continued.</p> <p>Councillor Smith gives his time freely to support the Council and is reimbursed for the annual charge of the website domain name.</p>

<p>Smith is paid £60 per year as an annual fee for this work in Council IT?</p>	<p>The £60/year is a standard web hosting package, which includes the hosting of the website and renewal of the domain name. The “website domain name” costs £5/year, and it is included in the £60 hosting package. In addition to this, and invoiced on separate annual schedules, three premium mailboxes which cost; around £15/year each.</p> <p>All activities undertaken by Councillor Smith that are not related specifically to the web hosting service (thus not including maintenance, support and operation of the site itself), email hosting or domain name renewal, are voluntary and his time freely given.</p> <p>Wincanton Town Council are undertaking a review of its internal systems and process to improve its productivity. We will include a review of the support requirements for the staff as part of this review and actions that require financial cost will be secured in the administration budget for 21/22</p>
<p>Is the Council confident that its budget is being managed prudently given that funding of skate park and with the effect of COVID on peoples jobs the amount of precept received will go down.</p>	<p>Wincanton Town Council in its role to deliver services is doing so, recognising the importance of ensuring value for money, delivering our cemetery, management of green spaces and allotments at the Sports Ground and considers costs through benchmarking with other Town/Parishes. This year has been challenging for all, and as such we have moved to mobilise a Town Offer, support grants that recognise our residents needs and those that are our future.</p> <p>The role of a Town Council, District and County Council is hugely different and as part of the three-tier system we have a role to provide higher levels of support in association with Government and the Public Sector. Those lower wages earners or those on state support will not meet the threshold for paying council taxes; this has always been a reality. In December and in January 2021 as a Town Council we will be better sighted on the Government’s requirements and support, so what is important at a local level is we spend wisely and for the benefit of Wincanton and its residents of all ages.</p> <p>The Town Council, are acutely aware of improving productivity and efficiency to make every penny spent count and ensure that as national and county initiatives emerge, we, if appropriate to do so, take action.</p> <p>The Skate Park loan was consulted upon within the Town Council and residents. The records of the discussion, costs and timescales were minuted. The loan was supported by a grant secured reducing the loan, noted in the Council Minutes.</p> <p>COVID and the impact of this year and future years, should be seen as an opportunity to think and do things differently. Prevention and working with district, county and national bodies is fundamental to meet the need of those in hardship. It is important to note that those in hardship that qualify will not be impacted by taxes and receive support for them and their families.</p> <p>Our annual council taxes, are not just the Town but it also funds the public sector we all use such as the fire service, refuse collections, hospitals and police and more. Some of these key services are under pressure and the role of town and parish councils is to use our money as effectively, prudently as possible and secure value for money. Wincanton Town Council is focused on our role to</p>

support residents and businesses but it is not just us. In 2020 Wincanton Town Council has not been able to appoint 6 Councillors through a Co-option and instead it has to fund a by-election. The cost of this would have been best used to fund a local charity or service that benefits our town and residents of all ages.

Councillors Shelbourn Barrow, Tudgay, Greening, Power, Ralph, Smith, Thomas, Vagg and Walters.