

**HORWICH TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions using online conferencing technology on Thursday 18 March 2021 commencing at 7.15 pm.

**PRESENT** Councillors: G. Stone (in the Chair), M. Baines, M. Brady, J. Bostocksmith, S. Burke, S. Chadwick, A. Coward, S. Denton, D. Grant, S. Rock, C. Rotheram, P. Wright.  
Deputy Town Clerk, C. Morris.  
Councillor R. Silvester, Ward Councillor Horwich North East  
David Johnston, Geographical Officer – Greater Manchester Police  
4 Members of the public.

**TO SUBMIT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ACCEPT THE REASONS:**

TC 3958 Resolved to accept apologies from Councillor Aldcroft for lateness.

**TO REMIND MEMBERS TO MAKE A DECLARATION CONCERNING ANY MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE MEETING OF WHICH THEY HAVE AN INTEREST:**

TC 3959 None.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT MAY PUT QUESTIONS OR MAKE OBSERVATIONS REGARDING MATTERS IN RELATION TO WHICH THE COUNCIL HAS POWERS OR DUTIES OR WHICH AFFECT THE PARISH. MAXIMUM PERIOD 15 MINUTES:**

TC 3960 Resolved to move out of committee to allow a member of the public to speak.

David Johnston, Geographical Officer from GMP stated that as he had not received any emails from members referencing any specific issues so instead he would inform the Council of two current police operations including the COVID-19 roadmap.

David highlighted a bespoke operation called Operation Portman which focused on road safety around the Bolton area. Officers launched the operation in December 2020 in response to the number of serious road incidents in the Borough. David was made strategic lead in September 2020 as there was an extremely high number of fatalities which had risen more than 80% than in previous years. To address this, Operation Portman was created which utilised resources and placed a bid to obtain specialist support such as road policing unit, tactical vehicle interception unit and officers from the safer transport team. There were a planned number of days which were successful with an excess of over 700 to 800 speeding offences identified during that period of which people would have been prosecuted. The positive aspect to this was that there had not been another fatal road traffic collision or a pedestrian killed since November. There has since been a 200% decrease in the number of fatalities. Operation Portman will be a long-term commitment which

aims to engage with all road users to make roads safer as it has been integrated into the everyday policing with 9 officers who are trained to use enforcement equipment. David wanted to reassure the public that it was a long-term vision in order to maintain safer roads.

Councillor Grant asked about the accident rate increasing and whether that was due to other criminal behaviour such as intoxication, stolen vehicles or due to fewer cars on the road or some people speeding.

David said data from January 2020, which was prior to lockdown, and data from the first lockdown, showed that the borough was above average. There were people within the community or coming into the community who drove faster than other areas although its unknown why. There has been a combination of drink related offences and other factors which have contributed to the accident rate and there have been tragic ones which have ended in a fatality due to speeding dangerously.

A member raised the point that in the early part of lockdown, there had been an increase in speeding activity which had been reported but despite numerous attempts contacting 101 and emailing, no action appeared to have been taken.

David informed members that in relation to drug dealing, sadly it will not be seen what is happening, as it was a longer-term objective gathering information into intelligence systems and a firewall would need to be created to protect the members of public providing the information. Also, the force would need to reach a threshold whereby a warrant could be obtained for an individual who had been identified, or be able to put an operation in place to target a specific area in order to catch them in the act. This is something that is part of everyday policing.

David informed members that the way policing has changed along with its priorities. The police are not always able to put the resources in, often due to other competing priorities but he encouraged members of public to continue to report crime and give information as there are a number of things the information could be classified as in regards to similar offences and warrants which have been obtained via this method.

David stated that he was disheartened to hear of dissatisfaction felt by members of the public when they have provided the police with information and have not seen a result from it due to other priorities, which was sometimes the case. He also noted that the reporting mechanisms are not great but advised members in the first instance to pick up the phone instead of reporting online. It is still work in progress resolving the reporting mechanism, but informed members

that the public reported information via crime stoppers. There was a particular issue with sending emails to the area's officer, as sometimes there is not necessarily a firewall put in place to protect the informant so it needs to go through a system. If there were any barriers in place and sending persistent emails regarding a specific issue then the advice was to contact David directly to see what can be done to move things through the system and whether it is included in the intelligence. This has been helpful in some cases as over the past 3-4 weeks there had been an increase in burglaries around the Horwich and Westhoughton area which had seen an operation linking with Lancashire Constabulary and colleagues at Wigan who had been experiencing the same problems. They decided to work in a co-ordinated way to try and target the activity and this had led to a significant reduction in the incidents. Over the past four weeks, there had been two burglar related crimes reported and although this is two too many, is certainly significantly lower than previous statistics. There will be plain clothed officers or officers from other units being dispatched to certain areas which, while displacing the crimes sadly, moves it elsewhere.

David spoke about how he tactically used the dispersal orders in the Horwich area after using intelligence and effective policing to minimise the problem before it exasperates.

Councillor Chadwick asked about general policing from a personal perspective as a victim of crime. He spoke about how Andy Burnham has stated that some crimes had been closed without being investigated by the GMP and that had seemed to be the same for himself, despite the incident being picked up on CCTV and the perpetrator was known. He asked what reassurance could the police give to others in a similar position when individuals are being asked to report crimes but then there no investigation or an outcome which then leads to a loss of confidence in the police.

David said when he and his officers go to work, there is a level of expectation of how they work and he had not witnessed the deep-rooted issues that had been reported after the Inspectorate had come into GMP. GMP had apologised and the Chief had stood down as a result of GMP being placed into special measures. There is currently work ongoing, to try and improve the way the GMP operates as a number of victims have been let down as a result of previous practices. Perhaps the justification was due to high demand and other competing priorities. From a personal perspective, there are routes that can be followed if a person is not happy with the policing. An individual has the right to ask for their crime to be reviewed by an Inspector and there is a complaints' process. David hoped it would not grow to that level and would not like to observe that within his team, as he felt that if somebody in the community had been let down, that they would go directly to him to try and resolve the issue. David was aware that

things are not always obtained correctly and sadly when issues are heavily politically advertised and get out into the community, it can defeat some of the hard work that officers have done and lead to a reduction in the confidence that GMP try and inspire in the community. Once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, it will be the officer's role to try and communicate with the public on what the officers are doing and what can be done to make the place better. The current method uses social media.

Councillor Rotheram and Councillor Burke joined the meeting at this point.

Councillor Chadwick had been contacted by residents to report anti-social behaviour and vandalism to their vehicles which resulted in him advising them to refer the matter to the police. The residents asked whether they should install CCTV but CCTV is only deemed useful if it has captured the crime and is obtained by police. Councillor Chadwick asked was it recommended to install CCTV, use it and then report the incident to the police.

David confirmed that the public were encouraged 100% to report crimes to the police and that improvements were being made across the district. If people were not confident, they would not report crimes which would then lead to a vicious cycle, as if it is not reported, it is not known about and if not known about then it continues. This then leads to a reduction in the public's level of confidence in the police. If there was a spate of crime in one hotspot then police would try their best to minimise the incidents and identify the offenders.

Councillor Rock informed members he had previously sat on Greater Manchester Police Authority and had organised trips for Councillors to be present on weekend police patrols and also to the call centres and this had been an eye opener as to what the police have to deal with. Councillor Rock suggested that it may be useful once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, for Councillors to attend something similar. Councillor Rock also raised the point that officers should acknowledge information emailed to them from residents. David agreed and said he personally responds back to communication, including actions that would be taken and being as transparent as can be, as he reiterated it had been highlighted on how the force had let people down and not been communicative on where they were up to, including results of specific cases. It all comes under the big umbrella of communication, how this could be improved and whether individual officers maintain that level and that if they are on leave that their email response includes other contact information, which is down to how effectively individual teams are managed. David was aware that if one individual was lacking on communication this would cause dissatisfaction with how the public views policing. David stressed the importance of correct foundations in terms of how to deal with the public, including administration.

David agreed about how Councillors could observe how officers engage with the public and would look into how this could be facilitated.

David informed members that police were tackling anti-social behaviour in the borough as part of Operation Arden, along with dedicated teams identifying hotspots and putting on additional patrols including utilising special constable colleagues to assist. He also included the COVID-19 roadmap which would be an additional burden on the force as it would see a significant increase in anti-social behaviour and demand additional resources. This was currently being looked into at force and local level, with resources being required on two key days

Councillor Stone asked how the Council can help GMP in order to help the community and felt more communication was required and understood that surgeries had been held but had been quite sporadic. This had proved difficult with Covid-19 restrictions but suggested that perhaps video conferencing could be used for the police to interact with the Council in order to attend meetings. Councillor Stone expressed the view that it needed to be a two-way process so that the Council could help make life better for Horwich residents. He thanked David for attending and stated that continual liaising between the Council and police would be beneficial.

David informed members of his experience when he worked in neighbourhood policing in Wigan where police surgeries were very poorly attended, and a lot of time and resources had gone into setting these up. He suggested asking the community what would they like to see, whether it was a surgery or a differing format where they could feed information, as it is a waste of resources if an officer is sitting for 2-3 hours in the same locality with only a couple of people attending. David proposed that if the council engaged with the community and was aware of an event where a large number of the public were in attendance then he would personally attend to communicate with them. It was felt that the council and police should have a proactive partnership to engage with the community, to ask what they would like as perhaps there were alternative solutions on how police could collaborate with the public.

In response to a further query, David stated that Bolton has always been high in regards to organised crime. It was previously law enforcing before safeguarding but this has since been addressed and, safeguarding of individuals has been prioritising over law enforcing. Horwich was in a better position in terms of crimes than other areas within Bolton. How organised crime was addressed could not be answered, but requires a continual build up of intelligence. It was a difficult balance on whether organised crime occurring on the street took priority over vulnerable members of the public being

objectified within organised crime.

Resolved to move back into committee.

Members thanked David Johnston for attending the meeting and hoped that regular communication would continue.

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2021:

TC 3961 Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on 18 February 2021.

TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2021:

TC 3962 Resolved to note the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 18 February 2021.

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY GROUPS SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 MARCH 2021:

TC 3963 Resolved to approve the minutes and recommendations of the Grants to Voluntary Groups Sub-Committee held on 9 March 2021.

TO APPROVE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT AS PRESENTED:

TC 3964 Resolved to approve the accounts for payment as and amounting to £7,575.59 as follows:

G. Stone (Re-imburement for 1x monthly Zoom Standard Pro subscription)	£14.39
Information Commissioners Office -Direct debit (Renewal of annual data Protection fee)	£35.00
<u>LGA 1972 s142</u> C. Hutchinson - (Renewal of annual cPanel starter for <a href="http://www.horwich.gov.uk">www.horwich.gov.uk</a> for 1 year from Namesco Ltd)	£107.99
HR Solutions – direct debit (HR retainer-March 2021)	£177.60
Nationwide Capital Finance (Quarterly rental for Xerox C450 copier)	£187.36
<u>LGA 1977 s142</u> Gary Taylor	£210.00

(Website updates to 31/08/21)

Tameside MBC - GMPF (Pension contributions March 2021)	£1,408.62
Authorised out of Committee: HM Revenue and Customs (PAYE tax month 11)	£1,964.26
<u>LGA 1972 s137</u> St Mary's RC Primary School	£500.00
Horwich Ride Social	£378.00
Rivington Heritage Trust	£448.49
Bolton Community First Responders	£300.00
Lever Park Allotment Society	£150.00
Over 50s Lads' Club	£250.00
Stocks Park Residents' Association	£143.88
Horwich Bowling Club	£500.00
Horwich RMI Harriers & Athletics Club	£300.00
Bolton Hot Wheels Cycling Club	£500.00

TO CONFIRM THE DATE FOR THE NEXT MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL  
AS 22 APRIL 2021:

TC 3965 Resolved to confirm the date of the next meeting of the Town  
Council as 22 April 2021.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Chairperson..... Date.....

