

MINUTES of a meeting of the ANNUAL COUNCIL held by MS Teams Live Event on TUESDAY, 23 JUNE 2020

Present: Councillor J Bridges (Chairman)

Councillors V Richichi, E G C Allman, R Ashman, R D Bayliss, C C Benfield, D Bigby, A S Black, R Blunt, R Boam, A J Bridgen, R Canny, J Clarke, D Everitt, T Eynon, M French, J Geary, L A Gillard, S Gillard, T Gillard, D Harrison, B Harrison-Rushton, M D Hay, G Hault, J Hault, R Johnson, J Legrys, K Merrie MBE, N J Rushton, A C Saffell, C A Sewell, S Sheahan, N Smith, J Windram, A C Woodman and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mrs B Smith, Mrs T Bingham, Mrs M Long, Miss E Warhurst, Mrs C Hammond and Mr T Delaney

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Tebbutt.

### **2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor C Benfield declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10.2 – Motions, as the Vice Chairman of the campaign to re-open the Ivanhoe Line.

Councillor D Bigby declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10.2 – Motions, as a supporting member of the campaign to re-open the Ivanhoe Line.

Councillor T Eynon declared non-pecuniary interests in item 10.2 – Motions, as a supporting member of the campaign to re-open the Ivanhoe Line and item 14 - Appointment of Representatives on Community Bodies, as an LCC appointed member to the Bardon Quarry Liaison Committee.

Councillor J Geary declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10.1 – Motions, as a qualified pyro-technician with experience in fireworks and firework displays.

Councillor S Sheahan declared non-pecuniary interests in item 10.2 – Motions, as a member of Leicestershire County Council, and item 14 – Appointment of Representatives on Community Bodies, as an LCC appointed member to the Redbank Liaison Committee and the New Albion Liaison Committee.

### **3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor J Bridges said a few words regarding his year as Chairman, noting that it had been a very strange year, especially the past few months. He took the opportunity to thank all staff for their support, with a special mention to the Democratic Services Team who had guided him through his term of office. He offered a special thank you to Councillor V Richichi for all his support and due to the Chairman's work commitments, stepping in at the last minute to cover many engagements. He noted that Councillor V Richichi had gone above and beyond the call of duty. Councillor J Bridges then took the opportunity to thank all the residents of North West Leicestershire who had come together as a community during the unprecedented situation and added that if the district continued to pull together everyone would get through the times ahead.

Nominations were sought for the Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt that Councillor V Richichi be appointed as Chairman of the Council for 2020/21.

Chairman's initials

The motion was seconded by Councillor R Ashman.

Upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor V Richichi be appointed Chairman of the Council for 2020/21.

Councillor V Richichi then took the Chair.

#### **4. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt that Councillor J Hoult be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Council for 2020/21.

The motion was seconded by Councillor R Ashman and

Upon being put to the vote it was subsequently

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor J Hoult be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Council for 2020/21.

Councillor J Hoult stated that he was very proud to be elected Deputy Chairman and he would carry out the role as best he could.

#### **5. APPOINTMENT OF LEADER**

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard that Councillor R Blunt be appointed as Leader of the Council for 2020/21.

The motion was seconded by Councillor K Merrie and

Upon being put to the vote it was subsequently

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R Blunt be appointed as the Leader of the Council for 2020/21.

Councillor R Blunt thanked Members for electing him to the role, which he took incredibly seriously and stated that there was a huge amount of work to be done. He pledged that he would do his very best for the people of North West Leicestershire.

#### **6. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank Councillor J Bridges for his kind words and stated that he had enjoyed every minute when supporting him. He thanked Members for appointing him as Chairman for the second time, which was a great pleasure. He noted that he would no longer be chairing the Audit & Governance Committee, which he was disappointed to be stepping away from. He highlighted the dedication of the Finance Team and all of the extra work that they had carried out over the past months to keep the Council going.

#### **7. LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R Blunt announced the appointments and delegations of executive functions for the forthcoming municipal year as follows:

Chairman's initials

Leader – Councillor Richard Blunt

Deputy Leader and Planning and Infrastructure Portfolio – Councillor Robert Ashman

Community Services Portfolio – Councillor Andrew Woodman

Corporate Portfolio – Councillor Nick Rushton

Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio – Councillor Roger Bayliss

Business and Regeneration Portfolio holder – Councillor Tony Gillard

As in previous years, the Executive responsibilities were to be delegated to the Cabinet to take decisions collectively.

He advised that in March he had taken the decision to delegate powers to Portfolio Holders to make individual urgent decisions during the COVID-19 period that allowed the Council to function and that, now the Council was in the recovery phase, the powers would be revoked with immediate effect.

He stated that the past twelve weeks had been unprecedented and he was extremely proud of the way the Council had responded to the situation. He highlighted that a number of services had been delivered remotely, critical help provided where needed and new services, such as the community hubs had been introduced. He noted that the Council had worked with volunteers to help provide support to the most vulnerable and those actions had helped many people to deal with self-isolation. He recognised further help the Council had provided such as support to individuals from entering financial hardship, insuring homes for those in need and working in partnership with colleagues across the County.

He informed Members that the community support network had help co-ordinate more than 500 volunteers and many amazing acts of kindness had been shown. He acknowledged the real community spirit that had not been seen in this lifetime and that many had risen to the challenge across the district, and plans were being put in place to recognise many of those local heroes.

He thanked staff and councillors for their dedication and hard work. He advised that 95% of the Government business grant had been delivered so far and that 250 applications had been received in relation to the discretionary grant scheme. He noted that there was still lots more to be done in relation to economic uncertainty but the Council was determined to play a key role in revitalising the local economy.

Councillor R Blunt acknowledged the loss of members of the community, with many families mourning their lost ones, and that it would take time for communities to recover. He advised that the Council would be there to support were it could.

Looking forward, he stated that the Council would need to focus on support to the economy and communities as they recovered from the past three months and that it would be a difficult road ahead. He advised the authority's regeneration plans remained key in supporting the high streets to grow again and it would work closer with businesses. He informed Members that the business case for the Future High Streets Fund bid had been submitted the week before and he thanked all who had contributed to the robust submission, with the outcome being announced in the autumn. He credited the Council

and community for what they had achieved in a short space of time and offered his thanks to the Chief Executive for her professional behaviour during the situation.

Councillor S Sheahan echoed the comments of the Leader in relation to the hard work of the staff and volunteers, and the support that they had given to the vulnerable residents of the district. He noted that it had made a difference to them and local businesses. He acknowledged that the Chief Executive had been outstanding and a tower of strength through the process.

He advised that the Labour Group's shadow portfolio team would remain the same as the previous year and he acknowledged that the reference to individual portfolio holder decisions had been dropped as he had felt that the decision was brought in too quickly, as it did not allow proper scrutiny or response to the decisions that were being made. He felt it was not good for democracy and did not wish to repeat the decision in the future.

Councillor R Blunt welcomed Councillor S Sheahan's comments and advised that Leaders from all political groups had met during the past few weeks and they had all worked well to deal with the situation. He thanked them all for their hard work and acknowledged that the district would be proud of them.

## **8. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no questions received.

## **9. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

Two questions had been received.

The Chairman invited Councillor R Johnson to ask his question addressed to Councillor R Ashman.

"Could the Portfolio holder for Planning and Infrastructure please tell me how many housing developments in my ward of Hugglescote St. Johns and Donington le Heath, have wheel washing facilities on their sites that are being used to clean HGV'S wheel before leaving their sites onto the highway.

As this is a recognised condition on all planning permissions."

The Chairman invited Councillor R Ashman to respond.

"The following development sites either under construction or with planning permission are subject to conditions requiring the provision of wheel washing facilities:

South East Coalville Consortium site (Bloor Homes, Davidsons Group, Harworth Estates and SECP Ltd)

Wainwright Road (Davidsons / David Wilson Homes)

Lower Bardon site (Davidsons)

Land South of Grange Road (Taylor Wimpey)

115 Station Road (Lychgate Homes)

The Green, Donington Le Heath (Williams Builders)

I can confirm that not all planning permissions are subject to a condition requiring the provision of wheel washing facilities. These conditions will only generally be attached where the County Highway Authority has requested them and they only tend to do so on the larger development schemes.

If wheel washing facilities have not been provided on any of the sites I have mentioned, this could be the subject of an investigation by the Council's Planning Enforcement scheme."

The Chairman invited Councillor R Johnson to ask a supplementary question.

He thanked Councillor Ashman for his response and asked:

"The list you have supplied may have this condition in their planning permissions but are they used or never been used.

Davidsons on the former Louella farm site with some encouragement from me have a bowser on site.

The Harworth Estates civil engineers, Newline openly admitted in not having any facilities on site but with encouragement from me through their agent have complied.

Wainwright Road Davidsons have none on site.

Taylor Wimpey have never had wheel washing facilities on site.

115 Station Road is on a call in, so nothing happening there.

The Green have no wheel washing facilities on site.

And finally, the important one you missed out was the Barratts/DWH Grange Road who have no wheel facilities.

When this planning authority gives permissions for development, We expect a duty of care from these house builders to do their part in having wheel washing facilities at hand within the working site hours to stop mud and stones going onto our roads and blocking gullies.

There have been numerous times I have had to call both LCC Highways and our own planning enforcement team to intercede, to encourage developers to comply with their duty of care

What can be done Councillor Ashman, as you see, it in protecting the Council tax payer in my community from uncaring developers."

Councillor R Ashman noted that not all sites were covered in the response and that if sites were not following conditions then the issues needed to be raised to the relevant department to be investigated. He also asked that he be copied in to ensure that the issue was followed up.

The Chairman invited Councillor M B Wyatt to ask his question addressed to Councillor R D Bayliss.

"A number of council tenants from Greenhill, Broom Leys and Measham contacted me recently expressing their concerns that they were continuing to pay an additional charge which covers other services like grass cutting and cleaning of communal areas. In some cases, tenants have seen a reduction or no service at all during the corona virus lockdown.

I light of this can the portfolio holder for housing give an update on my request for a rebate to council tenants who have received a reduced or in some cases no service at all.”

The Chairman invited Councillor R D Bayliss to respond.

“Thank you for your question Councillor Wyatt.

964 of our 4,250 tenants pay some form of service charge in addition to their basic rent, and as a result of the Corona Virus response we have not been able to provide all the services funded from these charges.

Officers have carefully examined the options available to compensate tenants for this reduced service, and we will be adjusting the weekly amounts due to reflect this in the 2021/22 budget setting process.

Any adjustments made during this financial year would require the recalculation and reduction of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit entitlements for any tenants claiming, making it impractical, particularly given the current position in response to the Corona Virus.

This will be communicated to tenants through the July edition of the tenants’ newsletter, InTouch.”

The Chairman invited Councillor M B Wyatt to ask a supplementary question.

Councillor M B Wyatt thanked Councillor R D Bayliss for his reply and he had no supplementary question. He thanked the administration for its positive response concerning an important financial issue that affected a number of Council tenants.

## **10. MOTIONS**

Councillor M B Wyatt moved the motion as set out in the agenda and presented it to Members. He advised that he had brought the motion forward due to the number of residents that had expressed both their anger and annoyance at the noise level from the firework displays, which affected both residents with disabilities and animals. He noted that many enjoyed firework displays, but due to the adverse effect that it they had, the loud noises should no longer be part of them. He urged Members to support the motion.

Councillor A Woodman seconded the motion. He thanked Councillor M B Wyatt for putting forward the motion and remembered when fireworks were restricted to Bonfire Night and New Year’s Eve, which would allow pet owners to prepare for the disruption. He noted that it had become the norm for fireworks to be set off at random times of the year. He highlighted the numbers of cats and dogs that showed distress on hearing fireworks and the significant proportion of the residents of the United Kingdom that were diagnosed with autism. He stated, that with the facts in mind, it was sensible for the Council to look at ways it could mitigate the stress caused by the noise whilst maintaining the spectacle to be enjoyed. He believed that the Council could use its social media channels to promote the outcome of the motion and was happy to work with officers to set an example moving forward.

Councillor S Sheahan stated that there was nothing really to disagree with and that the Labour Group would be supporting the motion.

Councillor M Hay stated that, as someone who used to work as a pyro-technic, when a debate on the subject took place there were those that were affected in a negative way and as a former pet owner, whose cats were affected he empathised with the problem. He

Chairman’s initials

noted that one of the common themes when the subject came up was who the fireworks were in the hands of and that organised events were always deemed far safer and where held at appropriate times. He highlighted that the calls for restrictions on fireworks were more aimed at members of the public setting them off at random times. He expressed concerns at the direction the motion was aimed, more at professional displays, than the nub of the matter, which was the general sale of the devices. He advised that there was no reason not to support the motion and asked that any public awareness campaign was well researched and fact based.

Councillor M B Wyatt thanked Members for their contribution and looked forward to future reports on the issue.

The Chairman then put the following motion to the vote. It was

RESOLVED THAT:

This Council notes:

- That firework displays are common throughout the world and are the focal point of many cultural and religious celebrations.
- The rising number of complaints about all year round noise nuisance from fireworks
- The impact loud bangs have on some people with mental ill health, some people who are anxious about loud noises, some people with a disability for whom loud noises can be extremely disturbing and those people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- The distress suffered by many household pets and wild animals because of the use of fireworks.
- Increasing public health concerns surrounding the use of fireworks

This Council believes that everyone has a right to enjoy firework displays. This Council also believes that this should not be at the expense of the amenity of others and notes the work done by the people of Collecchio in the province of Parma in Italy to introduce legislation to reduce acoustic stress.

This Council believes that with the increasing availability of quieter fireworks which can create “quieter” or “low noise” or “silent” displays which reduce the noise nuisance and impact on others, it is time for the Council to investigate the creation of more peaceful firework displays that can be enjoyed by all.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. To require all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries on council owned land to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people
2. To actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks
3. To investigate whether quieter or low noise fireworks could be used at council events as an alternative to the existing fireworks provision.

Councillor S Sheahan moved the motion as set out in the agenda and presented it to Members. He noted that he had been given three files of documents in relation to the re-

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opening of the Ivanhoe Line by Frank Straw, the last Labour Leader of the Council, and that the documents were a testament to the importance of the Ivanhoe Line, that was attached to the communities that stood to benefit from it. He advised that the motion aimed to set out a few steps which the Council could undertake to position itself to throw some weight behind the line. He outlined the two reasons for bringing forward the motion, which were the community group, CRIL, and the same worrying economic circumstances, under which the Ivanhoe Line was conceived back in the 1980s. He stated that restoring the passenger line between Burton and Leicester held the promise of a transformative effect on the local economy, whilst reaping environmental benefits.

Councillor S Sheahan informed Members that strategic plans were supportive of the line and that functional partnerships needed to be built with LCC, CRIL and others to create a sense of shared responsibility and shared endeavour.

Councillor J Legrys seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor T Eynon stated that she was pleased to be able to support the motion, as when she first moved to the area and worked in London, she was reassured that there would be a train line within a matter of years to help with the commute, however, the line never appeared. She advised that it was a source of frustration that nothing was ever done, but highlighted that it was a new era, and that a paper, that had been considered by LCC Cabinet that day, had made reference to the potential re-opening of the line. She was pleased to see that the project had moved forward with a sense of enthusiasm and that all the Councils along the line had put up money to support the project. She felt that cross party support was needed and, if included in strategic plans, it would help with getting the support from Government.

Councillor C Benfield welcomed the motion and noted the effort that the Council could bring in the identification of suitable sites for stations, along with ways of getting users to the stations such as cycle ways and bus routes. He highlighted that the wider implications of the line would be dealt with by the Department of Transport and that it was a very exciting time. He was behind the motion.

Councillor J Legrys advised that he was happy to second the motion, as it was essential that all the Councils along the line were supporting the project and he was keen on CRIL being the lead body. He was very supportive of the what the Council was doing with regards to bringing the line back and was aware that locations of stations needed to be established and that it needed to go in the Local Plan. He was pragmatic that the Council could achieve what it could and that the momentum was pushing an open door on the subject.

Councillor D Bigby noted that the Labour group had looked at including a clause in the motion to ask the Council to look at identifying sites for stations and protecting them under the Local Plan, but were advised that it would not be possible. He felt it was unfortunate as suitable sites were available now and during the time of the feasibility study, the sites were lost. He hoped that once the study was completed, the sites identified and concluded that the Ivanhoe Line was a cost effective proposition, the Council could move to protect the sites until the project had started.

Councillor A Black asked that the large businesses close to the line be consulted and possible investment sought.

Councillor R Ashman moved the following amendment:

“In the wake of the Coronavirus Pandemic and the predictions of an economic downturn this council welcomes the investment from Central Government, Leicestershire County



Council, North West Leicestershire District and other councils, to support funding the feasibility study for opening the Ivanhoe Line.

This Council resolves to:

Work with all agencies to support the restoration of the Ivanhoe Line as part of the proposals to improve the rail and public transport connectivity across NW Leicestershire District and the East Midlands.

Recognise the importance of the East Midlands Councils and North West Leicestershire District Councils evidence to the Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and North, which includes the benefits of restoring the Ivanhoe Line, a request to accelerate plans for the electrification of the Midland Mainline and to improve the overall connectivity to Segro, East Midlands Airport, Castle Donington, Kegworth and the Northern Parishes with the rest of the District and the East Midlands.

Closely align proposals for the restoration of the Ivanhoe Line with the wider environmental agenda, including climate change, air quality and road congestion.

Form a working partnership with the County Council and other interested parties, including CRIL, with a clear remit to take all practical steps available, including supporting necessary feasibility studies, to move the project forward.

Ensure that the Council's commitment to the Ivanhoe Line is reflected in all relevant strategic plans, including the local plan.”

Councillor R Ashman advised that the administration supported the feasibility study and the re-instatement of the Ivanhoe Line, but felt that it should be linked to work being carried out to improve connectivity across North West Leicestershire and the Midlands as a whole. He thanked all the MPs across the region for their continued efforts to re-open the line and securing funding of £50k towards the study, and along with funding from LCC and Local Councils, the study could be properly funded. He informed that proposals had been put forward to the Government to improve connectivity across the Midlands as a whole, which not only included the Ivanhoe Line but a list of other projects. He stated that was important that the transport infrastructure and connectivity, as part of the significant development that was taking place in the district, be considered, and could be done by looking at a variety of transport options. He hoped that Members supported the motion.

Councillor R Blunt seconded the amendment.

Councillor S Sheahan felt that the amendment was harmless enough and the Labour group would be voting accordingly.

The Chairman then put the amendment to the vote. The motion was declared CARRIED.

Councillor S Sheahan stated that he was very happy with the supportive nature of the comments and the amendment was harmless. He felt that the substantive motion that was before them was very good and he had no problems with supporting it as it stood.

The Chairman then put the substantive motion, as amended, to the vote. The motion was declared CARRIED.

It was therefore

RESOLVED THAT:

“In the wake of the Coronavirus Pandemic and the predictions of an economic downturn this council welcomes the investment from Central Government, Leicestershire County Council, North West Leicestershire District and other councils, to support funding the feasibility study for opening the Ivanhoe Line.

Chairman's initials

This Council resolves to:

Work with all agencies to support the restoration of the Ivanhoe Line as part of the proposals to improve the rail and public transport connectivity across NW Leicestershire District and the East Midlands.

Recognise the importance of the East Midlands Councils and North West Leicestershire District Councils evidence to the Rail Needs Assessment for the Midlands and North, which includes the benefits of restoring the Ivanhoe Line, a request to accelerate plans for the electrification of the Midland Mainline and to improve the overall connectivity to Segro, East Midlands Airport, Castle Donington, Kegworth and the Northern Parishes with the rest of the District and the East Midlands.

Closely align proposals for the restoration of the Ivanhoe Line with the wider environmental agenda, including climate change, air quality and road congestion.

Form a working partnership with the County Council and other interested parties, including CRIL, with a clear remit to take all practical steps available, including supporting necessary feasibility studies, to move the project forward.

Ensure that the Council's commitment to the Ivanhoe Line is reflected in all relevant strategic plans, including the local plan.”

## **11. PETITIONS**

No petitions were received.

## **12. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2020.

The Chairman advised that he was aware that Councillor S Sheahan had been liaising with Democratic Services in relation to some minor amendments to the minutes and that both parties were happy with the revised wording.

It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor J Hoult and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

Subject to the amendments agreed by Councillor S Sheahan, the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## **13. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AND GROUPS, ELECTION OF CHAIRMEN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMEN**

Councillor T Gillard presented the report to Members

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor N Smith and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The appointments to the Committees and Groups as set out in the additional papers be agreed.
- b) The Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of the Committees and Groups as set out in the additional papers be agreed.

Chairman's initials

**14. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON COMMUNITY BODIES**

Councillor T Gillard presented the report to Members

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor N Smith and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

Representatives be appointed to serve on the community bodies as set out in the additional papers.

**15. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2020/21**

Councillor T Gillard presented the report to Members

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor J Hoult and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The schedule of meetings for 2020/21 be approved.

**16. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS**

Councillor N J Rushton presented the report to Members

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The term of office of the Independent Persons be extended to the end of the 2020-2021 Municipal year.

**17. URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN QUARTER 4 2019/20**

Councillor R Blunt presented the report to Members

He highlighted the special urgency procedure as set out in the Constitution and the decision that was made to delegate the powers to individual portfolio holders. He reminded Members that the power to make individual decisions had now been revoked.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor S Sheahan and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00 pm

Chairman's initials