

MINUTES of a meeting of the ANNUAL COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 10 MAY 2022

Present: Councillor V Richichi (Chairman)

Councillors R Boam, E G C Allman, R Ashman, R D Bayliss, C C Benfield, D Bigby, A S Black, R Blunt, J Bridges, R Canny, J Clarke, 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, R L Morris, N J Rushton, A C Saffell, C A Sewell, S Sheahan, J G Simmons, N Smith, J Windram, A C Woodman and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mrs J Davidson, Mr M Walker, Mr J Arnold, Mr A Barton, Miss E Warhurst, Mrs M Long and Mrs C Hammond

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Everitt and A Bridgen.

It was agreed that the council would send a letter of support to Councillor Everitt who was grieving the loss of his wife, who sadly passed away a few days ago following a battle with cancer.

## **2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no interests declared.

## **3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor V Richichi said a few words regarding his year as Chairman. He thanked Councillor R Boam for supporting him as deputy; Judith Peace, for managing his diary, and all members for supporting him in his role. He advised that he had raised £4,006 for the Ukrainian Appeal in less than 6 weeks; and over the past year he had raised approximately £8,000 for Mountain Rescue and the RNLI.

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

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt that Councillor R Boam be appointed as Chairman of the Council for 2022/23.

The motion was seconded by Councillor R Ashman and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R Boam be appointed Chairman of the Council for 2022/23.

Councillor R Boam remained in the Chair and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Councillor Boam thanked Members for electing him as Chairman.

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

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt that Councillor J Bridges be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Council for 2022/23.

Chairman's initials

The motion was seconded by Councillor R Ashman and upon being put to the vote it was subsequently

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor J Bridges be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Council for 2022/23.

Councillor J Bridges received the Deputy Chairman's chains and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. He thanked members for electing him as Deputy Chairman and advised that he would support the Chairman as needed throughout the year.

## **5. APPOINTMENT OF LEADER**

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard that Councillor R Blunt be appointed as Leader of the Council for 2022/23.

The motion was seconded by Councillor N Rushton and upon being put to the vote it was subsequently

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R Blunt be appointed as the Leader of the Council for 2022/23.

Councillor R Blunt thanked members for electing him to the role for the 16<sup>th</sup> year and promised he would do the very best he could in the year ahead.

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

The Chairman welcomed the officers in attendance who were observing the proceedings as part of the Leadership Development Programme.

He then asked members to join him in remembering past councillor Clifford Stanley, who sadly passed away in March. Clifford was a Labour district councillor for the Greenhill ward between 1991 and 2003 and he was also chairman of this council in 1997/98 and a county councillor for the Greenhill division. Members observed a minute's silence in his memory and advised that he would be very sorely missed.

The Chairman then presented to Councillors R Blunt, J Geary and T Saffell who had served as members of this Council for 21 years, a scroll in recognition of their long service.

The Chairman announced his chosen charity as Hospice Hope currently based in Griffydarn.

## **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:

Leader – Councillor Richard Blunt

Deputy Leader and Infrastructure portfolio – Councillor Robert Ashman

Planning portfolio – Councillor Keith Merrie

Community Services portfolio – Councillor Andrew Woodman

Chairman's initials

Corporate portfolio – Councillor Nick Rushton

Housing, Property and Customer Services portfolio – Councillor Roger Bayliss

Business and Regeneration portfolio – Councillor Tony Gillard

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

The Leader was also pleased to announce the achievement of the Council being awarded the Investors in People silver standard accreditation, which was deemed an amazing achievement considering the backdrop of recent difficulties associated with the pandemic.

The Leader referenced a report which was due to be considered later in the meeting regarding the recruitment of the new Chief Executive and welcomed Joanna Davidson, Interim Chief Executive, to her first meeting of Council.

It was further announced that Blackfordby Parish Council had recently elected to have a Neighbourhood Plan, which is an important part of the planning system and brings a distinct local voice to the planning process. This plan will now form part of the Development Plan and the policies will need to be considered by planning officers in conjunction with the Local Plan.

The Leader advised that the Homes for Ukraine was proving successful in that just under fifty sponsor offers had been received and of these nine were now occupied by refugees. The majority of the home checks were being conducted within a few days and he conveyed his thanks to the Environmental Protection team for leading on this work.

In response to a question regarding progress on the provision of a cinema in Coalville, the Leader reported that discussions were ongoing but the information was highly commercially sensitive.

The Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor R Bayliss, announced that in 2012, following the council's decision to become a self-financing Housing authority, the HRA debt stood at £79m.

The borrowing comprised a number of loans, some on a repayment basis and some interest-only, or maturity, loans. Councillor Bayliss was happy to announce that on March 28<sup>th</sup> the council repaid £13m of maturity loans on schedule. This saves the HRA £312k per annum in interest charges and is now available to the current and future HRA budgets.

Repayment of the remaining £53m is on schedule and due to be complete by 2042.

He also announced that later this month, the Council Tax energy rebate should be paid to all council tax payers in bands A to D who currently pay by direct debit. Following this, details will be provided to all those who do not pay by direct debit setting out how they may claim; and details will be provided for those who fall outside the current scheme where discretionary payments can be applied for.

Councillor Bayliss also announced that this was the last meeting being attended by Chris Lambert, Head of Housing who would be retiring on Friday 13 May 2022. Members conveyed their thanks and gratitude to Mr Lambert for his service and professionalism.

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

There were no questions received.

Chairman's initials

## 9. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions received.

## 10. MOTIONS

A motion was received from Councillor T Eynon. It was noted that the wording had been changed from that which was published on the agenda. Copies of the revised motion were set out in the additional papers.

Councillor Eynon presented the motion and thanked members across the Chamber for supporting and strengthening the motion which she hoped would see this matter given the priority and attention it deserves.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Bayliss.

The motion received full support from across the Chamber and a lengthy debate ensued.

The motion was put to the vote and was subsequently RESOLVED THAT:

“This Council notes the work to date on reducing fuel poverty in our area but acknowledges that thousands of households are estimated to be in fuel poverty and more can be done to end fuel poverty by 2030.

This Council resolves:

1. To request that Community Scrutiny Committee review the work which the Council is doing to minimise fuel poverty in North West Leicestershire by 2030. This will include the work being done on the following:
  - a. continuous improvement in the energy efficiency of Council housing stock
  - b. partnership working to improve the energy efficiency standards in housing association stock
  - c. enforcement of existing regulations on energy efficiency and property standards in the private rented sector
  - d. reviewing the outcomes achieved by the 2017 Statement of Intent, eligibility criteria and access to Energy Company Obligation funding via the Local Authority Flexibility arrangements
  - e. leveraging in funds to improve the energy efficiency standards of all housing
  - f. making private tenants’ aware of their rights to Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and help under the Government’s ECO scheme
  - g. providing accessible information, advice and guidance in a variety of formats to those most in need
  - h. maximising the incomes of low-income households through the efficient delivery of Council-administered benefits, sensitive recovery of debt and the provision of advice and support
  - i. working in partnership with other agencies and voluntary and community groups to implement and monitor delivery of the Strategy
  - j. how the Council reports on progress on these areas of work

To consider whether this Council can support the work of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition.

## 11. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

Chairman’s initials

**12. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022.

It was moved by Councillor R Boam, seconded by Councillor J Bridges and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**13. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND GROUPS, ELECTION OF CHAIRS AND DEPUTY CHAIRS**

Councillor T Gillard presented the report to members. The details of all the nominations were set out in the additional papers.

It was noted that there were two nominations for the Chair and Deputy Chair of both the Community and the Corporate Scrutiny Committees and the votes on these was taken separately.

For the role of Chair of the Community Scrutiny Committee, nominations were received from Councillors T Eynon and J Hoult.

For the role of Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, nominations were received from Councillors D Bigby and N Smith.

For the role of Deputy Chair of the Community Scrutiny Committee, nominations were received from Councillors T Eynon and R Morris.

For the role of Deputy Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, nominations were received from Councillors D Bigby and V Richichi.

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor N Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The appointments to the Committees and Groups as set out in the additional papers be agreed.
- b) Councillor J Hoult be appointed as Chair of the Community Scrutiny Committee
- c) Councillor R Morris be appointed as Deputy Chair of the Community Scrutiny Committee
- d) Councillor N Smith be appointed as Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee
- e) Councillor V Richichi be appointed as Deputy Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee
- f) The remaining Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Committees and Groups as set out in the additional papers be agreed.

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

Chairman's initials

Councillor T Gillard presented the report to members. The details of all the nominations were set out in the additional papers.

It was noted that there were two nominations for the Alderman Newton Education Foundation and the vote on this was taken separately.

A question was asked on the role of PATROL, as referred to in the additional papers. It was reported that Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London is a new body which deals with appeals to parking enforcement issues dealt with at the County Council; and they were seeking a district representative to that body.

It was moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor N Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) That Councillor J Clarke be appointed to the Alderman Newton Education Foundation.
- b) The representatives, as listed in the additional papers, be appointed to serve on the remaining Community Bodies.

## **15. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2022/23**

Councillor R Ashman presented the report to members.

A question was asked on why the February council meeting was held on a Thursday. It was explained that this was to accommodate the budget meeting of the county council from which the council tax is calculated. It was asked whether this could be moved to a Wednesday to avoid a clash with parish council meetings and it was agreed that this would be looked at for next year's timetable.

A plea was made to all committee chairs to ensure they give as much notice as possible when a meeting is changed or cancelled.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The schedule of meetings for 2022/23 be approved.

## **16. EAST MIDLANDS FREEPORT UPDATE**

Councillor R Ashman presented the report to members.

During the debate, a number of impassioned comments were made including concerns about the implications of the proposal and what it meant for the district. Some felt that the creation of the Freeport Company was happening too soon, with no regard to the impact on the local infrastructure. However, some felt that it was preferable to be involved; to be on the inside looking out rather than on the outside looking in; but asked that they be kept fully informed and that every effort be made to keep an element of control, in order to influence future decisions.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor K Merrie and

RESOLVED THAT: Council

- a) Notes the progress of the EMF Project and the recommendations of Cabinet from its meeting on 26 April 2022;
- b) Approves the Council joining the EMF company and participating in the incorporation of it;
- c) Approves, in principle, to the council entering into the members' agreement and delegates authority for agreeing the final form of the members' agreement, articles of association and any other documents/agreements required to facilitate incorporation of the company, to the chief executive, in consultation with the portfolio holder.

## **17. FUTURE EXTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor N J Rushton presented the report to members.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R Morris and

RESOLVED THAT:

The decision made to accept Public Sector Audit Appointments' (PSAA) invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

## **18. MEMBER CONDUCT ANNUAL REPORT**

Councillor R Ashman presented the report and invited the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, Councillor S Gillard, to say a few words.

Councillor S Gillard referred to the complaints set out in the report and the manner with which they had been dealt, adding that they were able to be dealt with informally. He thanked the members of the Audit and Governance Committee for their work on the new Code of Conduct.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor S Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Member Annual Conduct Report 2021/22 be endorsed.

## **19. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was moved by Councillor R Boam, seconded by Councillor L Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

The press and public be excluded during consideration of the following items in accordance with Section 100(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 as publicity would be likely to result in disclosure of exempt or confidential information.

Members were reminded that they must have regard to the public interest test and must consider, for each item, whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure outweighs the public interest in making the item available.

## **20. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Councillor R Blunt presented the report to members.

Chairman's initials

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor R Ashman and

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a) Approves the recommendation of the Appointments Panel to appoint Allison Thomas to the post of Chief Executive;
- b) Confirms the designation of the post of Chief Executive as the Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20 pm