

MINUTES of a meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Remote Meeting using Microsoft Teams on TUESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2020

Present: Councillor V Richichi (Chairman)

Councillors J Hoult, E G C Allman, R Ashman, R D Bayliss, C C Benfield, D Bigby, A S Black, R Blunt, R Boam, A J Bridgen, J Bridges, 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 Hoult, R Johnson, J Legrys, K Merrie MBE, N J Rushton, A C Saffell, C A Sewell, S Sheahan, N Smith, J Windram and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mrs T Bingham, Mrs M Long, Mr A Barton, Mrs B Smith, Miss E Warhurst and Mr T Delaney

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Tebbutt and A Woodman.

19. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

A non-pecuniary interest was declared by Councillor Sheahan with regard to any reference in reports to HS2 on the proviso that if any verbal reference is made to it in the meeting, he would declare a pecuniary interest and leave the meeting.

Councillors R Bayliss and T Eynon both declared non-pecuniary interests in item 17 – Appointments to Community Bodies, as they are both trustees of the Alderman Newton Education Foundation, with Councillor Bayliss being the Chairman.

Councillor R Johnson declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 11 - Seeking approval to remove NWLDC byelaws from parcels of land owned by Whitwick Parish Council, as reference is made to Hugglestone & Donington le Heath Parish Council of which he is the Chairman.

20. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised Council that he had not undertaken many duties due to the COVID pandemic but he was proud to announce that he had laid a wreath to commemorate Victory in Japan (VJ) Day and the event had gone very well with social distancing having been observed.

21. LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R Blunt welcomed Councillor E Allman to the Conservative Group adding that Councillor Allman had already developed a reputation as a hard working individual and he would be a great addition to the Group.

The Leader shared details of the work which had been undertaken to date to help support local people and local businesses in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. He thanked local people for all their efforts adhering to the rules, particularly given the recent national and local pictures which were seeing a rise in the infection rates. He went on to advise Council of the recovery work which was ongoing making reference to the Economic Recovery Plan which will set out how the district will thrive over the next two years and beyond. It was reported that over £20m in grant funding had been provided to 1644 local businesses and work will continue to help support these by encouraging people to shop locally and support their local businesses.

Chairman's initials

In terms of the Council's staff, the Leader reported that from the 587 staff, 249 were working in the community and of the 388 located in the offices, 96% of these were working from home and all key services were being continued which was a testament to how the recovery plans were working.

The Leader advised Council that the Council had been awarded a silver star by the Ministry of Defence in respect of the Employer Recognition Scheme in its support and alignment of values in relation to Defence and the Armed Forces Community.

Council was advised by the Leader that in July, a ground breaking ceremony was held to recognise the start of the works on the new Whitwick and Coalville Leisure Centre with a completion date anticipated as being July 2022. There were more than 40 local companies working on the project and over 60% of the construction materials were being sourced locally.

A number of questions were raised by Members in response to Councillor Blunt's announcements. These related to loss of income to the Council, the political stance of a councillor joining a Group after being elected, the potential to overtax staff who are working additional hours and the cost implications to the Housing Revenue Account from the climate change commitments.

Councillor Blunt advised Council that the questions should be directed more appropriately at the relevant portfolio holder through the scrutiny process. He acknowledged that councillors changing their political stance was not uncommon and was down to individual choice, and recognised that care needed to be taken to ensure the wellbeing of staff and that this was being constantly monitored by the Head of Paid Service.

Councillor Bayliss shared with Council the details relating to the recent completion of the next phase of the council house new build programme, with another 8 new homes being completed and let to tenants in the Greenhill area of Coalville. The new development known as Woodbrook Court provides 3 three bedroom and 4 two bedroom houses together with a one bedroom bungalow and all have been let to applicants from the Council's waiting list. It was noted that new build council housing formed just one part of the Council's approach to increasing the supply of new affordable Council housing within the District, which has seen the completion of 56 new homes over the last three and a half years, with plans for 34 more already well advanced. The Council was also taking advantage of other opportunities, including the acquisition of Section 106 planning agreement properties and purchasing homes in the open market in areas of high housing need, using funding retained through the Governments 1 for 1 replacement funding scheme, with 48 new properties already acquired.

The amounts to a total of 104 additional affordable rented homes for tenants in need, and the future pipeline of schemes now details an additional 48 new homes on the way.

Councillor Bayliss concluded by advising Council that he will be presenting a report to Cabinet in October regarding the progress on the acquisition of additional properties, and a subsequent report to give further details on the new build and acquisitions programmes going forward.

22. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

23. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Two questions had been received.

The Chairman invited Councillor D Everitt to ask his question addressed to Councillor R Blunt.

“The on street retail industry is under threat from internet traders especially during the lockdown. Everything must be done to restore and maintain the pleasure of human contact and real informed choice which is the joy of street shopping. To achieve this it is important that the needs of shoppers especially young mother and senior citizens are addressed and provided.

Can you assure me that an adequate toilet facility with attendant and a baby changing will be incorporated at the Marlborough square development when it is opened?”

The Chairman invited Councillor R Blunt to respond.

“Cllr Everitt’s observations about the importance of the high street retail sector are well placed. A strong retail offer in Coalville can contribute to the capturing of greater wealth and prosperity within the local economy. The aspiration to make Coalville a desirable shopping destination once more, lies at the root of a number of recent commitments of time and money by this council into projects such as Newmarket, Marlborough Square Public Realm and the numerous schemes we hope to deliver as part of the Future High Streets Fund Bid. The provision of public toilets in Coalville town centre has been a sustained commitment of this council at a time when other councils have been closing their facilities. Coalville’s public toilet facilities are currently located at the market hall and will continue to be provided from that building until such time as a decision otherwise is made by the council. As part of the delivery of the Newmarket project fronting on to Marlborough Square, additional toilets are being provided which will be “accessible” and include a baby changing facility. It is hoped these will be popular with town centre users. Further opportunities to enhance public facilities in the town will also be explored as part of the planned regeneration projects”.

The Chairman invited Councillor D Everitt to ask a supplementary question. There was none.

The Chairman invited Councillor J Geary to ask his question addressed to Councillor R Bayliss.

“At Scrutiny earlier this year I expressed my concerns with regards the current conditions at the Appleby Magna Caravan Site. I was pleased to read in last week’s Members Bulletin you have held a virtual meeting with residents regarding site improvements. Could you now please update members on the outcome of that meeting, what improvements have been decided upon, time scale for implementation and estimated costs”.

The Chairman invited Councillor R D Bayliss to respond.

“Following Scrutiny and Cabinet approval in May this year I am pleased to say that we are progressing well will addressing the caravan site redevelopment.

- All necessary surveys have now been completed;
- Request for quotation has been sent to three selected suppliers for specialist project management support to support the progress of the plans through Planning determination, assist with the procurement of a building contractor and ensure the needs of the residents are being met;
- The meeting in August went through proposed designs for the scheme which include siting all pitches outside of the flood risk area, a new amenity block and upgraded site security and general facilities. Plans are now being updated following residents views with a view to applying for planning permission by end of October.
- With the future of the 1st Appleby with Measham Scouts at the site now being secured, plans have progressed to ensure that they have a long-term lease, which

will allow them to seek grant funding for which the Council has offered its support. Proposed Heads of Terms have been shared with the Scouting Association for a 25-year lease.

- Costs are still in line with our initial estimations c£500k which are already set out in the Council's Capital programme.

The Chairman invited Councillor J Geary to ask a supplementary question. There was none.

24. MOTIONS

Councillor S Sheahan moved the following motion in relation to issues surrounding the UK economy.

“The UK economy shrank by an unprecedented 20.4% in April this year compared to the previous quarter. By June, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was one sixth below its level in February. Between April and June, the number of people in work fell by 220,000, but these figures do not include millions of people who are furloughed, those on zero-hours contracts but not getting shifts or people on temporary unpaid leave from a job. 140,000 redundancies across England, Wales and Scotland were notified to the Government in June and with the furlough scheme ending in October, the outlook for millions more is very worrying.

This Council believes that urgent action needs to be taken to tackle the threat to jobs, businesses and livelihoods, We therefore call upon the Government to

- Target help to the industries and areas that need it most.
- Give our public services the resources to prepare for any second wave
- Get test, trace and isolate functioning properly to build public confidence
- Reform the furlough scheme so it helps people in the worst-hit sectors and targets funding to struggling industries
- Back businesses by setting up a £1.7 billion fightback fund to prevent firms going under and save our high streets
- Leave no-one behind by providing additional support to areas forced into local lockdowns, supporting the self-employed and helping those left out of existing schemes
- Keep workers safe by protecting workers rights, boosting sick pay, making workplaces safe and giving our NHS and care services the resources to avoid a second wave
- Drive job creation by investing in infrastructure, accelerating progress towards a zero-carbon economy and increasing access to skills and training opportunities.”

He asked the Council to call on the Government to act to protect jobs, key industries and public institutions.

A full debate was held which received mixed views both in favour and against the motion. There was disappointment expressed in what was deemed to be a party political motion being brought to Council with an attempt to use the pandemic to score political points whilst elsewhere there was support with regard to reference to specific local businesses and the people that work there. References to the motion being party political and critical of the Council were strongly disputed. Reference was also made to the work which was being done both locally and nationally, referring to the Economic Recovery Plan but also to the apparent failure of the track and trace system. Comments were made in relation to a recent Planning Committee where it was suggested that everyone from the same party had voted in the same way when considering an application in respect of a large company settling in the area. When challenged as a point of order as to whether this was an allegation of whipping, this allegation was refuted by the Member in question. Further comments were made in relation to this being a motion which was largely addressed to

Chairman's initials

central government with a suggestion made that any issues with national policy should be addressed through the local MP. Elsewhere it was noted that achieving the status quo was not a reality and that efforts should be focussed on a new working model with collaborative working to enable redeployment. A further comment was made that confusion and fear arising from the Government's advice should be replaced by certainty and clarity. Some members argued that, as they have a responsibility to local residents, this motion, whilst addressing national policy, was aimed at protecting local jobs and businesses.

The Chairman invited Councillor Sheahan to respond to exercise his right to reply.

He felt strongly that if local councillors considered the Government was not acting in the best interests of the local community, then they had a duty to point this out. He also disputed an earlier claim regarding the voting at a recent Planning Committee given how he personally had voted. Councillor Sheahan urged those who were minded to vote against the motion to consider what would happen when the furlough scheme ends; whether they really believed the track and trace system was working and how they would answer the complaints from one of the District's largest employers, East Midlands Airport, that the Government wasn't doing enough?

The Chairman then put the motion to the vote and subsequently declared it LOST with a vote of 21 against and 14 for the motion.

25. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

26. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2020.

The Chairman advised that he was aware that Councillor S Sheahan expressed a wish to make some amendments to the minutes and was invited to speak to the proposed changes, as set out in the additional papers.

Councillor Sheahan advised that he was not happy with the quality of the minutes and had therefore listened to the recording and submitted a verbatim record for complete accuracy.

As the relevant portfolio holder, Councillor Ashman was invited to respond. He advised that he was surprised at a request to have the minutes as a verbatim record, particularly given that the entire proceedings were available on-line to anyone who wished to listen to the transcript. He also referred to the best practice guide for local authority meetings which states that minutes should be a summary of the proceedings and not a verbatim record, including only an essence of the discussion. Councillor Ashman advised that he was not minded to change the style and format of the minutes but acknowledged that the Chief Executive and Leader had agreed to discuss at a future meeting.

Councillor Sheahan withdrew his proposed amendments.

It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor G Houtt and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2020 be approved.

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27. UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

Councillor N Rushton presented the report to Members.

Members supported the recommendations but sought further guidance on virtual meetings and, in particular, raising points of order with the lack of the 'hands up' facility provided by MS Teams Live Events. Councillor Rushton agreed to address this and get back to Members via the Cross Party Working Group.

It was moved by Councillor N Rushton, seconded by Councillor L Gillard and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

- (1) The amendments to the Council's Constitution set out in this report be adopted;
- (2) That the Council functions relating to the issue of Pavement Licences pursuant to Sections 1-7 of the Business and Planning Act 2020 (Pavement Licences) be delegated to the Director of Place;
- (3) The Council authorises the Monitoring officer to make the agreed amendments and any consequential amendments to the Constitution and reissue the document.

28. SEEKING APPROVAL TO REMOVE NWLDC BYELAWS FROM PARCELS OF LAND OWNED BY WHITWICK PARISH COUNCIL

Councillor R Blunt presented the report to Members.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

- (1) Council approve the removal of NWLDC byelaws from Whitwick Parish Council owned land;
- (2) Council delegates authority to the Head of Community Services in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Community Services to respond to and address any points raised through the consultation process.

29. ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES (POLITICAL BALANCE)

Councillor T Gillard presented the report to Members.

Councillor Wyatt advised that his group would be voting against this in principle.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor T Gillard, seconded by Councillor N Smith and put to the vote. The Chairman declared the vote as being 31 for and 4 against the recommendations. It was therefore

RESOLVED THAT:

- (1) The changes to the political proportionality of the Council be noted;
- (2) Councillor E Allman retain his seats on the Licensing Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as a Conservative Member;

Chairman's initials

- (3) Councillor S Gillard to be appointed as an additional substitute member of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as the Conservative Group is entitled to one more seat;
- (4) Councillor C Benfield be removed as a substitute member of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as the Independent Group is no longer entitled to a seat;
- (5) Councillor R Canny be removed as a substitute member of the Licensing Committee as the Independent Group is entitled to one less seat;
- (6) Councillor T Saffell be appointed as replacement Independent Group substitute member on the Planning Committee and Community Scrutiny Committee;
- (7) Councillor C Benfield be appointed as replacement Independent Group substitute member on the Investigatory Committee;
- (8) The above changes take immediate effect.

30. SCRUTINY CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP PROGRESS REPORT

Councillor R Ashman presented the report to Members.

The report was welcomed by Members and all were encouraged to engage in the workshops that had been organised off the back of the work undertaken by the Cross Party Working Group.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor K Merrie and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The progress report of the Cross Party Scrutiny Working Group be noted

31. URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN QUARTER 1 2020/21

Councillor R Blunt presented the report to Members.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

32. MEMBER CONDUCT ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Councillor R Ashman presented the report to Members.

It was moved by Councillor R Ashman, seconded by Councillor B Harrison-Rushton and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be endorsed

33. APPOINTMENT OF PARISH REPRESENTATIVES TO THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor S Gillard presented the report to Members.

It was moved by Councillor S Gillard, seconded by Councillor L Gillard and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The nomination process be received and noted and the appointments, as set out in the report, be approved.

34. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON COMMUNITY BODIES

Councillor T Gillard presented the report to Members.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

- (1) A representative be appointed to serve on the Alderman Newton Education Foundation in accordance with paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 of the report;
- (2) Council notes the appointment of Councillor A Woodman to the CCTV Operations Management Group, as the appropriate Portfolio Holder.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20 pm