

MINUTES OF COUNCIL

26 APRIL 2022

PRESENT:

The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Deepah Brojohomun-Roberts), Councillors Mrs Allanach, Mrs A'Barrow, Bearne, Brader, Mrs Brown, Mrs Crane, Daly, Miss Dumbleton, Eccleson, Mrs Garcia, Gillias, Mrs Hassell, Miss Lawrence, Lewis, Lowe, Mahoney, Mrs Maoudis, Mistry, Mrs New, Mrs O'Rourke, Mrs Parker, Picker, Poole, Rabin, Ms Robbins, Roberts, Roodhouse, Mrs Roodhouse, Sandison, Shera, Mrs Simpson-Vince, Srivastava, Mrs Timms, Ms Watson-Merret, Dr Williams and Willis.

Note: Councillor Dr Shera left the meeting after item 5 of Part 1 of the agenda.

116. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Douglas, Ellis, Keeling and McQueen.

117. MINUTES

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 14 March 2022 were approved and signed by the Mayor.

118. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 9 of Part 1 – Notice of Motion pursuant to Standing Order 11 – Councillor Willis (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being an employee of Warwickshire County Council).

Item 9 of Part 1 – Notice of Motion pursuant to Standing Order 11 – Councillor Mrs Timms (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture at Warwickshire County Council).

Item 8(a) of Part 1 – Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund - Councillor Lewis (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a trustee of Rugby Bareboards Trust).

Item 8(a) of Part 1 – Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund - Councillor Miss Dumbleton (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a trustee of Overslade Community Centre).

Item 9 of Part 1 – Notice of Motion pursuant to Standing Order 11 – Councillors Roberts, Roodhouse and Mrs Simpson-Vince (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a Warwickshire County Councillor).

Item 1(g) of Part 2 – Leisure Services Contract Provision - Councillor Lewis (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a member of Rugby Sports for the Disabled).

Councillor Mrs Timms left the meeting during the item in which she had declared an interest and took no part in the voting and discussion thereon.

Councillor Mrs Watson-Merret also left the meeting during item 1(f) of Part 2 (Election of Mayor 2022/23) and took no part in the voting and discussion thereon.

119. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) The Mayor recently presented two employees with their awards for 20 years' service at the Council. Sue Stephenson, a member of the PA team, and Mandy Wakelin-Lloyd, a Section 106 officer within the Planning team, joined the Mayor in the Parlour to receive their long service certificates. The Mayor congratulated them on such a milestone and thanked them for their hard work and commitment to the Council.

(b) Earlier this month, the Mayor attended a reception hosted by the High Sheriff of Warwickshire which included an awards ceremony to recognise outstanding work during the pandemic.

Councillor Mistry received an award as President of the Indian Community Centre. He worked tirelessly with the Management Committee and volunteers at the Centre in setting it up as an NHS Testing Centre for the whole of Rugby. It enabled daily NHS testing for Covid-19 and supported residents in Rugby to get quickly tested. Councillor Mistry also kept in contact with the wider Indian and Hindu community in Rugby, offering support during the first and second lockdowns, encouraging residents to take their vaccine. He also featured in community videos for Warwickshire County Council, NHS CCG and Public Health in supporting Rugby residents during the pandemic. On behalf of the Council, the Mayor congratulated Councillor Mistry on his award and thanked him for his huge efforts during such a difficult time.

A posthumous award was also presented to Lee Kirkbride's partner for his work on the decant of the high rise flats in Rugby and his remarkable efforts to ensure the continuation of the Foodbank service during the pandemic.

Lee, former Lead Officer in the Communities and Projects team, worked at the Foodbank for 12 weeks, setting it up in its new premises in The Retreat whilst ensuring the most vulnerable of our residents continued to receive support, tailored to include deliveries to people self-isolating. Once restrictions permitted, Lee returned to his decant work. His good humour, knowledge of the community and the needs of our tenants were boundless. As a result of his tenacity, the sites will progress to regeneration, providing much needed affordable homes in the borough.

The Council is still trying to come to terms with Lee's sudden and unexpected death last year. He was a valued, kind and committed officer and, as the Council moves towards providing new affordable homes, enabled by Lee's huge efforts, we must remember and celebrate his role in securing such a wonderful legacy for the people of Rugby.

120. SPECIAL VOTE OF THANKS TO COUNCILLOR DR JAMES SHERA

Councillor Dr James Shera was retiring from the Council in May after 40 years' continuous service as a Member for Benn Ward. All Group Leaders paid tribute to his incredible achievement and outstanding record of service and his commitment to public office.

Councillor Dr Shera thanked all residents of Benn Ward, all Councillors, past and present Leaders of the Council, Chief Executives/Executive Directors and past Mayors for their support during his four decades of service.

RESOLVED THAT – the Council places on record its thanks to Councillor Dr James Shera for his outstanding record of 40 years' continuous service as member of Benn Ward and his commitment to public office.

121. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10

- (a) Councillor Mrs Allanach asked the Growth and Investment Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs Simpson-Vince, the following question:

“At the September and December meetings of the Council I asked about public access to advice from planning officers. In your absence both of these questions were answered by the Leader of the Council. In England the UK government has abandoned all specific Covid regulations. On 14th April we were again informed that members of the public could not consult with Rugby planning officers in person because of Covid restrictions. In England the UK government has abandoned all specific Covid regulations. What specific risks are associated with giving planning advice in person which are not present with other council services?”

Councillor Mrs Simpson-Vince, Growth and Investment Portfolio Holder, replied as follows:

“There are no restrictions in place to prevent planning officers meeting with the public. Planning officers and technical support officers are in the office every day during office opening hours to answer simple general planning questions. However, if a member of the public wishes to speak to the case officer in person about a specific planning application then they can do so on an appointment basis and are advised to contact the case officer directly to arrange an appointment. The contact centre has been advised of this and neighbour consultation letters on applications have recently been changed to reflect this.

If the query relates to pre-application advice, the Council now has a chargeable pre-application advice service. The website provides details of how advice can be obtained, the information required and the cost of requesting advice which varies depending on the size of the development.”

Councillor Mrs Allanach then asked if members of the public were able to view plans at the Town Hall and how much the charges were referred to above. Councillor Mrs Simpson-Vince confirmed that plans could be viewed on an appointment basis with the relevant case officer and all charged relating to the planning service were available on the Council's website.

122. REPORT OF LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE – 10 MARCH 2022

RESOLVED THAT – the report be confirmed and adopted.

123. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

(a) Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund

Council considered the report of the Chief Officer – Finance and Performance (Part 1 – agenda item 8(a)) concerning the a Covid-19 additional relief fund.

RESOLVED THAT – the Covid-19 Additional Relief policy, as at Appendix 1 to the report, be adopted.

(b) £150 Energy Rebate Discretionary Policy

Council considered the report of the Chief Officer – Finance and Performance (Part 1 – agenda item 8(b)) concerning a proposed policy for the discretionary element of the £150 householder grants.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) a supplementary budget of £0.063m be established to implement the scheme which will be funded through the New Burdens Grant awarded from DLUHC; and
- (2) the policy for distributing the discretionary £150 householder grant to residents living in properties E-H, as at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

124. NOTICES OF MOTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 11

Council considered the following Motion, notice of which had been given pursuant to Standing Order 11.

(a) Councillor Mrs New moved and Councillor Douglas seconded the motion as set out below.

“In light of the removal of all Covid restrictions, this Council agrees to send a request to Warwickshire County Council that the Hunters Lane Waste disposal site returns to pre Covid working hours and conditions so that residents are allowed to access the site without booking through Eventbrite.”

Further to debate on the item, the Mayor put the motion to the vote and declared it lost.

125. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

126. COMMON SEAL

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded by the Deputy Mayor, and

RESOLVED THAT – the Common Seal be affixed to the various orders, deeds and documents to be made or entered into for carrying into effect the several decisions, matters and things approved by the Council and more particularly set out in the reports adopted at this meeting.

127. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC UNDER SECTION 100(A)(4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded by the Leader of the Council and

RESOLVED THAT - under section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of information defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

128. PRIVATE REPORTS OF OFFICERS

(a) HEART Shared Service update

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Communities and Homes (Part 2 – agenda item 1(a)) concerning an update with regard to the HEART shared service.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) the contents of the HEART board report (appendix 1) be noted;
- (2) that the current partnership agreement be extended for a further 12 months (to end of April 2023) to allow for both service development and to understand the potential implications arising from the forthcoming review of the DFG legislation; and
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer for Communities & Homes to participate in the negotiation of a potential 5-year extension to the shared service agreement, beyond April 2023, for consideration at a future meeting of Council.

(b) Woodside Park – Annual Pitch Fee Increase 2022

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Communities and Homes (Part 2 – agenda item 1(b)) concerning annual pitch fees at Woodside Park.

RESOLVED THAT – the matter be referred to the Gypsies and Travellers Working Party to consider and report back to Council.

(c) Phase 1 – Reshaping the Communities and Homes Service

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Communities and Homes (Part 2 – agenda item 1(c)) concerning a proposed restructure within the Communities and Homes service area.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) the proposed structure for both the CAST and Communities & Projects Teams, as summarised in appendices 5 and 8, be approved;
- (2) a supplementary revenue budget be approved in 2022/23 for the net increase in salaries for CAST and the Communities & Projects Team of £39,700 to be financed from the Welfare reform reserve. The permanent funding will be provided through the 2023/24 budget setting process, taking into account any reduction in agency costs to offset the increase;
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer for Communities and Homes to implement the proposed restructure as detailed within this recommendation and such authority shall include any resulting redundancies as detailed within this report; and
- (4) the CAST team be renamed Housing Advice and Benefits Team.

(d) Town Hall Security Review

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Communities and Homes (Part 2 – agenda item 1(d)) concerning a review of security at the Town Hall.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) delegated authority be granted to the Chief Officer for Communities and Homes to commission a review of the Town Hall Security as detailed within this report; and
- (2) the findings of the review and any required works be implemented in consultation with political Group Leaders and the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homes and, if required, an urgency decision be exercised which shall be reported at the next Full Council.

(e) Additional Resources – Legal Services

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Legal and Governance (Part 2 – agenda item 1(e)) concerning proposed additional resources within the Legal Services team at the Council.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) the creation of two fixed term posts for 18 months be approved as detailed within the report;

- (2) delegated authority be granted to the Chief Officer for Legal and Governance to implement both fixed term posts and such delegation shall include any non-material changes to the role and title;
- (3) a supplementary budget of £0.071m be created in 2022/23 for the roles which will be funded from recharging time to the projects that the roles will support or from the Budget Stability reserve; and
- (4) the 2023/24 cost of £0.036m be factored into the budget setting process and funded from recharging time to the projects that the roles will support or from the Budget Stability reserve.

(f) Election of Mayor 2022/23

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Legal and Governance (Part 2 – agenda item 1(f)) concerning the election of Mayor for the 2022/23 municipal year.

RESOLVED THAT – subject to the councillor concerned continuing to be a Member of the Borough Council in the ensuing municipal year, Councillor Ms Watson-Merret be nominated for election as Mayor for 2022/23.

(g) Leisure Services Contract Provision (QDJC)

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Leisure and Wellbeing (Part 2 – agenda item 1(g)) concerning the Leisure Services contract provision with regard to the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Centre.

RESOLVED THAT – the optional extension for the operation of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee be agreed with Greenwich Leisure Limited as per the continued management fee profile set out in the report.

(h) Data Analyst – IT and Digital Solutions

Council considered the private report of the Executive Director (Part 2 – agenda item 1(h)) concerning the establishment of a data analyst post for IT and digital solutions.

RESOLVED THAT - the creation of a Data Analyst post, for a fixed term of 18 months, to be funded from the transformation reserve, as detailed in the report, be approved.

MAYOR