

COUNCIL

18 MAY 2021

PRESENT:

Councillors Powell (Chair), Cross (Vice-Chair), Anketell, Baker, Ball, Banevicius, Barnett, Binney, Birch, Checkland, Cox, Eagland, D Ennis, Evans, Grange, Greatorex, Gwilt, Ho, Humphreys, Lax, Leytham, A Little, E Little, Marshall, Matthews, Norman, Pullen, Ray, Robertson, Salter, Silvester-Hall, Smith, Spruce, Strachan, Tapper, Warburton, Warfield, Westwood, White, M Wilcox, S Wilcox, A Yeates and B Yeates.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eadie, L Ennis and Parton-Hughes.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE ENSUING YEAR (FOLLOWED BY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE)

It was proposed by Councillor A Little, seconded by Councillor Baker and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Gwilt be elected Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor Gwilt made and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members for his election as Chair.

COUNCILLOR GWILT (CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL) IN THE CHAIR

4 VOTE OF THANKS

It was proposed by Councillor Marshall, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That the sincere thanks of the Council be accorded to Councillor Powell and his console Mrs Powell for their services to the Council.

5 TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2021 were approved as a correct record.

6 TO RECEIVE THE RETURNING OFFICER'S CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION OF DISTRICT COUNCILLOR AND REPORT OF DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Returning Officer certified that Eileen Heather Tranter had been duly elected District Councillor for Summerfield and All Saints Ward and had signed her declaration of acceptance of office.

7 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE ENSUING YEAR (FOLLOWED BY DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE).

It was proposed by Councillor Lax, seconded by Councillor Marshall and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Greatorex be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor Greatorex signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members for his appointment as Vice-Chair.

8 VOTE OF THANKS

It was proposed by Councillor Powell, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That the sincere thanks of the Council be accorded to Councillor Cross and his console Mrs Cross for their services to the Council.

9 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Civic Service

The Chair advised that due to the current Covid restrictions he would be confirming dates for the Civic Service later in the year.

Chair's Charity

The Chair announced that his chosen Charity would be Parkinson's UK.

10 REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON CABINET DECISIONS FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2021 AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

Cllr Pullen submitted his report on Cabinet Decisions and answered Members questions.

Support was expressed for the Councillor Community Grant Scheme but questions were raised in relation to an initial proposal for implementing the scheme that appeared to represent less checks and balances than had been requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Pullen advised that authority had been delegated to the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Climate Change to make changes if improvements were identified and this had been done. He confirmed that administrative costs associated with the audit trail would not diminish the pot available.

Questions were asked about the financial impact of the decision not to proceed with the sale of Netherstowe and Leyfields. It was confirmed that no cuts would be made and the capital receipt had been earmarked for the early repayment of a loan in connection with Burntwood Leisure Centre. The authority would now seek to achieve this from other sources.

Concerns were raised about the use of public funds in connection with Netherstowe and Leyfields. In response to a call for the matter to be considered by Overview & Scrutiny, Councillor Pullen advised that the issues related to process rather than policy and fell within the remit of Audit and Member Standards Committee.

11 MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Marshall, seconded by Councillor Baker and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Planning Committee held on 12 April and 29 April be approved and adopted.

12 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT & MEMBER STANDARDS COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Greatorex, seconded by Councillor Wai Lee Ho and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Member Standards Committee held on 27 April 2021 be approved and adopted.

13 MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET, COMMITTEES, PANELS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS (INCLUDING ALLOCATION OF SEATS AND APPOINTMENTS BY POLITICAL GROUPS)

It was proposed by Councillor Pullen and seconded by Councillor Lax “that the Membership of Cabinet, Committees and Panels including the allocation of seats and appointments by Political Groups as submitted be approved.”

RESOLVED: (1) That the Membership of Cabinet, Committees and Panels including the allocation of seats and appointments by political groups as submitted be approved.

(2) That the Constitution be amended to reflect any changes made.

14 ELECTION OF CHAIRS AND APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES, PANELS ETC.

It was proposed by Councillor Pullen and duly seconded “that the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees and Panels as submitted be approved.”

It was then proposed by Councillor Pullen and seconded by Councillor A Yeates that Councillor Leytham be appointed as Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:(1) That the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Committees and Panels as submitted be approved.

(2) That Councillor Leytham be appointed Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

15 APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Pullen proposed that the appointment of representatives on outside bodies as submitted be approved.

Councillor Pullen noted that that Cllr Eadie was the current representative for the Cannock Chase AONB/SAC and it was intended that this would continue for 2021/22.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Baker and it was

RESOLVED: That the appointment of Representatives on Outside Bodies as submitted be approved.

16 LEYFIELDS & NETHERSTOWE OPEN SPACE - AGREEMENT WITH BROMFORD

Consideration was given to the recommendations of Cabinet made at the meeting held on 11 May 2021

It was proposed by Councillor Pullen, seconded by Councillor Marshall and

RESOLVED: (1) That approval be given to refund planning applications fees of £13,365.60 and make a payment of £103,491.37 (a total of £116,865.97) to Bromford, and amend the Medium Term Financial Strategy to fund the payment from general reserves.

(2) That approval be given to further amend the Medium Term Financial Strategy to remove the capital receipt of £527,000 from the Capital Programme.

17 MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

Consideration was given to the proposed Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement and it was noted that it would be regularly reviewed in line with the ongoing development of best practice.

It was moved by Councillor Strachan, seconded by Councillor Cox and

RESOLVED: That the Modern Slavery Statement as submitted by approved.

18 APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

It was reported that a recruitment process for the role Chief Executive had been completed.

Members noted that Tony McGovern had been appointed as interim Chief Executive to ensure a smooth transition and it was recommended that an appointment be now made to the permanent role of Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service and Chief Officer), Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer.

Accordingly, it was proposed by Councillor Pullen, seconded by Councillor Norman and

RESOLVED: That Simon Fletcher be appointed to the role of Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service and Chief Officer), Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer.

19 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF LICHFIELD HOUSING LTD

Members noted the resignation of Diane Tilley as a Director of Lichfield Housing Limited. It was then moved by Councillor Pullen, seconded by Councillor Powell and

RESOLVED: That Tony McGovern be appointed as a Director of Lichfield Housing Ltd from 1 June 2021.

20 REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF AUDIT AND MEMBER STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Councillor Greatorex submitted the Annual Report of the Audit & Member Standards Committee 2020/21 and moved that the report be received.

The report was seconded by Councillor Ho and it was

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Audit & Member Standards Committee be received

21 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Following the decision of Full Council to revise the committee structure the relevant sections of the Constitution had been updated to reflect the new arrangements.

The changes impacted on Parts 1, 2 and sections of Part 4 of the Constitution.

A new section had also been included at Part 5 setting out codes and protocols for Members appointed to outside bodies.

It was moved by Councillor Lax, seconded by Councillor Spruce and

RESOLVED: (1) That the updates to Parts 1, 2 and 4 of the Constitution be approved and the programme of planned updates to the remaining sections be noted.

(2) That the addition to Part 5 - Codes and Protocols for Outside Body Appointments be approved.

22 QUESTIONS

Q1. Question from Councillor Evans to the Leader of the Council

"Will the Leader, Councillor Pullen, please commit to the production of a report on broadcasting meetings in future at the Council, which will include the costs involved?"

He previously has said that this Council will be transparent and the virtual meetings have allowed this to happen during the Pandemic, via YouTube. This has been successful and has attracted more members of the public to view proceedings. It is therefore important this is allowed to continue, in order to comply with his statement."

Response from the Leader of the Council

"I'm grateful that Cllr Evans shares my enthusiasm for both online meetings and the broadcasting of in-person meetings. Cllr Evans will of course know that we are already broadcasting in-person meetings from the Chamber, and we will certainly be looking at finding an even better, longer term solution for broadcasting our meetings."

Councillor Evans asked the following supplementary question:

“I hope assurance can be given that we will be informed of the cost?”

The Leader of the Council responded:

“Yes, agreed”

Q2. Question from Councillor Robertson to the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy and Local Plan

“Can the cabinet member confirm how much involvement this Council had with the now withdrawn proposal from Staffordshire County Council to redevelop part of Festival Gardens in Lichfield City Centre and add an additional lane to the A51 at the Bowling Green traffic island?”

Response from the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy and Local Plan

“The proposal was a matter between Staffordshire County Council as the highway authority and Lichfield City Council as the landowner. Lichfield District Council did not have a role in the discussions between these two parties or in the consultation that took place.”

Councillor Robertson asked the following supplementary question:

“Can confirmation be given that the District Council did not have any part in signing off the proposal”

The Leader of the Council responded:

“I can endorse Councillor Eadie’s response that the District Council did not have any part to play”

Q3. Question from Councillor Norman to the Leader of the Council

“At the meeting of Council on the 13th of October last year it was Resolved that the Council would:

‘.. write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill”, and “write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People”.

The organisation promoting the Bill, PowerforPeople, will attempt to persuade an MP drawn in the Private Members’ Ballot on 20th May to adopt the Bill. If Michael Fabricant MP is one of the lucky winners in that ballot, can the Leader agree to email him, by the following day, asking if he will adopt the Bill that this Council believes would benefit many residents and help to further our stated goal to reduce Greenhouse Gas emission?

Can he also he also tell the Council of the responses he would have received from both MPs who should have been written to following the Resolution agreed last October?”

Response from the Leader of the Council

"Both MPs have been in touch to say that they are not opposed - while recognising the very low likelihood that a bill of this nature will make it through Parliament. In addition, Michael Fabricant has set out his position, following our letter, here: <https://www.michael.fabricant.mp.co.uk/2020/11/28/local-electricity-bill-and-lichfield-district-council/>

As Michael is already aware of this, I am sure if he wishes to enter the Private Members Bill Ballot, and if he is successful, he will use his good judgment as to what legislation he wishes to propose."

Q4. Question from Councillor Norman to the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Climate Change

"At the meeting of Council held on the 15th of December last year the members supported the Slow Ways project and its goal to create a network of walking routes that connect all of Great Britain's towns and cities as well as thousands of villages including those in Lichfield District.

He will recall that the Motion that was agreed at that meeting by all members would help tackle the climate change emergency and including the following: "we will explore financial and other support such as encouraging the County Council to provide safe footway improvements."

Now that the Slows Ways Website has been launched and local volunteers have helped to identify a number of safe walking routes, including one that connects Burntwood to Lichfield, can he set out what action he will now take to honour that commitment?"

Response from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Climate Change

"It's great the work that Slow Ways is doing in re-inventing the wheel for a new generation. They are working closely with Ordnance Survey to encourage people to walk again, abandoning cars, buses and more. As we know walking is not only good for fitness but also mental health and wellness and if it helps reduce people's carbon footprint as well then this is to be applauded.

As a council we will be supporting these schemes and have already released a number of stories encouraging people in the district to enjoy walking and seeing our beautiful district. This will continue and where appropriate we will be highlighting the walks on Slow Ways alongside our own popular Active Lichfield Walks.

As it is a very new initiative we will probably find there are many ways we might be able to support and help Slow Ways in the coming years."

Councillor Norman asked the following supplementary question:

When will action take place and methods of supporting Slow Ways be considered by Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Climate Change responded:

As and when we see ways to help we will consider these but it is early days and as yet nothing has come forward. Some promotional work has already been undertaken.

Q5. Question from Councillor Norman to the Leader of the Council

"I appreciate that we are not yet able to meet again in the Council Chamber, or indeed virtually, but could he tell me what the financial cost of tonight's meeting, here in the Leisure Centre, is likely to be compared to a meeting held via Zoom and broadcast on YouTube?"

Could he also take a brief and exploratory report to Scrutiny of the likely cost of equipping the Council Chamber and, separately, the Committee Room so that these meetings could be seen more widely by our residents which has been the case under the Coronavirus restrictions until May 7th?"

Response from the Leader of the Council

"I'm grateful that Cllr Norman shares my enthusiasm for both online meetings and the broadcasting of in-person meetings. The cost of meeting here this evening in the Leisure Centre is around £1,200, whereas hosting this meeting online would not have incurred any additional costs. Cllr Norman will of course know that we are already broadcasting in-person meetings from the Chamber, and we will certainly be looking at finding an even better, longer term solution for broadcasting our meetings. Whether or not this comes to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, is, of course, a matter for that Committee."

Councillor Norman asked the following supplementary question:

Can we look at cost of the system to see if it is something that is realistic or not and consider including the Committee Room since some meetings will be held there.

The Leader of the Council responded:

Yes.

23 DIANE TILLEY (CHIEF EXECUTIVE 2013 - 2021)

Councillors Pullen, Norman, Wilcox, Evans and White paid tribute to the work of the Chief Executive, Diane Tilley who would be leaving the Authority on 28 May 2021.

Members spoke of her conscientious, productive and thoughtful approach that had helped ensure the delivery of efficient and effective services during challenging times and contributed towards making Lichfield District a better place.

24 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS

RESOLVED: That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

25 MINUTES OF THE APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Pullen, seconded by Councillor Norman and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appointments Committee held on 29 April be received.

(The Meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.)

CHAIR