

COUNCIL

13 OCTOBER 2020

PRESENT:

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

100 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Banevicius and Cross.

101 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Grange declared an interest in any discussions on Friary Grange as a Member of the Leisure Centre.

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

Councillor S Wilcox said she was sorry that the comments she had made in relation to Lichfield Live at the previous meeting had cause offence and she wished to withdraw them. She said she had learned a lot from the feedback that had been received and hoped this would bring an end to the matter.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2020 be approved as a correct record of the meeting subject to Minute 80 being amended to record that former Councillor Alan Pearce served from 2011 to 2015 and the first line of Minute 90 being amended to read 'although verbal notification had been given of Councillor Brown's intention to resign formal notification had not yet been received.'

103 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said it was his sad duty to inform Council that the following former Members had passed away:

Former Councillor David Leighton Bailey MA

Former Councillor David Bailey served as a Member of the Council representing Chadsmead Ward from 1991 to 1999.

During this time he served on a number of Committees including as Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee.

Former Councillor Douglas Harold Joseph Constable MIFM

Former Councillor Doug Constable served as a Member of the Council for a total of 38 years representing Chase Terrace Ward from 1976 to 1979, Redslade Ward from to 1980 to 1995 and Highfield Ward for the period 1999 to 2019.

He served on various Committees, including as Chairman and Vice Chairman of Planning Committee, Regulatory & Licensing Committee, Strategic (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee, Employment Committee and the Parish Forum.

Former Councillor Doug Constable would also be remembered for his service representing Lichfield District Council as Chairman of the Council from 1983 to 1984.

Former Councillor Peter Jones

Former Councillor Peter Jones served as a Member of Lichfield District Council representing Alrewas and Fradley Ward from May 1995 to May 1999.

He served on numerous Committees including as Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee and the Direct Service Organisation Panel. Peter Jones also represented the Council on a number of outside bodies including the Community Council of Staffordshire, Lichfield Police Executive Group and South East Staffordshire Health Council.

Former Councillor John Nichols

Former Councillor John Nichols served as a Member of Lichfield District Council representing Longdon Ward from 1986 to 2002. He served on many committees during his term and would also be remembered for his service as Chairman of the Council from 1999 to 2000.

The Chairman extend the Council's sympathy to the families and friends of the former Councillors, and to all those who had lost loved ones due to Covid-19. He hoped, next year, to be able to arrange a service of remembrance at the Cathedral for former council members and members of the community who had been lost to Covid-19.

The Council then held a Minute's silence.

Following the silence Members remembered and paid tribute to the former Members of the Council who had passed away.

104 REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON CABINET DECISIONS FROM THE MEETINGS HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER AND 6 OCTOBER 2020 AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

Councillor Pullen submitted his report on Cabinet Decisions from the meetings held on 8 September and 6 October and Cabinet Member decisions.

Councillor Grange questioned whether pushing ahead so quickly with the City Master Plan was the right thing to do given current uncertainty due to the global pandemic.

Councillor Pullen responded that the Masterplan was looking at the City as a whole and was not limited to the Birmingham Road site. The next phase would help ensure a balanced city where any new development would not detract from other areas of the city. It looked at the wider picture and movement around city which needed to be done regardless of what happened in the short to medium term.

105 MINUTES OF THE STRATEGIC (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

Councillor Spruce submitted the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 September.

In response to a question from Councillor Ball about the communication of the Council's commitment to involving minority groups Councillor A Yeates advised that consultation was as inclusive as possible and specific groups were contacted whenever appropriate.

106 MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT (OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

Councillor Leytham submitted the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2020.

Councillor Robertson referred to the budget available to mitigate the climate emergency and the proposal to include expenditure related to this budget in the work programme. Councillor Leytham confirmed that this would be considered by the O&S co-ordinating group meeting in November.

Councillor Norman noted that the LGA and most councils were very concerned about the Planning White paper that would take away local decision making and frustrate communities. He hoped that the Council would lobby local MPs on this.

Councillor Ball recalled that a number of concerns had been raised in respect the Planning White Paper during the debate and he urged Cabinet to make a strong representation. He also questioned whether the Joint O&S Co-Ordinating Group had discussed setting up a joint meeting to consider Section 106 and the CIL Levy.

Councillor Eadie confirmed that the representation on behalf of the Council would seek to reflect the Committee's views. He advised that a commitment had been given by the Chairmen of the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committees to consider the most appropriate way to look at Section 106 and the CIL Levy.

107 MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY, HOUSING & HEALTH (OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

Councillor England submitted the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020.

Councillor Norman asked why the Burntwood Health Centre was not included as a standing item and questioned what pressure was being applied to the NHS, CCG and MPs to make some progress on the health centre that was first promised ten years ago.

The Chairman confirmed that she thought it should be included.

Councillor Evans supported the need for additional health provision in Burntwood and also said it was vitally important that all Councillors were aware of the progress being made regarding the George Bryan Centre, especially given the increase in mental health problems. She said the Samuel Johnson and Robert Peel hospitals must continue in their present form and Councillor Leytham had been asked to ensure this was raised at the Staffordshire Select Health Committee.

Councillor White confirmed that the Greenwood House project would deliver a new GP surgery suitable for the 21st Century and he agreed that there was also a requirement for a health centre for Burntwood. He said he would raise this with the Clinical Commissioning Group and providers to make sure it was on their agenda.

Councillor Evans referred to problems with the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants by the provider and noted the contract would now be project managed. She emphasised the importance of regular updates on performance.

Councillor Eagland agreed with Councillor Evans in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants and said she was hopeful that the management of the contract would speed up delivery of grants and the Committee would keep the matter under review.

108 MINUTES OF THE LEISURE, PARKS & WASTE MANAGEMENT (OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

Councillor Matthews submitted the Minutes of the meetings held on 16 July and 23 September 2020.

Councillor Norman noted that last year the Council was 135th in the league table for dry recycling with a 45% record. He understood the new figure was 48.12% however South Staffordshire had achieved 50.1% so more needed to be done. Acknowledging that it was not an easy task he said recycling rates needed to be increased through education and he would support any such initiatives.

Councillor Matthews said there had been additional efforts to explain what could and could not be recycled. He confirmed there were further plans to fine tune the information being provided to the public.

Councillor Grange noted that opening date for Friary Grange Leisure Centre was rapidly approaching and requested an update as soon as possible.

Councillor Ray referred to the report submitted to the Leisure Parks and Waste Management (O&S) Committee estimating provision of £1.03 million funding to Freedom Leisure for the current financial year and while he understood the reason for this he asked, for transparency, that the Minutes refer to this amount. He asked if there were any further updates in relation to the funding situation.

With regard to the provision of guidance about recycling Councillor A Yeates said press releases had been issued recently together with bin stickers and called for Members to help including via social media.

Councillor Cox confirmed the intended opening date for Friary Grange Leisure Centre was still 24 October and no further payments had been made to Freedom Leisure.

Councillor White said the Covid assessment for Staffordshire was currently Medium for the period up until 21 October, however the direction of travel for infection rates was upwards. Hopefully this could be contained but the opening could potentially be prevented by Covid restrictions.

109 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT & MEMBER STANDARDS COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Greatorex seconded by Councillor Ho and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 be approved and adopted.

110 MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Councillor Marshall in submitting the Minutes expressed his appreciation of the work undertaken by planning officers and referred to the increased workload resulting from the Government's desire to create more homes. He stressed the importance of ensuring local authorities were adequately resourced to implement the delivery of new homes and the myriad of changes required by the impending arrival of HS2.

It was then seconded by Councillor Baker and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 27 July and 24 August 2020 be approved and adopted.

111 MINUTES OF THE REGULATORY & LICENSING COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor B Yeates seconded by Councillor Parton-Hughes and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meetings held on 30 July and 28 September 2020 be approved and adopted.

112 MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

The Minutes were submitted by Councillor Humphreys and seconded by Councillor Barnett.

Councillor Robertson referred to the gender pay gap and welcomed the progress made. He noted that there had been an undertaking to consider the remaining small gap and the difficulty in recruiting women into the joint waste service and asked when this could be discussed.

Councillor Humphreys confirmed that this matter would be looked at and expressed his appreciation of the work undertaken by officers during the pandemic under often difficult circumstances.

It was then

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020 be approved and adopted.

113 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020-25

Councillor Strachan submitted a report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020-25.

Approval was sought to remove all budgets related to investment in commercial property given changes to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) lending terms.

It was reported that the MTFS also included an Invest to Save project for the implementation of a cloud based IT environment. However further analysis identified an alternative option of procuring server hosting and support services from Staffordshire and Shropshire Health Informatics Service and this option was approved on 31 January 2020.

Members noted that the MTFS assumed a pay award for 2020/21 (and later years) of 2.00%. In August 2020 Local Government agreed a pay award for 2020/21 of 2.75%. This would result in an additional cost for 2020/21 and later years of 0.75% plus related employer costs.

Additionally, under the agreement, staff with less than five years' service would also see their holiday rise from 21 days a year to 22 and this could also result in a further additional cost.

Councillor Strachan emphasised that like much of the local government sector the Council remained in an uncertain situation and over a five year budget the reserves would be spent by the end of year five.

The report's recommendations were then seconded by Councillor Eadie. He urged central government to provide local government with the certainty of a multi-year settlement as soon as possible, noting that district and borough councils had borne the brunt of funding reductions for many years and additional funding on offer during the pandemic was falling short of the cost burdens and loss of revenue encountered.

Councillor Eadie said officers could not be asked to provide the same for less in future and new ways of working must be found, including working with others to safeguard the community and services.

Councillor Norman questioned what had been done to lobby local MPs on the financial situation and what they were doing about it. He expressed appreciation of the work being done by staff particularly during the pandemic.

Councillor Ray noted the removal of the commercial property budget and asked about the situation regarding the Housing Company.

Councillor Pullen gave assurance that the Council and individual cabinet members frequently lobbied the District's local MPs and also spoke regularly to the Local Government Association.

Councillor Strachan confirmed that Lichfield Housing Ltd was unrelated to the Property Investment Strategy.

It was duly

RESOLVED: (1) That all budgets related to investment in property be removed.

(2) That all budgets related to the ICT Cloud project be removed.

114 LICHFIELD CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Councillor E Little submitted a report on the Lichfield City Masterplan.

The report noted that consultants David Lock Associates were commissioned in 2019 to produce a Masterplan for Lichfield City Centre. Following preparation of a draft plan and public consultation, this had been considered by the Economic Growth, Environment and Development (O&S) Committee in June 2020 and subsequently by Cabinet in July 2020.

Consideration was now being given to the delivery of the Masterplan and its component parts. A Project Initiation Document (PID) had been prepared that included a programme of projects/work and associated timescales that would be implemented in the short term. The PID also sets out details of governance arrangements and resource requirements.

Arrangements for managing delivery of the masterplan included a Member-led Project Board; an officer Project Team and a Member Task & Finish Group to provide scrutiny.

It was advised that a Delivery Plan would set out the approach to achieving the Masterplan's aims and objectives.

Proposed budgets for Phase 1 of the work were set out and it was proposed that these be included in the MTFs with partial funding provided by the Birmingham Road earmarked reserve.

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved by Councillor E Little and seconded by Councillor Strachan.

Councillor D Ennis expressed concern that, given the uncertainty due to Covid19, proceeding too quickly could lead to mistakes.

Councillor Grange agreed that in the current circumstances the do nothing option should be considered until there was a compelling case to proceed, especially given the masterplan would affect the use of land in the city centre for generations.

Councillor White said good master planning was flexible but helped to understand the way a city operated and identified potential opportunities. He thought there was sense in taking a step forward on what would inevitably be a long journey.

Councillor Spruce said there were always reasons to delay, but a Masterplan was long-term planning and it was vital to establish resources now.

Councillor Ray supported the recommendations. He appreciated there was uncertainty but noted it was a flexible process and Covid-19 had highlighted existing issues, such as challenges faced by retail in city centres, which were identified and addressed by the Masterplan.

Councillor Leytham highlighted the importance of Overview and Scrutiny and stressed the necessity of having a plan and examining the options open to the Council.

Councillor Robertson said people deserved something to happen on the site that delivered jobs and economic security and it couldn't continue to be delayed.

Councillor Greatorex agreed that standing still was not an option and noted that the Council owned a site that was currently incurring costs and earning nothing.

Councillor Ball supported the recommendations and endorsed the current approach.

Councillor Marshall said there would never be a predictable future and it was necessary to proceed and seek intelligent development of a prime city centre site.

Councillor E Little noted that Council was at the beginning of long term process, and a number of options would be considered over the coming months as part of a phased approach.

On request a named vote was taken on the report's recommendations:

FOR (35)	AGAINST (8)	ABSTAIN (1)
ANKETELL	BIRCH	PARTON-HUGHES
BAKER	ENNIS, D	
BALL	ENNIS, L	
BARNETT	EVANS	
BINNEY	GRANGE	
CHECKLAND	LITTLE A	
COX	NORMAN	
EADIE	WESTWOOD	

EAGLAND		
GREATOREX		
GWILT		
HO		
HUMPHREYS		
LAX		
LEYTHAM		
LITTLE, E		
MARSHALL, T.		
MATTHEWS		
POWELL		
PULLEN		
RAY		
ROBERTSON		
SALTER		
SILVESTER-HALL		
SMITH		
SPRUCE		
STRACHAN		
TAPPER		
WARBURTON		
WARFIELD		
WHITE		
WILCOX, M.		
WILCOX, S.		
YEATES, A.		
YEATES, B.		

It was duly:

RESOLVED: (1) That the proposed revenue budget of £330,000 (£160,000 in 2020/21 and £170,000 in 2021/22) to take forward Phase 1 of the project be approved.

(2) That the proposed revenue budget be funded by £100,000 from the Birmingham Road Site earmarked reserve and the balance of £230,000 be funded from the Multi Storey Car Park Sinking Fund.

115 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Councillor Lax submitted a report on proposed updates to the Enforcement Policy.

Members noted that changes, informed by experience from Housing Tribunals, were recommended in the Housing Civil Penalties Annexe.

It was reported that the updated Policy had been considered and supported by the Regulatory and Licensing Committee at its meeting on 28th September 2020.

Councillor Evans spoke in support of the recommendations and commended the work of officers during the pandemic.

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

RESOLVED: (1) That the updated Regulatory Services, Housing and Wellbeing Enforcement Policy, including the Annexe on Housing Civil Penalties, be adopted.

(2) That delegated authority be given to the Regulatory and Licensing Committee to make any required amendments to the Policy in the future.

116 CHANGES TO COMMITTEES

(a) To approve changes to the Committee arrangements for Asset Management

Councillor Lax advised that the Council had a Strategic Asset Management Committee within its political management structure however it was considered that a separate committee was no longer needed and oversight and decisions could be exercised through existing mechanisms.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Smith and it was

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Asset Management Committee be removed from the structure and that the Head of Governance and Performance be given delegated authority to update the Constitution to reflect this change.

(b) To approve changes to the Membership of Committees

Changes to the Membership of Committees were proposed by Councillor Pullen and Councillor Norman. The changes were seconded by Councillor Eadie and it was

RESOLVED: (1) That the membership of the Economic Growth, Environment & Development (Overview & Scrutiny) Committee be amended to reflect that Councillor S Wilcox was not a Member of the Committee.

(2) That Councillor L Ennis be appointed to fill the vacancy on Planning Committee.

117 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

(A) The Following Motion was submitted by Councillor Norman:

That Lichfield District Council:

(i) acknowledges the efforts that this council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy by declaring the Climate Change Emergency last year and developing a Local Procurement Policy;

(ii) further recognises

- that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
- that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would enable and empower new local businesses, or councils, to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local customers, and
- that revenues received by new local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions;

(iii) accordingly resolves to support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by many MPs from both sides of the house which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply companies and co-operatives by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply operation; and

(iv) further resolves to

- inform the local media of this decision,
- write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill, and
- write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Robertson.

Councillor Pullen said he fully supported the spirit of the Motion, however the Motion as proposed left the door open for the local authority to enter the energy market and experiences in Nottingham and Bristol illustrated the danger of this. Councillor Pullen therefore proposed the following amendment with a view to ensuring that the Council had a barrier to entering the energy market while removing the barriers for others:

That Lichfield District Council

(i) acknowledges the efforts that this council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy by declaring the Climate Change Emergency last year and developing a Local Procurement Policy;

(ii) further recognises

- that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
- that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would enable and empower new local businesses, ~~or councils~~, to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local customers, and
- that revenues received by new local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions;
- *the recent, high profile collapse of the largest local authority-run energy companies.*

(iii) accordingly resolves to support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by many MPs from both sides of the house which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply companies and co-operatives by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply operation; and

(iv) further resolves to:

- inform the local media of this decision,
- write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill, and
- write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.
- *not enter the energy market*

Following a vote **the Amendment was approved.**

Councillor Norman indicated that he supported the Motion as amended and following a vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Motion as amended be approved.

(B) The following Motion was submitted by Councillor Evans:

This Council commends the work of the officers to support the transition of Council and committee meetings to an online format in the face of social distancing restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic. This Council further understands that the use of new technology represents an opportunity for current and future elected representatives to engage a wider audience in its work, including parents or guardians with young children, commuters, shift workers and those with mobility problems. This Council resolves to continue the use of virtual meetings while social distancing restrictions remain in place and to actively consider ways of integrating video conferencing and the online streaming of Council and committee meetings when restrictions are lifted, so that it can continue to engage with the wider community.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor L Ennis.

Councillor Pullen welcomed the motion and submitted the following amendment to reflect the need to comply with national legislation and acknowledge the work that had been undertaken to date on integrating video conferencing and virtual meetings:

This Council commends the work of the officers to support the transition of Council and committee meetings to an online format in the face of social distancing restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic. This Council further understands that the use of new technology represents an opportunity for current and future elected representatives to engage a wider audience in its work, including parents or guardians with young children, commuters, shift workers and those with mobility problems. This Council resolves to continue the use of virtual meetings ~~while social distancing restrictions remain in place~~ *while the relevant provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 (or any subsequent legislation) remain in place*, ~~to actively consider ways of~~ *and to continue its work on* integrating video conferencing and the online streaming of Council and committee meetings ~~when restrictions are lifted~~, so that it can continue to engage with the wider community.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Baker.

Councillors Birch, Ho, E Little, Norman, Ray and Smith spoke in support of the Motion and the amendment. Councillor Eadie supported the Motion whilst noting that it was important to recognise that not all residents wished to engage virtually and therefore alternative mechanisms were needed to engage and communicate.

Following a vote **the Amendment was approved.**

Councillor Gwilt and Roberts spoke in favour of the Motion as amended.

Following a vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the Motion as amended be approved.

118 QUESTIONS

Q1. Question from Councillor Ray to the Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Economic Development:

There are a number of buildings around the district that have been vacant for many years. They are a blot on our landscape. For example in Lichfield the old Prince of Wales / Feria pub on Bore Street, the old library, the old post office on Beacon Street and the old GKN factory near Lichfield Trent Valley Station.

What is the Council doing to proactively engage with landowners and to ensure that these premises are maintained or developed for the good of the community?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Economic Development:

“In respect of the Feria pub, the Economic Development Officer has been liaising with the owner of the premises on his current actions and future ambitions for the property to be economically active. The owner is currently undertaking internal refurbishment of the premises. As it has been left vacant for several years it needs quite a lot of work undertaken internally and externally. The Economic Development service shall continue to add pressure onto the owner to get the property into a usable state to be occupied. We have also looked at our options should the property not be redeveloped, then we are able to compulsory purchase these properties as long as we have a business case for us to access external funding for the redevelopment.

With regards to other long term vacant commercial premises, when a premises enquiries specifications suit one of these properties the economic development service work with the enquirer to occupy the site but there is a lot of work and financial investment needed in some

of these properties as they have been vacant for a long period of time which isn't favourable for some enquirers. The economic development service have made contact with some of the owners of these properties to understand what the barriers are to getting them back to an economically active status."

Councillor Ray asked the following supplementary question:

Can it be confirmed that through the Economic Development Officer there can be support for owners of properties that have been left vacant and undeveloped, since this information would be helpful to know and encourage Ward Councillors to try to contact landowners and put them in touch with the Council?

The Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Economic Development responded:

Yes, that is correct, we are in contact with many owners of properties and looking to get them back into use.

Q2. Question from Councillor Ray to the Leader of the Council:

During the difficult COVID-19 period councillor meetings have had to be conducted remotely by Zoom.

This has had a positive impact because it has led to increased attendance from members and also from the public as a result of meetings being broadcast on the YouTube channel.

Remote meetings have made the council more accessible to our residents. They could also lead to a wider group of people standing as councillors because for example working people, especially those who work outside of the district, and individuals with childcare and other caring responsibilities will be able to attend remote meetings more easily than physical meetings.

We do need to learn from the success of virtual meetings. They have been a positive that has come out of what is a very difficult time.

In my view we do still need to come together as a group of councillors and so do need to have a minimum number of physical meetings but we should not just go back to how things were before COVID-19.

Can I ask Leader for his views and for his commitment to set up a cross-party group to review options for council and committee meetings for the future.

Response from the Leader of the Council:

I think Councillor Ray may already know my views on this, as he seems to have repeated my comments made much earlier in the year and published in both Lichfield Live and ConservativeHome. I fully support a hybrid approach, where meetings can be attended either physically or via videolink and I of course look forward to the day that we can all meet together for our Full Council meetings in person. Our officers are already looking at the technology for hybrid meetings, which can go through the normal, cross-party, Overview & Scrutiny process.

Q3. Question from Councillor Tapper to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health:

Can the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health please update us on progress with Greenwood House, and assure us that she will continue to lobby Staffordshire County Council (SCC) until it is delivered?

Response from the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health:

SCC have confirmed construction work on the new health centre at Greenwood House is due to begin next month (November), which is great news for all Burntwood residents registered with the Darwin Medical Practice.

SCC have issued the following update:

“The Greenwood House Medical Centre on Lichfield Road, Burntwood, will replace the Hudson Drive site of Darwin Medical Practice and provide 12 new consulting rooms, five treatment rooms, a healthcare/phlebotomy room, and a health education space in a single-story building. The plans also include accommodation for an adjoining pharmacy.

The site, once occupied by a nursing home, is currently owned by Staffordshire County Council and the funding is from NHS England’s Estates and Technology Transformation Fund, a multi-million pound investment programme aimed at providing more modernised buildings and technology to improve GP services for patients across the country

It is hoped that the new centre will reduce pressure on local hospitals with purpose-built, modern facilities designed to meet the demands of an ageing population with multiple healthcare needs.

Johnny McMahon, Staffordshire County Council’s Cabinet member for Health, Care and Wellbeing, said: “Part of the strategy for reducing demand on our hospitals from ageing communities is to provide more facilities and services in the community and we have always earmarked this site for use to benefit the people of Burntwood.

“This will be a first-class health centre on the community’s doorstep and it will make a huge contribution to residents’ health and wellbeing, as well as supporting older people’s independence.”

Lynn Millar, Director of Primary Care for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent CCGs, said: “We are delighted that work is to begin on this purpose built accommodation in very close proximity to a facility that is no longer able to meet modern healthcare needs.

“The new premises will be more spacious and will allow the practice to fulfil its potential by providing the accommodation required for their expert training of the clinicians of the future. This will also improve recruitment and retention of staff by providing a modern workplace.

“In addition, the new building will facilitate closer collaboration and the co-location of primary care with other professionals such as physiotherapists and mental health practitioners.”

Dr Gerbo Huisman, GP Partner at Darwin Medical Practice, said: “I am delighted that years of collaborative working between skilled and dedicated professionals from local health authorities, the County Council and The Darwin Medical Practice have now come to fruition.

“Our patients, as well as the wider community, are now getting what they have asked for so long; a modern, spacious and comfortable health centre from which we, their GP practice, will be delivering high quality, responsive and patient centred primary care services.”

Building work is scheduled to be completed by autumn 2021. The site will have 61 car parking spaces, uses the existing road entrance and its surroundings will be landscaped.”

Q4. Question from Councillor Ray to the Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Economic Development:

The council has passed a motion to declare a climate change emergency and it is obviously important that the council implements specific policies to support that motion. This is the defining issue of our time and vehicle emissions are one of the major issues to be tackled and councils (including LDC) can make a real impact.

I have some specific proposals relating to electric vehicles:

1. Taxis are licensed by local councils and as part of LDC's licensing arrangements, LDC should phase out all taxis licensed in our district which are not hybrid or electric vehicles by a fixed date. That would make a real difference to the air quality in the district. In London all taxis will need to be electric by 2033 - but I would certainly want LDC to deliver this in a shorter timeframe.
2. All council-run vehicles to be hybrid / electric by a fixed date.
3. Parking charges to be lifted for electric vehicles. This has been done by other local authorities like Sheffield City Council - and that would be a great message for our residents.

These are sensible and pragmatic policies and residents are expecting LDC to take specific actions to "do its bit" to tackle the climate change emergency. These proposals will need detailed planning, for example LDC would need to ensure that there is full consultation with our taxis drivers and that there are sufficient charging points and can I ask Councillor Little to confirm that LDC will commit to these initiatives and plan for their implementation.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Economic Development:

Taxis

From 2022 all hackney carriage must have a euro 6 fitted engine and any without would not be granted license when it is up for renewal. As part of the masterplan, we are looking to fully pedestrianise the city centre and from looking at the latest air quality data we have 2 bad spots within the district which are Muckley Corner and A38 where the cottages are very close to the carriageway so we do actively monitor the pollution levels with the district. The type of taxi the owner drives is a matter for themselves to determine and with the distances they have to cover on a shift (both within and outside of the district), alternatives may not currently be suitable for them but we would encourage them to look for alternates to petrol and diesel.

Fleet Management

We will consider options for electric and hybrid vehicles for future fleet replacements, particularly for smaller vehicles where the technology is proven and the charging infrastructure is viable. We need to be mindful, that currently the refuse vehicles currently travel to Four Ashes to tip and the range on the current models of refuse vehicles are not yet proven to be viable.

Car Parking

As you are aware, we are imminently starting the development of our car parking strategy. Once complete, we will then be looking to implement more EV charging points within some of those car parks. We would not look to remove car parking charges for electric vehicles as we encourage people to walk or cycle where possible and removing charges does not promote that.

Councillor Ray asked the following supplementary question:

I'm disappointed by the response regarding the phasing out of taxis which are not hybrid or electric vehicles. Can I ask that this be reconsidered and left on the table as a serious proposal as it delivers as a specific tangible policy and assists in improving the environment and tackling the climate emergency here in Lichfield District.

The Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Economic Development responded:

I believe this is part of the Regulatory and Licensing Policy which will be considered when it is reviewed.

119 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

IN PRIVATE

120 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

The confidential Minutes of the Employment Committee held on 1 October 2020 were submitted by Councillor Humphreys and seconded by Councillor Robertson.

Councillor Birch referred to the additional hours worked by staff during the pandemic and the potential welfare impact.

RESOLVED: That the confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2020 be approved and adopted.

(The Meeting closed at 8.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN