

# WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa on Wednesday 28 July 2021, at 6.00pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Murphy (Chairman); Councillors Ashford, Bartlett, Boad, Cooke, Davison, Day, K Dickson, Grainger, Illingworth, Jacques, Kennedy, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt, Luckhurst, Mangat, Margrave, Matecki, Milton, Nicholls, Roberts and Syson.

## 15. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cullinan, A Dearing, J Dearing, R Dickson, Evans, Falp, B Gifford, C Gifford, Grey, Hales, Heath, Morris, Noone, Norris, Quinney, Redford, Rhead, Russell, Skinner, Tangri, Tracey, and Wright.

## 16. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 5 May 2021 were proposed, duly seconded taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## 18. Communications and Announcements

The Chairman welcomed back Council to the Council Chamber for the first time since February 2019. He thanked Group Leaders for enabling the meeting to take place, broadcasting the meeting to the wider community and in doing so showing community leadership through keeping Members and public attending meetings safe.

The Chairman informed Council that since Council last met, former Councillors Bob Attwood, who served on the Council from 1989 to 2001, and David Kohler, who served on the Council from 1995 to 2003, had both passed away. As a mark of respect, the Chairman led the Council in a minute silence.

The Chairman reminded Council of the genocide that occurred in Srebrenica 26 years ago. The annual memorial event had taken place between 4 and 11 July and as a mark of respect this and to show solidarity in standing against such acts, he led the Council in a minute silence.

The Chairman took the opportunity to remind Council that since it last met, the England Men's Football team had competed at the Euro 2020 competition, and along with Group Leaders and the Chief Executive, he made a joint statement, which read:

*"We wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the England men's Football team for their success but sadly this is not the main point of this statement. The Racist response to members of the football team has no place in society. There is no place for discrimination of any kind and sadly the actions of the few have undermined what had been an exceptional tournament for helping society to celebrate as we came towards the end of the global pandemic. Therefore, we trust that as a Council*

*you will support us in condemning the racists and their behaviours. This said We look forward to more positive sporting events across the Country in 2022 with the Women's Euro Championships and of course the Commonwealth games, which will partly be held in this District. At the times how true is the Motto of the Commonwealth Games Federation of Humanity, Equality, Destiny."*

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank all Council officers who had worked tirelessly over the last 17 months to support the community through the pandemic and continue to deliver services during this time.

The Chairman informed Council that there was no business for the Council to consider under item 6, Notices of Motion.

## 19. **Petition**

The Council received a petition from Gareth Dore, sponsored by Councillor Day, titled Permanently Pedestrianise Parade in Leamington Spa.

Gareth Dore addressed Council about the petition.15:22

Councillor Day addressed Council and proposed that the petition should be referred to Warwickshire County Council, as the Highway Authority with an additional proposal, to be refined by the Leadership Co-Ordination Group, that this Council sought a structure to bring about meaningful change for Leamington as part of the projects the Council was bringing forward and further funding opportunities that were available. As part of this transformation framework, there would be a transformation board with all three levels of local government represented, to co-ordinate effort, using the Leamington Neighbourhood Plan, engage highway resources, and in doing so create and support place. To support this there would be an advisory group comprising of Leamington Chamber of Commerce, BID Leamington, town traders, the University of Warwick, Chiltern Railway, Network Rail, bus companies, the canal and river trust, and a technical group.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Nicholls.

Councillors Boad, Cooke, Roberts, Davison, Granger, Jacques, Kohler all spoke on this item.

**Resolved** that the petition be referred to Warwickshire County Council, as Highway Authority; with an additional proposal, to be refined by the Leadership Co-Ordination Group, that this Council seeks a structure to bring about meaningful change for Leamington as part of the projects this Council are bringing forward and further funding opportunities that are available. As part of this transformation framework, there will be a transformation board with all three levels of local government represented, to co-ordinate effort, using the Leamington Neighbourhood Plan, engage highway resources, and in doing so create and support place. To support this there shall be; an advisory group comprising of Leamington Chamber of Commerce, BID Leamington, town traders, the University of Warwick, Chiltern Railway, Network Rail, bus companies; and the canal and river trust; and a technical group.

(During this item the Chairman proposed that the Council procedure rule restricting

the length of time available for the debate be suspended. On being put to the vote the motion was approved unanimously)

## 20. **Leader's & Portfolio Holders' Statements**

The Portfolio Holder for Homes, Health & Wellbeing, Councillor Matecki, informed Council that:

- (1) Riverside House would be reopening to the general public on an appointment basis;
- (2) the new Housing Allocations policy had gone live, with all persons on the register having been reclassified and notified of their banding; and
- (3) only certain Council owned flats, mainly the larger blocks in Leamington and Warwick, had their communal areas cleaned. Very few concerns were raised by residents in blocks without cleaning contract and in a number of these the residents took pride in maintain the communal areas and gardens. Support was offered where required by the estates team, which included cleaning work. On review it was considered that more complaints would be received if cleaning was introduced as it would see a rise in cost for both Council tenants and lease holders within the blocks.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism & Leisure, Councillor Bartlett, informed Council that:

- (1) It was one year to go to the Commonwealth Games, which would be hosted by Birmingham, but the road race cycling and Bowls would be held in Warwick District. He had attended several promotional events, including to Whitnash with the Game's mascot Perry the Bull. All town Councils had been briefed on the plans for the games, the volunteering programme had been launched and ticket ballot had been opened;
- (2) the arts services would all reopen from 1 August; the Art Gallery and museum were already open on restricted numbers but both attendances and feedback had been positive;
- (3) the new artificial pitch at Racing Club Warwick had been completed and was being used for training by both Racing Club Warwick teams and other teams from the local community. There was a planned official opening to coincide with the opening game of the season;
- (4) works had been completed on Christchurch gardens and Victoria Park tennis courts. As a result, participation had increased at both venues;
- (5) the Everyone Active (EA) managed leisure centres had recorded improving participation levels, with swimming lessons at 94% capacity. As a result, EA were seeing an improving financial return but the future of the centres were far from certain and therefore there was a long way to go, but he thanked all staff in getting the centres back open and keeping them open; and
- (6) he was working hard with the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism & Leisure from Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Shakespeare England to maximise tourism recovery in the area.

The Portfolio Holder for Place & Economy, Councillor Cooke, informed Council that:

- (1) there had been a successful public consultation on the Scoping document and Call for sites for the South Warwickshire Local Plan. 135,000 leaflets were delivered to households, 16 events for various stakeholder groups and the public were held, and over 550 responses received to the Scoping document plus over 500 possible sites had been submitted for consideration;

- (2) the Net Zero Carbon DPD was approved by Cabinet on 8 July. This DPD aimed to focus on minimising carbon emissions from new buildings within the District to support the achievement of national and local carbon reduction targets. The public consultation was due to end on the 13 September 2021;
- (3) the Policy Team had supported Bishop's Tachbrook and Burton Green Parish Councils in their preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans. It was anticipated that both Plans would be going to Referendum on 30 September 2021;
- (4) Planning permission had been granted earlier in the month for the restoration of the former United Reformed Church on Spencer Street and buildings in Spencer Yard for creative workspace for businesses. The developer, CDP, intended to be on site by the end of 2021;
- (5) Officers had been working with Stratford-on-Avon District Council to develop an economic strategy for South Warwickshire. Initial stakeholder engagement had been undertaken and the intention was to bring a draft document before both Councils in September;
- (6) the first allocation of £2.4 million from the Future High Streets Fund had been received from the Government. This enabled project officers to commence work on the delivery;
- (7) over £3m in support grants had been given for businesses that were unable to apply for the national grants for companies in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors. Since the scheme began, the Enterprise Team had administered a number of schemes for businesses including the self-employed, those without a business premises, those that were not mandated to close but were losing income, and taxi drivers. Businesses that were eligible under Part E of the scheme would have recently received a top-up payment of £485 each to ensure that the remaining funds for that scheme were evenly distributed; and
- (8) continued good levels of occupancy across nearly all Council Enterprise buildings and enquiries for vacant space had tripled in the last quarter, with new leases for tenants in the Court Street Creative Arches.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Councillor Grainger informed Council that:

- (1) the department continued to receive 40% more planning applications than normal, mainly for domestic property extensions, but for the first time the number of applications waiting to be validated had fallen below 200. However, there was still a 12-week wait before applications were validated;
- (2) additional funding had been approved by the Cabinet for additional staffing, but the hardest part was recruitment from the national market where there was a shortage of people for these roles;
- (3) Councillors were aware that the Enforcement Team Manager was leaving and there were other staff shortages in that team which would impact on this work;
- (4) The department had brought through the major applications for determination of the Newbold Comyn cycle track, creative quarter, and the Kenilworth Leisure Centres would follow in August. In addition, the Giga factory at Coventry Airport was being considered by officers;
- (5) £90,000 had been received from the government, which was to match the funding other Council's had received for transfer of land charges work,;
- (6) Building Control service had income 25% over the predicted budget, which was recognition of their excellent work within an open market;
- (7) Building Control also had been nominated with four entries in Local Authority Building Control (LABC) awards for the year; and
- (8) Councillors supported officers by explaining to residents the demands on the Planning Team at present and every email or communication received delayed, if even a small delay, the consideration of planning applications further.

The Leader, Councillor Day, informed Council that:

- (1) the Council's Covid recovery plan was underway with two major national infrastructures projects opening in the District; the megalab and battery innovation centre. The Council had also received the planning application Gigafactory application. This was a big vote of confidence in the District, and these would bring benefits for residents and the hard work of officers in achieving this should be recognised;
- (2) the planning inspectors appeal decision on the Chesterton Gardens was due, but at the same time he was working with the Ward Councillors, the Chief Executive and four key parties to work on improved access to that site;
- (3) the consultation on proposed Joint Heads of Service with Stratford-on-Avon District Council was due to end on 2 August and once in place would see the wider service integration work starting later in the year;
- (4) there would be a consultation with the public, partners and stakeholders on the proposed merger with Stratford -on-Avon District Council in the Autumn. The responses to this would form a key part to the proposals brought to both Council's in December on the potential for a political merger of the two Council's;
- (5) the Commonwealth Games were one year away, and would be the first carbon neutral games, the first multi sport games where more medals would be awarded to women than men, the first where all the tenders had included the requirements of the Social Value Act, which had been a private members bill by the previous Warwick & Leamington MP. There would be medal events in Leamington and in Warwick and overall, the Commonwealth Games would be seen by a 1.5 billion global tv audience; and
- (6) on the 7 August, Art in the Park would return to Leamington.

## 21. **Questions to the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holders**

Councillor Milton asked the Leader what plans were in place to maintain service deliver if officers or contractors were required to self-isolate.

In response, Councillor Day explained that most officers had been working from home for the last 18 months and so self-isolation, for the majority, would not present any change in circumstance or work. In respect of contractors, risk assessments were being updated not just because of Covid-19 but also due to the recent hot weather.

Councillor Milton asked the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Leisure if he could confirm what funding was sought from the national sports facility recovery grants for re-opening the outdoor pool at Abbey Fields.

In response, Councillor Bartlett explained that the funding was available between December 2020 and March 2021, therefore it was considered not appropriate to seek funding for the outdoor pool during this time and because of the time of year and the focus of the Council was to maximise the opportunity for swimming lessons. Subsequently, because of further closures the Council only received 30% of the original allocation.

Councillor Milton asked the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Tourism and Leisure, if the Council had any plans to mark the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Abbey Fields Swimming Pool.

In response, Councillor Bartlett explained that the Council would look to support

any plans from Kenilworth Town Council.

Councillor Kennedy asked the Leader of the Council that in respect of emergency planning and the significant challenges presented by the potential for extreme weather on a more regular basis, what plans were being brought forward to the to recognise this.

In response, the Leader explained that on the 8 July the Cabinet had passed the Climate Emergency Action Plan that included provision for adaption to recognise the challenges faced. The District Council had commissioned research from the Met Office on weather patterns which would be reported to the Climate Emergency PAB. The Council had an operational Major Emergency Plan which was regularly reviewed and updated as required.

Councillor Davison asked the Leader if he had seen, the Climate Change Committee report that the UK Government had made significant promises on Climate Change, but had been slow to deliver on these promises, and as a result. would the Leader write an open letter to the UK Government asking them to act on the recommendations of the Climate Change Committee and provide funding to enable local government to play its part in tackling climate change.

In response, the Leader agreed to write the letter as requested and in response to a supplementary question agreed to ask the Leaders of other Warwickshire Authorities to sign the letter as well.

Councillor Boad asked the Portfolio Holder for Place & Economy if there were plans in place to make Spencer's Yard look more presentable, at least from the Road, ahead of the Commonwealth Games.

In response, Councillor Cooke explained that the first tranche of funding had arrived and officers were looking to progress this as soon as possible.

Councillor K Dickson asked the Leader when the Abbey Fields Management Plan would be available.

In response, the Leader explained that it would be available for stakeholders week commencing the 30 August 2021.

## 22. **Standards Committee Report**

Councillor Margrave proposed and Councillor Day seconded the recommendation within the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 29 June 2021.

**Resolved** that the recommendations of the Standards Committee of 29 June 2021, be adopted.

## 23. **Employment Committee**

Councillor Bartlett proposed and Councillor Day seconded the recommendations of the Employment Committee meetings on 15 June and 1 July 2021, along with the associated revisions to the Constitution.

**Resolved** that the recommendation of the Employment Committee meetings on 15 June and 1 July 2021, along with the associated revisions to the Constitution, be adopted.

## 24. **Licensing & Regulatory Committee report**

Councillor Illingworth proposed and Councillor Mangat seconded the recommendations of the Committee meeting on 19 July 2021.

**Resolved** that the recommendation of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee on 19 July 2021, be adopted.

## 25. **Amendments to the Membership of Committees**

It was proposed by Councillor Day, seconded by Councillor Davison and

**Resolved** that

- (1) Councillor Quinney be appointed to Planning Committee in place of Councillor Cullinan;
- (2) Councillor Cullinan be appointed as a substitute to Planning Committee;
- (3) Councillor Tracey be appointed to Planning Committee in place of Councillor Murphy;
- (4) Councillor Luckhurst be appointed Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Tangri;
- (5) Councillor Tangri be appointed to as a substitute for Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Luckhurst; and
- (6) Councillor Roberts be appointed Licensing & Regulatory Committee.

## 26. **Membership of Programme Advisory Boards (PABs), Working Parties and Outside Bodies**

It was proposed by Councillor Day, seconded by Councillor Cooke and

**Resolved** that

- (1) the membership of the Programme advisory Boards, will be:

Strategic Leadership - Councillors Sidney Syson (Chair), Tangri, J Dearing and Cullinan;

Resources – Councillors, Wright (Chair), R Dickson and Luckhurst;

Transformation – Councillors Mangat (Chair), Tracey, Kennedy, Kohler and Murphy;

Climate Change – Councillors, J Dearing (Chair), Kohler and Roberts;

Homes, Health & Wellbeing – Councillors K Dickson (Chair), Kennedy, Cullinan and Evans;

Culture, Tourism & Leisure – Councillors Jacques (Chair) and A Dearing;

Place & Economy – Councillors Roberts (Chair), Quinney, B Gifford, Leigh-Hunt and Murphy;

Planning – Councillors Ashford (Chair), Quinney, B Gifford, Tangri and Leigh-Hunt; and

Community Protection - Councillors Redford (Chair) and Evans;

- (2) Councillor Quinney be appointed to the vacancy for the Labour Group on the South Warwickshire Local Plan Advisory Group;
- (3) Councillor Illingworth be appointed to the outside appointment of PATROL; and
- (4) the appointment of Councillor Cullinan as the Children’s and Adults’ Safeguarding Champion, be noted.

## 27. **Common Seal**

It was proposed by Councillor Day, seconded by Councillor Day and

**Resolved** that the Common Seal of Warwick District Council be affixed to such documents as it may be required for implementing decisions of the Council arrived at this day

(The meeting ended at 7.30pm)

CHAIRMAN

20 October 2021