

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Warwick District Council held at the Town Hall, Parade, Royal Leamington Spa, on Wednesday 15 March 2023, at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mangat (Chair); Councillors Ashford, Bartlett, Boad, Cullinan, Davison, Day, A Dearing, J Dearing, K Dickson, R Dickson, Falp, B Gifford, C Gifford, Grainger, Grey, Hales, Illingworth, Kennedy, King, Kohler, Leigh-Hunt, Luckhurst, Matecki, Milton, Murphy, Noone, Norris, Redford, Rhead, Roberts, Skinner, Syson, Tangri and Tracey.

87. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barton, Cooke, Jacques, Margrave, Russell, Wright.

88. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

89. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2023 were taken as read, subject to the addition to recording the votes of Councillors Cooke, Cullinan and Day against the amendment and in favour of the substantive motion and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

90. Communications & Announcements

The Chair informed Council that:

- (1) this would be the last Council meeting prior to the election, unless anything significant or urgent required a meeting on 26 April;
- (2) Councillors had all received, via email on 14 March, the related party declarations form from the Head of Finance and Section 151 officer. These were an essential part to the Council completing its accounts each year and while the deadline was 14 April, Councillors were reminded asked to respond ahead of that deadline; and
- (3) it had been Civic Reception on Friday for the Parish & Town Councils, it was a very successful event enjoyed by all who attended.

The Chairman informed Council that there was no business under item 5 – Petitions and item 6 - Notices of Motion.

91. Director of Public Health Warwickshire – Annual Report 2022

The Council received a presentation from Dr Shade Agboola, the Director of Public Health Warwickshire, on her Annual Report for 2022.

92. Leader & Portfolio Holder Statements

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood & Leisure, Councillor Grainger provided a review of her work as Portfolio Holder on the Cabinet over the last four years of the Council. This included the Commonwealth Games, Planning, introduction of cash less payments at car parks and the introduction of the new waste collection 123+

service. Councillor Grainger also paid tribute to the officers she had worked with who continued to deliver excellent services during the challenging times of pandemic.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Councillor Rhead, informed Council that:

- (1) The Net Zero DPD hearing had gone well. There might be a need for main modification that would require further public consultation, but overall there were no insurmountable issues. The Hearing was positive and the Inspector had thanked the Council for its work to deliver the hearings. The Inspector would be consulting with parties until 24 March, on an addendum document submitted by the Council that would provide clarity on the predicted cost up lift of 3% for dwellings and 6% non-residential properties as a result of the DPD. The Inspector would consider any submissions and inform the Council of their view on the Hearings and any additional work required. This was expected to be by the end of March. If main modification was required, this would be after the Elections in May. Following any modifications and consultation, the Inspector would provide a view by the end of the summer, followed by a report to Cabinet and Council for adoption.
- (2) He had attended a meeting at Coventry University regarding research and development of hydrogen fuel cells and hydrogen engine, including seeing a hydrogen powered engine in action.
- (3) On 29 March he had attended the launch of hydrogen valley at Parliament, which was the first time of looking at how to achieve a sustainable hydrogen economy in the United Kingdom.
- (4) This was his last Council meeting and he took opportunity to thank all Councillors and officers past and present that he had worked with over the last 16 years.

The Portfolio Holder for Arts and Economy, Councillor Bartlett, summarised his highlights as a Councillor over the last four years:

- (1) The creative and dynamic arts team who had developed the creative compact, delivered the very successful Spark events, future high street funding success, the excellent culturefest events and so far this year the Spa Centre income was 21% ahead of its best ever income year.
- (2) The Economic development team had delivered the South Warwickshire economic strategy, improved the governance and focus of Shakespeare's England, improved working with BID Leamington, grant funding support for Kenilworth Town Council, and during the pandemic there had been excellent work by the Enterprise team for their work in delivering grants.
- (3) The Events Team who delivered the Commonwealth Games in the District and continued to attract significant events to the District with more events being arranged of a higher standard, the growth in markets that had seen income tripled to the Council and the work to support the District becoming a regular destination for film and television series.
- (4) There had also been the work to introduce wayfinding signs in Leamington, improve the underpass at Leamington Railway Station and the launch of the Leamington Transformation Board.
- (5) He concluded by thanking all Councillor and Officers for their work over the last four years.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities & Environment, Councillor Falp, reflected that the last four years had not been easy with the challenges presented by a global pandemic and the Government, however they were, in her view, the best four years while she had been on the Council because the Councillors had

talked with each other and worked together.

Councillor Hales, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Place, Councillor Cooke, explained that:

- (1) the consultation period for the second Call for Sites and the Issues and Options papers for the South Warwickshire Local Plan had ended on 6 March 2023. Several Parish Councils and individuals had negotiated short time extensions to this but all those consultations should now have been submitted. The submissions would take time to collate, but when this had been done all would be published on the local plan website; and
- (2) a new Development Monitoring Officer had been appointed to keep tabs on the progress of building completions and sites where development had only just started. Their work was essential in completing the Authority Monitoring Report or AMR, which was a statutory requirement which was completed and published yearly. A new Senior Planning Officer had also just started and two new Site Delivery Officers, had also been appointed.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Assets, Councillor Matecki:

- (1) took the opportunity to thank the Chair for her work in the last year, the work and guidance of officers over the last four years and the Leader for bringing all Councillors to work together;
- (2) informed Council that the first houses at Stoneleigh view in Kenilworth were now complete and would start bringing income into Milverton Homes. They were sustainable and showed developers how these targets could be achieved. It was anticipated that not only would this deliver Council and affordable homes in the District but also £9million into general fund and £7million profit to Milverton Homes;
- (3) reflected that over the last four years the housing register had reduced by one third (500 people). The ambition though was to see this fall by a further 500 people within the next eight years; and
- (4) explained that he wanted to eradicate rough sleeping in Warwick District by finding a place for all rough sleepers and also increase housing stock by 2030 by 2030 properties.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Hales:

- (1) took the opportunity to thank the Chair, officers and Councillors for all their work over the last four years; and informed Council that it had received a grant arrived that for over £2million for a key infrastructure.

The Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Councillor Tracey, reflected on the work of his teams:

- (1) this had seen the delivery of the People Strategy 2023-2027 through the work of officers at all across the Council, Councillors and Unions;
- (2) 53,000 Council tax bills had been issued and 500 benefit letters sent out; and
- (3) thanked them for the role of WDC app, the bronze thrive award and the arrival of the EDI business partner.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership and Leader of the Council, Councillor Day, took the opportunity to thank all Councillors and officers and hoped the Council could look back with pride on what they had achieved over the four years.

93. **Questions to the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holders**

Councillor Grey asked the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities & Environment if there should there be a strategy for delivery of community facilities for new developments to ensure the communities need were met for those most at need.

In response, Councillor Falp explained that the specific grant had been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and had the same approach in terms of governance around the grant by officers, including conditions, as previous schemes. While Lillington was one of the most deprived areas in Warwickshire, there was deprivation in rural areas in different ways through lack of facilities and services. For example, Lapworth had the highest area for fuel poverty in the District. The grant helped to support young people of Barford by delivering services locally. It was funded through a combination of grants and local fundraising. Councillor Falp reminded Councillors that Whitnash and rural areas had to maintain parks, gardens and rural areas, where as those areas in Warwick, Kenilworth and Leamington were funded by Warwick District Council.

In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Falp explained that officers were working with the voluntary sector and planning for development in area, including school, health and community facilities.

Councillor Milton asked the Leader, if he would write to the Secretary of State for Transport asking for the active travel budget that had been reduced from £350million to £50million to be reinstated.

In response, Councillor Day agreed to and also would also seek to engage WCC. However, he highlighted that there was a need for the District Council to lead on active travel and not simply waiting for government.

Councillor Boad asked the Leader if he would agree that the last four years had been remarkable, from trying for the climate emergency referendum, working together with dialogue, using the role of LCG to resolve matters.

In response, Councillor Day whole heartedly agreed and thanked all Councillors for their contributions.

Councillor B Gifford asked the Leader if he was aware that the shop in the pump rooms had not ordered additional spring stock in because staff were unclear about its future due to additional services being added into Pump Rooms.

In response, it was agreed for officers to investigate and respond back to Councillors.

Councillor Kennedy asked the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities & Environment if they could inform Council how much of a reduction in use there had been of the use of herbicides like Glyphosate, and, more importantly, how much was planned to be used this coming year as part of the transition towards zero-usage in the future.

In response, Councillor Falp explained that Idverde used 70 litres last year which was a reduction of 90 litres on the previous year.

Councillor Norris asked the Portfolio Holder for Resources if he could provide the Council with the true cost of the merger and the ongoing cost of the Waste Management Contract.

In response, Councillor Hales explained the details had been published and he would send them again the following day to Councillor Norris.

Councillor Norris then asked if future community grants would have sufficient governance in place so that it was not a question of others suffering for funds being allocated at individuals bequest.

In response, the Chief Executive highlighted the governance arrangements in place on all grants and that this included reports being considered at Scrutiny and Cabinet. The Democratic Services Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer highlighted that if Councillor Norris had concerns about the conduct or behaviours of Councillors there was a formal process for the consideration of these.

Councillor Norris asked the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change if he could set out what the Council had achieved in moving forward to become carbon neutral.

In response, Councillor Rhead explained he had previously asked Councillor Norris to send his question in writing to him for him to provide a detailed response. Once this was received he would provide a response.

Councillor Cullinan asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets if the addition of 2030 homes was a target or a minimum.

In response, Councillor Matecki explained that the Council would go further if it could.

Councillor Davison asked the Leader if he had found the discussion between Group Leaders useful and that this had formed a confidential level of trust between them which had not been broken.

In response, Councillor Day agreed.

Councillor Davison asked the Leader if the welcome of addition of new colleagues at the Council four years ago had been refreshing in respect of the challenge and ideas they had brought.

In response, the Leader agreed and welcomed the talent across the Chamber.

Councillor Davison asked the Chair if she had a view on how the Council could encourage greater diversity within the Council.

In response, the Chair stated that the best way to do this would be through supporting each other as well as encouraging more women and women of colour to stand for election.

Councillor Dickson referenced the sad loss of Councillors Calver, Heath and Nicholls who had passed away during the last four years and reminded Councillors to thank their own families and colleagues for the support they provide.

With the agreement of the Leader and the Chair, Councillor R Dickson provided, in song, a resume of the last four years based on the Seekers song "The Carnival Is Over.

94. **Cabinet Report**

The recommendations of the Cabinet on 8 March 2023, were proposed by Councillor Day and seconded by Councillor Hales.

Resolved that the recommendations from the meeting of Cabinet 8 March 2023 be approved.

95. **Employment Committee**

The public recommendations from Employment Committee on 14 March 2023 were proposed by Councillor Mangat, seconded by Councillor Tracey and

Resolved that the recommendations from the Employment Committee of 14 March 2023, be approved.

96. **Public and Press**

Resolved that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as set out below.

97. **Employment Committee**

The confidential recommendations from Employment Committee on 14 March 2023 were proposed by Councillor Mangat, seconded by Councillor Tracey and

Resolved that the recommendations from the Employment Committee of 14 March 2023, be approved as follows:

- (1) the Head of Governance be appointed as Monitoring officer from 1 August 2023;
- (2) the Structure Chart at Appendix 1 to the minutes as revised in the addendum to the report, be adopted as Part 7 of the Constitution;
- (3) authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to update the structure Chart in the Constitution; and
- (4) Article 12 of the Constitution be amended to record that the legal responsibility for asset management is the responsibility of the Head of Neighbourhood and Assets.

At the discretion of the Chair, Councillor Illingworth addressed the Council, to thank officers and Councillors for the 16 years he had been a Councillor.

98. **Common Seal**

It was proposed by the Chair, 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 8.30pm)

CHAIR
17 May 2023