

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

HELD REMOTELY

21ST APRIL 2020 (5PM)

Present:

Councillors: S Miah (Chairman), P W M Young (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, J F Byng, V Caulfield, S J Chambers, A Coleman, R H Coleman, B S Dawes, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, K Henderson, L J Jones, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, S E N Rook, D R Sheppard, J W R Thomas, A Totty and L Whitehouse.

C.76 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence

Councillor M Rayner joined the meeting at this point (5.02pm)

C.77 Declarations of Interests by Members

There were no declarations of interest.

C.78 Coronavirus Act 2020 - Governance and Constitutional Issues

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive which proposed the making of arrangements to ensure continuity of the Council's decision-making functions during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Chairman of the Council and Group Leaders for the discussion that they had on the detail of the proposals set out in the report and said that he was satisfied that the report reflected the outcome of those discussions. He added that, for the convenience of the Council, he would invite the Chief Executive to take Members through the main points of the report.

The proposals were seconded by Councillor F M Oborski MBE.

The Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart, said that as a group they would support the recommendations. He said that at this time of national

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crisis, it was important that politicians united and worked together and that we continued with the good governance of the Council. He added that the arrangements and proposed changes to the constitution were necessary and proportionate in the circumstances we regrettably find ourselves in nationally.

The Chief Executive led Members through the main points of the report. He explained that the proposed delegation in point 2.4 of the report would only be used as a matter of urgency and any decisions taken would be reported to full Council for formal ratification.

Councillor Oborski said she hoped that we would not be in these exceptional circumstances for too long. However the authority must be absolutely certain that it is safe to hold normal meetings before we hold them. She expressed her thanks to those members of the Council staff who are doing a superb job in keeping everything going and felt very proud of exemplary work the Council was doing. She said she was delighted to second the proposals and hoped that all Members would support them.

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to the Chief Executive , Ian Miller, who had pulled the whole exercise together at break neck speed. He said that within days of having to deal with the flooding issues which affected the whole of the district, he and other staff were having to deal with the Coronavirus pandemic. He added that the demands that are coming on Chief Executives and Councils across the country from Government in these unprecedented times are remarkable; instructions and advice can be changed on a daily basis. He thanked the Chief Executive and his immediate team for their hard work. He said that the Chief Executive was a remarkable person; he had had to cope with many issues at the same time, and everybody appreciates the work that he does for this Council.

The vote was carried unanimously.

Decision: Council AGREED;

- 1.1 That the Council's annual meeting in 2020 is held on a date decided by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman to the Council, such date not to be before the lifting of restrictions on movement and social distancing measures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak; and subject to there being no annual meeting in 2020 if those restrictions are not lifted in time for the annual meeting to be held by 30 September 2020.**
- 1.2 That the temporary changes to the Constitution set out in the report and the delegations set out in paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5 below should apply until the earliest of:**
 - (a) A date decided by the Solicitor to the Council in consultation with the Chairman of the Council; or**

- (b) The date of revocation of the section 78 regulations; or**
- (c) 6th May 2021.**
- 1.3 The following temporary changes to its Constitution:**
 - 1.3.1 the revised Section 7: Council Procedure Rules in Appendix 1;**
 - 1.3.2 the revised scheme of delegation for planning in Appendix 2 to be included in Section 4: Responsibility for Functions, with delegation to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place to update planning practice notes and/or associated practice protocols to the extent necessary to reflect the temporary changes in the procedures adopted by the Council;**
 - 1.3.3 amendments to the scheme of delegation for licensing and registration functions in Section 4: Responsibility for Functions, as set out in paragraph 3.12 of the report;**
 - 1.3.4 the revised provisions to Section 8: Access to Information set out at paragraph 3.13; and**
 - 1.3.5 the revisions to Section 12: Contract Procedure Rules set out in paragraph 3.14.**
- 1.4 That delegated authority be given to the Solicitor to the Council in consultation with the Chairman of the Council, Chief Executive and Corporate Director: Resources, to make any additional temporary changes to the Constitution that are required as a matter of urgency between meetings of the Council, such additional temporary changes to be reported to the next meeting of the Council for formal ratification.**
- 1.5 That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Council, Solicitor to the Council and Corporate Director: Resources, to make any temporary changes to policies that ordinarily require full council approval and that are required as a matter of urgency between meetings of the Council, such temporary changes to be reported to the next meeting of the Council for formal ratification.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 5.27pm.