

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

HELD REMOTELY

13TH MAY 2020 (6PM)

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, N Gale, 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.01 Prayers

Prayers were said by Rev Robert Legge, Team Vicar, Kidderminster East.

C.02 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

C.03 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor H Dyke declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in agenda item 15a - Recommendations from Cabinet, 31st March 2020; Kidderminster Town Centre Acquisition Strategy – as she works in Kidderminster Town Centre. She stated that she had not been involved in this area of work and would not take part in the vote on this item.

C.04 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 20th February 2020, the meeting held on 26th February 2020 and the extraordinary meeting held on 21st April 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.05 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

C.06 Questions

No questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 1.8) by Members of the Council.

C.07 Chairman's Communications

The Council received a list of functions attended by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman since the Council's last meeting.

The Chairman announced that it was clear that the Covid-19 pandemic was having a massive effect on what all the dignitaries across the District have been able to do since the lockdown. This has meant that there has been an impact on the charities that they have been fundraising for. He said that, if any Councillor or member of the public would like to make a donation to any of the charities, please get in touch with the relevant dignitary.

C.08 Leader of the Council Announcements

The Leader of the Council referred Members to his tabled report.

C.09 Motions Submitted under Standing Orders

One motion has been received in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1).

Notice of Motion from Councillor M Hart

Councillor M Hart presented the motion and formally gave notice that he wished to amend the motion as printed, in order that just paragraphs 1 and 2 form the notice of motion and the other paragraphs are to be deleted, so that the motion read as follows:

This Council resolves to publicly congratulate all of our outstanding NHS staff, front line key workers performing a wide variety of roles including shop workers, and our wider public sector workers, including, Fire, Police, Ambulance and Teachers. All of those involved in local government in delivering essential front-line services; working in collaboration and having a multi agency approach. They all deserve our grateful thanks.

The Council further thanks in particular, each and every one of our staff. From whichever team front facing or back office, uniting to work as one Council for the greater good of our whole community of Wyre Forest in ensuring that such things as; our bins are emptied, our streets swept, our public open space kept safely open, residents being able to get vital assistance with benefits, grants and loans; not only in respect of the Coronavirus pandemic but also as a result of the unprecedented flooding incident back in February, and of course that our democracy can continue with virtual council meetings. To you all, this Council says thank you.

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Councillor Hart said that he was grateful to the Leader and the actions taken to resolve the matter which had led to him not needing to move the notice of motion as printed. He added that he was grateful to those involved in that matter to getting us to this position.

The motion was seconded by Councillor N Desmond. He said he was delighted to formally second the motion which pays a heartfelt tribute to the many workers across a number of different sectors carrying out vital and urgent work in the fight against Covid-19. He said those in a medical profession and those on the front line have to deal with the real effects of this devastating virus. He added that we absolutely salute these individuals and are eternally grateful for their professionalism, dedication and self-sacrifice that they show day in day out.

Councillor H Dyke said that volunteers of all types have played a major part in dealing with this crisis from delivering food boxes to people that cannot get out to fetching prescriptions and sorting medication out for people. She said that she supported the motion 100% and asked to include volunteers in the motion itself.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Desmond and accepted by Councillor Hart.

A discussion ensued. Several Members spoke about community spirit and shared their experiences of how communities across the district were coming together in amazing ways, to support each other.

Upon a show of hands, the motion as amended was carried unanimously.

Decision: The Motion, as amended, from Councillor M Hart be agreed:

This Council resolves to publicly congratulate all of our outstanding NHS staff, front line key workers performing a wide variety of roles including shop workers, and our wider public sector workers, including, Fire, Police, Ambulance and Teachers, and all community volunteers. All of those involved in local government in delivering essential front-line services; working in collaboration and having a multi agency approach. They all deserve our grateful thanks.

The Council further thanks in particular, each and every one of our staff. From whichever team front facing or back office, uniting to work as one Council for the greater good of our whole community of Wyre Forest in ensuring that such things as; our bins are emptied, our streets swept, our public open space kept safely open, residents being able to get vital assistance with benefits, grants and loans; not only in respect of the Coronovirus pandemic but also as a result of the unprecedented flooding incident back in February, and of course that our democracy can continue with virtual council meetings. To

you all, this Council says thank you.

C.10 Urgent Motions submitted under Standing Orders

There were no urgent motions submitted under Standing Orders.

C.11 Municipal Calendar 2020/2021

Council considered the municipal calendar for 2020/2021 which had been developed in consultation with Group Leaders.

Decision: The municipal calendar for 2020/2021 be approved.

C.12 Annual Reports for the Municipal Year 2019/2020

Council received the annual reports from the Leader of the Council and the Chairmen of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Ethics and Standards Committee.

Decision: The Annual Reports for the Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Ethics and Standards Committee be noted.

C.13 Members' Annual Activity Reports and Attendance 2019/2020

Council received the schedule of Members' Annual Activity Reports which gave details of their activities in their role as District Councillors for the 2019/2020 municipal year and a record of their attendance.

Decision: The reports and attendance be noted.

C.14 Extension of the timetable for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report on Flooding

Council received a report to agree an extension to the deadline for the Committee to report back about the flooding issues.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart, presented the report and formally moved the recommendation for approval. He said that no one would have known when this motion was agreed in February what would have happened next and how much members have been hampered in being able to deliberate upon it at scrutiny due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The proposal was seconded by Councillor N Desmond.

Councillor C Edginton-White formally moved an amendment to agree an extension to September 2020 to the deadline for the committee to report back about flooding issues. She further requested that, if there was any earlier relevant information available from the Environment Agency with regard to the flooding in Bewdley, it is reported back to Council in July 2020 as an interim

report.

In proposing the amendment Councillor Edginton-White acknowledged the work of the Council and all the emergency services. She said she was aware that the Environment Agency had a small dedicated team looking at the issues relating to the February flooding and they were hoping to get a newsletter and updates as to the issues and the way forward to residents and the community by the end of May. She said that, once this was available, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the Chairman's agreement, could commence gathering evidence for the report. In conclusion she appreciated that talking to the emergency services and other partners may take longer but implored the Council to agree to move the extension to September. If the report was delayed until December there was a feasible possibility that Bewdley could be in the throes of another flooding event.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor N Martin.

Councillor M Hart expressed concern over the amendment. He said that he had been asked out of courtesy to present the report which had been drafted by the Chief Executive, and was under the impression that it had everyone's agreement.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the paper was brought forward at his suggestion and the wording had been shared with other colleagues in advance of the agenda going out. Having agreed at its meeting in February that Council wanted a report in July, if it wasn't going to be feasible for very good practical reasons, it is only courteous that the Council should be asked to agree an extended timeline.

He further explained that for the last 8 to 12 weeks time has been taken up entirely by emergency planning issues; first of all in responding to the floods and more recently in dealing with the coronavirus situation. He added that there simply had not been time for him and others to do the sort of background research that would be necessary to pull together information to produce the sort of evidence base that would assist the committee in its work.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that it was only when Council met on 21st April that virtual meetings of any formal meeting of the Council became possible. Therefore the scrutiny committee could not have started its work at any point after the lockdown until Council had agreed the changes to its constitution.

He apologised to Councillor Hart for not having had forewarning of the amendment. If Council was minded to agree the amendment, he assured Members that all would be done to try to produce a report for July; however he did express concern about the impact on the capacity of his and other Officers when they had so many other things to be doing.

Several Members spoke against the motion and urged Council to listen to the advice of the Chief Executive. Councillor T Onslow said, if the work was going

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to involve frontline workers such as the Police, Fire Service and Environment Agency, it would be difficult for the Council to speak on behalf of other agencies as to what their workload would be like once the current crisis is over.

A vote on Councillor Edginton-White's amendment was taken, and agreed.

Councillor Hart said as it was now the democratic will of the Council, as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, he would of course use his best endeavours to ensure that the committee produces a report in September. He stressed that it would stretch the Chief Executive and Officers who will be working on this and it may be that the committee have to come back for a further extension but as Chairman he would certainly do his best to execute the democratic will of the majority.

Upon a show of hands, the vote on the substantive motion was carried.

Decision: Council AGREED an extension, to September 2020, to the deadline for the Committee to report back about the flooding issues, and any earlier relevant information from the Environment Agency to be provided in an interim report to July 2020 Council.

Councillor C Rogers entered the meeting at 7.34pm.

Councillor T Onslow left the meeting at 7.34pm.

C.15 Policy and Budget Framework

a) Recommendations from Cabinet 31st March 2020

- **Kidderminster Town Centre Acquisition Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments presented the recommendations and formally moved them for approval.

Councillor H Dyke declared her interest at this point, (7.38pm), and left the meeting.

The Leader of the Council seconded the proposal.

Councillor J Aston left the meeting at 7.39pm and returned at 7.40pm.

The Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart, thanked the Head of Economic Development & Regeneration – North Worcestershire, and his team for the fantastic work they had done in relation to the bid for the Future High Street Fund. He hoped that the authority would be successful in receiving funding so that it can continue with its investment in Kidderminster Town Centre and shape it for the next generation. He said that the recommendations would receive support from the Conservative Group.

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The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments said this was a really exciting opportunity for Kidderminster. She added that the Head of Economic Development & Regeneration – North Worcestershire had led a fantastic team, who had submitted a really good bid with exciting proposals that could change the face of Kidderminster well into the future.

Upon a show of hands, the vote was carried unanimously.

Decision: Council Approved an amendment to the Capital Programme for a Future High Street Property Acquisition Fund of £4.275m to be funded from external grant and to be conditional on award of such grant.

Councillor H Dyke returned to the meeting at 7.43pm.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.43pm.