

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 8 July 2020

Attendance:

Councillors Present

Cunningham (The Mayor)

Achwal	Humby
Becker	Hutchison
Bell	Laming
Bentote	Learney
Bronk	Lumby
Brook	Mather
Clear	McLean
Clementson	Miller
Cook	Murphy
Craske	Pearson
Cutler	Porter
Evans	Power
Ferguson	Prince
Fern	Read
Gemmell	Ruffell
Godfrey	Rutter
Gordon-Smith	Scott
Gottlieb	Thompson
Green	Tod
Griffiths	Weir
Hiscock	Williams
Horrill	

Apologies for Absence:

Councillors Weston

Audio recording of the meeting

A full audio recording of this meeting is available via [this link](#)

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 26 February (less exempt item) and the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2020 be approved and adopted.

2. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Councillors Hiscock, Humby, Tod and Porter declared personal (but not prejudicial) interests in respect of matters referred to in the petition to be heard at agenda item 5 due to their roles as County Councillors.

3. **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR, LEADER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE.**

The Mayor made a number of announcements.

Although the Armed Forces Day flag raising event at the Great Hall was unable to take place this year, the Mayor reported that the council flew the flag from the Guildhall in the normal way. A special message from him to show the council's support for all the armed services was recorded for social media and for the council's website.

The Mayor was pleased to announce that Bishops Waltham Community First Responders had received the Queen's Award for voluntary service and he congratulated them for receiving this accolade.

The Mayor had recently visited the Basics Bank at Bar End, Winchester where he was able to personally thank the volunteers for their commitment both before and during the lock down in delivering food boxes to those in need and adversely affected by the pandemic.

The Mayor then reported that as the Cathedral had been unable to host the annual Mayor's Sunday civic service, a virtual Prayer and Reflection service had been arranged. This was to be available via the Cathedral's website from 23 July.

Finally, the Mayor announced that he had been pleased to engage with the local community with virtual engagements, video recordings, and also meeting people face to face whilst socially distancing. He was looking forward to visiting some schools in the district and the Army Training Regiment at St John Moore Barracks.

The Leader then made several announcements.

The Council had been awarded £93,000 from the Enterprise M3 LEP fund to assist with the recovery of the local economy. This had been combined with the £109,000 of government funding and £40,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding to use on a package of measures to encourage people back to the district's centres and to walk and cycle. The Leader thanked officers for their work in achieving this successful bid for the funds.

The Leader then referred to the recent National Health Service 72nd birthday commemorations. Together with the Mayor, she offered her special thanks to all those who work in NHS and social care and reported that the Guildhall clock was lit up in blue to mark this event.

The Leader then referred to the recent volunteering response and she passed on her thanks to all those who had given their time. The Leader made special mention of those volunteers who had attracted national attention. These included Debbie Lockett who was the national winner of the HSBC UK 'Local Heroes' campaign whose project to provide free meals in Winchester during the pandemic had been supported by the council. The Leader also added her congratulations to those of the Mayor to the Bishops Waltham Community First Responders for their prestigious award.

Finally, the Leader then congratulated Clare Bradley from Winchester who was the recent winner of the BBC's 'Great British Sewing Bee' programme.

The Chief Executive then announced that she had been very pleased to have attended the recent presentation of the Deputy Mayor's badge to Councillor Vivian Achwal at Abbey House. Councillor Achwal's husband and daughter had also attended this special celebration together with the Leader and the Strategic Director (Resources).

The Chief Executive then announced apologies for the meeting.

4. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Four written questions had been received, three of which were presented by the members of the public at the meeting along with an associated supplementary question. The questions and the response from the Cabinet Member were subsequently set out in full on the [council's website](#).

5. **PETITIONS**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16, a petition was submitted by Extinction Rebellion Winchester containing 746 signatures.

Mr Joyce on behalf of Extinction Rebellion introduced the petition. In summary, Mr Joyce referred to the desire to reduce traffic in the centre of Winchester and creating safer conditions for pedestrian and cyclists. He suggested that where the pavements were at their most narrow, one lane of traffic should be reallocated for use by pedestrians and cyclists. There should be restrictions to the use of inner city car parks and roads and some areas considered for permanent pedestrianisation. These arrangements would be good for safety, business and also to prevent the return of levels of pollution previously experienced.

Councillor Tod (Cabinet Member for Service Quality and Transformation) thanked Mr Joyce for his presentation. In summary, Councillor Tod reported that a number of the initiatives referred to in the petition had already been implemented. He shared some of the ambition in the petition, but that more funding from government would need to be forthcoming as well as time to design schemes in consultation with stakeholders. County Council traffic engineers were also involved with schemes across the district. Councillor Tod referred to the Movement Strategy which was a joint study with the City and County Council

Councils. This work focused on longer-term goals including reducing city centre traffic, supporting healthier choices and sustainable growth.

Councillor Tod explained that he would be pleased to meet with Extinction Rebellion to explain the Movement Strategy further and to share its views. He also proposed that the ideas set out in the petition could be further explored by officers involved in the Movement Strategy. There would also be further discussion of the petition at a future meeting of the Health and Environment Policy Committee to help formulate a considered response.

During the debate which followed, Members raised a number of points including:

- Many of the points referred to in the petition regarding social distancing and wider pavements and separation and prioritisation of traffic were likely to be generally accepted. Existing poor air quality in the town area was an existing issue that must also be improved upon. However, consideration must be given to the fact that Winchester draws in many visitors due to it being an administrative, tourist, educational and retail centre; as well as a transport hub and a place of work and an urban centre with a sizeable population.
- The petition indicated that there was a good level of support for safer walking and cycling routes. During the pandemic, there had been a notable reduction to the number of vehicles on the roads and also from air pollution from vehicles. It was hoped that more sustainable transport options in future would reduce car ownership, although there would need to be some provision for car parking in the city centre at least in the shorter term. Further changes would also help with the climate emergency.
- There must be safe separation between cyclists and pedestrians, as some cyclists travelled at speed.
- Some aspects of the petition were already in place, or under consideration as part of the Movement Strategy. However, an effective public transport system for Winchester was important and residents should not be given priority in central car parks, as they were best placed to use other more sustainable means of transport.
- Winchester city and the district's market towns all face economic challenges as a consequence of the pandemic. People needed to be able to access these centres to support businesses with their recovery. Car parks should remain open for visitors.
- Some historic city centres which have been fully pedestrianised have not seen a fall off in visitor numbers. Market towns and villages must also be considered as part of further discussion of the petition.
- The new Local Plan would mirror the Council Plan by having a focus on reducing carbon footprint at its heart. Extinction Rebellion were encouraged to comment on the options and issues elements of the new Local Plan when this was published

In summing up, Councillor Tod reassured that there was an ongoing desire for Winchester and other centres to continue to thrive. As a consequence of the pandemic, people should be able to confidently access streets by ensuring that they are safe and practical. The Health and Environment Policy Committee would be able to give further detailed consideration and discussion of the matters presented in the petition so that a considered response can be provided.

RESOLVED:

That the matters raised in the petition be referred to a future meeting of the Health and Environment Policy Committee.

6. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10, a Motion was submitted by Councillor Horrill as follows. The Motion was seconded by Councillor Godfrey.

“That the Council commends the Chief Executive and all the Council's officers for maintaining the delivery of all essential services during the COVID lockdown.

Normal engagement with Councillors has, however, been adversely affected.

In the interests of openness and transparency, we call on the Administration to arrange a full round of additional meetings, briefings and training sessions during July and August to allow Councillors and the public to regain a full understanding of what the Council has been doing and what it is planning to do in the short, medium and longer terms as the Coronavirus situation evolves over the coming months.”

Councillor Horrill introduced the Motion and firstly commended officers for their hard work in delivering services during the pandemic with dedication, whilst remaining flexible. All Members reciprocated with applause.

In summary, Councillor Horrill was concerned that the ‘open and transparent’ agenda promised by the administration during the previous year had yet to be envisaged. For example since the start of the pandemic, until recently, there had been few opportunities to discuss important matters with officers and fellow councillors. A break over the summer would therefore mean that the role of councillors would once again be diminished. There should be discussion and involvement in decisions of how to implement government guidance etc on the ongoing pandemic situation and also with regard to the council's short to longer term plans.

During the debate which followed on Councillor Horrill's Motion, in summary, the following points were raised:

- Officers had shown dedicated care and support since the start of the pandemic and should not be asked to arrange additional meetings and

briefings during August as they needed a break. This was especially important in case there was a second wave of the virus in the autumn.

- The administration should use the summer months to get its plans and vision back on track, including for the post covid recovery phase. The Council Plan and the council's major projects had seen little progress during recent months and Members should therefore be told of plans for the future.
- Cabinet members had continued to perform their usual duties as well those additional challenges presented by the pandemic. The council as a whole has also operated with a 'business as usual' approach and had maintained delivery of quality services throughout the crisis. The new municipal year had started with regular scheduled meetings and a series of member briefings.
- Officers need time to recuperate and councillors have been hard at work in their wards and parishes throughout the pandemic. There have been many virtual meetings and briefings arranged with councillors. The shadow cabinet was closely involved with the cabinet throughout the crisis.
- Officers had responded to the challenges of the pandemic crisis and continued to deliver high quality services. Officers had ensured that meetings and engagement events continued to take place and a full cycle of council meetings was to take place before August. Virtual meetings take longer to arrange.
- Communication on the small screen was not as easy for councillors to communicate with officers. The joint cabinet and shadow cabinet meetings and member briefing events do not have opportunities for discussion or debate. Members and the public need to be better engaged in decision making so can support the administration to tackle the challenges that it faced.
- The previous four months had changed how the council operates and officers had responded despite greater workloads and the personal impact of shielding, home schooling etc. Engagement with councillors had not been adversely affected and delivery of key services had continued. The agreed schedule of council meetings had been maintained. Officer delegated decisions and emergency powers had not been exercised. Officers need to take a break and ensure that they take their holiday entitlement.

Council then voted on the Motion, which was lost.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion as set out above be not supported.

7. **CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS**

The Strategic Director (Resources) reported that it had been necessary to re-evaluate the proportionality of the council further to the recent designation of an independent councillor.

Accordingly, the following proposed changes to the existing memberships of committees had been agreed by Group Managers. These changes were also circulated to all Members prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. For the Audit and Governance Committee (which has now become a committee of eight members), Councillors Bentote, Laming and Miller are no longer members. Councillors Bentote and Laming are to replace Councillors Gordon-Smith and Gottlieb respectively as deputy members. Councillor Miller will replace Councillor Read also as a deputy member.

2. For the Planning Committee (which has also now become a committee of eight members), Councillor Pearson is no longer a member and is to replace Councillor Brook as a deputy member.

8. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL**

23 written questions had been received which were all heard at the meeting along with any associated supplementary questions. All questions are set out in full on the [council's website](#), together with responses from the relevant Cabinet Member.

9. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

1. That in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2. That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
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) Information relating to any) individual. (Para 1 Schedule) 12A refers))
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10. **EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2020**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 26 February be approved and adopted.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and concluded at 8.25 pm

The Mayor