

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
HELD IN
VICTORIA ROOM, LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN HALL
ON 7TH NOVEMBER 2022

PRESENT

The Mayor (Councillor Tillotson)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Smidowicz)

Councillor Bailey	Councillor Lowe
Councillor Baines	Councillor Mercer
Councillor Barkley	Councillor Miah
Councillor Bentley	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Bokor	Councillor Murphy
Councillor J. Bradshaw	Councillor Needham
Councillor S. Bradshaw	Councillor Pacey
Councillor Campsall	Councillor Paling
Councillor Capleton	Councillor Parsons
Councillor Charles	Councillor Parton
Councillor Draycott	Councillor Poland
Councillor Forrest	Councillor Popley
Councillor Fryer	Councillor Radford
Councillor Goddard	Councillor Ranson
Councillor A. Gray	Councillor Rattray
Councillor Grimley	Councillor Savage
Councillor Hadji-Nikolaou	Councillor Seaton
Councillor Hamilton	Councillor Shepherd
Councillor Harper-Davies	Councillor Snartt
Councillor C. Harris	Councillor Taylor
Councillor K. Harris	Councillor Ward
Councillor Howe	
Councillor Hunt	

Honorary Aldermen Day and R Shields

59. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Boldrin, Brookes, Beverley Gray, Rollings and Williams.

Apologies for absence were also received from Honorary Aldermen Bush, Stott and Tormey.

60. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

The following disclosures of pecuniary and personal interests were made:

- i. Councillor Barkley - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a member of the Leicestershire County Council and as Chair of the Pension Committee.
- ii. Councillor Fryer - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a member of Leicestershire County Council.
- iii. Councillor Grimley - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a member of Leicestershire County Council and as Vice-Chair of the Pension Committee.
- iv. Councillor Miah - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a member of the Leicestershire County Council pension scheme.
- v. Councillor Parton - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a member of Leicestershire County Council.
- vi. Councillor Radford - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a recipient of a Leicestershire County Council pension through the local pension scheme.
- vii. Councillor Seaton - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a recipient of a Leicestershire County Council pension through the local pension scheme.
- viii. Councillor Shepherd - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a member of Leicestershire County Council and the Local Pension Scheme.
- ix. Councillor Taylor - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a member of Leicestershire County Council. Councillor Taylor also disclosed that her spouse was a recipient of a Leicestershire County Council pension through the local pension scheme.
- x. Councillor Tillotson - In respect of item 9.1 (Motion on Notice – Charnwood Borough Council Divestment), a non-registrable interest as a recipient of a Leicestershire County Council pension through the local pension scheme.

61. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 5th September 2022 were confirmed and signed.

62. ANNOUNCEMENTS

63. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements:

“Firstly, as this is the first Council meeting since the passing of Her Majesty, the Queen, I would like to express my sincerest condolences following the passing of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, who was an exceptional Monarch and leader. She ruled with the utmost dignity and grace for 70 years and was sure in her faith and steadfast in her duty. Her Majesty brought great comfort and consistency through many significant changes. We celebrated with her during events such as the London 2012 Olympics, royal weddings and births and Jubilee years, most recently her Platinum Jubilee earlier this year. We also mourned with her following the death of her husband the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip. We will remember Her late Majesty with great affection and gratitude for her unwavering service to her people.

I would also like to say on behalf of all members and officers of Charnwood Borough Council, that we welcome with good faith, our new Sovereign, King Charles III.

I would also like to remind you about some upcoming Mayoral events:

- Fair Opening – Wednesday, 9th November at 6p.m
- Armistice Service at the Carillon Tower - Friday 11th November, the Service is starting at 10:50am
- Santa fun run in aid of Rainbows – Sunday, 4th December
- Rainbows Christmas service - Wednesday, 7th December
- The Community Carol Service, All Saints with Holy Trinity Parish Church, Loughborough – Monday, 19th December starting at 7pm, people are asked to be in their seats by 6:45pm.”

64. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Leader's announcements.

65. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chief Executive made no announcements.

66. PETITIONS

No petitions were submitted.

67. BUSINESS RESERVED TO COUNCIL

68. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS - OUTCOME

A report of the Chief Executive to present the outcomes of the review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations within the Borough, was submitted (item 6.1 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

It was proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Miah and

RESOLVED that the proposals of the Chief Executive as set out in the Annex to this report, which are put forward in his capacity as the Returning Officer for elections, for future arrangements for polling districts, polling places and polling stations be approved.

Reason

To comply with requirements of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, and to ensure that any amended arrangements for polling districts, polling places and polling stations are in place in time for the Borough elections on 4th May 2023 following the review undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

69. AUTHORISATION OF ABSENCE

A report of the Chief Executive to enable the Council to consider authorising an absence from meetings in accordance with section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 ('The 1972 Act'), in the circumstances set out in the report, was submitted (item 6.2 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The Leader stated that the Conservative Group wished Councillor Boldrin a speedy recovery and that their thoughts were with him and his family, friends and colleagues at this time.

Councillor Miah stated that the Labour Group also wished Councillor Boldrin a speedy recovery.

It was proposed by Councillor Miah, seconded by Councillor Hamilton and

RESOLVED that should Councillor Boldrin be unable to attend the Council meeting, his absence since the Personnel Committee on 7th June 2022 be authorised due to his ongoing ill health.

Reason

To enable Councillor Boldrin's absence to be authorised by the Council prior to the end of the 6-month period since he was last able to attend an "in person" meeting as required by Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

70. CALL-IN REFERENCES

There were no call-in references from Scrutiny.

71. POSITION STATEMENTS

No position statements had been requested.

72. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

73. CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL DIVESTMENT MOTION

A Motion on Notice regarding Charnwood Borough Council Divestment was submitted by Councillor Ward (item 9 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

In proposing the motion, Councillor Ward stated that she believed the council could not be distanced from the investments of the pension fund. She also stated that she believed the investments had an impact on the Council's target of carbon neutrality. Finally, Councillor Ward raised that investments associated with fossil fuels were likely to decrease in value in the future.

Councillor Mercer responded to the motion noting that there was a requirement to ensure the pension funds for employees remained healthy and that there was not many options available to increase the funds available.

Councillor Barkley highlighted that Charnwood Borough Council was not responsible for making decisions on behalf of the Pensions Committee. There was a Net-Zero Climate Strategy in development, which would be submitted to the Pensions Committee on 18th November 2022. Subject to approval, the strategy would be subject to further consultation with members, employees and other interested parties. He highlighted that the Local Pensions Fund invested responsibly and that climate change was taken extremely seriously.

Councillor Hamilton said that he supported the motion because while the Council was not able to directly influence the decisions made by the Local Pensions Fund, it was important for members to express their opinions on the matter. He also stated that businesses in the private sector were divesting fossil fuel assets.

Councillor Miah suggested that fossil fuel investment was a small part of the market and that there were other investment opportunities which the Local Pensions Fund could be invested in. He also stated that it was important for members to express their opinion on the matter.

The Leader stated that he had initially proposed the Net-Zero Carbon initiative at the Council and that he understood the issues raised in the motion. He stated that it was unrealistic and not feasible to register all of the Council's associations against the Net-Zero Carbon target. He reiterated Councillor Barkley's statement regarding the Net-Zero Climate Strategy which would be reviewed by the Local Pensions Board, and highlighted that work was already being undertaken to address issues raised in the motion. The Leader felt that the correct course of action would be to allow the Local Pensions Board to undertake their work and to wait for the outcome of the consultation on the Net-Zero Climate Strategy.

Councillor Grimley stated that there were experts reviewing information and monitoring investment markets for the Local Pensions Fund. He highlighted that there was also money invested in green schemes.

Councillor Poland noted that the funds managed by the Local Pension Scheme were managed with prudence. He recognised it was possible that at some point in the future the fossil fuel market may reduce, but that it was for the members of the Local Pension Scheme to address at the appropriate time.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Needham stated that the motion was intended to advise the Local Pensions Board the opinions of Council members. She also highlighted that the motion would demonstrate leadership on the issue and would encourage the Local Pensions Board to continue with its positive action.

In concluding, Councillor Ward stated that she was pleased that the Local Pensions Board members had been consulted with and that she was looking forward to the outcome of the consultation. She acknowledged that Leicester District Trade Council, Unison and other trade unions were supportive of the motion. Councillor Ward went on to say that she recognised that the Council did not have a direct influence over the decisions of the Local Pensions Board, but that members had a right to express their opinions. She also reiterated comments made about investing in other areas, which supported sustainability. Councillor Ward finished by requesting a named vote on the motion.

For the motion – Councillors J Bradshaw, Draycott, Forrest, Goddard, A Gray, Hamilton, K Harris, C Harris, Miah, Needham and Ward.

Against the motion – Councillors Bailey, Baines, Barkley, Bentley, Bokor, S Bradshaw, Capleton, Charles, Harper-Davies, Fryer, Grimley, Hadji-Nikolaou, Howe, Hunt, Lowe, Mercer, Morgan, Murphy, Pacey, Paling, Parsons, Parton, Poland, Popley, Radford, Ranson, Rattray, Savage, Seaton, Shepherd, Smidowicz, Snartt and Taylor.

Abstentions – Councillors Campsall and Tillotson.

Following a named vote, the Mayor stated that it had been defeated.

74. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The questions on notice and the responses of the Leader or his nominee were submitted (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

75. GAS CHECKS ON COUNCIL PROPERTIES

Councillor Draycott asked whether the Council could undertake a best practice exercise on entering homes to undertake gas safety checks in a timely manner?

Councillor Poland recognised that residents want the Council to do everything they can to ensure properties have gas safety checks. He stated that the Council was doing everything possible to ensure checks were undertaken and that best practice exercises were welcomed.

76. HOUSING REGISTER

Councillor Draycott asked whether the Leader or his representative was aware that there were 135 empty council properties across Charnwood, some of which had been empty for over a year? Councillor Draycott stated that 52 properties of these properties required major works and 83 required standard works. She also asked if these works would be a distraction to the day-to-day work of Housing Officers?

Councillor Mercer responded by stating that he was aware of these issues and highlighted that the Covid-19 pandemic had had a significant impact on the Council's ability to undertake specific works, and that the Council was now catching up on these works. Councillor Mercer also highlighted that a new Head of Service for Strategic Housing would be in post imminently and that the postholder would ensure these issues were tackled.

77. CONSOLIDATING CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL INCOME AND MAKING PROVISION FOR RESIDENTS

Councillor A Gray stated that vacant properties caused a loss of income for the Council and highlighted that some residents were waiting for significant repairs. She asked if properties with significant repairs requirements could be prioritised and that all housing stock and garages be put into good order?

Councillor Poland thanked Councillor A Gray for her question and stated that the Council had experienced significant challenges including the Covid-19 pandemic and the introduction of new contracts and that the Council was working to overcome these challenges. He stated that some of the properties referred to were not fit for modern housing and that they were part of a Sheltered Housing Review. This meant that substantial amounts of money would be spent to improve these properties and bring them up to a good standard.

78. THE STORE FUTURE PLANNING

Councillor J Bradshaw wished to ask one supplementary question for both of the responses she had received to her Questions on Notice. She asked that at a time when there was significant investments in the Borough, when would the Council's residents receive help from the Council?

Councillor Harper-Davies stated that the Council supported their strategic partners to help local residents. She also highlighted that Charnwood Community Action had been relaunched to support vulnerable residents in the Borough. She stated that the Council did not fall short and that residents were supported in every way possible.

79. FOOD BANK CO-ORDINATION

Councillor J Bradshaw had already asked her supplementary question.

80. PLASTIC-FREE MARKET

Councillor Ward asked whether the Council would be giving away or selling sustainable shopping bags as part of the sustainable shopping initiative in the Town Centre? She also asked how market traders would be encouraged to reduce single-use plastic and how this information would be made available to shoppers and traders? Finally, Councillor Ward asked if the Council would be providing recycling bins in the Town on market days?

Councillor Bokor stated that she understood the concerns of Councillor Ward and that the market did produce a large amount of waste, which was well managed by contractors. She highlighted that some of the waste of market traders, such as meat, fish and other foods had to be disposed of in plastic bags. Councillor Bokor said that reusable bags had been distributed previously and while some shoppers did use these, some did not, and so a lot of the issues raised were down to education. Councillor Bokor invited Councillor Ward to meet with her and lead officers in order to discuss ideas.

81. COST OF LIVING - FUNDING

Councillor Miah stated that he believed £180k funding was not enough and he asked how the money would be spent as he would prefer the money to be spent in the community?

The Leader responded by stating that the Cabinet paper which addressed this issue had been to the Scrutiny Commission for review and that Cabinet had received positive feedback from the Scrutiny Commission. He advised that Councillor Miah looked at the minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 13th October 2022 as this was discussed in detail at that meeting. It was highlighted that the costings had been subject to discussions with strategic partners and that this was the amount required to support residents in need.

82. COST OF LIVING - WARM ROOMS

Councillor Forrest thanked the Lead Officer for the response and stated that there were Council buildings that could be used as warm rooms for residents.

Councillor Harper-Davies acknowledged that warm rooms were important, and that the location of existing warm rooms should be communicated to residents. She highlighted that the Communities Facilities Grants were focussed on cost of living issues.

83. TOWN CENTRE EMPTY PROPERTIES

Councillor Draycott asked how the improvements made to the Bedford Square area had helped businesses in the area?

Councillor Bokor responded by stating that there was no correlation between empty shops and the improvements made to the Bedford Square area. She emphasized that the Council had no control over traders closing shops and she invited Councillor Draycott to meet with her so that they could discuss any further concerns that Councillor Draycott had.

84. MINUTE REFERENCES

There were no minute references.

85. URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS EXEMPTED FROM CALL-IN

A report of the Chief Executive to note decisions which were exempted from call-in in accordance with Scrutiny Committee Procedure 11.9, was submitted (item 12 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

86. DELEGATION OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

A report of the Chief Executive to inform Council of delegations of executive functions, was submitted (item 13 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

87. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

There were no proposals to consider.

Note:

These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Council which is scheduled for Monday 23rd January 2023.