

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL
HELD IN
VICTORIA ROOM, LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN HALL
ON 6TH NOVEMBER 2023

PRESENT

The Mayor (Councillor Smidowicz)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Bradshaw)

Councillor Ashcroft	Councillor Jackson
Councillor Baines	Councillor Jadeja
Councillor Blackshaw	Councillor Jones
Councillor Bokor	Councillor Knight
Councillor Bottomley	Councillor Lawrence
Councillor Braker	Councillor Lennie
Councillor Brookes	Councillor Lowe
Councillor Campsall	Councillor Matthews
Councillor Charles	Councillor Maynard
Councillor Cory-Lowsley	Councillor Miah
Councillor Dent	Councillor Monk
Councillor Forde	Councillor Needham
Councillor C. Forrest	Councillor Northage
Councillor S. Forrest	Councillor O'Neill
Councillor Fox	Councillor Palmer
Councillor Fryer	Councillor Rattray
Councillor Goode	Councillor Roberts
Councillor A. Gray	Councillor Seaton
Councillor B. Gray	Councillor Snartt
Councillor Hadji-Nikolaou	Councillor D. Taylor
Councillor Hamilton	Councillor N. Taylor
Councillor Harper-Davies	Councillor Tillotson
Councillor Haynes	Councillor Westley
Councillor Infield	Councillor Woodward
	Councillor Worrall

Honorary Aldermen Day and R Shields

58. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Popley.

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

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

No disclosures of interest were made.

60. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 4th September 2023 were confirmed and signed.

The Mayor highlighted that a response had been received from the Chairman of the Pensions Committee at Leicestershire County Council and that this response had been circulated to members.

61. ANNOUNCEMENTS

62. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements.

Loughborough Street Fair Opening – Wednesday 8th November

As Mayor I will be formally opening the fair and reading the Charter from a fairground ride at 5.50 pm. All are welcome to come along for a fun evening!

Armistice Day Service – Saturday 11th November

There will be an Armistice Day Service in Queens Park, Loughborough on Saturday 11th November. All are welcome to attend from 10.50 a.m.

Remembrance Service and Parade – Sunday 12th November

It is a great personal honour for me to take part in this year's Loughborough Remembrance Service and Parade on Sunday, 12th November. All are welcome and Councillors are requested to come along to John Storer House for 10.15 a.m. ready for the procession to the Carillon Tower.

Loughborough Christmas Lights Switch On – Sunday 26th November

The Christmas lights in the Town Centre will be switched on at 5 p.m. on Sunday 26th November. All are welcome to come along.

Community Carol Service- Monday, 18th December

I will be holding a community carol service at All Saint's with Holy Trinity Parish Church on Monday 18th December. The service starts at 7p.m. and all are welcome to attend.

63. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Leader's announcements.

64. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chief Executive made no announcements.

65. PETITIONS

Councillor S Forrest presented a petition submitted on behalf of residents in her ward regarding antisocial behaviour. The Mayor stated that the petition would be considered and responded to in accordance with the Council's petition scheme.

66. BUSINESS RESERVED TO COUNCIL

66.1 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

A report of the Cabinet to consider recommendations of the Cabinet in respect of changes to the Constitution relating to procedures for dealing with planning applications and other planning matters, and to the composition of the Audit Committee, was submitted (item 6.1 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The motion was proposed by Councillor Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Miah.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor D Taylor and seconded by Councillor Seaton:

The Conservative Group would like all references to three minutes removed from Appendix A and all references to five minutes added back in.

Following a vote, the amendment was defeated.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Seaton and seconded by Councillor D Taylor:

To remove the suggested sentence at the end of the paragraph:

"In addition, if, following a call-in which has not been withdrawn, officers believe that the issues raised by the ward councillor in his/her call-in have been addressed, officers will submit the recommendation report, which is prepared for each application, to the ward councillor. The report, which will contain a summary of the main issues regarding the application, will enable ward councillors to consider whether they wish to maintain or withdraw their call-in of an application. Ultimately, the Chair (or vice chair in their absence) will decide if the item will be added to the committee agenda."

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Following a vote, the amendment was defeated.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Bokor and seconded by Councillor Baines:

The Conservative Group would like an addition to Appendix A: *“Single-member wards - if the councillor has a disclosable interest to allow them to nominate a fellow ward councillor to call in the planning application on their behalf.”*

Following a vote, the amendment was defeated.

It was proposed by Councillor D Taylor and seconded by Councillor Seaton that a named vote be taken on the substantive motion.

For the motion – Councillors Ashcroft, Blackshaw, Bottomley, Bradshaw, Cory-Lowsley, Forde, C Forrest, S Forrest, Goode, A Gray, B Gray, Hamilton, Haynes, Infield, Jadeja, Jones, Lawrence, Lennie, Maynard, Miah, Needham, O’Neill, Palmer, Roberts, N Taylor, Tillotson, Woodward and Worrall.

Against the motion – Councillors Baines, Bokor, Braker, Brookes, Campsall, Charles, Harper-Davies, Dent, Fox, Fryer, Hadji-Nikolaou, Jackson, Knight, Lowe, Matthews, Monk, Northage, Rattray, Seaton, Smidowicz, Snartt, D Taylor and Westley.

The substantive motion was passed and it was

RESOLVED

1. That the changes to the Constitution set out in Appendix A to the Cabinet report (attached as an Annex and revised in Appendix A to include an amendment agreed by Cabinet) be made with effect from 1st December 2023 and that the Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to make any further consequential changes that arise elsewhere in the Constitution;
2. That the composition of the Audit Committee, set out in section 12.3 of the Constitution, be changed from one independent person to two independent members of the Audit Committee..

Reasons

1. To implement improvements to procedures for dealing with planning applications and other planning matters following an independent service review.
2. To enable the authority to meet the best practice set down by CIPFA the constitution of the authority needs to be amended to enable the committee to appoint two co-opted independent members.

67. CALL-IN REFERENCES

There were no call-in references from Scrutiny.

68. POSITION STATEMENTS

No position statements had been requested.

69. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

69.1 DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

A Motion on Notice regarding the Declaration of a Climate Emergency was submitted by Councillor Jones (item 9.1 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

In proposing the motion, Councillor Jones stated that tackling climate change was a global issue and that the global threat of climate change was manifesting in Charnwood. She stated that flooding and heat waves would continue and become more severe. She said that in declaring a climate emergency, the council would be formally acknowledging the work already done and also leading the way for more progress. Councillor Jones went on to say that climate impact was at the heart of the Council's business. She said that by making this declaration, it would inspire organisations, businesses and individuals to do what they can to reduce their impact on the climate, just as the Council had been inspired by other local authorities that had declared a climate emergency. Councillor Jones asked Council to think about the generations to come and to support the declaration of a climate emergency.

Councillor Baines said that while he supported the motion, he felt that it was symbolic and that real initiatives to help reduce carbon emissions were needed. He suggested measures such as moving the Council offices, investing in solar and wind energy and making a shift towards electric vehicles.

Councillor Westley said that he supported the motion but that perspective was needed. He stated that the Council had little control over the world's carbon emissions and that Charnwood's contribution was very small. He said the motion put forward would have little impact on the climate and that resources should be focussed on real issues faced by residents. He said that the Council should be debating community funds and business grants instead of the motions being put forward. Councillor Westley finished by stating that there were real opportunities to help residents in Charnwood.

Councillor Hamilton highlighted that the motion was not a symbolic act but a statement of intent to put the climate emergency at the centre of the Council's business. He said that the Council could work with stakeholders, businesses and other authorities to promote the reduction of carbon emissions.

Councillor Haynes recognised that Charnwood was a small area but stated that it was a small area with a larger impact on the climate than some other areas of the world. He said if all small areas decided their impact was insignificant and to do nothing, no change would be made longer term. Councillor Haynes recognised there were other issues in the Borough but stated that without addressing climate change, there would be no capacity to address the other issues. He went on to say that climate change was the most significant issue facing the world.

Councillor Rattray highlighted that the Council had declared an ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030 in June 2019 and approved a carbon neutral plan in

September 2021. She said that the Council had been committed to reducing carbon emissions for a number of years already and that she felt the commitments in the motion should be done regardless of the passing of the motion.

Councillor Infield said that the urgency of dealing with the climate was increasing and that every organisation needed to do more to tackle the issue. He went on to state that the Cost of Living Crisis and climate change were closely linked and that actions such as properly insulating homes would reduce emissions and reduce energy costs for residents. He said that building new homes would cause a significant increase in emissions unless more sustainable measures were taken.

Councillor Bokor said that addressing the climate emergency had been part of the Council's work for a number of years and that there was a lot of work being done to reduce emissions in the Borough already. She said she felt that physical actions and ideas would be more beneficial than declarations and statements.

Councillor Lawrence stated that the motion meant that the Council recognised the impact of climate change on the Borough and demonstrated active leadership to support the transition to net zero. He said that practical actions to achieve this were set out in the revised action plan and the declaration of a climate emergency would add more emphasis to this work. Councillor Lawrence said that he felt there was a need for greater clarity and focus on improving the Council's impact on the climate and to demonstrate leadership to communities and businesses to encourage the whole Borough to work towards net zero.

Councillor Jones summed up by acknowledging the good work that had already been done. She said that there would be actions to follow the declaration of a climate emergency and thanked members for their support.

Following a vote, the motion was passed.

70. 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).

71. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Councillor Hadji-Nikolaou asked how the Labour Party's position on development control aligns with the policies and values of the Green Party.

Councillor Jadeja replied by stating that her response had been provided in writing.

72. LOUGHBOROUGH TOWN DEAL PROJECTS AND UK SHARED PROSPERITY PROJECTS

Councillor Bokor asked whether the Leader felt that the projects included in the programmes were vanity projects and whether there was a recognition that the projects had made large contributions to communities within the Borough?

Councillor Tillotson responded by stating that the programmes and projects included had been inherited by the Labour Group and that it was in the best interests of the Borough to continue to deliver the projects.

73. BUDGET STRATEGY

Councillor Baines did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

74. PROMOTING RENEWABLE ENERGY

Councillor Bokor asked whether the Leader agreed that the Council should be educated in carbon literacy and that a cross-party project board should be established to promote renewable energy projects with ambitious targets?

Councillor Jones said that she would discuss these ideas with the Leader and the Cabinet and respond to Councillor Bokor in due course.

75. SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION FUND

Councillor Needham thanked the Lead Member for the response received and asked whether the Lead Member could look into the Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme further and discuss this with her?

Councillor Jones thanked Councillor Needham for her question and stated that she would discuss the scheme with Councillor Needham outside of the meeting.

76. PLANNING MATTERS

Councillor D Taylor asked whether the Lead Member for Planning would attend more Plans Committee meetings? She also asked for more information on the applications that were outside of time-scales for decisions without agreed extension time?

Councillor Jadeja said that she would respond to Councillor D Taylor in writing. She also said that Plans Committee meetings often coincided with meetings of the Cabinet which made it difficult for her to attend Plans Committee meetings on a regular basis. Councillor Jadeja confirmed that she had regular updates on the work of the Plans Committee from Planning Officers and the Head of Planning and Growth and that she had confidence in the members of the Plans Committee to fulfil their role.

77. BUDGET SCRUTINY PANEL

Councillor D Taylor asked why Labour members had not participated in the Budget Scrutiny Panel?

Councillor Miah responded by stating that the Labour Group had a good insight on the Council's budgets. He also stated that the Lead Member for Finance had attended Budget Scrutiny Panel.

78. COST OF LIVING

Councillor Bottomley said she was encouraged by the initiatives already offered by the Council and that she was looking forward to seeing the Council build on this to support residents in the future.

Councillor Blackshaw said that she had responded to the question.

79. FLOODING

Councillor Haynes thanked those involved in the flood response and asked that details on the application of the Flood Recovery Grant be circulated to members. He also asked that information on emergency flood response be available on the Council's website?

Councillor Jones said that she would look into this and provide an update to Councillor Haynes.

80. MINUTE REFERENCES

There were no minute references.

81. URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS EXEMPTED FROM CALL-IN

There were no urgent decisions taken by the Cabinet or urgent key decisions taken by an officer under delegated powers that were exempted from call-in.

82. CHANGES TO THE DELEGATION OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

There were no changes to the delegation of Executive functions.

83. 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 15th January 2024.