

CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD IN VIRTUAL MEETING - ZOOM ON 7TH SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT

The Mayor (Councillor Snartt)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Baines)

Councillor Bailey	Councillor Lowe
Councillor Barkley	Councillor Mercer
Councillor Bentley	Councillor Miah
Councillor Bokor	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Boldrin	Councillor Murphy
Councillor Bolton	Councillor Needham
Councillor J. Bradshaw	Councillor Pacey
Councillor S. Bradshaw	Councillor Parsons
Councillor Brennan	Councillor Parton
Councillor Brookes	Councillor Poland
Councillor Campsall	Councillor Popley
Councillor Capleton	Councillor Radford
Councillor Charles	Councillor Ranson
Councillor Draycott	Councillor Rattray
Councillor Forrest	Councillor Rollings
Councillor Fryer	Councillor Savage
Councillor Gerrard	Councillor Seaton
Councillor Grimley	Councillor Shepherd
Councillor Hamilton	Councillor Smidowicz
Councillor Harper-Davies	Councillor Tassell
Councillor C. Harris	Councillor Taylor
Councillor K. Harris	Councillor Tillotson
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Ward

Honorary Alderman Day

OPENING THOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, the Mayor recited a prose poem.

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Goddard, Hadji-Nikolau, Howe and Paling, and Honorary Aldermen Bush, Shields, Stott and Tormey.

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, the Mayor recited a prose poem.

14. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

The following disclosures of pecuniary and personal interests were made:

Councillor Miah - Item 8.1 – Position Statement - Local Government White Paper – Devolution and Local Recovery, as a Member of Leicestershire County Council. It was highlighted that as a decision was not to be made at the meeting, Councillor Miah and any other dual-hatted Members were permitted to take part in the discussion of the item.

Councillor Hunt – Item 9.1 – Motion on Notice – Local Electricity Private Member’s Bill 2020, as the Member of Parliament for Loughborough.

15. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 29th June 2020 were confirmed and signed.

16. ANNOUNCEMENTS

17. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements.

Former Councillor Marion Smith

‘First all I would like to express my sadness at the passing of former Councillor Marion Smith, in June this year.

Marion represented the Loughborough Southfields Ward for four years from May 2011 – May 2015 as a Labour councillor.

During her time as a councillor, Marion held positions on the Licensing Committee, Plans Committee and Policy Scrutiny Group between 2012 and 2014.

As a passionate gardener she was regularly involved in Loughborough in Bloom and became Chair of the Loughborough in Bloom board in 2017, helping many community groups to blossom. She was a school governor at Mountfields Lodge for more than 30 years. Marion was an excellent fund-raiser. She raised money for John Storer House and its allotment project, Loughborough Town of Sanctuary and Loughborough Labour Party, often by baking cakes or through the sale of honey or plants from her garden in Herrick Road, Loughborough.

Councillors, I invite you to take part in a one-minute silence now and stay behind after the public meeting concludes to pay your respects.’

A one-minute silence was then held as a mark of respect.

Charnwood Community Action

'Recently I was delighted to be invited to the community hub in Loughborough to see the incredible work of the Charnwood Community Action team first-hand and to also mark the delivery of the 10,000th food parcel.

These past few months have been difficult for our communities and I know everyone involved with Charnwood Community Action has worked incredibly hard to help those who need a bit of additional support during this time. They should be proud of what they've achieved.

It's been wonderful to see volunteers, local community groups and businesses pulling together to offer support to their neighbourhoods and the hub.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who has played their part in helping our communities.'

18. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made no announcements.

19. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chief Executive made a point of clarification regarding item 13 on the agenda filed with these minutes. He stated that the item was for Council to note decisions made during the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the decisions made was to extend committee positions until the Council could hold an Annual meeting. This was achieved on 29th June 2020 and the positions referred to in the annex to the report were relevant to the period prior to that Annual Council meeting and had now been superseded.

20. PETITIONS

No petitions were submitted.

21. BUSINESS RESERVED TO COUNCIL

22. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN REVIEW LETTER 2019/20

A report of the Monitoring Officer to make Members aware of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) review letter for 2019/20 and two cases of complaints which were upheld by the LGSCO during the year, in accordance with the LGSCO's guidance which is that the Monitoring Officer should make a periodic report to Councillors summarising any upheld complaints.

Councillor Miah emphasised that the findings of the Ombudsman should be taken seriously. He expressed his concern regarding the complaints outlined in the report but stated that he was satisfied that the recommendations of the Ombudsman had been actioned. He noted that the Council should continue to consider the points made by the Ombudsman and there was a need to ensure complaints were handled earlier in future.

Councillor Rollings acknowledged that considering the size of the Borough, the two complaints received was relatively low but stated that ideally the Council should receive no complaints. He stated that there was always opportunities for the Council to improve and that compliance with recommendations had been 100%.

It was proposed by Councillor Rollings and seconded by Councillor Taylor and

RESOLVED that the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's appended review letter for 2019/20, and the summary of the upheld complaints as set out in Part B of this report, be noted.

Reason

To comply with the guidance from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman that the Monitoring Officer should make Members aware of upheld complaints on a periodic basis.

Councillor Brookes joined the meeting at 6:50pm.

23. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

A report of the Cabinet to consider proposed amendments to the Constitution following the annual review.

It was proposed by Councillor Smidowicz, seconded by Councillor Poland, and

RESOLVED that the changes to the Constitution set out in appendix 1 to the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached as an Annex) be made, to be effective from 8th September 2020.

Reason

To ensure the Constitution is kept up to date and fulfils its intended purposes.

24. CALL-IN REFERENCES

There were no call-in references from Scrutiny.

25. POSITION STATEMENTS

No position statements had been requested.

26. LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER - DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL RECOVERY WHITE PAPER

The Leader had given notice of a position statement on the Local Government White Paper – Devolution and Local Recovery (item 8.1 on the supplementary agenda filed with these minutes).

The position statement was introduced by the Leader and the following points were raised by Councillors:

- i. The position statement was welcomed and it was acknowledged that the White Paper had not yet been published by Central Government due to other priorities associated with the pandemic
- ii. It was important that continuous dialogue between the District Councils across the County was maintained as this was in the best interests of Charnwood residents.

The Leader acknowledged the points made by Councillors and stated that the publishing of the white paper was anticipated between the 5th and 7th October 2020, which would allow for submission to the meeting of the Council on 9th November 2020. He stated that he would request an extraordinary meeting of the Council to discuss the white paper if required. The meeting with the Local Government Minister would involve the Leaders of District Councils, the City Council, the County Council and Rutland County Council. The Leader agreed that the outcome of the white paper would need to ensure the best for Charnwood residents and businesses.

It was proposed by the Leader, seconded by Councillor Fryer, and

RESOLVED

1. That the Position Statement be referred to Cabinet, so that following publication of the Devolution and Local Recovery white paper, a detailed response be prepared and submitted to Cabinet following consideration by the Scrutiny Commission, and then brought back to Council.
2. That if required, an extraordinary meeting of the Council be arranged in order to consider the white paper.

Reasons

1&2. To ensure the Local Government white paper on Devolution and Local Recovery is properly scrutinised and considered by the Cabinet and Council.

27. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE COUNCIL

The Labour Group had requested that a position statement regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the Council be present at the meeting. The Leader had given notice of a position statement (item 8.2 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The position statement was introduced by the Leader and the following points were raised by Councillors:

- i. Councillors expressed their pride in Charnwood Borough Council and recognised the remarkable way in which the pandemic was responded to. It was stated that the response of the Council had demonstrated the quality of its Councillors and officers, including the Leader and the Chief Executive, as

- services had continued to operate to ensure the needs of residents and businesses were met.
- ii. The work of Community Action Charnwood during the pandemic had demonstrated how communities could work together and it was hoped that this would continue into the coming months.
 - iii. It was acknowledged that the situation remained uncertain and that there were issues to overcome including financial implications.
 - iv. There was confidence that the well-organised nature of the Council's response was an indication that the Council was able to effectively respond to potential future challenges.

The Leader thanked Councillors for their comments. He stated that he was aware of the considerable work still required for the Council to recover but acknowledged that Councillors and officers had already undertaken a substantial amount of work in order to support residents and the community. He paid tribute to the officer teams, the organisations that had worked with them, and also to his fellow Councillors, all of whom had worked to ensure residents and communities were supported.

28. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

No motions on notice had been submitted.

29. LOCAL ELECTRICITY PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL 2020

In accordance with Full Council Procedure 9.12, Councillor Ward had given notice of a motion on the Local Electricity Private Member's Bill 2020 (item 9.1 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

Councillor Ward thanked members for their comments and stated that the motion would help to establish small renewable energy providers and enable residents to purchase energy directly from these sources. This would ensure profits were kept within the Borough, improving resilience.

The motion was moved by Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor Rollings, and it was

RESOLVED

1. That the Council acknowledged the efforts that this council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;
2. That the Council further recognises that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so, that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would enable and empower new local businesses, or councils, to be providers of locally

generated renewable electricity directly to local customers, and that revenues received by new local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions.

3. That the Council accordingly, and because of the potential environmental and financial benefits that could arise for the Borough, resolves to support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by 198 MPs which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply companies and co-operatives by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply operation.
4. That the Council inform the local media of this decision, write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill, and write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.

Reasons

1-4 To ensure the motion on notice supported by Council be implemented.

30. 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).

31. TWINNING TOWN - ZAMOSC

Councillor Tillotson thanked the Lead Member and officers for the response provided and acknowledged that the issue was serious and compromised human rights. She stated that she did not doubt the Council's dedication to equality and that there had been a number of towns and cities that had terminated twinning relationships based upon this issue. The issue had also prohibited some Polish towns from participating in the twinning initiative. Councillor Tillotson enquired about the way in which the response from Zamosc would be reported, the actions which would be taken by the Council following the response and asked the Lead Member to liaise with Schwäbisch Hall, Charnwood's German twin town which was also twinned with Zamosc.

Councillor Harper-Davies thanked Councillor Tillotson for her question and confirmed that the Council was investigating the situation in Zamosc. Councillor Harper-Davies ensured Councillor Tillotson that with more information, the Council would take action as appropriate.

32. FLOODING

Councillor Gerrard thanked the Cabinet Lead Member for the response provided and asked whether the Council could encourage developers to use a base of 50% concrete to allow for ground ventilation and drainage of excess precipitation. She also highlighted that the production of concrete had a negative impact on the environment.

Councillor Bailey thanked Councillor Gerrard for her question and stated that he recognised the importance of sustainable urban drainage systems on greenfield sites. He informed Councillor Gerrard that developers had a responsibility to ensure drainage on a site was either improved to not adversely affected by works. There were many mitigating actions taken to alleviate any negative impacts on the environment.

33. MORATORIUM ON HOUSING EVICTIONS DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

Councillor Draycott thanked the Cabinet Lead Member and the officers for the response provided and commended the Council on managing the challenging situation during the pandemic, resulting in accommodating 85 individuals. She stated that the work to alleviate the impact of Covid-19 was ongoing but would end in the near future and that this would create further issues. It was anticipated that approximately 221 tenants could become subject to legal action and evictions in the coming months. Councillor Draycott asked the Cabinet Lead Member how the Council would ensure there was not a return to rough sleeping in the Borough, despite the potential increase in evictions.

Councillor Mercer thanked Councillor Draycott for her question and acknowledged the challenges ahead as a result of the impact of Covid-19. He stated that there was usually a relatively small number of rough sleepers in Charnwood and that the 85 individuals referred to were assessed as at imminent risk of becoming homeless as a result of Covid-19. Councillor Mercer stated that officers had worked hard to manage this situation and that the issue was being discussed regularly.

34. FINANCIAL RECOVERY

Councillor Bolton thanked the Lead Member and officers for the response provided and stated that the Council had lost a substantial amount of income during the pandemic. She acknowledged that there was a shortfall in what was anticipated financially in order to counteract the impact of Covid-19, and that the expected income outlined in the response was not certain. Councillor Bolton asked the Cabinet Lead Member to confirm the amount of funding the Council would receive from Government and how the Council intended on alleviating the shortfall without depleting reserves.

Councillor Barkley thanked Councillor Bolton for her question and acknowledged her concerns. He stated that the Government had provided the Council with £2.1 million in emergency grants, of which a large proportion remained unspent. He stated that the Council would conduct reviews into the provision of services and that an increase in income was anticipated through the Investment Strategy. He assured Councillor Bolton that the Council was working to improve the financial situation and that there would be sufficient consideration of this through the Council and Scrutiny function. Councillor Barkley stated that there remained some uncertainty regarding funds recovered from the Government and that for the foreseeable future the Council was financially sound.

35. CANCELLED EVENTS

Councillor Draycott did not wish to ask a supplementary question or make a statement based upon the response provided.

36. CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Councillor Julie Bradshaw thanked the Lead Member and officers for the response provided and referred to the need for more stringent checks and processes to ensure the confidentiality of documentation was maintained with the new working practices introduced. Councillor Julie Bradshaw asked the Cabinet Lead Member to highlight this to the Chief Executive and ensure that a policy is produced to reflect current working practices, outlining the responsibility of the management of confidential information.

Councillor Smidowicz thanked Councillor Julie Bradshaw for her question and stated that agile working had impacted on Councillors and officers alike. She highlighted that it was necessary to remain conscious of the level of sensitivity of documentation at all times and to consider the implications of failing to manage documentation properly. She agreed to refer this to the Chief Executive and confirmed that documentation was being managed properly in the meantime.

37. MINUTE REFERENCES

There were no minute references.

38. URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS EXEMPTED FROM CALL-IN

A report of the Chief Executive, informing the Council of an urgent decisions made by the Cabinet that were exempted from call-in in accordance with Scrutiny Committee Procedure 11.9, was submitted (item 12 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

39. URGENT COUNCIL FUNCTION DECISIONS TAKEN DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A report of the Chief Executive to note the action taken by the Chief Executive, and/or Strategic Directors and Heads of Service, in respect of Council function decisions which were made under urgency provisions due to the COVID-19 pandemic (item 13 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

40. CHANGES TO THE DELEGATION OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

A report of the Chief Executive to inform Council of changes to the delegation of Executive functions (item 14 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

41. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

There were no changes 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 9th November 2020