

## WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 20 January 2020 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor Steve England (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Owen Bierley	Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Stephen Bunney	Councillor Liz Clews
Councillor David Cotton	Councillor Mrs Tracey Coulson
Councillor Timothy Davies	Councillor Michael Devine
Councillor Jane Ellis	Councillor Ian Fleetwood
Councillor Mrs Caralyne Grimble	Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan
Councillor Mrs Cordelia McCartney	Councillor Giles McNeill
Councillor John McNeill	Councillor Mrs Jessie Milne
Councillor Keith Panter	Councillor Roger Patterson
Councillor Mrs Judy Rainsforth	Councillor Mrs Diana Rodgers
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings	Councillor Jim Snee
Councillor Mrs Mandy Snee	Councillor Lewis Strange
Councillor Jeff Summers	Councillor Robert Waller
Councillor Mrs Anne Welburn	Councillor Mrs Angela White
Councillor Trevor Young	

**In Attendance:**

Ian Knowles	Chief Executive
Alan Robinson	Monitoring Officer
Tracey Bircumshaw	Strategic Finance and Business Support Manager
Katie Storr	Senior Democratic & Civic Officer

**Also in Attendance:**

**Also Present:** 5 members of the public

**Apologies**

Councillor Mrs Jackie Brockway  
Councillor Christopher Darcel  
Councillor David Dobbie  
Councillor Cherie Hill  
Councillor Tom Regis

### 51 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all Members, Officers, and Members of the Public present to the meeting.

Representatives from Spridlington Neighbourhood Planning Group, and Mr Richard Quirk,

Chairman of the Remuneration Panel, both of whom would later in the meeting present their successful Plan and reports to Council, were also welcomed to meeting.

Finally, the Chairman welcomed Mr Ian Knowles to his first meeting of Council, in his new role of Chief Executive.

All Members joined the Chairman, in congratulating Mr Knowles on his appointment.

## **52 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 4 November 2019

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held on 4 November 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

(b) Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council held on 4 November 2019

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council held on 4 November 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **53 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made.

## **54 MATTERS ARISING**

The Monitoring Officer presented the report and advised Members that all actions had been completed within their targets.

**RESOLVED** that the Matters Arising be duly noted.

## **55 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Chairman**

Since Council's last meeting the Chairman had attended numerous civic events and spoke of the remarkable people he had met and the tremendous work they did in their communities.

The Chairman took the opportunity to bring Members' attention to the Community Award packs which had been distributed across the Chamber. The Chairman urged all Members to ensure that their respective town and parish councils, and any other community groups were aware of the Awards. He also encouraged all Councillors to nominate individuals or deserving groups known to them.

Referring to recent engagements, the Chairman took the opportunity to highlight just a few: -

- The Christmas Light Switch on, here in Gainsborough, also attended by the Mayor of Gainsborough (commenting on his moves!)
- The Civic Carol Service, held at the beautiful Hackthorn church was a memorable occasion, the choir of William Farr school performed outstandingly. He thanked Officers who had supported the evening and paid tribute to his Civic Officer for her usual efficiency in organising it.
- His “Merry Christmas” visit to the local fire Station, where he was treated to a mock rescue from an overturned car. He commented on the amazing work our emergency services do on behalf of the community with the mock training exercise being a perfect example.
- On Christmas Day the Chairman had had the pleasure of attending the annual lunch organised by the Gainsborough Christmas Day Lunch committee for those who would otherwise be alone. It had been superb and was run entirely by volunteers who willingly gave up their Christmas for others, another example of the great community spirit out there.
- The opening of our superb new facility at Lea Fields had been a very special occasion and a great privilege. He encouraged those who had not been already, to go and visit the facility, something he considered clearly demonstrated the Council's commitment to its residents.

The Chairman closed on a more sombre note, reading the following statement, by way of marking Holocaust Memorial Day, which was being held on 27 January and supported by 46 countries around the world.

**“We recognise** that the Holocaust shook the foundations of modern civilisation. Its unprecedented character and horror will always hold universal meaning.

**We believe** the Holocaust must have a permanent place in our nation's and community's collective memory. We honour the survivors still with us, and reaffirm our shared goals of mutual understanding and justice.

**We must** make sure that future generations understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences. We vow to remember the victims of Nazi persecution and of all genocides.

**We value** the sacrifices of those who have risked their lives to protect or rescue victims, as a touchstone of the human capacity for good in the face of evil.

**We recognise** that humanity is still scarred by the belief that race, religion, disability or sexuality make some people's lives worth less than others. Genocide, anti-semitism, racism, xenophobia and discrimination still continue. We have a shared responsibility to fight these evils.

**We Pledge** to strengthen our efforts to promote education and research about the Holocaust and other genocides. We will do our utmost to make sure that the lessons of such events are fully learnt.

**We will continue** to encourage Holocaust remembrance by organising an activity to

commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. We condemn the evils of prejudice, discrimination and racism. We value a free, respectful and democratic society.

Having visited Auschwitz Birkenau, himself, he urged everyone to visit such sites at least once. They served as a stark reminder of man's inhumanity to man, and that we should never let it happen again.

## **Leader**

The Leader addressed Council and updated the Chamber in respect of the following matters: -

- The Leader was very pleased to see the Appointment of our new Chief Executive by the Chief Officer Employment Committee. The Committee had taken a steady and deliberate approach and had resolved a number of key issues with this appointment. He, like others, would be interested in the appointment of the senior management team in the coming weeks.
- The Leader had attended a visit to Nettleham C of E Junior School with the Chairman in mid-November. The questions from the children were some of the most difficult he'd ever faced, and it was great to see the young engaging in politics.
- The Leader had also attended the final module of the LGA's Leadership Academy at the end of November, having now completed the course. It had been a valuable experience which had been both rewarding and helped evaluate his leadership.
- At the start of December, the Leader attended an opportunity in Lincoln at County Hall, to meet the candidates for the position of Chief Executive of Lincolnshire County Council. The County Council had appointed Debbie Barnes and the Leader was looking forward to working with her on shared priorities both for the district and Lincolnshire. He had discussed the ongoing work in Greater Lincolnshire, the County Council's LGA Peer Review and the Director of Public Health's Annual Report. At the end of that week the Leader had also attended the National Council Meeting of APSE in Blackpool and had volunteered to assist Dr. Peter Kenway with his research into local authorities and climate change.
- The following week, the Leader had visited the new Nomad centre in Lincoln, being run by the YMCA. This was an impressive facility and the Leader was looking forward to having meetings with members of Lincolnshire YMCA in the coming months to discuss their engagement in West Lindsey.
- On the 12th December, the Leader had attended the opening of Lincolnshire Co-operative's new store in Sturton-by-Stow with the Chairman. The following day, the Leader had the honour of being a guest of the Chief Constable at Lincolnshire Police's Christmas Carol Concert at Lincoln Cathedral, with our Chief Executive. He advised Members that the 'Lincolnshire Armistice Stories' book, that had been compiled by Lincolnshire Police, had been placed in the Members' room, for their perusal.

- The Leader's final duty of 2019 was to attend the Leaders and Chief Executive's Meeting in Lincoln. Discussions had centred around the ongoing work related to Greater Lincolnshire, the County Council's LGA Peer Review and the Director of Public Health's Annual Report.
- New year, new decade and the first formal duty of 2020 had seen the Leader attend the opening of West Lindsey's beautiful new Lea Fields Crematorium. It had given the Leader great pleasure to see the Chairman cut the ribbon, and meet with staff, contractors, guests and funeral professionals. The weather had been kind enabling some truly excellent images and a video of the opening to be taken. The following day the Leader had also attended the public Open Day of the facility, which was particularly well attended.
- The Leader had attended the meeting of the Central Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit, the previous week, and whilst the meeting was fairly brief the briefings which had followed were substantive on how Central Lincolnshire's ambition, to be the first Local Plan area to deliver a green local plan, could be achieved and consideration of the allocation of sites. The Leader noted that progress had stalled on Market Rasen Town Council's 3 year vision, which he considered a shame as this obviously should be aligned with the local plan review. He trusted Ward Members would encourage the Town Council to make progress.
- The Leader had been in correspondence with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government about Anti-Semitism and he had asked that Mr. Robinson and Councillor J. McNeill look at ways to incorporate this into our Constitution and procedures
- On Wednesday, 15th January, the Leader had been in London to meet with Sir Edward Leigh at the House of Commons. Whilst he understood that in the past there have been meetings at the Guildhall with Sir Edward; on the whole these had been largely about assisting Sir Edward with the needs of constituents. He considered one of the Council's most important strategic partnerships was with Sir Edward, as the areas local parliamentarian and the Government. After all they were responsible for some significant streams of revenue for the authority.
- Since the last meeting of Full Council the Leader had had numerous meetings with Councillors, Officers, stakeholders and the media. In addition to his duties in the Chamber, he undertook to have further such meetings prior to the next meeting of Council on Monday, 2 March.

### **Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive addressed Council, firstly indicating of his pride at having been appointed Chief Executive of West Lindsey District Council. He valued the trust placed in him to take the Council forward. The Chief Executive further advised he would be looking to meet with each Councillor over the next twelve months and would be making arrangements with each Councillor starting in April. Communications would be sent shortly to initiate arrangements.

Referencing recent flooding, West Lindsey District Council had provided grants under the government support scheme to 24 properties a total amount of £12k. This scheme was now timed out.

The Council were currently in the process of writing to residents with regards to the Flood Resilience grant. This grant helped property owners to make property improvements to mitigate the impact of future flooding, the maximum grant level being £5000.

The debrief following the recent incidents had highlighted a number of improvements which the Council would be looking to make to implement in partnership with the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum.

As mentioned earlier by the Leader, there had been a very positive meeting held with the local MP. West Lindsey had highlighted an agenda with Sir Edward, which Members and Officers alike would continue to promote with him, in an effort to ensure that West Lindsey had a voice that was heard.

Tomorrow would be the first day of the Authority's LGA Peer Challenge, those Members who have agreed to attend a session with the peers were encouraged to advise Officers at the earliest opportunity if there were any concerns about specific appointments.

Finally, the Chief Executive was pleased to advised that the first meeting of the Environment and Sustainability Working group, chaired by Cllr Coulson, which had arisen from a motion to Council in November 2019, had been held. The Group would be looking to report to Prosperous Communities Committee in March 2020 initially.

That concluded announcements for the meeting.

## **56 TO ADOPT THE SPRIDLINGTON NP**

Members were asked to give consideration to a report to fully 'make' (adopt) the Spridlington Neighbourhood Plan (NP) following a successful referendum.

Councillor Caralyne Grimble, as Local Ward Member, introduced the report. She expressed thanks, to the Group for their hard work, and to the Officers for the support they had offered.

Representatives from Spridlington Neighbourhood Planning Group were in attendance and prior to Members debating the matter, the Chairman invited them to make a short address to Council and present their successful Neighbourhood Plan.

Mr Martin Marris, Chairman of Spridlington Parish Council addressed the meeting and made the following statement: -

“Chairman, Councillors,

Actioning an Neighbourhood Plan was first discussed at a meeting of the Parish Council on 11 October 2016. Present at that meeting was District Councillor Steve England, who advised Members on what was involved. He explained what grant monies were available, what support was out there including

workshops to help with the detail and a list of expert consultants to guide us through the various stages of the Plan.

None of envisaged just how complicated and detailed it was to format a Neighbourhood Plan!

On 15 November that same year, we wrote to West Lindsey requesting they designate the area of Spridlington Parish for the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. This was approved on 20 December.

The next stage was to form a Steering Group. In addition to three members of the Parish Council, a further six members of the village joined up.

In all it took us a little over three years to get to the referendum stage. This took place on 31 October 2019. The turnout was an impressive 49.7% of the electorate of which 73.2% voted to approve the Plan.

Producing this Plan has been a real team effort. I would like to thank the Core Members of the Steering Group, most of whom were heavily involved for the entire process.

Particular thanks to Group Leader, Mrs Deb Kealey who couldn't be here this evening as she's on a flight back from sunny climes and also Councillor David Clough who has turned up this evening on the day of his 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday. A special thanks to Mr Ian Knowles for stepping in with help at a critical time.

Finally, with great pride, I'd like to present the Chairman with a copy of the Spridlington Neighbourhood Plan. Thank you."

Mr Marris then formally presented the Plan to the Chairman.

Members across the floor congratulated the Group on their remarkable achievement.

Following a round of applause, it was moved, seconded and duly

**RESOLVED** that the Spridlington Neighbourhood Plan be adopted and made.

## **57 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Monitoring Officer confirmed to the meeting that no questions had been received from members of the public.

## **58 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 9**

Councillor Tracey Coulson, Ward Member for the Stow Ward, submitted the following question to the meeting: -

“Is the Leader aware of the work on the Local Electricity Bill which is currently progressing through parliament?”

Do you

- (i) acknowledge the efforts that this council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;
- (ii) recognise that councils can play a central role in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity;
- (iii) further recognise

- 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 create significant opportunities for councils to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and
- that revenues received by councils that became local renewable electricity providers could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;
- Does he support the Local Electricity Bill, currently supported by a cross-party group of 115 MPs, and which, if made law, would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a Right to Local Supply; and consider taking action including:
  - informing the local media of his position
  - writing to the local MP, asking him to support the Bill, and
  - Writing 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](mailto:info@powerforpeople.org.uk)) expressing his support.

Thank you”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Giles McNeill responded as follows: -

“Thank you for this question which is very useful at this time. I understand that this bill was under consideration in the last parliament prior to the Conservative election win. Unfortunately there was insufficient time to take the bill through the parliamentary process.

I understand that a number of my fellow leaders and MPs across Lincolnshire have already given their support to this bill. I agree that the set up cost can be prohibitive and this bill can only help to allow Local Authorities to enter the market no matter what the scale of the scheme.

I believe that this is a timely question following the motion from myself and the Leader of the Opposition being agreed at our last meeting. We have now established the Environment and Sustainability Working Group. I will write to Sir Edward and take other steps to support the bill.



Thank you once again for raising this.”

## **59 MOTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10**

Councillor Anne Welburn submitted the following Motion: -

“Chairman

Fireworks are used by people throughout the year to mark different events. While they can bring much enjoyment to some people, they can be a source of fear and distress for many animals (including pet animals, farm livestock and wildlife). Animals affected not only suffer psychological distress but can also cause themselves injuries – sometimes very serious ones – as they attempt to run away or hide from the noise. Debris produced by fireworks, if found on the ground, can also pose a hazard to animals as well as littering the countryside.

The RSPCA believes the law is failing as it does not prevent or sufficiently reduce the risk of fireworks causing distress, injury or anxiety to people, as well as death, injury or distress to animals. Although there has been research and is some evidence of distress being caused further research is needed to properly understand the impact of noise on animals and things that can be done to improve the situation for animals and people.

The RSPCA believes that a licensing system would help with better enforcement of the law by allowing enforcement bodies to know where licensed events are being held so they can focus on locations and incidents elsewhere.

I would ask Council to require all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people and to actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.

I so move

Councillor Anne Welburn”

The motion as submitted was duly seconded.

The Leader of the Council addressed the Chamber and advised that over the Christmas period he had received multiple communications, including from NFU, of a similar vein regarding the use of sky lanterns.

The NFU had noted that the releasing of sky lanterns may appear an impressive sight, but they could be dangerous.

They considered sky lanterns were unpredictable as you cannot control where they land.

The main dangers include:

- causing fires on an industrial scale; destroying acres of crops, farm buildings and stored food supplies
- killing or injuring farm animals
- causing significant litter problems
- being mistaken for distress flares

On the basis of this the Leader proposed the following amendment : -

“that the Council ban the release of sky lanterns from council owned or operated sites in West Lindsey and include information about the dangers of sky lanterns as part our public awareness campaign”

The amendment was duly seconded and on being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

Members sought indication whether in fact the Council could licence firework events as suggested by the RSPCA. It was noted that currently there were no licensing regulations covering firework displays, however those serving alcohol were licensed, under the licensing regime but only to the extent of the sale and consumption of alcohol.

Councillor Bunney addressed Council and felt it important that the term “vulnerable people” clearly extended to include the elderly and those with learning difficulties for example, as these groups too could find the use of fireworks distressing. He also considered the motion should be extended to not just address the use of fireworks but also the sale of them, and therefore offered a further amendment, namely: -

“suppliers of Fireworks across the District will be encouraged and required to separate and label quieter fireworks from louder ones, allowing customers to choose their purchases with animal and people safety in mind. In addition to help with the responsible use and possession of fireworks all retailers are required to apply challenge 25 legislation to the sale of fireworks, as would be the case with alcohol”.

This further amendment was seconded, however the Monitoring Officer, addressed the meeting to advise that the sale of fireworks was dealt with by Trading Standards and therefore a function of the County Council. The Council was not able to pass a motion relating to the operation of a County Council function. The Council could encourage, or lobby but it could not pass a motion which would require enforcement of this function, as it was not within its powers.

The Leader addressed Council and gave his assurance that the term vulnerable people was widely accepted as including such groups as Councillor Bunney had suggested. He further indicated that should Councillor Bunney wish to further amend his amendment to make it incumbent on the Leader to write to County Council regarding the recommendations he had earlier stated, he would be supportive of such action.

Councillor Bunney indicated he was happy with the proposal that the Leader write to

the County Council to lobby for the changes his early amendment had stipulated and the revised amendment was seconded.

Following much debate, the motion as, amended, including the banning of sky lanterns and the lobbying of the County Council regarding the sale of fireworks, as detailed above, having been moved and seconded was **ACCEPTED**.

## **60 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME FOR 2020/21**

The Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee presented the report which had been considered by the Committee and referred to Council for approval.

No changes were made to the scheme in 2017/18 but amendments were made in 2018/19 in anticipation of Universal Credit implementation and again in 2019/20. Data available showed that it had been effective and that the collection rate for Council Tax Support claimants last year was just over 70%, an increase of 1.5% on the previous year.

At the end of October this financial year the collection rates for council tax support claimants was 46.52% an increase on the same period last year of 3.22%.

In view of this it was considered appropriate to continue to embed the current scheme with both staff and council tax support claimants for at least a further year taking this scheme through to 2021.

This Option had been supported by the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee at their meeting in December 2019 and as such was being recommended to Full Council for approval and adoption from 1 April 2020.

The recommendations were moved and seconded and on being voted upon it was:-

**RESOLVED** that:

(a) Option 1 be agreed as the preference for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for West Lindsey District Council for 2020/21, this being: -

- \* to adopt the scheme based on the 2019/20 scheme with adjustments to include any new legislation affecting the default/pension age scheme and the uprated non-dependent deductions, applicable amounts and allowances as per the Department for Works and Pensions annual "up-ratings"

as recommended by Corporate Policy and Resources Committee on 4 December 2019.

## **61 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2019/20**

The Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee presented the report which had been considered by the Committee and referred to Council for approval.

The mid-year report had been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covered the following:

- An economic update for the first part of the 2019/20 financial year;
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy;
- The Council's capital expenditure, as set out in the Capital Strategy, and prudential indicators;
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2019/20;
- A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2019/20;
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2019/20.

Brexit remained uncertain. The Bank Base rate had remained at 0.75%. CPI for August was 1.7% and likely to remain around the 2% mark, however a Brexit no deal may result in increases to 4%.

There had been no changes to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.

The forecast out-turn for Capital Expenditure was £22.655m against an original budget (including carry forwards) of £30.636m with £9.215m slippage to 2020/21.

The Council was projected to have £13.706m invested by the year end having generated £0.238m in investment Interest

In respect of commercial investment in property, the total acquisition costs year to date were £5.668m. The Council now had seven properties in its portfolio. The total capital spend on acquisition of investment property was £22.999m at a gross return of 6.4% per annum and a contribution of £0.720m to service delivery in 2019/20.

It was anticipated that total external borrowing would be £28.189m by the year end.

In response to a question regarding future plans for acquisitions outside of the District, the Chairman of the Corporate Policy Resources Committee advised that whilst there were still monies within the budget for such acquisitions, no such purchases were currently under consideration or being appraised.

Having being moved and seconded on being put to the vote it was: -

**RESOLVED** that Council note the report, the treasury activity and accept the recommendation from Corporate Policy and Resources Committee that the changes to the prudential indicators be approved.

## 62 COUNCIL TAX BASE

Members gave consideration to a report which sought approval of the Council Tax Base for the District and determination of the Surplus or Deficit to be distributed for the purposes of 2020/21 budget setting.

The Council was required to declare an estimate of the surplus or deficit that would occur on the Collection Fund at the end of each year. The Collection Fund recorded the amount of income collected from Council Tax, together with precept payments made to principal authorities. These elements would generate a surplus or a deficit which should be taken into account when determining the Council Tax for the following year.

Any surplus or deficit generated through the Collection fund in relation to Council Tax was shared between the County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and this Authority in the same proportion as the amount of their precepts for 2019/20.

A surplus or deficit could occur in the Collection Fund if the Council tax base was larger or smaller than originally anticipated or collection rates were higher or lower than expected.

Section 2 of the report set out the estimated surplus for 19/20 and how this would be shared amongst precepting authorities during 20/21.

Section 3 of the report set out the Council Tax Base for 2020/21 together with the factors which had been taken into consideration in making the calculation.

A summary of the calculation and adjustments taken into account was shown in Appendix A.

The Council also levied additional amounts for the precepts of Local Councils, and separate tax bases were required for those areas. These were shown at Appendix B.

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved, seconded and voted upon.

**RESOLVED** that: -

- (a) the estimated surplus of £215,436 be declared as accruing in the Council's Collection Fund at 31 March 2020 relating to an estimated Council Tax surplus;
- (b) the Council uses its element of the collection Fund surplus/deficit in calculating the level of Council Tax in 2020/21; and
- (c) the calculations of the Council's tax base for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix A, be approved and in accordance with the Local Authorities' (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1993 (as amended) the tax base for each part of the Authority's area shall be as set out in Appendix B.

### **63 PROPOSED MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2020 / 2021**

Mr Richard Quirk, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel introduced the report and outlined the process that had been undertaken to produce the recommendations set out in the report. Consultation had taken place with Members and thanks were expressed to those that had responded. However the response rate had been particularly low.

Taking all factors into account, the Panel had recommended an increase of £560 pa to

Members' basic allowance. However it was noted that this included the rolling in of broadband connection payments, valued at £240pa, currently claimed separately by Members.

The Panel were of the view that the SRA payments were currently adequate and had recommended these remain unchanged.

The issue of payments to Vice-Chairmen, where two Chairmen served one Committee had been a matter raised with the Panel. The Panel had felt this was something that Members needed to determine and as such two options were presented for consideration: Splitting the payment between the two roles, or continuing to pay both positions the allowance.

The Panel's full set of recommendations were as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Debate ensued and a Councillor spoke vehemently against multiple payments being made to Committee Vice-Chairmen where they shared a role. He considered this completely unjustified. He also questioned the need for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at all, as in his view the Committee served no purpose. As such he moved option A within the report.

This view was challenged, with a Member noting that multiple Vice-Chairmanships had been introduced under the Leadership of that member. In response he advised the circumstances of the Council had considerably changed with a move away from the previous commercial and entrepreneurial drive, reducing the work, and as such stood by his previous statement.

The Chairman of Governance and Audit Committee, referred to the very low response rate, referred to by the Chairman of the Remuneration Panel. Such a low response rate had the potential to outweigh the general feeling and therefore he encouraged all Members to engage in the process in the future to ensure the views expressed were accurate and reflective of the collective.

Several Members spoke to challenge the view expressed by the former Leader. The Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee acknowledged the direction of work had changed but this had been replaced by other drivers, such as adding Social Value. In his view the work demand had not reduced but in fact increased in terms of his Committee. Furthermore, different Vice-Chairs brought with them different skills, all of which added value to the work of the Committee. He therefore moved Option B within the report which was duly seconded.

The former Chairman of the Challenge and Improvement Committee, who had served with the assistance of two Vice-Chairmen again made representations in support of retaining the two payments. He praised his former Vice-Chairman, Councillor Angela White, and outlined examples of work she personally spear-headed in the role.

This view was endorsed by many.

Members thanked the Remuneration Panel for the work they undertook on behalf of the Authority.

The Leader encouraged Members to make representations to himself, if there were concerns with how Committees were operating.

Having being moved and seconded it was **RESOLVED** that: -

- (a) the new rates, as shown within the report (at Appendix A) with regards to Members' Allowances for the 2020/2021 Civic Year be approved, namely:
- - an increase of £560 p/a to the individual Basic Allowance and incorporating broadband within this (no separate broadband payment to be made);
  - retaining all remaining allowances at current rates; and
- (b) where there is more than one Vice-Chairman sitting on a Committee, Option B be supported, namely: -
- that the SRA allowance continue to be paid to both Vice-Chairman, as opposed to being split between them.

#### **64 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

#### **65 FREEDOM OF THE DISTRICT - POSITION UPDATE**

Council at its meeting on 4 November had resolved to grant a freedom of the District. Members considered a report which sought to update Members on this matter, having received communication from the proposed recipient.

The report outlined the recipient's current position, together with a proposed way forward in light of this information.

Debate ensued and a Member raised another Freedom he was aware of in another Authority area, which had been accepted and questioned whether the Policy had changed.

Another Member was of the view that if the Freedom was not acceptable it should be withdrawn, not the Policy be amended. This view was not shared across the Chamber.

The original proposer of the Freedom, indicated to the Chamber that Council was acting on the advice of the recipient, which Council must acknowledge. He considered it a reasonable compromise and considered honouring the organisation in some way was more important than the way in which the honour was titled.

Some Members sought indication as to whether the recipient's mind could be changed, offering alternatives ways in which they considered the Freedom may be exercised.

After much debate, the Leader undertook to discuss the points raised with the appropriate ceremonial office whilst investigating the adoption process. The decision under consideration would not prevent a Freedom being honoured in the event that a working solution could be found.

On that basis it was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the awarding of an adoption to the organisation named with the report be approved in principle;
- (b) delegated authority be granted to the Governance and Audit Committee to introduce a process by which “adoptions” can be granted going forward as part of the Civic Honours Policy; and
- (c) subject to (b) above being completed, the recipient be invited to Annual Council in May to receive their “adoption”.

The meeting concluded at 8.17 pm.

Chairman