

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF
THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF WELLINGBOROUGH
HELD ON TUESDAY 16 JUNE 2020**

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Carr and Councillors Abram, Allebone, Anslow, Aslam, Beirne, Bell, Bone, Ekins, Emerson, Francis, Graves, Gough, Griffiths, Hallam, Harrington, Henley, G Lawman, L Lawman, Maguire, Morrall, Partridge-Underwood, Patel, Scanlon, Scarborough, Simmons, Skittrall, Stevenson, Walia, Ward, M Waters, V Waters, Watts, Weatherill and York.

Officers present: Mr S Darcy, (Director/S151 Officer), Mr A Piper, (Assistant Director), Mr B Gill, (Monitoring Officer), Mrs C A Mundy, (Democratic Services Officer), Mrs F Hubbard and Mrs E Robinson (Meeting producers). (Mrs L Elliott, (Managing Director) and Miss K Denton, (Assistant Director) were also present).

1. WELCOME AND STATEMENT FROM THE MAYOR

The mayor welcomed everyone to the council meeting and explained how the meeting would proceed.

He also referenced the 'Black Lives Matter' movement, and read out the following statement on behalf of all elected councillors of the Borough Council of Wellingborough.

"In the borough of Wellingborough we are both fortunate and proud to have a diverse and welcoming community with a rich heritage and culture.

"Residents and businesses in our town and villages celebrate a multitude of faiths and cultures harmoniously, and as a council we are honoured to be represented by councillors from a multitude of cultures.

"There are a variety of people from the borough, both past and present, who have made a contribution to our area, who have made it a diverse and more accepting place locally, as well as impacting on national and worldwide affairs.

"As a council we stand together and recognise the work that still lies before us to confront racism. We, as a council, are committed to ensuring that the borough of Wellingborough is a place in which all citizens stand together.

"The Borough Council of Wellingborough aligned its commitment to ensuring that it continues to uphold and promote diversity and equality alongside our twin towns of Niort and Wittlich by signing, in 1997, an anti-discrimination statement, which is displayed in the council chamber. As the council motto states 'Forward Together'.

The mayor then asked Councillor Partridge-Underwood to say a few words of reflection, before a minutes silence was held in memory of Councillor Tom

Lloyd, who died in April, Mrs Sue Ridge, wife of Honorary Freeman Ridge, and others who had passed away in the borough; and for all whose lives had been affected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that there were no apologies.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the council's code of conduct and the council's constitution, the following declarations were made:

| Councillor | Min. no. | Reason |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Anslow | Min. 12 - Community Asset Transfer Request Queens Hall & 10 High Street Place | Other interest – Trustee of Daylight Centre |
| Griffiths | Min. 11 – Members Allowance - Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) | DPI – Position was referred to in the report of the IRP and he would leave the meeting during discussion thereon |
| Partridge-Underwood | Min. 11 – Members Allowance report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) | DPI – Position was referred to in the report of the IRP and he would leave the meeting during discussion thereon |
| Scarborough | Min. 11 – Members Allowances report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) | Other interest – his position was referenced in the report of the IRP, having been interviewed by the panel, though it was proposed that his remuneration would remain unchanged. |

4. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING OF 26 MAY 2020

The minutes of the annual council meeting held on 26 May 2020 were received.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the annual council meeting of 26 May 2020, be confirmed and signed.

5. **QUESTIONS/PETITIONS/REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING**

The mayor clarified that he had received one request to address the meeting and welcomed Mr James Bellamy, a trustee of the Daylight Centre and Wellingborough Foodbank. Mr Bellamy had dialled into the meeting and was happy to answer any queries that members had on report 8.

6. **MINUTES TO NOTE**

The following minutes were received to note:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Planning Committee | 19 February 2020 |
| Planning Committee | 18 March 2020 |
| Licensing Sub-Committee | 9 March 2020 |

RESOLVED that the minutes of the planning committees of 19 February 2020 and 18 March 2020; and the licensing sub-committee of 9 March 2020, be noted.

7. **DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 17 FEBRUARY 2020**

The minutes of the development committee of 17 February 2020 were received.

Reference was made to minute 4 – The Roundhouse - Members supported the option to find a suitable alternative use for the development of this important historical building and were supportive of the action taken.

The mayor then referred to the following items:

Minute 5 – Open space developer contributions SPD and recommendation 1 regarding the adoption of the SPD, which on being put to the vote was declared carried.

Minute 6 – Sports provision: Developer contributions SPD recommendation 2 the adoption of the SPD, which on being put to the vote was declared carried.

Minute 8 – Town Centre Vision with recommendation 3 - the establishment of the Wellingborough Town Regeneration Working Group. On being put to the vote approval was given to the establishment of the working group with Councillors G Lawman, Partridge-Underwood and Skittrall being the Conservative members and Councillors Anslow and Maguire representing the Labour group.

Councillor Graves made reference to minute 9 – the Tithe Barn and Croyland Gardens Project Update. He expressed disappointment that despite repeated requests from members, the creation of a calm and tranquil piazza with a café culture feel, seating and water feature to enhance the environment and area outside the Tithe Barn had not been progressed as a legacy for the town. He

asked that this be discussed further. A number of other members supported the comments of Councillor Graves and did not feel that the fears over the area being abused or vandalised should be a deterrent to enhancing it with a water feature being included. Councillor G Lawman suggested that this be referred to the working group. This was seconded by Councillor Anslow.

The chairman clarified that nothing had been decided on how this area would be developed as yet. He considered that it was appropriate for the working group to discuss this further.

Councillor Scarborough clarified that the request was to refer back the installation of a water feature in this area. This was seconded by Councillor Graves. On being put to the vote the reference back was carried, with the agreement that this would be discussed by the Wellingborough Town Regeneration Working Group, who in turn would report back to the committee.

(Councillor Griffiths abstained from voting on this item.)

The chairman responded thanking members for their comments and confirmed that this would be discussed further by the Wellingborough Town Regeneration working group, taking into account members views and comments.

Councillor Allebone proposed the adoption of the minutes, which was seconded by Councillor Skittrall and on being put to the vote declared carried.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the minutes of the development committee of 17 February 2020, be adopted;
- (ii) The Open Space Developer Contribution supplementary planning document (SPD) be adopted;
- (iii) The Sports Provision: Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be adopted;
- (iv) The Wellingborough Town Regeneration Working Group be established with Councillors G Lawman, Partridge-Underwood, Skittrall, Anslow and Maguire being appointed thereto;
- (v) The Wellingborough Town Regeneration Working Group would discuss the inclusion of a water feature outside the Tithe Barn and take into account the comments made by councillors.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM SUB-COMMITTEE – 3 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the local government reform sub-committee of 3 March 2020 were received.

Councillor Griffiths proposed the adoption of the minutes which was seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the local government reform sub-committee of 3 March 2020, be adopted.

9. AUDIT COMMITTEE – 10 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the audit committee of 10 March 2020 were received.

Councillor Weatherill proposed the adoption of the minutes which was seconded by Councillor Bell. On being put to the vote the adoption was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the audit committee of 10 March 2020, be adopted.

10. RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 11 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the resources committee of 11 March 2020 were received.

Members made reference to minute 5 – Redwell Leisure Centre and spoke about the benefit that a hydro-pool would bring to those who suffered with mobility issues in the borough; they considered this would be a good addition.

The mayor referred to the following:

Minute 8 – Capital programme monitoring and recommendation 1. Members referred to the Isham Bypass project and asked how this was progressing. The leader clarified that a purchase order had been received from the county council for £1m, which, subject to council's agreement, would be paid to enable the delivery of the infrastructure. He said that a briefing note, giving an update, would be provided during July. On being put the vote the recommendation was declared carried.

Minute 9 – Capital and Investment Strategy for the medium term, with recommendation 2, which on being put to the vote was declared carried.

Minute 10 – Prudential indicators and treasury management strategy 2020-2021 with recommendation 3, which on being put to the vote was declared carried. (Councillor Scarborough abstained from voting on this item having declared an interest at the meeting.)

Minute 11 – Pay Policy Statement 2020-2021 with recommendation 4, which on being put to the vote was declared carried.

Councillor Griffiths moved the adoption of the minutes and this was seconded by Councillor Partridge-Underwood. On being put to the vote the adoption was declared carried.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the resources committee of 11 March 2020, be adopted.

(Councillors Griffiths and Partridge-Underwood left the meeting during the following item.)

11. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES – REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The annexed circulated report of the managing director was received in relation to the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on the review of special responsibility allowances.

The IRP had been asked to consider the additional work undertaken by the leader and deputy leader of the council and the leader of the opposition during the last year moving towards the creation of North Northamptonshire Council.

The findings of the panel were appended to the report and indicated that the workload of the leader of the council had significantly increased since the last review in 2018 and the responsibilities and time commitment were now considerable. The panel recommended a 25% increase, to take the SRA of the leader to £11,405, slightly below the average for comparable authorities. Likewise, the deputy leader was also heavily involved in the work programme, with the main role being to keep the Conservative group fully briefed about the progress being made towards the unitary authority. The panel considered that the increase in the workload of the deputy leader would also merit an increase to the SRA, and recommended an increase of 12.5% to £5,125.

Whilst the workload of the opposition leader had also increased it was not to the same extent as the leader and deputy leader and a justifiable increase would be small, on balance it concluded that the status quo should be maintained.

These increases were for the period 2019-2020, though the panel considered that the supplemental increases to the SRA should be retained for a further year, until the council ceased to exist.

Therefore the recommendations of the panel were as follows:

- The SRA of the leader of the council should be increased to £11,405 for the year 2019-2020 and backdated to the start of the municipal year;
- The SRA of the deputy leader of the council should be increased to £5,125 for the year 2019-2020 and backdated to the start of the municipal year;
- If the leader and/or the deputy leader are elected to positions of responsibility on the North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority in May 2020, then the supplements recommended above should cease to be paid. Otherwise they should continue to be paid until April 2021;
- The panel should be reconvened in May 2020 if it is felt that the above recommendation requires reconsideration.

The mayor reminded members that this report had originally been submitted to the meeting of 26 March, which had been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Allebone.

A lengthy debate ensued.

Some members considered that whilst not disputing the additional workload that the leader and deputy leader had undertaken, the allowance was not a living wage, and therefore should not be treated as such. Some members also considered standing as a borough councillor was not a job, but was a voluntary role to which you were elected, to undertake to represent the people of the borough. The government had previously indicated that no special responsibility allowances would be paid to councillors; nor senior managers, who would also not receive remuneration for any additional work they undertook, during the set up of the new unitary shadow council. Members had volunteered for the positions on offer and were aware that the additional workload was unpaid. It was considered that in the current climate of the worldwide pandemic, where people in the borough were losing their lives, their loved ones, their jobs and their livelihoods and struggling to feed their families, that council tax payers should not subsidise this increase.

It was also mooted that there were a number of people across the borough who were spending time and energy moving toward the North Northamptonshire Unitary Council and would not receive additional allowances.

Whilst members fully acknowledged the hard work of the leader and deputy leader, and did not dispute the hours, or effort, that were going into the formation of the unitary council, they felt that it was not the right time to consider an increase and that this could be revisited later on in the year. Members stressed that this was not a personal issue against either the leader or deputy leader; it was purely seen to be inappropriate during the pandemic and financial uncertainty of many people.

Councillor Gough requested to speak and stated that he would not be supporting the increase and started to read out a statement. The mayor politely warned Councillor Gough that the statement he was endeavouring to make was inappropriate and asked him to cease and restrict his comments to the report. Councillor Gough continued with his statement and was warned again by the mayor to cease making derogatory comments and was asked to stick to the subject matter. Connectivity was lost with Councillor Gough for a short while and when he re-joined the meeting he informed the mayor that he had written his statement on the 'meeting chat'. The mayor asked Councillor Gough again to stick to the subject matter and refrain from being disruptive, when he refrained from doing so, and on the advice of the monitoring officer, the mayor removed Councillor Gough from the meeting.

(Councillor Gough left the meeting.)

The debate continued, with many councillors fully supporting the increase, which they considered to be reasonable and appropriate. They appreciated that the workload of both the leader and deputy leader had substantially increased and would continue to do so during the coming year. Whilst appreciating that this was a voluntary role, for the leader of a council, it was more than a full-time job these days and extremely time consuming. A leader would be unable to undertake this role and hold down a full time job. The workload was all consuming and the appropriate allowance should be paid for the additional work.

Councillor Emerson proposed an amendment to the recommendation as follows:

- (i) the Special Responsibility Allowance of the leader of the council should be increased to £11,405 effective from the start of the municipal year 2020 and continuing until April 2021;
- (ii) the Special Responsibility Allowance of the deputy leader of the council should be increased to £5,125 effective from the start of the municipal year 2020 and continuing until April 2021.

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Maguire.

Members considered this amended proposal to be more appropriate and reasonable in the current climate.

Councillor Henley made a request for a recorded vote under rule 4.1.6(d) of the constitution. Seven Councillors supported this request.

The mayor put the amendment to the meeting and the following votes were cast:

For: Cllrs Abram, Allebone, Anslow, Aslam, Beirne, Bell, Bone, Emerson, Francis, Graves, Hallam, Harrington, Henley, G Lawman, L Lawman, Maguire, Morrall, Patel, Scanlon, Scarborough, Simmons, Skittrall, Stevenson, Walia, Ward, M Waters, V Waters, Watts, Weatherill and York (no.30);

Against: None (no. 0)

Abstentions: Ekins (no.1)

The amendment was declared carried with 30 votes in favour, no votes against and one abstention.

This became the substantive motion and on being put to the vote the amendment was declared carried with one vote against.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Special Responsibility Allowance of the leader of the council be increased to £11,405 effective from the start of the municipal year 2020 and continuing until April 2021;
- (ii) the Special Responsibility Allowance of the deputy leader of the council be increased to £5,125 effective from the start of the municipal year 2020 and continuing until April 2021.

12. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER REQUEST – QUEENS HALL AND 10 HIGH STREET PLACE

(Councillors Griffiths and Partridge-Underwood re-joined the meeting and Councillor Anslow left the meeting.)

The circulated report of the assistant director was received in relation to the transfer of Queens Hall and part of 10 High Street place to the Daylight Centre in accordance with the approved community asset transfer policy.

The Daylight centre had submitted an application for the transfer of the property which they have occupied under short term leases for some years.

Appended to the report were the following:

Appendix 1 - Business case, feasibility study and responses to queries;
Appendix 2 - Valuations;
Appendix 3 – Financial information in support of the application.

The mayor reminded members that Mr Bellamy was available to answer any queries.

Members considered the request and felt that this was a good way forward for the Daylight Centre who provided a valuable service to the community, including the foodbank, and fully supported the proposal.

Councillor Griffiths moved the proposed action which was seconded by Councillor Scarborough. On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) approval be given to the transfer of the Queens Hall and part of 10 High Street Place to the Daylight Centre on a long lease in accordance with the policy;
- (ii) delegation be given to the assistant director (corporate landlord) to agree the detailed terms of the leasehold transfer, and to ensure that the council's interests are protected.

13. CORRESPONDENCE, COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE DIRECTION OF THE MAYOR OR THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

The mayor had no further business, thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.

Mayor

The meeting concluded at 9.35pm.