

COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 15th SEPTEMBER 2021 – 7.15 p.m.

Minutes of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 15th SEPTEMBER 2021** at **7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs. Sandra Haigh (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Jim Atkinson, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Barbara A. Clare, John D. Clare, John Clark, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Dave Hardaker, Phillip Hawkins, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, and Michael Stead.

OFFICERS

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)

Mrs. T. Woodhead (Finance Manager)

Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. A. Bailey (Former Town Clerk)

57. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

The Chairman welcomed guests and members of the public who attended as part of agenda item 14, Honorary Freeman of the Town Presentation.

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Bergg, Brian Hall, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Kate Hopper, Andrea Miller, and Maureen Shelton.

59. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

There had been no requests for dispensations under disclosable or non-disclosable interests.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There had been no declarations of interest submitted.

61. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

62. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M Chandran, seconded by Councillor Dave Hardaker and

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 28th July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

63. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor submitted a list of appointments which had been attended for the period up to 8th September 2021.

The Town Clerk advised that Councillor Peter Bergg is stepping down as spokesperson for the Labour Group and that Councillor Eddy Adam will be taking over the position.

The Town Clerk also advised that a draft letter of objection had been received from ELG Planning and circulated to all councillors for comment prior to being submitted to Durham County Council Planning Department.

It was also advised that that due to staff sickness, the kitchen at the Oakleaf Sports Complex would need to be closed over the coming weekend.

RESOLVED – that the information be received.

64. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(a) Environment Committee

Councillor Eddy Adam proposed that Minute 45 regarding the Car Parking Working Group) should be amended to read as follows:-

“An item had been placed on the agenda by Councillor John Clare regarding issues surrounding the creation of the Car Parking Working Group. Councillor Clare had tendered his apologies for absence from the meeting and was therefore unable to present his questions. A brief debate took place around the issues raised”.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 1st September 2021 be received and approved, subject to Minute 45 being amended to read

“An item had been placed on the agenda by Councillor John Clare regarding issues surrounding the creation of the Car Parking Working Group. Councillor Clare had tendered his apologies for absence from the meeting and was therefore unable to present his questions. A brief debate took place around the issues raised”.

- ii) that the said minutes be approved and adopted.

(b) Recreation Committee

Councillor Eddy Adam proposed that Minute 35 regarding Aycliffe Village footpath be amended to include reference to his proposal that the residents are not consulted as this has already been undertaken by Aycliffe Village Residents Association.

It was proposed by Councillor George Gray, seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 1st September 2021 be received and approved subject to the following wording being added to Minute 35:

“Councillor Eddy Adam made reference to the fact that a consultation had already been undertaken by Aycliffe Village Residents Association and proposed that there would therefore be no requirement to undertake any further consultation”.

and that a further resolution is to be added to read:-

“That no further consultation is undertaken with local residents”.

- ii) that the said minutes be approved and adopted.

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor Eddy Adam proposed that Minute 59 regarding the Notice of Motion Reconsideration should read that the vote on the original proposal to rescind the motion was decided by a majority vote and not unanimously.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 8th September 2021 be received and approved subject to the following amendment being made to the wording of the Minute:

“The proposal was carried by a majority vote”.

- ii) that the said minutes be approved and adopted.

65. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT

The Town Clerk submitted a report to advise the Council that a Code of Conduct complaint had been made against a Member of the Council, and to report the outcome of the investigation by the Durham County Council Governance Solicitor as required by Council Standing Order 33 – Code of Conduct Complaints.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, and seconded by Councillor Ken Robson and

RESOLVED – that:

- i) that the report and Decision Notice be received.

66. OUTCOME OF THE ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT

The Finance Manager gave a report setting out for approval the external auditor's report and certificate in respect of the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the 2020/21 financial year.

Councillor Ken Robson thanked the Finance Manager and praised the work that has been undertaken to deliver the positive external audit report.

It was proposed by Councillor Dave Hardaker, and seconded by Jim Atkinson and

RESOLVED – that:

- i) Members receive the external auditor's Audit Completion Letter, External Audit Report and Audit Certificate in respect of the 2020/21 Annual Governance and Accountability Return;
- ii) note the arrangements made by the Finance Manager to publish public notice of the completion of the audit and the audited Annual Governance and Accountability Return on the Council website;
- iii) note the unqualified external audit opinion highlighting that *"the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with proper practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislative and regulatory requirements have not been met"*.

67. DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL PROPOSED PARKING AND WAITING RESTRICTIONS AMENDMENT ORDER

A report was received requesting comments or objections to a proposed Prohibition and Restriction of Waiting and Loading and Prohibition of Stopping, Permit Holders Only Amendment Order relating to a number of roads and streets in the Great Aycliffe area.

RESOLVED – that:

- i) the information be received, and Members submit any comments in relation to their individual wards.

68. NOTICE OF MOTION

To consider the following Notice of Motion from Councillor Michael Stead:

"Council meetings currently start at 7.15pm and can extend after 10pm.

This impacts upon the wellbeing of staff, puts residents off standing as councillors and makes it more unlikely that the public will attend meetings.

It is proposed that this Council therefore agrees:-

- *to change the start times of Council and Committee meetings to 7pm with effect from 1st November 2021;*

- *that before 9pm a motion must be carried that allows the meeting to proceed beyond 9pm, otherwise the meeting closes at 9pm prompt;*
- *that every half hour thereafter, the vote must be put to continue or not; and*
- *any outstanding business will go to the next available ordinary meeting of the Council or relevant Committee. This does not exclude calling special meetings to clear any items of an urgent nature.*

Councillor Michael Stead withdrew the notice of motion.

69. OUTSIDE BODIES

It was agreed that written reports would be circulated where relevant by the Council's representatives on the undermentioned Outside Bodies:

- (a) Youth Council
- (b) County Durham Association of Local Councils
- (c) Aycliffe Village Hall Association
- (d) Woodham Village Community Association
- (e) Great Aycliffe and Middridge Local Councils' Committee
- (f) Larger Local Councils' Forum
- (g) Newton Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society
- (h) Friends of Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve
- (i) Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway
- (j) Western Area Partnership

70. HONORARY FREEMAN OF THE TOWN CEREMONY

Councillors Eddy Adam, Arun M. Chandran and Bob Fleming each gave a speech reflecting on the former Town Clerk, Andrew Baileys' contribution to the Town Council and Great Aycliffe area over his many years of public service.

There then followed the presentation, by the Mayor of the Council, of a scroll bestowing the title of 'Honorary Freeman of the Town' to Andrew Bailey, who gave a speech acknowledging and thanking his colleagues and councillors both present and past.

CHAIRMAN.