

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 18TH MAY 2022 – 7.15 p.m.

Minutes of the proceedings of the **ANNUAL MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 18th MAY 2022 at 7.15 p.m.**

PRESENT

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs. Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Kate Hopper, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Andrea Miller, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. D. Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. T. Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Miss. A. Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Mrs. S. Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

Councillor Sandra Haigh took the Chair for the meeting as the current Mayor.

1. VOTING SYSTEM

The Town Clerk requested that members agree an appropriate voting system for the Annual Council Meeting.

It was advised that the two most common voting systems used by local authorities are:-

1. First Past the Post whereby every member receives one vote and whoever gets the most votes in the first voting round wins.
2. An Exhaustive Ballot whereby every member receives one vote and the nominee with the lowest vote in each voting round drops out. Further voting rounds then take place until there is a clear winner. This system works best if there are three or more nominees.

The Chairman's casting vote applies in the event of a tie.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran that First Past the Post be used where there are two nominations and an Exhaustive Vote where there were three or more nominees.

It was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam that an Exhaustive Ballot, by show of hands be used as this would cover both scenarios, and that this should be written into the Standing Orders relating to the Business and Proceedings of the Council. This was seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary.

RESOLVED – that an Exhaustive Ballot voting system be implemented by the Council and written into the Standing Orders relating to the Business and Proceedings of the Council.

2. APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor George Gray that Councillor Ken Robson be nominated as Mayor for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Ken Robson be appointed Chairman (Mayor) of the Council for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

Councillor Ken Robson took the Chair for the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Mayor's Declaration of Acceptance of Office

The newly appointed Mayor made and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

RESOLVED – that the information be received.

The Mayor thanked the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Mrs. Sandra Haigh and presented her with a bouquet of flowers for the dedicated service given during her year in office.

4. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

It was proposed by Councillor Phillip Hawkins and seconded by Councillor Bob Fleming, that Councillor Carl Robinson be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

It was further proposed by Councillor Joanne Jones and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston, that Councillor Neville Jones be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

A vote took place with the following results:

Councillor Carl Robinson - 13 votes
Councillor Neville Jones – 15 votes

RESOLVED – that Councillor Neville Jones be appointed Vice-Chairman (Deputy Mayor) of the Council for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

5. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

6. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

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

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were received from Councillor Eddy Adam for Agenda Items 21 and 22 as he is County Councillor.

8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Bergg and Maureen Shelton.

9. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston and;

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on the 27th April 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor's Announcements

The newly appointed Mayor, Councillor Ken Robson, thanked the Council for the honour of being appointed as Chairman of the Council (Mayor) for the year 2022/23.

11. ANNUAL CONSTITUTION REVIEW

The Town Clerk submitted a report requesting that members consider the annual review of the Council's Constitution and seeking the adoption of the amendments proposed.

The report set out information on each Article of the Constitution separately attaching details of any amendments which were recommended:

CONTENTS AND INTRODUCTION

Minor changes have been made to the list of Council services to add detail and clarification, while reference to the lorry park has been deleted.

ARTICLE 1 - How the Council Operates

Minor amendments have been made to the reflect the changed political make-up of the Council, whilst an updated staffing establishment list and organisation chart has also been added.

ARTICLE 2 - Committee Structure

The sub-committee and working group list has been amended to remove the Review Sub Committee and Parking Issues Working Group as previously agreed by the Council, and to add the Town Centre Regeneration and Development Working Group.

ARTICLE 3 - Powers and Duties of Committees

This document has been updated to remove reference to the Review Sub Committee and to add the terms of reference of the Town Centre Regeneration and Development Working Group as previously referenced.

The responsibilities relating to the Review Sub Committee have been transferred to the main Policy and Resources Committee.

Some minor amendments to wording have also been made to improve clarity.

ARTICLE 4 - Mayor's Information Booklet

One minor change has been made to this Article to remove the reference to the transfer of the grant of the Coat of Arms i.e. the Council Crest from Aycliffe Development Corporation to the Town Council as per the recent report to the Council which established that this transfer did not take place.

Members are also asked to agree or amend the Civic Guest List for 2022/23 which is set out in Appendix E to the Mayor's Information Booklet.

ARTICLE 5 - Members' Allowances Scheme

There were no recommendations for amendments or alterations.

ARTICLE 6A - Standing Orders – Relating to Proceedings and Business of the Council

Three amendments were approved to these Standing Orders at the Council Meeting held on the 28th July 2021 (Minute No. 51 refers).

Some further minor amendments to wording had been made to improve clarity.

ARTICLE 6B - Standing Orders – Relating to Contracts and Procurement

These Standing Orders have been updated and were approved at the Council Meeting held on the 27th April 2022 (Minute No. 135 (ii) refers).

ARTICLE 7 - Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations have been updated and were approved at the Council Meeting held on the 27th April 2022 (Minute No. 134 (ii) refers).

ARTICLE 8 - Scheme of Delegation

Some minor amendments to wording have been made to improve clarity.

ARTICLE 9 - Rights of Citizens

Some minor amendments to wording have also been made to improve clarity.

ARTICLE 10 - Members Code of Conduct

The Member's Code of Conduct was updated to bring it in line with the Durham County Council Code of Conduct and was approved and adopted by the Council at its meeting on the 28th July 2021 (Minute No. 52 refers).

There are no further recommendations for amendment or alteration to the Code of Conduct.

ARTICLE 11 – Officers Code of Conduct

There were no recommendations for amendment or alteration to the Officers Code of Conduct which remains fit for purpose.

ARTICLE 12(A) – Member / Officer Protocol

ARTICLE 12(B) – Protocol on use of Council Facilities & Resources by Councillors

Some minor amendments to wording have also been made to improve clarity.

ARTICLE 13 - Strategies / High Level Documents / Service Plans

The following documents are reported and updated annually at their appropriate times and reported to the Council or appropriate committee:

1. *Risk Management Strategy*
2. *Medium Term Financial Plan*
3. *Treasury Management Code of Practice*
4. *Business Continuity Plan*
5. *Asset Management Plan*
6. *Town Council Service Delivery Plan*
7. *Sports Complex Service Plan*
8. *Works and Environment Section Service Plan*
9. *Finance Section Service Plan*
10. *Pre-Schools Service Plan*
11. *Code of Governance*
12. *Health and Safety Policy Manual*

ARTICLE 14 - Council Policies and Procedures

A full list of Council Policies and Procedures showing when they had last been reviewed was provided for information.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- (i) That the report be received.
- (ii) That the various amendments to the Council's Constitution be approved.
- (iii) That the Civic Guest List be agreed to be the same list of Authorities as in 2021/22.
- (iv) That the Council's Constitution as set out in the report be readopted.
- (v) That a full copy of the adopted Constitution of the Council be available for Members to peruse in the Council Chamber and on the Council Website.

12. NOTICE OF MOTION

Members considered the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Joanne Jones and seconded by Councillor Lindsey Aston:

"The Council agrees that the allocation of seats to political groups represented on the Council on committees, sub-committees and working groups be politically balanced i.e. numbers of places are set based on the numbers of councillors in each political group, and that Standing Orders 15 and 16 is updated to reflect this".

Councillors sought clarification from the Town Clerk on the legality and practical implications of the motion.

The Town Clerk clarified that there was no specific legislation for town and parish councils regarding proportional representation but that there was therefore nothing to preclude councils from applying such rules.

Based on the current political make-up of the Council, agreement of the motion would mean the allocation of places to political groups on all committees, sub committees and working groups would be based on the following proportions:-
Independents - 13 Members out of 30 which is 43%
Labour - 9 Members out of 30 which is 30%
Liberal Democrats – 8 Members out of 30 which is 27%.

In terms of Committee numbers the Town Clerk advised that it would be preferable to have a maximum committee size of 26 members, thereby allowing for 4 members to be available to form an Appeals Sub Committee.

Following a lengthy debate Councillors voted on the motion with the following result:

For - 15
Against – 1
Abstentions - 12

The motion was carried.

RESOLVED – as follows:

That the Council agrees that the allocation of seats to political groups represented on the Council on committees, sub-committees and working groups be politically balanced i.e. numbers of places are set based on the numbers of councillors in each political group, and that Standing Orders 15 and 16 is updated to reflect this”.

13. REVIEW AND APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

The Town Clerk submitted a report requesting members consideration for the numbers on the three Standing Committees of the Council; Environment, Recreation and Policy and Resources and the appointment of Members to those committees.

Following the agreement of the previous motion, the Town Clerk advised that proportional representation would apply in the allocation of places to the political groups using the following percentages:-

Independents 43%
Labour 30%
Liberal Democrats 27%.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the Committees consist of 27 members plus the Mayor and Deputy Mayor as ex-officio.

The Town Clerk confirmed that this would result a proportional representation allocation of places ratio of:-

12 Independents
8 Labour
7 Liberal Democrats.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor John Clark that the Committees consist of 24 members plus the Mayor and Deputy Mayor as ex-officio.

The Town Clerk confirmed that this would result a proportional representation allocation of places ratio of:-

11 Independents

7 Labour
6 Liberal Democrats.

A vote then took place on the amendment with the following results:

For – 15 votes
Against – 13 votes

The amendment was carried.

A vote then took place on the substantive motion with the following results:

For - 15 votes
Against – 13 votes

Councillor Bob Fleming then requested an adjournment to discuss the nominations to the Committees.

The meeting was adjourned at 8.10pm. The meeting reconvened at 8.27pm

(i) Environment Committee

RESOLVED – as follows

- (a) That an Environment Committee be appointed for the Municipal Year 2022/23.
- (b) That it comprise of 24 Members of the Council plus the Mayor and Deputy Mayor as Ex-Officio Members.
- (c) That the Membership of the Environment Committee be:
Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.
Plus one vacancy available to the Liberal Democrats.

(ii) Recreation Committee

- (a) That a Recreation Committee be appointed for the Municipal Year 2022/23.
- (b) That it comprise of 24 Members of the Council plus the Mayor and Deputy Mayor as Ex-Officio Members.
- (c) That the membership of the Recreation Committee be:
Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Mrs. Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward. *Plus one vacancy available to the Liberal Democrats.*

(iii) Policy and Resources Committee

- (a) That a Policy and Resources Committee be appointed for the Municipal Year 2022/23.
- (b) That it comprise of 24 Members of the Council plus the Mayor and Deputy Mayor as Ex-Officio Members.
- (c) That the membership of the Policy and Resources Committee be:

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, John Clark, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Mrs. Sandra Haigh, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.
Plus one vacancy available to the Liberal Democrats.

14. ADJOURNMENT OF COUNCIL MEETING

It was moved by Councillor Arun Chandran, seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and

RESOLVED – that the meeting be adjourned to enable the Environment, Recreation and Policy and Resources Committees to appoint their Sub-Committees and Working Groups.

Please refer to the Minutes of these Committees.

15. RECONVENING OF COUNCIL MEETING

It was moved by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and

RESOLVED – that the meeting of the Council be re-convened following the completion of the meetings of the Environment, Recreation and Policy and Resources Committees.

16. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCES 2021/22

The Town Clerk submitted a list of members' attendances for the Municipal Year 2021/22. It was advised that the list circulated with the agenda had a couple of formulaic errors and a revised list would be published on the website.

RESOLVED – that the information be received.

17. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2021/22

The Finance Manager submitted a report setting out allowances and expenses which had been paid to Elected Members during the Financial Year 2021/22.

RESOLVED – that the information be received.

18. OUTSIDE BODIES

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out the current list of Outside Bodies to which the Council currently appoints representatives, together with the number of members currently serving on those Bodies.

RESOLVED – that the following members and officers be nominated to the undermentioned outside bodies:

- (a) **Youth Council**
Councillors Tony Armstrong and Dorothy Bowman together with the Corporate and Policy Officer.
- (b) **County Durham Association of Local Councils**
The Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee (Councillor Arun Chandran) and Councillor Ken Robson, together with the Town Clerk.
- (c) **Aycliffe Village Community Association**
Councillor Neville Jones.
- (d) **Woodham Village Community Association**
Councillors John Moore and Michael Stead.
- (e) **Great Aycliffe and Middridge Local Councils' Committee**
Councillors Peter Bergg and Arun Chandran together with the Town Clerk.
- (f) **Larger Local Councils' Forum**
The Chairman and Vice Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee (Councillors Arun Chandran and Martin Ashcroft) together with the Town Clerk.
- (g) **Newton Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society**
Councillor Ian Gray.
- (h) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that Councillor Brian Haigh be appointed to this outside body.

It was further proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary that Councillor Jim Atkinson be appointed to this outside body.

A vote was carried out as follows:

Councillor Brian Haigh – 13 votes
Councillor Jim Atkinson – 15 votes

RESOLVED – that Councillor Jim Atkinson be appointed to the Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway outside body.

(i) **Western Area Partnership**

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Arun Chandran that Councillors Ken Robson and George Gray be appointed to this outside body.

It was further proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Jed Hillary that Councillor Kate Hopper be appointed to this outside body.

A vote was carried out as follows:

Councillor Ken Robson – 16 votes
Councillor George Gray – 13 votes
Councillor Kate Hopper – 14 votes

RESOLVED – that Councillors Ken Robson and Kate Hopper be appointed to the Western Area Partnership outside body.

19. MEETINGS 2022/23

The Town Clerk submitted a suggested schedule of Council meeting dates for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

RESOLVED – that the scheduled dates be approved for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

20. COUNCIL INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS REVIEW

The Finance Manager submitted a report setting out the annual review of the Council's insurance arrangements, including a list of insurance claims over the last ten years, as required by the Council's Standing Orders.

RESOLVED – that the annual review of the Council's insurance arrangements and list of insurance claims over the last 10 years as required by Standing Orders be approved.

21. REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS WITH DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL - LICENCE TO OPERATE ON DCC ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out a review of the licence agreement in place with Durham County Council allowing the Town Council to operate on County Council environmental areas, as required by the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED – that the report be received and that the licence is continued.

22. REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS WITH DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL – WINTER MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENT

The Town Clerk submitted a report setting out a review of the licence agreement in place with Durham County Council covering winter maintenance works, as required by the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED – that the report be received and that the licence is continued.

23. REVIEW OF INVENTORY OF LAND AND BUILDINGS

The Town Clerk submitted a report to provide a list of land and buildings under the Council's ownership and advise of any sales, acquisitions or leases entered into over the previous year.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

24. REVIEW OF COUNCIL AND STAFF SUBSCRIPTIONS TO OTHER BODIES

The Town Clerk submitted a report with a list of subscriptions to other bodies currently paid on behalf of the Council and its officers.

RESOLVED – that the report be received with no changes proposed to the list of subscriptions.

25. REVIEW OF COUNCIL EXPENDITURE INCURRED UNDER THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE 2021/22

The Town Clerk submitted a breakdown of expenditure incurred by the Council under the General Power of Competence during the 2021/22 financial year.

RESOLVED – that the report and information be received.

26. COUNCILLOR TRAINING

The Town Clerk submitted a report to provide Members with information on the training provided to and undertaken by councillors since the 2021 election.

Councillor Martin Ashcroft requested that the Town Council website be updated with members training.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

27. POLITICAL GROUPS

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report requesting that each Political Group on the Council advise who their Spokesperson(s) are for the information of Officers of the Council to enable consultation and co-ordination of information outside of Council Meetings.

RESOLVED – that:

- (i) Councillor Ken Robson is the spokesperson for the Independents with Councillor Arun Chandran as deputy.
- (ii) Councillor Eddy Adam is the spokesperson for the Labour Party with Councillor Jed Hillary as deputy.
- (iii) Councillor Joanne Jones is the spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats with Councillor Lindsey Aston as deputy.

CHAIRMAN.