

FULL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER 2022 – 7.15 p.m.

Minutes of the proceedings of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the **COUNCIL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Aycliffe Lane, Newton Aycliffe, on **WEDNESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER 2022** at 7.15 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor Ken Robson (Chairman)

Councillors Eddy Adam, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, Dorothy Bowman, Arun M. Chandran, Neil Collinson, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Sandra Kirby, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward, and John Woodward.

OFFICERS

Mr. Dan Austin (Town Clerk)
Mrs. Tracey Woodhead (Finance Manager)
Ms. Amanda Donald (Corporate and Policy Officer)
Mrs. Sharna Stretch (Senior Administration Officer)

59. NOTICE OF MEETING

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

60. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Armstrong, John Clark, Bob Fleming, Sandra Haigh, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Kate Hopper, and Andrea Miller.

61. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS

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

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

63. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

64. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Carl Robinson, and seconded by Councillor George Gray and

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

65. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman introduced and welcomed the newly elected Councillor Sandra Kirby to the meeting as suggested by Councillor Eddy Adam.

The Mayor submitted a list of appointments for the period 21st July to 21st September 2022 for information.

RESOLVED – that the information be received.

66. COMMITTEE MINUTES

(a) Environment Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 7th September 2022 be received, and
- (ii) that the said minutes be approved and adopted.

(b) Recreation Committee

It was proposed by Councillor George Gray, and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Recreation Committee held on the 7th September 2022 be received, and
- (ii) that the said minutes be approved and adopted.

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

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

RESOLVED – as follows:

- (i) that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on the 26th September 2022 be received, and
- (ii) that the said minutes be approved and adopted.

67. CODE OF CONDUCT DECISION NOTICE

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

Councillor Eddy Adam requested that members note the contents of the Decision Notice.

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- (i) that the report be received.

68. CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Town Clerk to update Members on progress in making the Town Council carbon neutral by 2030, consider a Carbon Reduction Report from the climate change consultants, and advise officers as to how the Council should proceed ahead of the 2023/24 budget setting process.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Carl Robinson that the Council:-

- (i) receive the report
- (ii) that no action be taken at this time
- (iii) that bearing in mind the substantial financial challenges currently being faced in relation to the cost-of-living crisis, very high levels of inflation and potentially significant pay increases, an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council be held, after April 2023, to solely consider further actions in connection with this report.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Eddy Adam and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson, that the Council further investigate the option of signing up to the Smart Carbon Programme to access training for senior officers and the Corporate Assistant, and use of carbon footprint software at a cost of £700 and to seek further advice and support from Durham County Council.

Following a discussion, a vote was taken on the amendment, and this was agreed by a majority decision.

The amendment was therefore carried and became the substantive motion.

A vote then took place on the substantive motion which was agreed by a majority decision.

RESOLVED – as follows:

- (i) the update report, Carbon Reduction Report provided by the consultants; Genee, and the information provided regarding the Investors in the Environment Accreditation and Smart Carbon Software be received.
- (ii) that no action is taken with regards to the Investors in the Environment Accreditation process at this time.
- (iii) officers further investigate the option of signing up to the Smart Carbon Programme to access training for senior officers and the new Corporate Assistant with a view to using the carbon footprint software, at a cost of £700, and continue to seek further advice and support from Durham County Council.
- (iv) an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council be held, after April 2023, to solely consider any further actions in connection with the report.

69. OUTCOME OF THE ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT

The Finance Manager submitted a report for members approval on the external auditor's report and certificate in respect of the Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the 2021/22 financial year.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- (i) that the external auditor's Audit Completion Letter, External Audit Report and Certificate in respect of the 2021/22 Annual Governance and Accountability Return is received.
- (ii) that 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 is noted.
- (iii) that 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"* is noted.

70. OUTSIDE BODIES VACANCY

As Councillor John Moore had stepped down as a representative to the Woodham Village Community Association Outside Body, members were asked to nominate a replacement representative.

It was proposed by Councillor Michael Stead and seconded by Councillor Joanne Jones and

RESOLVED – as follows:

- (i) that Lindsey Aston be appointed representative to the Woodham Village Community Association Outside Body.

71. OUTSIDE BODIES

Reports were given by representatives on the undermentioned Outside Bodies:-

(a) Youth Council

There had been no meeting.

(b) County Durham Association of Local Councils

Councillor Arun Chandran advised that minutes and reports are available from the Town Clerk if required. He also advised that he had raised the proposal raised by Councillor Eddy Adam at the previous Council meeting that CDALC request NALC to lobby the Government for funding for Town and Parish Councils in relation to the 2022/23 local government pay award, and that this has been agreed unanimously.

- (c) **Aycliffe Village Hall Association**
Councillor Neville Jones gave an update.
- (d) **Woodham Village Community Association**
There had been no meeting.
- (e) **Great Aycliffe and Middridge Local Councils' Committee**
There had been no meeting.
- (f) **Larger Local Councils' Forum**
Councillor Arun M Chandran gave an update report and advised that the minutes and reports were available via the Town Clerk if required.
- (g) **Aycliffe and District Bus Preservation Society**
Councillor Ian Gray gave an update report, and the Chairman congratulated the society on their work on the opening day event.
- (h) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**
Councillor Jim Atkinson was unable to attend the meeting.
- (i) **Western Area Partnership**
Councillors Ken Robson and Eddy Adam gave an update report.

72. EXEMPT BUSINESS

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and

RESOLVED – that it was in the opinion of the Council that due to the confidential nature of the following item, it was advisable to exclude the press and public.

73. COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AND AWARDS SCHEME NOMINATIONS

A report was submitted from the Town Clerk for members to consider three nominations received under the Council's Community Recognition and Awards Scheme.

Councillor Eddy Adam suggested that each nomination should be discussed individually and asked if any checks are carried out to ensure that the nominees are bona fide applicants.

The Town Clerk confirmed that no checks are carried on out on the individuals, but basic checks are undertaken to ensure the forms are complete and that the groups that the individuals represent are legitimate.

Councillor Arun Chandran suggested that applications should always be scrutinised and be comprehensive and proposed a two-tier approach for the awards whereby a group can receive multiple certificates for each member and a medal is given to one special nominee only. He added that the decision should be made on merit and by checking the supporting information, and, if need be, by checking with the Chairman and Vice Chairman. This was seconded by Councillor Joanne Jones

Councillor Peter Bergg further suggested that each person recommended for the award should have at least two nominators.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk would bring forward a report to a future meeting with proposed changes to the Scheme wording to address these issues.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun Chandran and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam that the nominee identified in item 3.1(a) receive retrospective approval.

This was agreed by majority vote.

It was proposed by Councillor Peter Bergg and seconded by Councillor Martin Ashcroft that the nomination identified in item 3.1(b) be agreed and awarded with a certificate and medal.

This was agreed by majority vote.

It was proposed by Councillor Joanne Jones and seconded by Councillor Eddy Adam that the nominee identified in item 3.1(c) does not receive an award.

This was agreed by majority vote.

RESOLVED – as follows

- (i) that the report be received.
- (ii) that the nominee identified in item 3.1(a) receive retrospective approval for an award.
- (iii) that the nominee identified in item 3.1(b) receive an award and be invited to receive a certificate and medal at a future meeting.
- (iv) that the nominee identified in item 3.1(c) does not receive an award.
- (v) that the Town Clerk bring forward a report to a future meeting with proposed changes to the Scheme wording to address the issues raised by members in relation to a two-tier award system and the required number of nominators.

74. RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill and

RESOLVED – that it be recommended that the press and public be re-admitted to the meeting.

CHAIRMAN.