

## **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**WEDNESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2023 – 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 17<sup>th</sup> MAY 2023 at 7.15 p.m.**

### **PRESENT**

Councillors Eddy Adam, Tony Armstrong, Martin Ashcroft, Lindsey Aston, Jim Atkinson, Peter Bergg, 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, Simon Hocking, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, Sandra Kirby, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Anita Sparrow, 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)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

One member of the public.

**Councillor Ken Robson took the Chair for the meeting as the current Mayor.**

#### **1. APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24**

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, seconded by Councillor Andy Hill, that Councillor Carl Robinson be nominated as Mayor for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

**RESOLVED** – that Councillor Carl Robinson be appointed Chairman (Mayor) of the Council for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

**Councillor Carl Robinson took the Chair for the meeting.**

Councillor Eddy Adam wanted to recognise the effort and time that the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Ken Robson has given to the role, adding that he has been a fantastic ambassador for Great Aycliffe both locally and further afield, and expressed his thanks for his commitment.

#### **2. 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 Ken Robson and presented him with a small gift for the dedicated service given during his year in office.

### **3. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24**

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft and seconded by Councillor Arun M. Chandran, that Councillor Phillip Hawkins be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

**RESOLVED** – that Councillor Phillip Hawkins be appointed Vice-Chairman (Deputy Mayor) of the Council for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

### **4. NOTICE OF MEETING**

The notice convening the meeting was taken as read.

### **5. MEMBERS' DISPENSATIONS**

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

### **6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **8. MINUTES**

Councillor Martin Ashcroft noted that the minute 138B(i) of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023 should read 'Environment' and not 'Recreation'.

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

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the amendment at minute 138B(i) to read 'Environment' and not 'Recreation'.

### **9. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Mayor's Announcements**

The newly appointed Mayor, Councillor Carl Robinson, made a short speech and thanked the Council for the honour of being appointed as Chairman of the Council (Mayor) for the year 2023/24.

The Town Clerk welcomed the new members, Councillors Simon Hocking and Anita Sparrow and confirmed he had received their declarations of acceptance of office. He reminded everyone that the Parish Meeting was next Wednesday at 7.15pm at the Council Offices and that all councillors were welcome to attend.

## **10. 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 various amendments proposed.

The report set out information on each Article of the Constitution separately attaching the relevant Article where any amendments had been recommended:

### **CONTENTS AND INTRODUCTION**

Minor amendments to the list of Council services, to add in reference to the 'Outstanding' Pre-School Ofsted result and new events such as the 'Ayclive' music festival.

### **ARTICLE 1 – HOW THE COUNCIL OPERATES**

Minor amendments had been made to add reference to the Civility and Respect Pledge, remove reference to meetings being advertised in the local press, and to update the Council's approved staffing structure.

### **ARTICLE 2 – COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

No changes other than to add the committee meeting timetable for 2023/24.

### **ARTICLE 3 – POWERS AND DUTIES OF COMMITTEES**

Minor amendments had been made to wording throughout the Article to improve clarity, and additional detail added where relevant to make it clearer which decisions are delegated to committees, sub-committees and working groups, and which decisions must be approved by their parent committees or Full Council at the time that the minutes of the meetings are agreed.

### **ARTICLE 4 – MAYOR'S INFORMATION BOOKLET**

Various minor amendments and additions had been made to improve clarity and understanding of the role of Mayor.

These included additional information clarifying the roles of Mayor and the Mayor's Secretary, removing reference to the Leader of the Council, additional examples of miscellaneous events and duties, clarifying the rules around attendance at events and functions at authorities not on the Council's approved Civic Dignitary List, adding in a protocol for the use and safety of the Mayor's Regalia and adding in lone working guidance.

Members were specifically asked to agree or amend the Civic Dignitary Invitation List for 2023/24 which is set out in Appendix E.

It is also requested that the new Mayor advises the Council as soon as possible of the two other authorities within the County Durham boundary who they wish to add to the Civic Dignitary Invitation List.

### **ARTICLE 5 – MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

This document was last updated in April 2019 and remains current unless the Council wishes to undertake a review of this scheme during 2023/24.

## **ARTICLE 6A – STANDING ORDERS – RELATING TO PROCEEDINGS AND BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL**

A small number of additions and amendments had been made to ensure consistency with the NALC Model Standing Orders, while various amendments to wording had been suggested throughout to improve clarity.

The following specific changes were proposed-

- Wording added to Standing Order 9 on Draft Minutes to clarify that Full Council is responsible for agreeing the decisions made by Committees and that Full Council has the right to reject, defer or refer back a decision (unless taken under delegated powers). The addition to this Standing Order reads:  
*“All decisions recommended by Committees of the Council, with the exception of those made under delegated powers, must be approved by Full Council at the time of agreeing the minutes. Committee Minutes may be agreed ‘subject to’ a particular recommendation being rejected, deferred, or referred back for further consideration”.*
- Standing Orders 15 and 16 on Committees and Sub-Committees and Working Groups were reviewed and updated in line with best practice guidance and advice from NALC and the two Standing Orders amalgamated to reduce duplication and improve clarity.
- A full list of issues that must be considered and agreed at the Annual Meeting were added to Standing Order 2.
- Reference to Members being permitted to remain in the meeting when a non-pecuniary interest has been declared (but not vote) has been added to Standing Order 7 on Code of Conduct.
- Ensuring that Working Groups are subject to the same rules as Sub Committees in line with NALC guidance was added to Standing Order 15.
- Ensuring that Standing Order 31 regarding Procurement is consistent with the NALC Model Standing Orders and the Council’s Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement.

## **ARTICLE 6B – STANDING ORDERS – RELATING TO CONTRACTS AND PROCUREMENT**

These Standing Orders were updated and approved at the Council Meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (Minute No. 139 (ii) refers).

## **ARTICLE 7 – FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Financial Regulations were updated and approved at the Council Meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (Minute No. 140 (ii) refers).

## **ARTICLE 8 – SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

Minor amendments to wording had been suggested to improve clarity, while the following specific additions were made to this Article:-

- The responsibility of the Town Clerk to act as the Ofsted Nominated Individual for St Oswald's Pre-School was added to the Proper Officer's Delegated Powers;
- This Article has been specifically cross referenced to Article 3 – Powers and Duties and Committees, Sub Committees and Working Groups; and
- The delegated powers given to the Events Sub Committee to consider and approve decisions relating to the planning of Council events and to consider and approve applications from external providers who wish to hold events on Council land and set terms and conditions for use of the land, have been specifically referenced.

## **ARTICLE 9 – RIGHTS OF CITIZENS**

Minor amendments to wording had been suggested to improve clarity.

## **ARTICLE 10 – MEMBER'S CODE OF CONDUCT**

Minor amendments to wording had been suggested to improve clarity and to include reference to the Civility and Respect Pledge.

## **ARTICLE 11 – OFFICER'S CODE OF CONDUCT**

Minor amendments to wording had been suggested to improve clarity.

## **ARTICLE 12 (A) – MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL**

A comprehensive review and rewrite of the Member and Officers Relations Protocol had been undertaken to bring the Protocol in line with the Civility and Respect 'Model Councillor and Officer Protocol' issued by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

## **ARTICLE 12 (B) – PROTOCOL ON USE OF COUNCIL FACILITIES AND RESOURCES BY COUNCILLORS**

Minor addition had been made to clarify that use of Council accommodation will be subject to the availability of the premises and staff to open and close the building.

## **ARTICLE 13 – STRATEGIES / HIGH LEVEL DOCUMENTS / SERVICE PLANS**

All Strategies, High Level Documents and Service Plans of the Council are listed in Article 13 of the Constitution.

These documents are updated at the appropriate time and reported to the Council or relevant Committee.

## **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.

It was proposed by Councillor Arun M. Chandran and seconded by Jed Hillary and;

**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 2022/23.
- (iv) That the Mayor advises the Town Clerk as soon as possible of which two other authorities within the County Durham boundary he wishes to add to the List.
- (v) That the Council's Constitution as set out in the report be readopted.
- (vi) 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.

## **11. 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; Recreation, Environment and Policy and Resources and the appointment of Members to those committees.

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

Councillor Eddy Adam asked if the Town Clerk was comfortable with the proposed numbers.

The Town Clerk reiterated the information set out in the report highlighting that a total of 26 members would be preferable, in order to ensure that 4 members are available to form an independent appeals panel, but that there was nothing in the law to stop the numbers increasing to 29.

The Town Clerk advised that he had received nominations from all 30 councillors for the positions on each committee and asked if any members were willing to withdraw their nominations in order to avoid the need to undertake an individual vote on each.

No Councillors withdrew at this stage.

Councillor Eddy Adam proposed that the Independents Group reduce their nominees by one member which would still maintain their majority on the committees. He further added that previous attendances at meetings could be used to decide on committee membership.

A lengthy discussion took place following which Councillor Sandra Haigh withdrew her nomination for the Environment Committee, Councillor Wendy Hillary withdrew her nomination for the Recreation Committee and Councillor Neil Collinson withdrew his nomination for the Policy and Resources Committee.

**RESOLVED** – as follows:

(i) **Recreation Committee**

- (a) That a Recreation Committee be appointed for the Municipal Year 2023/24.
- (b) That it comprise of 27 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, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Sandra Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Simon Hocking, Sandra Kirby, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Anita Sparrow, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

(ii) **Environment Committee**

- (a) That an Environment Committee be appointed for the Municipal Year 2023/24.
- (b) That it comprise of 27 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, Neil Collinson, Bob Fleming, George Gray, Ian Gray, Brian Haigh, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Sandra Kirby, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Anita Sparrow, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

(iii) **Policy and Resources Committee**

- (a) That a Policy and Resources Committee be appointed for the Municipal Year 2023/24.
- (b) That it comprise of 27 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, Phillip Hawkins, Andy Hill, Jed Hillary, Wendy Hillary, Simon Hocking, Sandra Kirby, Joanne Jones, Neville Jones, John Moore, Carl Robinson, Ken Robson, Anita Sparrow, Michael Stead, Anne Woodward and John Woodward.

## 12. ADJOURNMENT OF COUNCIL MEETING

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor - Peter Bergg and;

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

*Please refer to the Minutes of these Committees.*

## 13. RECONVENING OF COUNCIL MEETING

It was moved by Councillor Martin Ashcroft, and seconded by Councillor Jim Atkinson and;

**RESOLVED** – that the meeting of the Council be reconvened following the completion of the meetings of the Recreation, Environment and Policy and Resources Committees.

## 14. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCES 2022/23

The Town Clerk submitted a list of members' attendances for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

**RESOLVED** – that the information be received.

## 15. DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2022/23

The Finance Manager submitted a report setting out allowances and expenses which had been paid to Elected Members during the Financial Year 2022/23.

**RESOLVED** – that the information be received.

## 16. 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 M. Chandran and Councillor Lindsey Aston, together with the Town Clerk.
- (c) **Aycliffe Village Community Association**  
No appointees were agreed.
- (d) **Woodham Village Community Association**  
Councillors Lindsey Aston and Michael Stead.



- (e) **Great Aycliffe and Middridge Local Councils' Committee**  
Councillors Arun M. Chandran and Peter Bergg, together with the Town Clerk.
- (f) **Larger Local Councils' Forum**  
The Chairman and Vice Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee  
Councillors Arun M. Chandran and Lindsey Aston with the Town Clerk.
- (g) **Newton Aycliffe Bus Preservation Society**  
Councillor Ian Gray.
- (h) **Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway**  
Councillor Jim Atkinson.
- (i) **Western Area Partnership**  
Councillors George Gray and Ken Robson.

## **17. MEETINGS 2023/24**

The Town Clerk submitted a suggested schedule of Council meeting dates for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

**RESOLVED** – that the scheduled dates be approved for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

## **18. 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.

## **19. 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.

## **20. 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.

## **21. 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.

## **22. 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.

## **23. REVIEW OF COUNCIL EXPENDITURE INCURRED UNDER THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE 2022/23**

The Town Clerk submitted a breakdown of expenditure incurred by the Council under the General Power of Competence during the 2022/23 financial year.

**RESOLVED** – that the report and information be received.

## **24. COUNCILLOR TRAINING 2022/23**

The Town Clerk submitted a report to provide Members with information on the training provided to and undertaken by councillors. He advised that specific training needs should be followed up with the Town Clerk.

**RESOLVED** – that the report be received.

## **25. 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 Eddy Adam is the spokesperson for the Labour Party.
- (i) Councillor Lindsey Aston is the spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats.
- (ii) Councillor Ken Robson is the Chairman for the Independent Group with Councillor Arun M. Chandran as Secretary.
- (iii) Councillor Bob Fleming is the nominated representative for disseminating information to the independent Independents.

**CHAIRMAN.**