



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB

Tel: (01453) 754 351/754 321

www.stroud.gov.uk

Email: democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

COUNCIL

Thursday, 27 April 2023

7.00 - 8.35 pm

Council Chamber

Minutes

Membership

Councillor Steve Robinson (Chair)

Councillor Beki Aldam
 Councillor Paula Baker
 Councillor Martin Baxendale
 Councillor Natalie Bennett
 Councillor Catherine Braun
 * Councillor Chris Brine
 Councillor Martin Brown
 Councillor Doina Cornell
 Councillor Gordon Craig
 Councillor Kate Crews
 Councillor Laurie Davies
 Councillor Stephen Davies
 Councillor Katrina Davis
 Councillor Robin Drury-Layfield
 Councillor Jonathan Edmunds
 Councillor Christopher Evans
 Councillor Helen Fenton
 * Councillor Colin Fryer
 * Councillor Victoria Gray
 Councillor Lindsey Green
 Councillor Trevor Hall
 Councillor Jessie Hoskin
 * Councillor Nicholas Housden
 * Councillor Nick Hurst
 * Absent

*** Councillor Norman Kay (Vice-Chair)**

Councillor Steve Hynd
 Councillor George James
 * Councillor Julie Job
 Councillor Christopher Jockel
 * Councillor John Jones
 Councillor Haydn Jones
 Councillor Jenny Miles
 * Councillor Dave Mossman
 Councillor Gill Oxley
 * Councillor Loraine Patrick
 * Councillor Martin Percy
 * Councillor Keith Pearson
 Councillor Nigel Prenter
 * Councillor Mattie Ross
 Councillor Mark Ryder
 Councillor Lucas Schoemaker
 Councillor Ashley Smith
 Councillor Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
 Councillor Haydn Sutton
 * Councillor Brian Tipper
 Councillor Ken Tucker
 Councillor Chloe Turner
 Councillor Tricia Watson
 Councillor Rich Wilsher

Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive
 Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer)

Strategic Director of Resources
 Senior Democratic Services & Elections
 Officer

CL.072 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brine, Fryer, Gray, Hurst, Housden, Job, John Jones, Kay, Mossman, Patrick, Percy, Pearson, Ross and Tipper.

CL.073 Declaration of Interests

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Subject to approval at
 next meeting

There were none.

CL.074 **Minutes**

The Chair confirmed that a small amendment had been made to the Minutes to show Cllr Kay as the Vice-Chair instead of Cllr Hall.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2023 were approved as a correct record.

CL.075 **Announcements**

Councillor Stephen Davies congratulated Councillor Green on her appointment as the Conservative Group Leader. Councillor Green thanked Councillor Davies for his hard work and support whilst he was Group Leader.

Councillor Cornell congratulated Councillor Drury-Layfield on his appointment as the Community Independents Group Leader. Councillor Drury-Layfield thanked Councillor Cornell for the compassion and kindness she had shown during her time as Group Leader.

Councillor Braun announced that a new prospectus for the Stroud District had been launched, the Natural Place was an online prospectus which aimed to stimulate investment and reflected the values of the Stroud District.

CL.076 **Public Question Time**

Public questions were submitted. They were answered by the Leader of Council, Councillor Braun. A supplementary question was also answered. (Refer to the [recording of the meeting](#) and [Agenda Item 5](#)).

CL.078 **Interim Fleet Procurement Strategy - Ubico**

Councillor Turner, Chair of Environment Committee, introduced the report and advised that out of the 77 vehicles in the fleet that Ubico operated, 24 were due for replacement. The report outlined the decision making process and the options available. The Environment Committee recommended that the Council undertake option 3 which would mean that light vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes would be replaced where possible with electric vehicle options and extensive trials would be undertaken for larger vehicles to ensure that there was no impact on operational reliability.

Councillor Green asked for clarification on section 1.3, Councillor Turner advised that it meant they would take the opportunity to look at rounds and ways the rounds could be delivered with different types of vehicles to make improvements.

Proposed by Councillor Turner and seconded by Councillor Drury-Layfield.

Councillor Drury-Layfield commended the work of the Community Services Manager and encouraged everyone to support the transitional step.

Councillor Watson advised that they had spoken at length at Environment Committee regarding the use of fuels to ensure that they did not cause the displacement of food

crops. She encouraged Ubico to consider circular economy opportunities by using recycled fuel.

Councillor Turner thanked the Community Services Manager and Ubico and asked the Council to support the decision.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED i) **Include £45k in the capital programme for HVO Tank**
 ii) **Increase the vehicle purchase budget in the capital programme by £152k to meet the higher cost of EV procurement as recommended by Environment Committee.**
as recommended by Environment Committee.

CL.079 **Revised Complaints & Feedback Policy**

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the report and confirmed that the Committee had agreed to recommend the revised policy to Council at their meeting on the 18 April 2023. He advised that the policy reflected changes to best practice, the Service Standards and Values and Behaviours the Council had adopted. The new policy would help to ensure a consistent level of service across the whole Council. Councillor Studdert-Kennedy drew Members attention to the key timescales included in the policy.

In the absence of any questions, Councillor Studdert-Kennedy proposed and Councillor Stephen Davies seconded.

Councillor Stephen Davies stated that they had spent a lot of time at Audit and Standards Committee discussing the report and wanted to ensure that complaints were handled effectively for residents of the district, he offered his support for the new policy.

The Chair advised that he found the flow chart included in Appendix B very useful to help understand the process that would be followed.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED (a) **To adopt the revised Complaints & Feedback Policy; and**
 (b) **Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Resources to approve minor changes to the policy as recommended by Audit and Standards Committee.**

CL.080 **Member Questions**

There were none.

CL.082 **Motion on Domestic Abuse - Proposed by Councillor Trina Davis and Seconded by Councillor Stephen Davies**

Councillor Trina Davis presented the Motion and stated that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men were victims of domestic abuse. She acknowledged the great work that the Council were already doing around domestic abuse but felt that more could be done. She stated that having a Working Group and a dedicated strategy in place would be a huge step forward.

Councillor Edmunds asked whether they knew how many refuges were in Gloucestershire as more than 2,500 child protection referrals regarding domestic abuse had been made in Gloucestershire in 2021. Councillor Stephen Davies advised that refuges were not the only solution and that every domestic abuse case was different with the victims requiring different support.

Councillor Green welcomed the Motion and urged Councillors to support it.

Councillor Turner advised that they had seen some good work carried out by the County Council and she had recently undergone training. She asked whether the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service could be highlighted on the Members Hub webpages.

Councillor Braun thanked Councillor Davis for bringing the Motion to Council and highlighting an important issue that affected over 2 million people across the UK. She confirmed that the Council worked closely with the County Council but was interested in what more could be done.

Councillor Watson as a member of the Member Development Working Group highlighted the low uptake by Members of some training courses which would help Councillors know what to do.

Councillor Stephen Davies stated that the County Council had a greater responsibility however the District Council did a huge amount of good work but didn't have any documents to highlight this. He asked Council to support the Motion.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

**Council
NOTES
that:**

- **The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty on first tier councils (county and unitary councils) to Prepare a Domestic Abuse Strategy. Gloucestershire County Council has prepared a Domestic Abuse Strategy 2021-24:**
<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2110605/gcc-domestic-abuse-strategy.pdf>
- **The District Council plays an important role in the delivery of the Domestic Abuse Strategy, working in multi-agency partnership with the County Council and others including the Police, the Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS) and Stroud Beresford Women's Refuge, our current charity of the year.**
- **The District Council is working on the preparation of a Domestic Abuse Policy relating to tenants and tenancies, and another relating to staff, as well as reviewing its Safeguarding Policy and training, including in relation to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.**

**RESOLVED
that:**

- **Officers are asked to prepare a report for consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee to set out this Council's role in addressing Domestic Abuse within the context of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the County Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy. The report should include:**
 - **Recognition of the need for the preparation of a clear and concise overarching District Council Domestic Abuse Strategy to show how the different strategies and policies of different councils and council services relate to each other, provide appropriate support**

- and protection to victims and address the perpetrators of Domestic Abuse.
- o Recognition that the preparation of the above strategy will be led by the Strategic Director of Communities, who chairs the cross-service Safeguarding Group.
- o Consideration of how Members are to be involved in the preparation of the above strategy and other Domestic Abuse policies as appropriate and in the identification of any gaps, potentially through a Working Group or Task and Finish Group to complement the cross-service Safeguarding Group chaired by the Strategic Director of Communities.
- o Reference to the need for cross-service and staff / Member work to identify any gaps in provision and recommend how these will be addressed.
- o Consideration of further training needs for staff and Members in relation to Domestic Abuse.
- The overarching District Council Domestic Abuse Strategy referred to above will be brought to a future meeting of relevant committees for consideration.

CL.083 **Motion Regarding the Rejection of the Illegal Migration Bill - Proposed by Councillor Doina Cornell and Seconded by Councillor Steve Hynd**

Councillor Cornell presented the Motion and advised that the UK had been a key signatory to the refugee convention in 1951 which aimed to protect refugees. On the Government website it stated that the aim of the Illegal Migration Bill was to “make it unambiguously clear that, if you enter the UK illegally, you should not be able to remain here. Instead, you will be detained and promptly removed either to your home country or to a safe country where any asylum claim will be considered.” She stated that evidence showed that the bill was unlikely to work, the UK only currently had an agreement with one country willing to accept asylum seekers and this agreement was not currently operational. Asylum seekers who were not removed to another country would remain in the UK indefinitely with no legal status and would not be able to work. It was not clear how the government planned to provide suitable accommodation for those who were not granted status. Furthermore she stated that the bill would not deter people from arriving in the UK as evidence showed that refugees had limited knowledge on asylum policies and this was not the largest factor in them making decisions as to where to go. She asked for the government to drop the bill and create safe and legal routes for people to travel to the UK to claim asylum.

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy asked what alternatives could be considered. Councillor Cornell stated that safe routes were needed so that citizens from other countries e.g. Sudan, could flee to the UK. She also advised that resources needed to be put in place to clear the backlog.

Councillor Green proposed an amendment as laid out with the changes in red below, the amendment was seconded by Councillor Stephen Davies.

Council resolves to:

- ~~Condemn the Illegal Migration Bill, which it considers to be in opposition to fundamental tenets of international human rights law, and represents an attack on migrants’ rights.~~
- Commit to defend the rights of all people in our communities to live side by side in dignity and to continuing to welcome those who make our district their home.
- Call on the Home Secretary to:

~~a) Withdraw the Illegal Migration Bill.~~

- b) Commit to resourcing an asylum system that can deliver fair and timely asylum decisions.
- c) **Welcome the ending of** the Home Office contracts with providers of temporary, often poor quality and unsuitable accommodation for asylum seekers.
- Call on the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to open discussions with local authorities about the best ways and resources needed to provide good quality long term accommodation for all those in need, including asylum seekers, within our communities.
- Mandate our Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to this effect.

Councillor Prenter stated that he didn't think the bill had anything to do with immigration but instead aimed at appealing to marginal constituencies.

Councillor Smith asked what the point of the amendment was as it removed the central aim of the Motion.

Councillor Cornell stated that the condemnation of the bill was central to the motion, she stated that the government needed to rely on evidence so that they had an informed position.

Councillor Turner advised that she would not be able to support the amendment, she also advised that other organisations had condemned the bill including the Church of England.

Councillor Bennett highlighted the concerns raised by the law society and that there had been no public consultation to ensure that it was a workable policy.

Councillor Stephen Davies advised that as the bill had been passed by parliament they were suggesting the amendment due to the timing of the Motion.

The amendment was put to the vote, there were 9 votes for, 25 against and 1 abstention.

Councillor Drury-Layfield stated that without safe passage for refugees fleeing conflict, war and persecution the Illegal Migration Bill did not help and would drive people into slavery. He asked Councillors to vote with their hearts and send a strong signal to government that the bill was plainly wrong.

Councillor Jockel advised that he had a self-interest in the motion as he was a descendent of a migrant and that humans were intrinsically migratory. He highlighted the climate emergency which would not respect borders and would result in more refugees fleeing. He asked Councillors to show their moral purpose and compass.

Councillor Hynd informed Councillors that he had been brought up in lifelong conservative household and stated that the bill wasn't the conservative politics he knew. He asked Councillors to imagine their loved ones in a situation where their life was under threat, he asked them to think about how they would want foreign governments to respond.

Councillor Cornell confirmed that the bill had passed through the House of Commons but had not yet been approved by the House of Lords. She highlighted concerns that they were betraying the previous generations who hoped to build a better world after the horrors of the second world war. She stated that the bill fuelled misconceptions and

prejudice against genuine refugees. She asked Members to support the Motion and call on government to expand safe routes and address the backlog.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried with 25 votes for, 9 against and 1 abstention.

**Council
NOTES
that:**

- At the end of 2021, around 89 million people were forcibly displaced across the world. Of these, 27 million were refugees, whilst 53 million were internally displaced within their country of origin.
- Of all the refugees in the world, 72% are living in countries neighbouring their country of origin, often in developing countries. The UK is home to approximately 1% of the refugees who were displaced across the world.
- In 2022, 75% of initial asylum decisions made by the UK Government resulted in a grant of asylum or other form of protection.
- The Government has brought forward yet another immigration bill, at a time when there are currently no safe routes to the UK for nationalities of many countries most likely to be granted asylum including those with family members in our local communities
- People who arrive irregularly, when there are no safe and legal routes available to them, would never be allowed under the provisions of the new Illegal Migration Bill, to access the asylum system. Instead, they are likely to be detained and / or left destitute, without the right to work and in limbo indefinitely.
- The Illegal Migration Bill would also remove vital protections for women and children, and victims of trafficking, meaning they could all face detention.

**RESOLVED
to:**

- Condemn the Illegal Migration Bill, which it considers to be in opposition to fundamental tenets of international human rights law, and represents an attack on migrants' rights.
- Commit to defend the rights of all people in our communities to live side by side in dignity and to continuing to welcome those who make our district their home.
- Call on the Home Secretary to:
 - a) Withdraw the Illegal Migration Bill.
 - b) Commit to resourcing an asylum system that can deliver fair and timely asylum decisions.
 - c) End the Home Office contracts with providers of temporary, often poor quality and unsuitable accommodation for asylum seekers.
- Call on the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to open discussions with local authorities about the best ways and resources needed to provide good quality long term accommodation for all those in need, including asylum seekers, within our communities.
- Mandate our Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to

this effect.

CL.084 **Update to the Constitution**

The Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report that proposed a number of changes to the constitution, she highlighted the key changes which were expanded in sections 2 – 8. The changes had been considered in part by the Constitution Working Group and the Development Control Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Studdert-Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Braun.

Councillor Watson made an observation regarding the Role Profiles in Appendix E and advised that it was important that all Councillors operated from a minimum knowledge and commitment level. The Role Profiles outlined that this relied on group leaders to encourage members to attend training and meetings. Councillor Watson asked Members whether they needed to consider strengthening this to ensure that Members were participating in relevant meetings and training.

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy asked for assurance that tenancy hearings would remain as a standard duty of Members of the Audit and Standards Committee however other Members would be able to attend in the absence of available Audit and Standards Committee Members. The Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer) confirmed that was correct.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

- RESOLVED**
- TO:**
- a) **Approve the amended Councillor Call for Action (Appendix A)**
 - b) **Approve the amended Whistleblowing Policy (Appendix B)**
 - c) **Agree to the deletion of section 9 of the Constitution (Members Relation Document) (Appendix C)**
 - d) **Approve the revised Planning Code of Conduct (Appendix D)**
 - e) **Approve the use of electronic signatures and seals**
 - f) **Amend delegation C3A.9 in the officer scheme of delegation as set out in part 7 of this report**
 - g) **Approve the amended Councillor Role Profiles (Appendix E)**
 - h) **Give delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution.**

CL.085 **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Revisit and Feedback Report**

The Leader, Councillor Braun, introduced the report and advised that conclusions and comments of the Peer Challenge Team had been included in Appendix A. She highlighted some findings of the Peer Challenge team including the following:

- Stroud was in many ways a unique place with a strong industrial heritage, but with a real focus on the future.
- Emphasised the importance of partnership working and the value the council placed on working with communities.
- Staff were advocates for the Council and the Stroud District.
- The Council had staff who wanted to work for an organisation that cared, that had a sense of purpose and was doing the right thing, a good employer and provider of services for the right reasons.

The Leader confirmed that any further recommendations for improvement would be included in the relevant service plans.

Proposed by Councillor Braun and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

Councillor Brown said that the report had been very positive about the work with Town and Parish Councils and advised that he would be taking sections of the peer challenge report to his next Parish Council meeting to provide them with an update.

Councillor Cornell expressed her support for the report and stated she was glad that they had the opportunity to reflect on the progress.

Councillor Drury-Layfield was pleased to see the work of the Member Development Working Group acknowledged and paid tribute to the Members of the Working Group who had recently agreed to work towards the Councillor Development Charter.

Councillor Bennett stated that they had received really positive feedback and that it was good to see the progress that had continued.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To note the feedback report prepared by the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and the progress made against the Action Plan.

CL.086 Ubico Five Year Vision and Business Plan 2023/2024

The Chief Executive introduced the report and advised that she fulfilled the shareholder function of the Ubico multi services partnership. She confirmed that the Environment Committee had the opportunity to feed into the business plan in December 2022 and had considered the draft business plan in February 2023.

Proposed by Councillor Turner and seconded by Councillor Drury-Layfield.

Councillor Drury-Layfield offered his support for the report and paid tribute to the Ubico workers.

Councillor Turner advised that she was impressed with how open Ubico were with them and appreciated that they always suggested further opportunities.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To Note the Business Plan for 2023/24.

CL.087 Changes to Committee Membership

Councillors Nick Hurst and Nick Housden were replaced by Councillors Trina Davis and Lindsey Green on Strategy and Resources Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm

Chair