



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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COUNCIL

Thursday, 20 July 2023

7.00 - 10.32 pm

Council Chamber

Minutes

Membership

Councillor Doina Cornell (Chair)

Councillor Beki Aldam
 Councillor Paula Baker
 Councillor Martin Baxendale
 Councillor Natalie Bennett
 Councillor Catherine Braun
 * Councillor Chris Brine
 Councillor Martin Brown
 Councillor Gordon Craig
 Councillor Kate Crews
 * Councillor Laurie Davies
 Councillor Stephen Davies
 * Councillor Katrina Davis
 Councillor Robin 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
 Councillor Steve Hynd
 Councillor George James
 *Absent

Councillor Norman Kay (Vice-Chair)

* Councillor Julie Job
 Councillor Christopher Jockel
 Councillor John Jones
 * Councillor Haydn Jones
 Councillor Gary Luff
 Councillor Jenny Miles
 * Councillor Dave Mossman
 Councillor Gill Oxley
 Councillor Loraine Patrick
 Councillor Martin Percy
 Councillor Keith Pearson
 * Councillor Nigel Prenter
 Councillor Steve Robinson
 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

Strategic Director of Resources
 Corporate Director (Monitoring Officer)
 Head of Community Services

Principal Accountant
 Democratic Services & Elections Officer

**CL.012** **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brine, Laurie Davies, Davis, Evans, Gray, Hall, Hoskin, Housden, Job, Haydn Jones, Mossman, Prenter, Smith and Studdert-Kennedy.

The Chair proposed to move item 9 to the end of the agenda, Councillors agreed that it would be taken after item 13.

CL.013 **Declaration of Interests**

There were none.

CL.014 **Minutes**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2023 were approved as a correct record.

CL.015 **Announcements**

The Chair asked everyone to join her for a minute silence for Mike Williams, a previous District Councillor, who had recently passed away. Councillor Sutton paid tribute to Mike Williams and offered condolences to his friends and family.

The Strategic Director of Resources announced that Stroud District Council (SDC) had been shortlisted as part of the Local Government Chronical (LGC) Workforce Awards for best equality, diversity and inclusion employer and best wellbeing innovation. The results were due to be finalised in November.

CL.016 **Public Question Time**

There were none.

CL.017 **Member Questions**

Member questions were submitted, they were asked by Councillors Lindsey Green and Stephen Davies. ([Refer to the Council's recording](#) and [Agenda Item 6](#)).

CL.018 **Motion on regulating Air B&B - Proposed by Councillor Keith Pearson and Seconded by Councillor Lindsey Green**

Councillor Pearson introduced the Motion regarding the regulation of Airbnb's. He explained that there was a large and growing market for the use of properties as holiday lets through Airbnb and that more landlords were switching to market their properties this way. Landlords were regulated through various health and safety regulations which Airbnb properties were not. This also meant that less properties were available for longer term rentals during.

Councillor Luff proposed the following amendment:

That Council asks the Chief Executive to write to the relevant Secretary of State:

- stating that the Council believes there is an urgent need for the registration and control of the increasing trend towards the offering of ~~Air B&B's~~ **Airbnbs and other holiday rentals**,
- requesting that all possible measures are taken to ensure that relevant Health and Safety requirements under the current national regulations for Health and Safety are in place, including but not limited to all relevant electrical and gas checks, fire escape requirements etc, as apply to all registered landlords are applied to ~~Air B&Bs~~ **Airbnbs and other holiday rentals**; and
- confirming that Stroud District Council will fully support any legislation **to implement or allow** for mandatory registration of such properties; and
- **requesting that Councils be provided with powers to ensure that the needs and interests of local communities are addressed including, but not limited to, the availability of housing, sustainability of communities, noise levels and parking availability.**

Councillor Pearson accepted the changes as a friendly amendment.

Councillor Watson expressed support for the motion in order to provide safe accommodation for tourists to the district.

Councillor James raised concerns regarding the affordability of mortgages and how Airbnb rentals support some residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

Councillor Kay stated that the landlord also needed to be protected against bad tenants.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried.

RESOLVED That Council asks the Chief Executive to write to the relevant Secretary of State:

- **stating that the Council believes there is an urgent need for the registration and control of the increasing trend towards the offering of Airbnbs and other holiday rentals,**
- **requesting that all possible measures are taken to ensure that relevant Health and Safety requirements under the current national regulations for Health and Safety are in place, including but not limited to all relevant electrical and gas checks, fire escape requirements etc, as apply to all registered landlords are applied to Airbnbs and other holiday rentals; and**
- **confirming that Stroud District Council will fully support legislation to implement or allow mandatory registration of such properties; and**
- **requesting that Councils be provided with powers to ensure that the needs and interests of local communities are addressed including, but not limited to, the availability of housing, sustainability of communities, noise levels and parking availability.**

CL.019 Motion on Open Spaces and Amenities - Proposed by Councillor Mark Ryder and Seconded by Councillor Lindsey Green

Councillor Ryder introduced the motion and explained that the current approach to maintaining and developing open spaces on new build estates was to devolve the responsibility to the developers. This had led to compromised quality and delivery of these open spaces in many places across the district and had led to increased costs to both the residents and the Parish and Towns Councils. The Local Planning Authority should hold the responsibility for determining the open space vision for the district. He provided an example of the issues that residents have been experiencing in Hunts Grove where the village had been split into 2 sections. One section would be adopted by SDC and the other half would be looked after by a management company. This meant the open spaces and facilities would be available to all to use with only half of the village paying an additional annual service charge for the maintenance. The open spaces were not being well maintained and they were still awaiting much needed facilities such as allotments.

In response to Councillor Baker, Councillor Ryder confirmed that it would be for all future developments and not retrospective.

Councillor Pearson expressed support for the motion and raised concerns that those residents who pay an additional service charge would also be paying their council tax on top of that.

Councillors Patrick, John Jones and Jockel expressed support for the motion.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED That Council asks the Chief Executive to work with officers and members to explore potential options and approaches concerning the management of open spaces and amenities on new residential developments.

The scope of work should explore, but not necessarily be limited to, the topics raised in the context section of this motion.

Findings and recommendations to be reported to the appropriate committee by no later than December 2023.

CL.020 Motion on Championing Nature - Proposed by Councillor Chloe Turner and Seconded by Councillor Robin Layfield

Councillor Turner introduced the motion and explained that there had been a number of record shattering heat waves and that they were expected to become a regular part of our climate. She further explained that nature was suffering due to extreme heat, delayed rainfall and other factors such as development. This has led to limited connectivity for nature to recover after climate events such as heatwaves. She further informed Councillors that the UK was one of the most nature depleted countries in the world and ranked 228 out of 240 countries in the biodiversity intactness index. SDC had been invited by the Local Nature Partnership to declare a national and international ecological emergency and this motion brought forward some suggested actions to support this.

Councillor Davies stated that they had passed a similar motion at Gloucestershire County Council and commended the specific actions of the Motion.

Councillor Edmunds expressed his support for the motion and raised concerns about the UK's ability to cope with extreme temperatures.

Councillors Jockel, Brown Braun, Pearson and Layfield all expressed support for the motion.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To:

- **Join fellow Severn Vale Catchment Partnership members in the promotion and delivery of the 'Wilder Frome' project**
- **Partner with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust on early work towards introducing unenclosed beavers to the county**
- **Pursue new opportunities to increase biodiversity on our own estate, including our parks and playgrounds, cemeteries and closed churchyards, verges and other green spaces and our social housing estate**
- **Investigate the introduction of particulates air quality monitoring above the statutory minimum required by the EA, including engaging in a possible partnership with a local academic institution**
- **Work with our fellow Gloucestershire councils to develop countywide guidelines for the implementation of the Biodiversity Net Gain rules by developers**
- **Continue our work to reduce pesticide use across the district, and to take part in the Pesticide Action Network UK Pesticide-free Towns initiative**
- **Continue our work to reduce the litter and other waste that ends up in our natural environment, including proactive work with supermarkets and other businesses, and through partnership with other local stakeholders**
- **Work with Climate Leadership Gloucestershire on the actions arising from the Biodiversity theme**
- **Ask our Chief Executive to write to the Gloucestershire MPs, requesting that they press the Government for targets and a delivery plan to deliver the commitment in the Environment Act to restore 30% of land for nature by 2030.**
- **Ask our Chief Executive to write to the Gloucestershire MPs, requesting that they press the Government for proper scrutiny of the 341 environmental EU laws that are due to be repealed at the end of this year under the EU Retained Law Act, and to introduce an equivalent or higher standard of environmental protection wherever required.**
- **Ask our Chief Executive to write to the Chief Executives of Severn Trent and Wessex Water to enquire as to**
 - **What measures the companies are taking to ensure there are no sewage discharges or other pollution incidents in those parts of the River Severn, its tributaries (in particular the Frome) and the coastal waters that lie within the area covered by Stroud District Council, and**
 - **How much the companies are investing in infrastructure improvements in the area covered by Stroud District Council and what measures they are taking to ensure this infrastructure is climate resilient.**

The meeting was adjourned for a short break.

Councillor Tucker left the meeting.

CL.021 Leisure Management Recommendation

Councillor Aldam, Chair of the Community Services and Licencing Committee, provided a brief background of the report. A Task and Finish Group was set up in July 2021 to consider 6 options for the leisure management as listed in Appendix 1. Independent consultants were brought in to help with the appraisal of the options, the option to bring the leisure services inhouse had scored the highest across all of the evaluated areas. After consultation with the Strategic Leadership Team a larger weight was placed on the financial costs of the schemes and therefore the option to use the Local Authority Trading Organisation (LATC) emerged as the best option financially. The LATC option was explored in detail however in March 2023 there was a legislative change to the VAT placed on Local Authorities for their inhouse leisure facilities as detailed on page 24 of the reports pack. The consultants were therefore asked to recalculate the scoring as a result of the VAT changes, these could be found on page 122 of the reports pack. This showed that a minimum saving of £40k could be made with the inhouse option therefore the recommendation needed to be amended as the inhouse option now came out on top. Councillor Aldam highlighted the excellent work that The Pusle had been doing especially during the Covid-19 pandemic and asked Councillors to support the new recommendation to bring Stratford Park Leisure Centre (SPLC) in house.

Councillor Patrick questioned whether SDC could afford to take on all of the staff currently employed at Stratford Park. The Strategic Director of Resources explained that all of the staffing costs had been considered as part of the overall analysis.

In response to Councillor Tipper the Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that the cost of the consultants brought in to assist with the decision making had been included within the budget setting process.

Councillor Kay questioned where there could be an option to consider additional local leisure centres. It was agreed to get back to Councillor Kay outside of the meeting.

Councillor Jockel thanked the Officers involved and asked how the inhouse model would integrate with the current facilities such as the Museum in the Park. Councillor Aldam confirmed that the consultants had been asked to develop a 10-year vision for the park which brought the history, nature and physical activity together as a destination.

Councillors received the following answers in response to their questions:

- Page 121 detailed the projected net income from the leisure facilities. This was expected to remain the same regardless of which option was chosen.
- Approximately 15% of the total business rates paid by businesses within the district was retained by SDC.
- SDC were already running a successful in-house leisure centre in Dursley.

Councillor Aldam proposed, and Councillor Braun seconded.

Councillor Braun thanked all of the Officers and Councillors who had been involved with the project for all of their hard work and contributions. She echoed the earlier comments regarding the importance of the financial changes surrounding the VAT.

Councillor Pearson raised concerns with The Pulse being compared to the SPLC as the two were very different in size and services that they offered. He raised further concerns

regarding staffing such a large leisure centre and that one of the benefits of having a management company was that they could draft in staff from other leisure centres they managed when required. For those reasons Councillor Pearson stated that he could not support the recommendation.

Councillor Watson expressed her enthusiasm to bring SPLC in house which would allow for a unique opportunity to connect it with the Museum in the Park and The Pulse in Dursley.

Councillor Turner echoed the comments of support.

Councillor Davies stated that he was likely to vote against the motion, as he had taken part in the Task and Finish group for the leisure review and felt that the discussions differed from what had been described. He stated that the outsourcing of the leisure facilities remained the most financially secure and viable route. The £45k that would be saved by bringing the service in house was not a large sum of money given the larger deficit and that leisure was a subsidised service within the district.

Councillors Crews, Edmunds, Layfield, Schoemaker and Hynd showed support for the Motion.

Councillor Wilsher read a statement of support on behalf of Councillor Tucker

Councillor Ross showed her support for the motion and explained that this would lead to a joined-up approach of both leisure facilities. She further commended the work that had been carried out at the Pulse throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Bennett commended the work of the Task and Finish Group and offered her support for the Motion.

Councillor Hurst debated the difficulties of the decision and which form of management would be easier to solve common issues such as staffing and equipment maintenance.

Councillor Robinson offered support for the motion.

Councillor Green asked everyone to respect others opinions regardless of their decision.

Councillor Tipper stated he was nervous to bring the service in house due to previous issue with in-house services and that he would therefore likely not be able to support the motion.

Councillors Craig, Baker and John Jones showed their support for the motion.

Councillor Hurst left the meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Cornell, commented that the change in VAT calculations for Councils was a positive step, she also confirmed that part of the recommendation included that the Audit and Standards Committee would receive relevant assurances regarding the internal control and risk management.

Councillor Ross requested a recorded vote.

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

FOR: 28 VotesCouncillors

Becki Aldam
 Paula Baker
 Marin Baxendale
 Natalie Bennett
 Catherine Braun
 Martin Brown
 Doina Cornell
 Gordon Craig
 Kate Crews
 Jonathan Edmunds

Helen Fenton
 Colin Fryer
 Stephen Hynd
 George James
 Chris Jockel
 Norman Kay
 Robin Layfield
 Gary Luff
 Jenny Miles
 Gillian Oxley

Martin Percy
 Stephen Robinson
 Mattie Ross
 Mark Ryder
 Lucas Schoemaker
 Chloe Turner
 Tricia Watson
 Richard Wilsher

AGAINST: 4 VotesCouncillors

Stephen Davies
 Keith Pearson

Haydn Sutton

Brian Tipper

ABSENTIONS: 3 VotesCouncillors

Lindsey Green

John Jones

Lorraine Patrick

RESOLVED To

- a) **Bring Stratford Park Leisure Centre inhouse operating both leisure centres and creating a Leisure Service for Stroud District Council as the preferred option as identified in the management options appraisal and business case.**
- b) **Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Communities in consultation with the Chair of Community Services and Licensing to produce a detailed capital investment plan to support the development of the existing centres and future provision within the district. This plan would then be considered by Council for inclusion within the capital programme when required.**
- c) **Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Communities in consultation with the chair of Community Services and Licensing to set up the service within an agreed operating framework, quality assurance programme and reporting mechanism.**
- d) **Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to update the Terms of Reference for the Audit and Standards Committee to enable them to receive relevant assurances in relation to internal control and risk management within the inhouse option.**

As recommended by the Community Services and Licensing Committee and the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Crews left meeting.

CL.022**Political Balance and Committee Allocations**

The Strategic Director of Resources introduced the report and explained that there had been a few changes within the political groups and this set out the newly balanced committee membership.

Councillor Schoemaker proposed and Councillor Layfield seconded.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To approve the changes to committee membership and political balance as set out in the report and appendix A.

CL.023 Member Development Strategy 2023 - 2027

Councillor Layfield, Chair of the Member Development Working Group, introduced the report and thanked Members of the Working Group and all Councillors for their participation and feedback. He explained that the role of a District Councillor had become more challenging and required more wide ranging and varied skills. The aim of the strategy was to ensure there was support for all Members to enable them to acquire sufficient knowledge and a comprehensive range of skills to maximise their ability and capacity. The strategy focused on the continual development of Councillors throughout their term as well as the induction period. He highlighted the main changes for the proposed 2024 induction programme which would be further developed:

- Allowing for a break after the election, with only 4 key induction activities happening within the first month.
- Categorising all of the induction activities.
- Producing a committee focused timetable to allow Members to prioritise their training needs.
- 30-minute committee etiquette training ahead of the first committee meetings.
- Setting aims and objectives for each induction activity to make Members aware of what to expect.

The following answers were given in response to Councillor James:

- The responsible officer for the Member Development Strategy was the Corporate Policy and Governance Manager
- It was agreed to confirm the percentage of Councillor engagement with the online training outside of the meeting.
- Not all training would be appropriate for everyone therefore attempts were being made to tailor the sessions for what Members had requested. It would then fall to the Councillor to manage their own development and participate in the training sessions they feel would benefit them as well as the mandatory sessions.

Councillor Layfield proposed and Councillor Watson seconded.

Councillor Green stated that she was pleased with the categorisation of the training sessions and that the development of the strategy had been produced using direct feedback from Members.

Councillor James raised concerns regarding avoidable training such as online sessions and stated that it needed to be delivered in simple ways without a bombardment of information that would be overwhelming.

Councillor Watson explained that the strategy would re-assure potential candidates that they would be given the knowledge and tools required in order to fulfil the role of a Councillor and further their knowledge in areas of individual interest.

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

RESOLVED To

- a) **Approve and adopt the Member Development Strategy 2023- 2027; and**
- b) **Approve the draft Induction and Refresher Programme 2024**

The Chair asked members if they wished to continue the meeting given that the time was approaching 10pm and in accordance with the Councils' Constitution section 3 paragraph 6, members would need to vote in order to continue the meeting.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried.

RESOLVED To continue the meeting beyond 10pm.

Councillor Watson left meeting.

CL.024 Community Governance Review - Final Recommendations

Councillor Ross, introduced the report and explained that following a Community Governance Review (CGR) in 2019, the council had agreed to undertake a CGR for the Parishes containing the Great Oldbury development by the end of 2023. Consultation with all remaining Parish and Town councils resulted in a list of participating areas which was approved at the [October 2022 full council meeting](#). The review began at the end of 2022 with an initial public consultation. Draft recommendations had been formed and after a further public consultation the final recommendations were now available and included in the report. She highlighted the main changes from the recommendations which included:

- Increase to the number of Parish Councillors for Frampton on Severn and Hunts Grove.
- Changes to the warding arrangements for Stonehouse.
- The creation of the new Parish Council, Great Oldbury and resulting decrease in the number of Easington Parish Councillors.
- An agreement to carry out a further review in the near future for the following areas if required:
 - Cam
 - Frampton-on-Severn
 - Standish
 - Minchinhampton
 - Brimbscombe

Councillor Ross informed the committee that if approved, these changes would come into effect from the May 2024 elections.

Councillor John Jones questioned whether the Ward Councillors would be involved in the creation of the new Parish Council. The Corporate Policy and Governance Officer confirmed that if approved the new Parish Council would come into effect on the 1st April 2024 and therefore a shadow council would need to be formulated ahead of the election in order to complete tasks such as distribution of the nomination papers.

Proposed by Councillor Ross and seconded by Councillor Stephen Davies.

Councillor Davies thanked the Officers for their hard work and expressed his support to see the recommendations for Great Oldbury and Hunts Grove.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To

- a) **approve the final recommendations in relation to the Parish/Town Council areas within the Stroud District as set out in this report;**
- b) **authorise the Corporate Policy and Governance Manager to:**
 - i. **request that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England make alteration orders to change district wards to reflect the changes made to parish boundaries; and**
 - ii. **make a reorganisation of community governance order to implement the changes approved by Council, subject to receiving the necessary consents from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.**

CL.025 Annual report on the Outcome of 2022/23 Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Action Plan and proposed 2023/24 Action Plan

Councillor Bennett, Chair of the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Working Group, presented the report and explained that it included an overview of the action plan for 2022-23 and the draft action plan for 2023-24. She highlighted the following key points:

- Page 286 of the reports pack showed the status of all of the previous year's actions and any that were identified as incomplete had been included in the 2023-24 action plan.
- The simul-spec walks had been scheduled between August - November and would be shared with Members imminently.
- The screening of unreflected reflections that took place in 2022 was very well attended therefore an additional screen had been scheduled for October 2023.
- 2 Members of the RISE (Black, Asian and Minority staff group) group had been successful on securing a placement in the SOLACE's AMPLify programme.
- Stroud had been shortlisted as the Best Equality Diversity and Inclusion employer at the LGA Chronical Workforce Awards in November.

Councillor Bennett provided a brief introduction to the 2023-24 action plan and explained that it included the results of the annual talent inclusion and diversity evaluations. The result demonstrated the progress made and highlighted the focus areas for the coming year which had helped to create the action plan. She further informed the committee that the Working Group and the action plan had been updated to reflect the need to include equity.

Councillor Bennett proposed and Councillor Layfield seconded.

Councillor Miles left the meeting.

Councillors Layfield, Turner, Baker, Robinson, Ross and Jockel commended the report.

After being put to a vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED To

- a) **Note the progress that has been made over the past year towards the Council's equality objectives; and**

b) Approve the refreshed Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Action Plan 2023/24.

CL.026 Recommendation from Audit and Standards Committee

CL.027 Treasury Outturn 2022/23

Councillor Percy, Vice-Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee introduced the report and briefly highlighted the following points:

- The treasury activity table on page 134 outlined the changes to the borrowing and investments over the year and showed that the investment values had decreased.
- Paragraph 3.3 detailed the change in the interest base rate to 4.25% from the predicted 1.25%.
- Paragraph 4.1 detailed the amount of external and internal borrowing and the next load due to mature was for £6m on 31 March 2032.
- Appendix 1 provided a break down of the temporary investment activity and the long-term investments. The long-term investments had generated an income of £294k however due to the capital reduction the amount of the initial investment had reduced.

Councillor Baker questioned whether there were any concerns with any of the other long-term investments, the Strategic Director of Resources explained that he had no specific concerns and highlighted that the capital reductions had been reported to the Audit and Standards Committee.

Councillor Percy proposed, and Councillor Braun seconded.

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

RESOLVED To approve the treasury management activity annual report for 2022/2023 and the actual Prudential Indicators as recommended by the Audit and Standards Committee.

The meeting closed at 10.32 pm

Chair