



# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

Telephone 01453 766321

www.stroud.gov.uk

Email: democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

## COUNCIL MEETING

18 March 2021

7.00 pm – 9.40 pm

Remote Meeting

### Minutes

# 3

#### Membership

<b>Gary Powell (Chair)</b>	P	Lindsey Green	P	Nigel Prenter	P
<b>Steve Robinson (Vice-Chair)</b>	P	Trevor Hall	P	Skeena Rathor	A
Martin Baxendale	P	Nick Hurst	P	Sue Reed	A
Dorcas Binns	A	George James	P	Mark Reeves	P
Catherine Braun	P	Julie Job	P	Mattie Ross	P
Chris Brine	P	Haydn Jones	P	Tom Skinner	A
Miranda Clifton	P	John Jones	A	Nigel Studdert-Kennedy	P
Nigel Cooper	P	Norman Kay	P	Haydn Sutton	P
Doina Cornell	P	Darren Loftus	A	Brian Tipper	P
Gordon Craig	P	Stephen Lydon	P	Jessica Tomblin	P
Rachel Curley	P	John Marjoram	A	Chas Townley	P
Stephen Davies	P	Karen McKeown	P	Ken Tucker	P
Paul Denney	P	Jenny Miles	P	Martin Whiteside	P
Jim Dewey	P	Dave Mossman	P	Tim Williams	A
Jonathan Edmunds	P	Gill Oxley	P	Tom Williams	P
Chas Fellows	A	Keith Pearson	P	Debbie Young	A
Colin Fryer	P	Simon Pickering	P		

P = Present A = Absent

#### Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive

Strategic Director of Place

Strategic Director of Change & Transformation

Strategic Director of Resources

Strategic Director of Communities

Monitoring Officer

Corporate Policy & Governance Manager

Policy & Performance Officer

Senior Carbon Neutral Officer

Senior Democratic Services & Elections Officer

#### Others in Attendance

Tom Wickham-Bassett, Stroud District Youth Council, Chairperson

Cate James-Hodges, Stroud District Youth Council, Principal Member for Environment

#### CL.049

#### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rathor, Marjoram, Binns, Fellows, Young and John Jones. Councillor Haydn Jones also advised that he wished to leave the meeting after Agenda Item 7 to attend the Severn Voice meeting.

**CL.050**                    **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

**CL.051**                    **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**            **That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2021 are approved as a correct record.**

**CL.052**                    **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair announced that a communication had been received from the Department for Work and Pensions in response to a motion passed by the Council on 17 December 2020 supporting Universal Basic Income. The full response had been published on the Members' Hub.

The Leader announced that, on 23 March 2021, a National Day of Remembrance will be held one year on from the start of the pandemic. It will be led by the Marie Curie charity and will be to remember those who have lost their lives and to thank all those who have done amazing work including in our communities. The Chair thanked Members for all they have contributed during such a difficult year.

**CL.053**                    **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were none.

**CL.054**                    **CIVIC TIMETABLE 2021/22**

The Chair proposed the Civic Timetable for 2021/22 and Councillor Lydon Seconded.

In the absence of questions, the item was put to the vote, the Motion was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED**            **To agree the Civic Timetable for 2021/22**

**CL.055**                    **PROPOSED PROTOTYPE FUSION POWER PLANT AND ASSOCIATED INNOVATION AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AT BERKELEY AND OLDBURY**

Councillor Cornell, The Leader, presented the above report and advised that Members had had the opportunity to attend 2 briefings regarding the proposed power plant. She outlined the timeline for the site nomination bid process which was nationwide and likely to be highly competitive. UKAEA had established a scoring process against a set of criteria and various assessment stages will be carried out prior to making a final recommendation to the Minister in late 2022. The Project Steering Group agreed that Western Gateway would be the most appropriate lead entity to submit the bid nomination. The Steering Group also suggested that Oldbury should be named as the focus for the siting of the STEP fusion reactor with Berkeley hosting the Technical Centre and an ecology of related innovation businesses. There is a strong alignment between the bid nomination and a number of key local and County wide policies and plans including the current and emerging Local Plans, the draft Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy (2019) and the Gloucestershire Sustainable Energy Strategy (2019).

Proposed by Councillor Cornell and seconded by Councillor Davies

Councillor Braun questioned whether, given that the sites were in a Flood Zone 3, work had been carried out on the costs and implications of the flood risks to the sites. The Strategic Director of Place indicated that whilst this detailed work had not yet been carried out it would need to be addressed should the bid be selected.

Councillor Whiteside asked whether the legacy knowledge and skills referred to had been quantified as he believed very different skills would be needed for fusion. It was noted that many of those involved in the project had long standing connections to the sites which are an integral part of the identity of the district. The Strategic Director of Place also explained that there is set of complementary skills, including those in aerospace, robotics and high temperature, which were essential for the new fusion technology and which have a strong presence in Gloucestershire.

Councillor Whiteside asked whether a skills audit had been undertaken to ascertain whether people with the required skills would be available locally or whether they would have to be drawn from other areas. The Strategic Director of Place clarified that, whilst a detailed audit had not been carried out, the report made clear these would be available both locally and further afield. He emphasised that no location would have a readymade supply of skilled labour for this new technology so this proposal would be as strong as others nationally.

Councillor Dewey asked whether consideration had been given to the implications of the bid in relation to Stroud District's Carbon Neutral Strategy 2030, particularly construction costs, carbon emissions from those travelling to the sites and energy input. Councillor Cornell confirmed that this was important and complex work which would be required if the bid was progressed to a further stage.

Councillor Jones congratulated the Strategic Director of Place and his team for putting together a bold and visionary bid within very short timescales. He advised that he would support the bid given the hugely beneficial knock-on effects for the whole district including education for young people, and local skill development.

Councillor Kay stated that he believed the presentation of the bid had been unsatisfactory with Officers and others being unable to answer significant questions. He confirmed that he would support the bid at this stage but that if the bid was progressed answers would be required to the issues raised.

Councillor Whiteside stated that the Council needed to know the environmental implications of the bid particularly in relation to the Carbon Neutral Strategy 2030. He believed that there would be significant damage to the area around Berkeley by commuters, and that careful spatial planning was required. He indicated that he would not support the bid and that proper use needs to be made of existing technologies.

Councillor Braun indicated that she could not support the bid as it did not give sufficient consideration to the urgency of renewable energy generation on the sites now.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried with 32 votes for, 4 against and 4 abstentions.

**RESOLVED** To endorse the submission by the Western Gateway (and partners) of a bid nomination to the UK Atomic Energy Agency (UKAEA) for the former nuclear energy production and new build sites at Berkeley and Oldbury, to host a prototype fusion power plant and associated innovation centre and business park.

**CL.056****DRAFT EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2021 - 25**

Councillor Curley introduced the policy and objectives and thanked members of the Equality Working Group who had worked so hard over the last six months to develop them. She noted that the Policy provided an important update and improvement to the 2018 Policy. It set out the Council's overarching objectives over the next four years and put listening to, and learning from, our communities at the heart of the Policy. She drew Council's attention to the Action Plan for the next twelve months which provides more detailed focus on priority areas of work. She indicated that, if Council approved the draft policy and objectives, they would go out for public consultation following the May 2021 elections to ensure that the views of local residents and communities were considered. Councillor Curley encouraged all members to respond to the consultation and to encourage others to do so. She hoped that, as a result of this work, the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion would be embedded across all aspects of the work of the Council.

Proposed by Councillor Curley and seconded by Councillor Kay.

Councillor McKeown asked how the use of a Cultural Competency Model would be integrated into this work so that there is a seamless approach across the county and other organisations. Councillor Curley agreed that issues around cultural competency are key to the way organisations embed this work so it needed to be considered through the consultation and picked up by the Equality Working Group as an important matter.

Councillor Cornell indicated her full support for the three key Equality Objectives and recognised that it was incumbent on all members to take them to heart and put them into practice.

Councillor Whiteside suggested that the Council needed to be judged by the actions that come out of this important work to demonstrate a longer-term commitment to change attitudes and behaviours.

The Chair invited the Chairperson of the Stroud District Youth Council to make a short presentation to the Council about the Youth Council's work on, and commitment to, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Members thanked him for his enthusiastic support for the work of the Council in this area and the draft Policy and objectives.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED**

- a. **To approve the Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Equality Objectives 2021 – 2025 for public consultation;**
- b. **To approve the formation of a permanent Equality Working Group with the appointment of Elected Members to the group at the Council's AGM; and**
- c. **To require officers to report annually to Council on progress made against delivering the Equality Objectives and publish the report on the Council's website.**

**CL.057****STROUD DISTRICT 2030 STRATEGY – LIMITING, ADAPTING, RECOVERING AND RESPONDING IN A CHANGING CLIMATE**

Councillor James, Vice-Chair of Environment Committee, introduced the Strategy and explained that it provided a one Council approach to the climate emergency and also recognised the

ecological emergency and carbon neutral ambition. He noted that all three aspects needed to be tackled together in a manner which did not overlook social justice while enhancing the District's potential to thrive. The Strategy and Master Plan have a core function in Council's future work across the spectrum of its policy and practice. There is a clear challenge ahead and a significant amount to achieve and this ambitious plan seeks to address this. It is for the Council to demonstrate leadership in educating and engaging others to work towards an overall sustainable district. Councillor James noted that the Strategy and Plan had been subject to wide public consultation as well as considered at the four main Council committees and the feedback had been incorporated into this revised version. Community governance structures would ensure that consultation is ongoing with community representatives.

Proposed by Councillor James and seconded by Councillor Cornell.

The Chair invited Councillor Ross as Chair of the Housing Committee to respond. Councillor Ross provided details of the Council's investment in building new energy efficient sustainable homes and in improving existing homes. She reiterated that Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions had been demonstrated by taking a fabric first approach in new builds and the retrofitting of existing homes. The Council would continue to make significant investment each year in planned preventative maintenance to ensure homes met existing and future standards.

The Chair invited Councillor Brine as Chair of the Community Services and Licensing Committee to respond. Councillor Brine noted that there were 18 community groups working on climate change and it is vitally important that, through the Strategy, we aimed to influence and guide people locally and beyond to help meet the necessary targets.

The Chair invited Councillor Cornell as Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee to respond. Councillor Cornell was pleased to note the proposals and action plan focusing on the economy within the Strategy. She recognised the need to strengthen local supply chains and to build local resilience whilst reducing carbon emissions. Councillor Cornell highlighted that the Strategy is also about what happens within the Council and noted the need to make further progress on procurement. Finally, she emphasised the need for urgent action on delivering ethical investment and hoped that progress could be made on this through the Strategy.

The Chair invited the Principal Member for the Environment from the Stroud District Youth Council to respond. She confirmed the Youth Council's commitment to help the Council achieve its Carbon Neutral 2030 target and welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Strategy. She highlighted the Youth Council's continued work to encourage young people and all educators to become actively involved in achieving carbon neutrality and to address the climate and ecological emergencies.

Councillor Davies expressed concern that despite the climate emergency being declared two years ago the report was all that had been produced and that it contained very little that was measurable. He believed that the Council should be leading the country in this area but there was no evidence that it was. Councillor Davies questioned what actions could be taken to reach those areas of society who do not see climate change as an emergency to change minds and behaviours.

Councillor Hurst noted that the emerging Local Plan Strategy would be republished in a few weeks' time for public consultation and hoped that this would incorporate all the main elements of the report.

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy expressed his unease about some aspects of the Plan including the suggestion that those who continue to use cars will be penalised. He believed that finding a viable

alternative was the way forward. He suggested that more positive thought should be given to the mechanical means of removing carbon dioxide through capture and storage.

Councillor Denney pointed out a number of ways in which he thought that the District is leading the country in relation to sustainable rural drainage, carbon neutrality, and recycling. He noted the alternative transport option of electric vehicles which if charged on renewable energy produce very low emissions but condemned the Government's recent reduction in subsidies for them.

Councillor Braun welcomed the section of the Plan devoted to the Built Environment. She noted the measurable and achievable actions and targets set for the District's housing stock and the built environment more generally. She expressed the need for the Government to provide financial incentives to encourage people to take the right actions.

Councillor Townley noted the need for the County Council to change its transport policies to assist in achieving carbon emission targets. He also highlighted the need for Government to provide the resources to allow radical retrofitting to take place. He believed the report did not address the issue of protecting private tenants or the need to enhance the Council's enforcement protocols to ensure routine inspections and raise standards.

Councillor Pickering noted the need for the Council's future decision making to take sufficient account of its ability to cope with climate changes occurring over the next 20-30 years, and for it to contribute to the parish climate change targets of cutting emissions. He encouraged all Councillors to take the opportunity to communicate widely on these issues and particularly with those reluctant to change attitudes or behaviours.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED To adopt the 2030 Strategy and Master Plan**

**CL.058 MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

There were none.

The meeting closed at 9:40 pm.

Chair