

## **HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF MEETING OF COUNCIL on

**Monday 24 July 2023** commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Held at **The Council Chamber, The Symington Building**, Adam & Eve Street,  
Market Harborough, LE16 7AG

Present: Councillor Johnson (Chairman)

Councillors: Anderson, Asher, Bannister, Bateman, Beadle, Burrell, Dann,  
Elliot, Finan, Gair, Galton, Graves, Hallam, Hollick, James, King,  
Knight, Knowles, Mahal, Modha, Page, Rickman, Sarfas, Taylor,  
Whelband, Woodiwiss, and Worrell.

Officers present: C. Mason, C.Pattinson, V. Jessop, R. Jenner, E. Newman, K.  
Parsons, C. Elsasser

### **SILENCE FOR FORMER CHAIRMAN EILEEN DERRICK**

A minute's silence was held for the late Eileen Derrick, who was the Chairman of Harborough District Council from 1998-1999

### **PRESENTATION OF THE CITIZENSHIP CUP 2023**

The Chairman presented the Citizenship cup to Peter Mitchell of Harborough Cinema and the Market Harborough Movie Makers with a particular mention of members Ralph Holderness, Peter Wilford, Colin Sullivan. The Chair of the Civic Society, John Tillotston, addressed the Council on the background of the award.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Birch, Bilbie, Forman, Nunn, and Whitmore.

### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Johnson announced that she attended various civic events since starting her Chairmanship including the opening of a new hydrotherapy unit in Market Harborough, the Big Green week and the University of Leicester degree ceremonies at De Montfort Hall. Councillor Johnson also congratulated Councillor Forman on the birth of her daughter.

Councillor Johnson informed the meeting that she had received a request from Councillor Bateman to include an urgent question to the meeting. She confirmed that this request was rejected as it was received outside of the timescale for submission of urgent questions set out in the Constitution. She invited him to submit the question to the next Council meeting.

## **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor Beadle declared an interest under Item 13 due to his employment by a train operating company and his membership on the Board of the National Trade Union.

Councillors King, Page, Bannister and Galton declared an interest in relation to the Leader's statement as they are County Councillors for Leicestershire County Council, which is a lease holder of the Symington Building.

## **MINUTES**

In respect of the Ordinary Council Meeting on 27 February 2023 it was noted that Cllr Page should be added to the list of attendees on page 5.

- RESOLVED:**
1. that the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 27 February 2023 be received and adopted;
  2. that the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 15 May be received and adopted.

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER**

The Leader stated that, just 11 weeks after the coalition formally took on the administration, it had been an extremely busy and informative few weeks. He confirmed that Cabinet lead members were being briefed by officers on a wide range of issues, engaging with the community and taking up the reins from the previous administration. He was developing an initial work plan and looking forward to delivering for the District on Leisure matters.

The Leader confirmed his intention to have 4 Community Champions to lead on Armed Forces, Young People, Equalities and Domestic Abuse, evidencing that the Coalition is intent on working with all of the community. He considered the young people's champion to be especially innovative and able to ensure that young people across the District are at the centre of the future decisions made by the Council.

Since the last meeting of Council, the Leader had met with two of the District's Members of Parliament, Mr Costa and Mr O'Brien and agreed with them that whilst they may not agree on everything, they would work together to deliver for the community and he would have quarterly meetings with each of them. The Leader

had also met with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Rupert Matthews, and they had discussed a wide range of issues and agreed to quarterly meetings to discuss how best to work for the benefit of the community.

The Leader also confirmed that he had the opportunity to attend a meeting of employees to share with them the Coalition's aspirations for collaboration and team working to deliver the best for the future.

The Coalition wished to work with new partners to enable The Symington Building to host a banking hub, as well as addressing frontline customer services and securing them and other services for the future.

The Coalition have taken a look at the overall financial situation inherited and the full and detailed current figures. The Leader reported that while everyone was aware of the desperate situation on homeless numbers, one of the first actions that has had to be taken is to suspend the Roman Way scheme due to the hugely increased costs of the project. He confirmed that officers had been asked to prepare a new report which explores all options so the matter can be reconsidered.

In addition, the coalition have instigated a review of all of the Council's assets to protect the public purse from unbudgeted expenditure and protect services. The Leader told Council that it needed to look at the potential use of assets to provide for the community in the future. This review would include considerations for The Symington Building itself and Members and the Community would be updated in future.

The Leader reminded Members that, in September, Cabinet and Council will be considering the report on the Statement of Common Ground, which had been delayed while officers checked all the details and investigated the options open to Members.

Recruitment had commenced for the role of Chief Executive of the Council and the Leader confirmed that Members would be updated as this process progressed.

The Leader received the following questions on his report, which he stated he would respond to:

- Councillor Bateman asked the Leader about his intention to meet with Alicia Kearns (MP) for Rutland and Melton, the detail of the coalition agreement, the response to the consultation on closing the Market Harborough railway station ticket office and what the Coalition's plans are for The Symington Building given its carbon footprint.
- Councillor King asked whether the Leader would be willing to attend a wider stake holding meeting around The Symington Building and the banking hub.

## **QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from the Public.

There were no petitions from the Public.

## **QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS**

### **1. Councillor Bateman to the Leader:**

The four-party coalition of Huntingdonshire District Council (Independent / Liberal Democrat/ Labour / Green) have published their full and detailed coalition agreement, together with detailed outlines of their aspirations and strategy for their four-year term of Office? We are now some two months in from the current administration being formed, and both members and the residents of the District have no clear knowledge of the details of the administration's coalition agreement, nor any information on the administration's strategy or aspirations moving forwards. Whilst it was welcome to hear the Leader talk of his desire to be open and transparent at the Annual Meeting, that was two months ago and still there is a deafening silence with no information being released. Will the Leader confirm that the full details of the coalition agreement will be openly published for all to see, or will it continue to be shrouded in mystery?

#### **Response:**

The new administration has given officers guidance on its key priorities for the current year. The officers are working to ensure that the delivery plan for 23/24 includes these priorities and a report will be brought to cabinet in September with the reviewed and amended delivery plan. The process to review priorities for future years will be done as part of the budget setting exercise, to ensure that the resources available are targeted at the priorities. Members will be involved in this in the usual way.

Supplementary Question: Will you confirm details for coalition agreement?

Response: Yes.

### **2. Cllr Bannister to the Leader**

Can the Leader assure the Council that he will circulate the Minutes of the Member Advisory Group Meeting (MAG) to each member of the Council as soon as is reasonably practicable after each MAG meeting.

#### **Response:**

The Members Advisory Group is advisory in nature and has no decision-making powers. However, we will be raising this matter with MAG and will keep Members updated on any progress.

Supplementary Question: I agree the Member advisory is of extreme importance could we have a brief summary of MAG?

Response: Council will be updated in due course. MAG is currently being reviewed and areas are being looked at.

### **3. Cllr Page to the Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Climate Change**

Can the cabinet member for the CSP communicate effectively with the ward member and residents what actions are being taken to combat ASB in the Ullesthorpe Ward so their needs are addressed and their voices heard – and not just by social media?

#### **Response:**

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the anti social behaviour in the Ullesthorpe ward. As you maybe aware this ward is adjacent to the Mere lane traveller site which has been the source of a number of complaints.

There was a public meeting in Lutterworth on the 27th which raise a number of issues around the site and the police have assured us that they have raised their profile in the area to act as a deterrent. There is a Joint Action Group meeting as well this week where this will be one of the discussion items.

I will let you if there are any updates after the meeting and as I find out more.

**Supplementary question:** What is Harborough District Council doing to deal with anti-social behaviour? Presumably it was involved, getting regular information and working with the police?

**Response:** Councillor Woodiwiss confirmed he would reply to Councillor Page.

### **4. Councillor Mahal to the Leader**

Can the Leader please explain why the job advert recruiting a new CX says more about the political composition of the council and doesn't mention ambitions and the process of seeking the best person to lead on behalf of all the residents of the Harborough District?

#### **Response:**

The editorial, which was an interview conducted by a journalist at the MJ where the advert was placed, was an opportunity to provide prospective candidates with up-to-date information on the changes, opportunities and challenges we face in our District. The recruitment advert details what we are looking for in a candidate, inviting them to work with us to deliver our vision for our communities. The link in the advert through to Starfish who are supporting us with our search, leads to further information about the council including the role prolife and links to key documents, policies and strategies.

Supplementary Question: What is MJ? Does it need to be conducted by a journalist?

Response: The MJ is the Municipal Journal - an extended response would be given to the question within 7 days.

### **5. Cllr Rickman to the Leader**

Will the Leader publish as soon as possible the priorities [of the administration] and allow all members a debate on priorities and ambitions going forward?

#### **Response:**

The new administration has given officers guidance on its key priorities for the current year. The officers are working to ensure that the delivery plan for 23/24 includes these priorities and a report will be brought to cabinet in September with the reviewed and amended delivery plan.

The process to review priorities for future years will be done as part of the budget setting exercise, to ensure that the resources available are targeted at the priorities. Members will be involved in this in the usual way.

Supplementary Question: Will the priorities be published, and a debate occur on that?

Response: Yes, this would go through the appropriate channel.

## **6. Cllr Nunn to the Leader**

How will the Leader ensure that the independence of a [Chief Executive] candidate is paramount to drive this council forward with pride, to thrive, to grow and to be an acknowledged force in these uncertain times?

### **Response:**

The member appointment Panel, as appointed by Council, is there to support the Council's function of appointment to statutory posts. The panel, which is politically balanced, consists of three members appointed in accordance with the proportionality rules of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. At least one member of the Panel will be a member of the Cabinet in accordance with Part 4(8) of the Constitution. There is a report on the agenda to appoint the member panel. The Leader of the opposition, Cllr Bateman, has been nominated to join the panel for the final interviews. The recommendation for appointment will come back to Full Council on 24 September 2023.

## **REPORT FROM THE CABINET**

Councillor Knowles introduced the report from the Cabinet, detailing the Decisions taken by Cabinet from 10 July 2023, which was **NOTED**.

## **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

Councillor Knowles introduced the Constitution Review Committee report summarising the activities of the Constitutional Review Committee since the last meeting of Council. It was confirmed that all Members would be consulted on the review. The report was **NOTED**.

Councillor Hallam introduced the Scrutiny Commission report summarising the activities of the Scrutiny Commission and its Overview and Scrutiny Panels. He confirmed that a task and finish group had been set up to review the Council's

overview and scrutiny functions, and that extra training on scrutiny would occur on 14 of September 2023. The report was **NOTED**.

Councillor Finan introduced the Licensing and Regulatory Committee report, summarising the activities of the Licensing and Regulatory Committees and their sub-committees since the last meeting of Council. He confirmed that neither committee had met yet however one Sub-Committee had been convened since the last meeting of Council. The report was **NOTED**.

Councillor Burrell introduced the Planning Committee report summarising the activities of the Planning Committee since the last meeting of Council. It was requested that future reports include a summary of major planning decisions and enforcement activity. The report was **NOTED**.

Councillor Gair introduced the Audit and Standards Committee report, confirming that the Committee had yet to meet but that it had received additional training in advance of the first meeting, which would take place this week. The report was **NOTED**.

The Interim Director of Law and Governance introduced a report in relation to committees which met on an ad hoc basis. The report was **NOTED**.

Council requested that the 'Alternative Options' section of the update reports be removed. The Interim Director of Law and Governance reminded Members that work was being done to improve the presentation of reports and minutes, and that all suggestions on further improvements were welcomed and should be sent to her and Democratic Services. She also informed Members that the review of the constitution could look at what reports are provided in the future.

## **JOINT ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor Knowles introduced a report updating Council on the joint arrangements currently in place within the District in compliance with the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 2.11. It was explained that Article 11 of the Council's constitution provides that either Council or Cabinet could enter into joint arrangements to promote the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. The report was **NOTED**.

## **NOTICES OF MOTION**

Two notices of motion had been received by the Council and accepted in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules.

Given that the Council Procedure Rules allow only 30 minutes for the debate of motions, a **motion without notice** was **proposed** during the debate of the first motion by Cllr Johnson, seconded Cllr Beadle and agreed by Council and it was

**RESOLVED:** 3. That the time allowed for debating the Motions on Notice be extended by 15 minutes to a total of 45 minutes.

### 1. Rail Services

It was **proposed** by Councillor King and **seconded** by Councillor Whelband that the Council agree the following recommendations and actions:

- i. That this Council believes that this ongoing and serious disruption to the rail travelling public has now gone on long enough.
- ii. That our residents, communities and businesses in the Harborough district are being seriously adversely affected.
- iii. That the action by the Trade Unions is unwarranted.
- iv. That this Council instructs the Leader to write a letter within 7 days of this meeting, to be agreed with the Leader of the Opposition, to the heads of the railway unions and the Rail Delivery Group, with a copy of this motion, asking them how they intend to solve this dispute and to stop the serious disruption and economic damage to our district.
- v. That a copy of that letter be sent to all District Cllrs and our 3 members of Parliament.
- vi. That a copy of the responses received be cc'd to all members and to the members of parliament.
- vii. That all correspondence is published on the Council's website.

Councillor Beadle **proposed** that the motion be amended to:

1. This disruption caused by the failure to resolve the dispute is causing serious harm to the railway economy and, also to businesses.
2. That this council instructs the Leader to write to the Transport Secretary and to the Chair of the Rail Delivery Group to urge them to meet with the recognised Trade Unions for meaningful negotiations, with the aim of resolving this dispute.
3. That a copy of the letter, and all responses, be circulated to all District Councillors.

The amendment was **seconded** by Councillor Sarfas.

The amendment was debated and put to a **recorded vote** following a request by Councillor Knowles which was supported by the requisite number of Councillors. The result was:

The amendment to the motion was therefore **CARRIED**.



The motion, as amended, was debated before a **recorded vote** on the motion was requested by Councillor Knowles and supported by the requisite number of Councillors. The result was:

- 33 For the motion (as amended)
- 0 Against the motion (as amended)
- 0 Abstentions

The motion, as amended, was therefore **CARRIED**.

## 2. **Pets as Prizes**

It was **proposed** by Councillor Asher and **seconded** by Councillor Anderson that the Council:

- i. Ban outright the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Harborough District Council land.
- ii. Request the Leader, on behalf of the Council, to write to the Government urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes.

The motion was debated.

A **recorded vote** on the motion was requested by Councillor Knowles and supported by the requisite number of Councillors and the result was:

- 33 For the motion
- 0 Against the motion
- 0 Abstentions

The motion was therefore **CARRIED**.

## **APPOINTMENT PANEL REPORT**

Councillor Knowles introduced a report that proposed an establishment of a Member Appointments Panel for the recruitment of Statutory Officers. It was explained that the appointment of a Statutory Officer could only be made by a meeting of Full Council. In preparation for the selection of suitable candidates for the vacant Statutory Officer posts, the Leader confirmed that it is necessary for a Member Appointment Panel to be appointed by Council. The Member Appointment Panel must consist of 3 members and be politically balanced in accordance with the proportionality rules set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. At least one member of the Panel shall be a member of the Cabinet in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules at Part 4(8) of the Constitution. He referred Members to the proposed terms of reference for the Member Appointment Panel at Appendix A of the report.

Council discussed whether another Member could be added to the Panel and was reminded by the Director of Law and Governance that if no decision was made, a

delegation would need to be given to allow the Panel to be properly convened prior to the interview dates identified, which fell before the next meeting of Council. It was

- RESOLVED:**
4. That the Leader would reflect on amending the size of the Member appointment Panel and update Members after consulting with the Monitoring Officer.
  5. That if the Leader decides to appoint additional Members to the Member Appointment Panel, the Council delegate to the Director of Law and Governance the ability to give effect to this decision.

#### ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-2024

Councillor Knowles introduced a report that confirmed the democratic arrangements for the Municipal Year 2023-2024. He reminded Members that as the Council was in no overall control following local government elections on 4 May 2023, it was not possible at Annual Council on 15 May 2023 to explicitly confirm all the democratic arrangements for the 2023 / 2024 municipal year. Therefore, the report confirmed the following:

- i. the updated determination of political balance;
- ii. allocation of seats to committees and sub-committees;
- iii. appointments to outside bodies;
- iv. delegation of functions to and by the Council
- v. confirmation that Cabinet would determine Cabinet sub-committees
- vi. Membership and portfolios for Cabinet.

Council reported that outside bodies were missing from Appendix C and it was proposed that Members be contacted by Democratic Services to gather information on all outside bodies Members were aware of. The report was **NOTED**.

#### URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The Meeting closed at 21.10