

## HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL on

**Monday 27 February 2023** commencing at 6.30 p.m.

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

Present:

Councillor Bannister (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs Ackerley, Bateman, Beadle, Bilbie, Dr Bremner, Burrell, Critchley, Dann, Dunton Elliott, Golding Graves, Hallam, Hollick, James, Johnson, King, Knowles, Modha, Rickman, Mrs Robinson, Sarfas, Whelband, Whitmore and Mrs Wood

Officers present: D. Atkinson, L. Elliott (remotely), S. Hamilton, K. Parsons  
V. Jessop, C. Mason and C. Pattinson

### CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Bannister announced that he had attended a number of civic events since the last meeting in December 2022 including the Holocaust memorial day Commemorative Event, 'Stand with Ukraine' Service of Commemoration. He thanked the Councillors for their support in their attendance at the Civic Quiz in January and the Civic Dinner in March.

It was **moved by Councillor Bannister, seconded by Councillor King** and;

**RESOLVED that the order in which agenda items be considered is amended so that items 7(a) (cabinet recommendations on Strategic Partnership), 11 (Council tax base), 12 (Safeguarding) and 13 (strategic partnership) be received between items 5 and 6. Council voted unanimously in favour.**

### DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

### MINUTES

In respect of the ordinary meeting of Council on 19 December 2022 it was **moved by Councillor Bannister, seconded by Councillor King** and

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on the 19 December be received and adopted.**

## REPORT OF THE LEADER

### **District Councils Deliver**

The Leader reported that at the District Councils Network (DCN) Annual Conference 2023, exclusive new market research was presented in relation to how residents in two-tier areas view their councils. The DCN Innovation Spotlight was launched to showcase great examples of how member councils are delivering innovation to improve outcomes for their communities.

The ***“Districts Deliver: How local people view their councils”*** report contained the following key findings:

1. District councils have strong name recognition and awareness among residents. In two-tier areas many can only name their district council.
2. There is a widely held view that the services delivered by district councils are important for their local area.
3. District councils enjoy high levels of satisfaction across a range of measures, more so than county councils.
4. Residents feel that their district council understands and cares about their local area. They have a high level of trust in their district council's ability to tackle local issues.
5. Local government is more trusted than national government to tackle local issues.

The Leader recommended that councillors and prospective councillors view the [press release](#) and read the [full report](#).

The Leader confirmed that the Council has been awarded £1.15 Million by the Government to increase electric vehicle charging infrastructure across Harborough and Leicestershire by the installation of 63 EV charge points and the expansion of EV car clubs. This funding matches the £1.15million funding already secured from the Business Rates Pooling Fund. He highlighted that the project (named Flex D) consists of the following key aspects:

- solar powered charging hubs in each district and borough area providing up to 12 charging points at each hub.
- development of rural EV car clubs enabling rural mobility and driving uptake of EVs and use of chargers with the provision of a number of standard dual chargers in smaller village locations. This will support the development of the network of charging between hub towns and satellite villages.

Separately, the Council has agreed the County's FIRST rural electric car club at Tilton on the Hill and teamed up with Leicester-based Green Fox Community Energy Co-operative (Green Fox) to develop this club. Tilton on the Hill has no public transport, school or doctors' surgery but will now benefit from two electric cars as pool cars from Green Fox which residents can book to hire when needed. The village

will also benefit from two double EV charging points located at the village hall which the council has funded and will allow up to four electric cars to be charged.

### **Ukrainian Refugees**

The Leader noted that the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine had passed, and thanked the residents of the Harborough District for embracing the refugee challenge, with over 250 refugees are now living in the district. The Council observed the national 1-minute silence and the Chairman and other Councillors attended the Churches Together service at the Methodist Church in Market Harborough to commemorate the invasion and the sacrifices of those who remained to defend their homeland. ***Sláva Ukraýini! Слава Україні!***

### **Brooke House College**

The Leader was saddened to hear of the death of Duangphet Phromthep, aka 'Dom', one of 12 boys rescued from a Thai cave in 2018, at Brooke House College, stating that the Council's thoughts and prayers are with his relatives, friends and all those at Brooke House College as they come to terms with this unexpected loss.

### **Shambles Public House**

The Leader thanked the emergency services for their response to the fire at the Shambles in Lutterworth.

### Comments on the Leader's Report

Council Knowles asked the following question :-

1. District Council Network if somewhere down the road we might see some of the powers of the large authority pushed down to District Councils.

Council Dr Bremner asked the following question :-

1. Flex D does not resonate EV charging is it possible to have this amended?

### QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the Public.

There were no petition from the Public.

### REPORT ON THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2023/24

Councillor Hallam introduced the report and outlined the calculation and detail around the Council Tax Base for 2023/24. He outlined the changes in Council Tax

charges, including increasing its irrecoverable rate from 1% to 2% during the Covid-19 pandemic and recommended that this rate continue for 2023/24 due to the cost-of-living crisis and potential recession. The Council heard and considered the report.

It was **moved by Councillor Hallam, seconded by Councillor King** and

**RESOLVED that: -**

- (i) the calculation of the Council Tax base for the year 2023/24 be approved;**
- (ii) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 SI 2012/2914, the amount calculated by Harborough District Council as its Council Tax base for the year 2023/24 shall be 38,251.46 and**
- (iii) the Council Tax base for individual Parishes for 2023/24 be calculated in accordance with the same principles as the Council's overall Council Tax Base as detailed in Appendix A.**

#### THE ANNUAL REPORTS OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND SAFEGUARDING SAFEGAURDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Councillor Dann introduced the reports. He highlighted the focus of the report including encouraging individuals to live more independent lives with the right support and guidance in place, addressing physical and mental health needs to prevent crisis and support those who are most vulnerable in our communities including those that face loneliness, food, and fuel poverty and those that need support to remain in their own homes.

It was **moved by Councillor Dann, seconded by Councillor Whelband** and

**RESOLVED that the annual report of the Leicestershire and Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Partnership to increase awareness and identify issues relevant to the district and was NOTED.**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

1. Budget 2023/24 & the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2024/25 to 2027/28)  
Councillor King was invited to introduce the recommendations of the Cabinet from its meeting on the 5 December 2022, to be considered in conjunction with Agenda item 13 - Officer's report on the Strategic Partnership between Harborough District Council and Melton Borough Council and a comprehensive debate took place.

Councillor King requested a recorded vote to consider Recommendations i to ix as detailed in the report which was supported by more than four other Members.

On being put to the vote the Resolutions i to ix were lost.

### **Recorded vote**

**For: Cllrs Bannister, Bateman, Bilbie, Dr Bremner, Champion, Critchley, Dann, Golding, Hallam, Hollick, King, Liquorish, Nunn, Rickman and Whelband (15)**

**Against: Cllrs Ackerley, Beadle, Burrell, Dunton, Elliott, Graves, James, Johnson, Knowles, Modha, Mrs Page, Mrs Robinson, Sarfas, Mrs Simpson, Whitmore and Mrs Wood (16)**

The Chairman advised that as entry into a strategic partnership with Melton Borough Council was not resolved, Council would need to address the extension of the appointment of Elizabeth Elliott as Interim Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer until 28 February 2023.

It was **moved by Councillor Bannister, seconded by Councillor King** and

**RESOLVED that the appointment of Elizabeth Elliott as Interim Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer be extended until 28 February 2023.**

### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

- i. The following question was submitted by **Councillor Beadle to Councillor King**:

“There are many concerns amongst residents about the Government's imposition of new voter ID checks that councils will have to undertake, starting with the local elections this May. This will require councils to have more staff at polling stations, and their roles will become more difficult.

Concerns include the impact this will have on council finances, the extra burden and difficulties placed on council staff at polling stations, and the potential for reducing voter participation.

Can the Leader advise what the additional cost burden is to this council caused by these measures, and what additional training and support is being given to council staff who undertake roles at polling stations?

The **Leader responded** that:

The additional cost burden to the council and the additional training and support available to council staff who undertake roles at polling stations are as follows:

- **Grants** - Grants from DLUHC have now been confirmed and received for the extra burden placed on LA's regarding the Election Act changes. Harborough District Council have received £17,206 for 2022/23 and will receive £34,555 for the year 2023/24
- **Awareness Strategy** - This has assisted us in running an awareness campaign for our voters which includes a radio campaign, posters throughout the district, an information leaflet sent in every 2023/24 Council Tax bill, Printed pharmacy bag, social media, in conjunction with the Electoral Commission awareness campaign. Poll cards will be sent out end March with information regarding voter ID and a full list of acceptable ID included.
- **Voter ID** - Electors are able to request ID through the GOV UK site which is linked to all Electoral Registration systems. We are already receiving such request and have processed a number which have been now sent for printing at the central government printing hub.
- **Training** - Training on all aspects of the Election Bill changes including Voter ID, types of ID, using the Voter ID request software, train the trainers for poll staff has already been carried out across the country, our own permanent staff have been to all required training at no cost to the authority.
- **Poll Staff training** - We use both face to face and online training for our poll staff prior to all elections. This year training will include voter ID what can be accepted and how to deal with customers who do not have ID. The Electoral Commission have produced a number of training aids including quick guides and the polling station handbook for all our staff.
- **Increased staff numbers** – As usual we will have a staffed help desk with a dedicated number for election queries as well as ensuring that our own Customer Services department have a full list of FAQ's to enable them to answer questions. We will be increasing the number of polling station inspectors to assist poll staff with queries regarding voter ID at the polling station. As a large number of our stations are in rural areas and have a low number of electors they will not require extra staff to assist, but we will be ensuring that the larger urban stations will be fully staffed in line with the Electoral Commission guidelines, this will include part time poll staff to assist during the peak time, this will help in keeping the cost down

## REPORT FROM THE CABINET

**Councillor King** introduced the report from the Cabinet, detailing the Decisions taken by Cabinet from 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023, which was **NOTED**.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION 27 FEBRUARY 2023

**Councillor King** introduced the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission from its meeting on the 27 February 2023 in respect of The Scrutiny Commission and Performance and Communities Scrutiny Panel have been consulted extensively regarding a Scrutiny Review. However, it has been acknowledged that the Council needs to review its governance arrangements. Therefore, it has been decided that it is no longer appropriate to continue with the scrutiny review separately. The review of the scrutiny function will now be integrated into a broader review of the Council's governance arrangements.

It was **moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Dann** and **RESOLVED that the proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix B (i) and (ii) be adopted.**

## REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

The report recommended the adoption of the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24.

It was **moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Dann** and **RESOLVED that the proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendix B (i) and (ii) be adopted.**

## NOTICES OF MOTION

Notice of Motion from Cllr Phil Knowles - Seconded by Cllr Barbara Johnson. For submission to Feb 23 Full Council

" Harborough District Council had an extremely well supported, investigative and committed 'Green Working Group' which though referred to under a variety of names was widely acknowledged as an important contributor to these environmental matters and considerations.

The decision was taken by a majority vote to scrap the working group and to move to other established parts of the council structure the responsibility for the wider issues and the tens of points raised. Many of which required progression and further consideration.

It is vitally important that all of this work is not lost, it is equally important that we know how all the tens of matters identified have progressed. It is therefore moved that a full and detailed report and update be prepared and taken to the appropriate body with HDC in order that members can have the opportunity to see the progress

made, work carried out, any proposals and the chance to comment on the report, progress etc "

The motion was debated.

A recorded vote was requested by Councillor Knowles and supported by the requisite number of Councillors.

**Recorded vote**

**For: Cllrs Beadle, Burrell, Dunton, Elliott, Galton, Graves, James, Johnson, Knowles, Mrs Robinson, Sarfas and Whitmore (11)**

**Against: Cllrs Ackerley, Bannister, Bateman, Bilbie, Dr Bremner, Critchley, Dann, Frenchman, Hallam, Hollick, King, Mahal, Rickman and Whelband (15)**

There were no abstentions and the motion was therefore **LOST**.

URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The Meeting closed at 21.10