

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL

Held remotely on

Monday 29th June 2020

commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Bilbie (incoming Chairman)

Councillors (remote access): Mrs Ackerley, Bannister, Bateman, Beadle, Dr Bremner, Mrs Burrell, Champion, Dann, Dunton, Elliott, Fosker, Frenchman, Galton, Golding, Graves, Hallam, Hollick (until 9.41pm) James, King, Knowles, Liquorish, McHugo, Mahal, Modha, Nunn, Mrs Page, Rickman, Mrs Robinson, Sarfas, Mrs Simpson and Whelband

Officers present: D. Atkinson, S. Curtis, S. Hamilton, G. Keeping, C. Mason, N. Proudfoot, J. Smith and V. Wenham

Officers remote access: D. Atkinson

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Johnson

INTRODUCTIONS

Prior to the start of the meeting a minute's silence was observed to acknowledge those people who have sadly lost their life to Covid-19.

Members of the public were welcomed to this remote meeting and members of the Committee introduced themselves. The Chairman stated that whilst new Government legislation enabled the Committee to make decisions through remote meetings during the current pandemic, other provisions on how the Council conducted meetings remained the same.

VICE- CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Bilbie announced that since Councillor Johnson was unable to attend the meeting, he would be chairing the meeting in his capacity as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Mahal stated that she is a Board Director of the LLEP.

Councillor Page stated that she is County Councillor and declared an interest in all matters relating to the County Council.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS PROCEDURE RULES

The Chief Officer Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced the report and stated that the Virtual Meetings Procedure Rules were adopted on the 8th April 2020 under the emergency planning powers vested in the Joint Chief Executive under Part 3 of the Constitution.

Members of the Council were asked to endorse and adopt the procedure rules.

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

RESOLVED that the Virtual Meetings Procedure Rules be endorsed and adopted.

MINUTES

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

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 24th February 2020 be received and adopted.

CIVIC APPOINTMENTS

The Council considered the report on Civic Appointments to receive nominations for the civic roles of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council until Annual Council in 2021. The election of the position of Chairman and Vice Chairman for the current civic year would normally take place at the Annual Meeting of Council. However, the Regulations introduced as a consequence of the Coronavirus Act 2020 enable appointments to Committees and other Council appointments to be extended until the next Annual Council or until determined by the Council.

Councillor Stephen Bilbie was nominated by Councillor King and seconded by Councillor Hallam. There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED that: Councillor Bilbie be elected Chairman for the remainder of the 2020/21 civic year.

Councillor Bilbie made and subscribed to the Statutory Declaration of Office and thanked Members for his appointment.

Councillor Bilbie took the Chair.

A number of Members including Councillors King and Knowles added their congratulations to Councillor Bilbie including a message from Councillor Johnson offering her congratulations and thanking him for the support that he had given her during her term in office.

Councillor King also passed on best wishes to Councillor Johnson on behalf of the Conservative Group and hope that she makes a good recovery. Councillor King acknowledged that it would be a testing time with the recovery from the pandemic, but that Councillor Bilbie and his family, through his community involvement would be well placed to support the Harborough District for the remainder of civic year.

Councillor Neil Bannister was nominated by Councillor King and seconded by Councillor Bateman.

There being no other nominations, it was

RESOLVED that: Councillor Bannister be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council for the remainder of the 2020/21 civic year.

Councillor Bannister made and subscribed to the Statutory Declaration of Office and thanked Members for his appointment.

Councillor Knowles offered his congratulations to Councillor Bannister.

REPORT OF THE LEADER

Councillor King, Leader, presented his report, copies of which had been emailed to all Members, as set out below, preceding this with a reference to the imminent decision from the government regarding whether or not Leicester will have an additional period of lockdown.

There is a great deal that has happened since the last full Council meeting on February 24th, that I won't be able to cover everything off in this report, so I apologise in advance for any omissions.

Coronavirus Covid-19 response.

Later during this meeting Councillors will consider the report about the Council's response and the impact that CV19 and the lockdown is having, and the brilliant work of volunteer groups and our community hub across the district.

However, looking at my report to our meeting on 24th Feb, I reported to you that 9 patients in England had tested positive. Yesterday 28th June, the government reported that there have been more than 311,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus in the UK and more than 43,000 people have died. However, these numbers only include people who have been tested, and the total number of deaths relating to coronavirus is likely to be higher.

As of 21st June, Leicestershire has recorded a total of 1,395 laboratory-confirmed cases of Covid-19. The weekly reporting shows that Harborough district has the 4th lowest rate of Covid-19 deaths in the county. The rolling 7-day average of daily cases has shown two peaks in April: one around 10th April and one around 24th April. A third smaller peak has been witnessed around 20th May but has since been declining.

Of all care homes in Harborough district, 47.1% (8) have reported outbreaks of Covid-19; this is higher than the county percentage of 38.5%. A third (33%) of deaths involving Covid-19 occurred in care homes in Harborough district, slightly higher than the county percentage of 31%.

Sadly across our district there have been so far, 57 deaths associated with CV-19 out of a total of 479 in Leicestershire (up to 12th June). This is of course very sad news for the families and relatives of those affected and our sympathies are extended to them.

The latest counts of deaths show there were no deaths in Harborough district in week 24. This has declined from two deaths in each week, in week 22 and week 23.

But as our residents, communities and businesses emerge from the harsh Covid-19 lockdown and try to get their lives and businesses working again, we are facing a public order challenge, which is putting all of our recovery at great risk.

Many of you will like me have been shocked by the pictures spread across social media, which demonstrate reckless and mindless acts of debauched, anti-social behaviour, fuelled by drugs and alcohol, taking place in our public parks and spaces such as Little Bowden Recreation Ground, and private spaces such as Saddington Reservoir to name but two. Such wanton acts mean that residents of this district are now at a greatly increased risk of a local outbreak occurring, because no social distancing has taken place whatsoever. That is of course aside from the great risks that people are taking driving under the influence of drugs and drink, jumping or swimming in dirty and cold canal water, etc.

The decision of the local Police commanders, to impose a 36 hour emergency dispersal order, on Saturday evening, at the Council's Little Bowden Recreation Ground in Market Harborough is hugely disappointing, but was inevitable given the reported incidents in the days prior to that.

Residents of all ages, need to take, very seriously, their individual and collective responsibility for making sure that they, their families, friends and neighbours, all continue to stay safe - keep well - save lives.

The consequences of not doing so will impact on us all.

Town centres reopen as lockdown eases

Shops and businesses have reopened across Harborough district following the Government's easing of the lockdown – and more businesses are set to reopen in July. My thanks to the 'Highstreet Helpers' (including Cllr Nunn) who are helping guide shoppers in our town centres; there are also public hand sanitiser stations in high streets, and street markings to show people where to queue.

The public toilets in the Commons car park in Market Harborough, have reopened with additional cleaning arrangements in place, new signage, and staff on hand to allow one person in at a time. (The Little Bowden Rec and Welland Park toilets are due to open imminently and we will confirm as soon as they do).

To create a safer pedestrian environment, temporary road closures have been introduced in collaboration with Leicestershire County Council, Lutterworth Town Council, retail groups and local businesses. These apply to Adam and Eve Street, and Church Street in Market Harborough, and in Church Street in Lutterworth. These road closures will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

We are also working with local businesses following further Government announcements this week that hairdressers, hotels, pubs and other businesses in England can from 4 July 2020 and how they can do this safely.

We are also working on a 'shop local' campaign to encourage people to support their local shops, and markets, at this time.

The latest information for the Harborough district is available from ww.harborough.gov.uk/coronavirus

Customer services reopening for appointments only

We are looking to reopen the Council's customer services at The Symington Building from week commencing 13 July 2020. This will be by appointment only. Customers will not be permitted to walk in without an appointment.

Appointments will be on a Monday and Wednesday between 10am-4pm. There are screens being installed and new social distancing arrangements in place for our customers.

Customers will need to call 01858 8282828 number and select the option for an appointment. An adviser will see if they can deal with the enquiry over the phone and if not the customer will be invited in for an appointment.

Customer Services continues to operate the community hub service and will also signpost people to other organisations such as Job Centre for Universal Credit and Citizens Advice for financial support/advice etc.

Parking charges

In line with businesses opening, Harborough District Council will look to reintroduce car parking charges at all Council-owned car parks across the Harborough District, later in July, and details will be shared publicly once a date is finalised.

Parking restrictions continue to apply at on-street locations across the district.

Market Harborough Farmers' Market set to return

Market Harborough Farmers Market is set to return to The Square on Thursday 2 July 2020, from 9am to 3pm. The market had been stopped due to the coronavirus pandemic but will restart with new safety measures in place. Social distancing measures will be introduced, which includes fencing of the Square to create a one-in, one-out queuing system at entry, a revised layout and hand sanitiser stations in place. Sit down seating will not be available, and shoppers will be asked not to touch produce without

buying and are encouraged to pay by card. The return of the Farmers Market follows the full reopening of the indoor market hall. We are urging the public to get behind traders and 'shop local'.

New podcasts on how Council has responded to Covid-19 crisis

A new podcasts series is being published over the next couple of weeks on YouTube, documenting how Harborough District Council has adapted to support residents and businesses throughout the Covid-19 crisis, and onwards as we look forward to the recovery phase. The episodes, which are each approximately seven minutes long, cover a range of topics including, fly tipping management, virtual planning meetings, increased safeguarding and local food banks. They include interviews with council employees who have been redeployed from their usual roles to support the evolving needs of people across the district.

You can find the podcasts here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofwJdJfUKKs&feature=youtu.be>

I hope you enjoy listening to the podcasts in the series, and welcome any feedback. Please send comments to: communications@harborough.gov.uk

Community hub

More than 1,000 residents and families have requested support through Harborough District Council's Community Hub which offers help to those who are vulnerable or self-isolating.

People who are vulnerable and do not have a local support network can contact Harborough District Council's Community Hub if they:

- need immediate help with supplies of essential food
- are feeling lonely or would like a friendly phone call or text message
- would like to connect with a local community group
- need transport to medical appointments
- would like advice about staying active and exercising

To refer yourself or someone you are concerned about please visit: www.harborough.gov.uk/hd-community-hub

If you cannot use the online forms please email: communityhub@harborough.gov.uk including contact details and support required or call 01858 821 232 9am-5pm.

Draft Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities 2020-2050

As the minutes from the 24th Feb show I advised Council that a draft strategic transport priorities document had been prepared by Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council to outline high level priorities for the two Local Transport Authorities (LTA's). I also asked HDC Officers to prepare a response using the services of an external Transport Consultant. Due to the CV-19 situation we were not able to hold any community engagement activities, but the consultation was extended until midnight on 29th June. As advised in last week's member briefing the Council's response has now been submitted along with a copy of our consultant's report.

Without repeating in full the Council's response here, there were 5 themes which it was based on:-

- 1) Lack of an evidence base
- 2) That the aims, challenges and priorities needed to be restructured
- 3) That the 'travel around the county towns and other urban areas theme is ill-defined
- 4) Lack of stakeholder consultation in development of the document
- 5) The LLSTP is too narrowly defined on passenger transport and needs to take into account long term impact from COVID-19.

Fly-tipping campaign shortlisted for national awards

Harborough District Council's Tip Off campaign, which aims to increase awareness of fly-tipping, and encourage reporting of it, has been nominated at the National Recycling Awards 2020 in two categories 'Campaign of the Year' and 'Local Authority Success'.

The National Recycling Awards celebrate those making a difference in the recycling and waste management industry. In November, the Council bucked the national trend announcing that incidents of fly-tipping had fallen by more than a quarter compared to the same period in the previous year – the biggest reduction since Council records began.

The fall was attributed to the Council's proactive actions, through its Tip Off campaign, and its success in catching those responsible.

During the recent lockdown period, due to the coronavirus pandemic, where other local authorities had seen a huge spike in fly-tipping, Harborough district saw slightly less incidents compared to the previous year due to its Tip Off campaign.

Last week, the Council reported that they had caught a fly-tipper on CCTV just days after launching banners on their refuse collection vehicles which read: 'Fly-tippers beware – we are watching you. Residents and taxpayers of this district are fed up with rubbish being dumped and indiscriminate littering. HDC is committed to keeping our district as clean and green, and protecting it from those that seek to destroy it through their illegal actions.

My message to the criminal fly-tippers is our campaign continues!

No place for hate or racism

Back in February I condemned unreservedly those who recently attacked students from the Brooke House College in Market Harborough, in some wildly misguided belief that they somehow were responsible for carrying coronavirus to the UK.

But since then there's been extremely upsetting circumstances in the United States.

We need to listen and learn, and recognise that racial bias still exists.

At Harborough District Council we celebrate diversity and we acknowledge the role that we have in challenging inequality. We will continue to tackle inequality in all its forms and endeavour to support everyone in our community.

To help us with this, I am creating the member role of Equality and Diversity Champion and have invited Cllr Amanda Nunn to undertake this important role.

Comments on the Leader's report

Councillor Knowles commented that currently in the UK there are 311 confirmed cases of Covid19 and 43,000 deaths which could rise to 70,000.

Councillor Knowles joined the Leader in expressing concern over the anti-social behaviour, particularly at Little Bowden, and wanted to thank the police for the speed in their response. Councillor Knowles commented that he was keen that Councillors, and in particular Ward Members fully support the police to progress matters.

In respect of car parking charges, Councillor Knowles asked for more details on the financial implications of the car park charges and what government support is available.

Councillor Knowles thanked Harborough District Council staff and members of the public who have supported members of the community during the Covid19. In addition he expressed concern at the uncertainty of the potential Leicester lockdown, and how far the lockdown would extend into Leicestershire.

With regards to the re-opening of town centres Councillor Knowles expressed concern that whilst businesses are able to open, they may be reliant on financial support for some time. In addition it is a

welcome step that the Farmers markets are set to return, however members of the public need to know that these can be cancelled if there is a spread of the disease or a spike in Market Harborough.

In relation to fly tipping Councillor Knowles commented how expensive and dangerous it is to clean up and wanted to thank those who undertake this role. In addition care needs to be taken that the people taking away waste are licensed, as if they aren't the household is still liable.

Councillor Knowles concluded by stating that diversity should be celebrated and everyone must stand against any form of racism or hate. He fully supports the appointment of the equality and diversity champion and it sends out a very loud and clear message from the Council.

In respect of the lockdown situation in Leicester, Councillor Galton reported that meetings had taken place with Public Health England that afternoon and that an announcement is expected within the next eight to twelve hours. Councillor Galton's concerns, and that of residents and other local Members, are over how the restrictions will impact on areas bordering Leicester city such as the Thurnby and Houghton and Glen Wards. Councillor Galton urged the Leadership of the Council and the Corporate Management team to make sure that they had as much information as possible on how the situation will work and he stated that the Council may have to direct and re-prioritise resources to these areas of the Harborough District. Councillor Galton reported that there had been a number of examples of people gathering in large number at local facilities and requested the support of the Council if that happens again.

Councillor James commented on the incident at Little Bowden recreation ground and reported that a meeting took place earlier today between the police and community safety officers. He hoped that the Council would receive a report from this meeting in order to understand the incident more fully, and use it both as a basis to learn from and for any future occurrences.

Leader's response

In response to the issues relating to civil disorder, Councillor King reported that he had made various public statements in the media and on social media regarding the incidents across the District. There have yet not been any discussions between HDC and Leicestershire County Council or Leicester City Council on this issue. However a meeting took place earlier in the afternoon with the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Wellbeing, Communities and Housing involving the police.

Councillor King reported that he had been assured by Inspector Gorman (the responsible Command Officer for policing in the Harborough and Oadby and Wigston areas) that these issues are being addressed in the relevant policing operation plan over the coming days and weeks and that the police are fully aware of the Council's concerns.

Councillor King also commented that the anti social behaviour of hundreds of people who are ignoring government requests have caused deep concern, angst and frustration to many residents across the district. Councillor King reported that there are three local outbreak plans that have been developed across the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland resilience areas which are the responsibility of the Director of Public Health in those localities and the Chief Officer for those councils. The involvement of HDC is very minimal at the moment due to the way that the upper tier authorities are proceeding with these plans which has caused concern to himself and other District Leaders and Chief Executives across Leicestershire.

Councillor Whelband, Cabinet Portfolio holder for Wellbeing, Communities and Housing, reported that he had attended a meeting with the Community Safety Team, the police and the staff from the HDC Environmental Health team, and he wanted to assure Members that the Council is taking these issues

very seriously. During the meeting the police advised that there would be an increased police presence. The Council is also looking at installing or moving the moveable CCTV cameras into the parks so that the situation at night can be monitored. In addition, residents will be given information on how to report issues, particularly on the parks. Also the Council is planning on re-opening the toilets in both Little Bowden and Welland Park from the 1st July. A number of other outcomes are planned, and Councillor Whelband reported that he would be happy to update Ward Councillors separately.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

There were none.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Sarfas:

“Was there a meeting between yourself and Rosita Page to discuss the Fielding Palmer hospital or the 106 money for Lutterworth East ? “

Councillor King responded as follows :

“ There have been a number of discussions, but not physical meetings and may I remind Councillor Sarfas in the minutes of the meeting of the 24th February Council meeting I did make a statement about the dialogue that had been undertaken at that time with the CCG’s about the s106 offer that has been submitted via the planning process for East of Lutterworth and also to talk to the NHS family and the the situation with the Fielding Palmer Hospital.

Since then of course we have had the COVID-19 lock down and the NHS 'family' have been wholly diverted because of that until very recently.

What I can confirm is that building on those previously reported meetings and discussions, an online meeting was held earlier in June, between myself, senior executives from HDC, Leicestershire Partnership Trust and the combined CCGs. This was also in part arranged as a result of representations made by Councillor Page in her capacity as the Leicestershire County Councillor for Lutterworth to the Health Oversight and Scrutiny Committee for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and myself in relation to the recent temporary closure of the Fielding Palmer Hospital In Lutterworth.

This meeting included Cllr Page in her capacity as the County Councillor for Lutterworth.

Further discussions between senior officials are taking place to look at how a co-ordinated approach can be put together by the NHS' family', which would involve S106, and form part of an integrated plan for Lutterworth moving forward. This would be a first in Leicestershire.

I am grateful for Cllr Page's involvement in these matters”.

Councillor Sarfas asked an additional question as follows :

“Was there a meeting regarding the Clinical Commissioning and you and Councillor Page and NHS regarding the situation of the Lutterworth hospital and the two GP surgeries. If there was, can there be a meeting with the Ward Councillors with Clinical Commissioning regarding the option on the 106

regarding whether it would be the GP surgery in the hub in Lutterworth East or the GP surgery in Lutterworth as people in Lutterworth have the right to know before it's decided in planning.”

Councillor King responded as follows:

“At the moment it isn't really appropriate to have a briefing as there isn't anything to have a briefing about apart from the answer above. There isn't anything else to say at the moment.

Councillor Sarfas made further points regarding his question including the fact that he is dyslexic, and also that the Ward Councillors need to be involved in the meeting with Clinical Commissioning, the Fielding Palmer hospital and representatives of Lutterworth.

Councillor King apologised to Councillor Sarfas if he had inadvertently been insulting to him and explained that he meant that the initial question from Councillor Sarfas was very generic rather than being very specific and noted any learning difficulty which Councillor Sarfas may have for future reference. Councillor King reiterated that there was nothing more to look at or discuss at the moment, and confirmed that he has a personal interest in health and wanted to see better facilities for health for the Lutterworth locality. Currently the NHS and relevant parties are responding to issues relating to Covid-19 and haven't had chance to work through the issues.

The Chief Officer Governance, and Monitoring Officer confirmed the correct procedure for questions.

REPORT FROM THE CABINET

Councillor Knowles asked for further clarification on the Cabinet decision on the Adoption of public space at KB1, Kibworth from the 9th March 2020 meeting given that public spaces are a currently a key topic of debate in a lot of areas across the district.

Councillor Galton also raised concerns over the Cabinet decision on the Adoption of public space at KB1, Kibworth as whilst a case has been successfully made for this open space to be adopted and maintained by the Council, it is contrary to the current policy and is not consistent with previous decisions on other applications. Also a lower commuted sum has been accepted. He commented that this decision has reverted back to the previous policy and wants this looked at in more detail. Councillor Galton welcomed the Scrutiny review on Open Spaces.

Councillor Graves raised his concerns on the same issue. In this Council year, before Covid-19 there was already a plan to use nearly £2million of Council reserves to support the general budget of the Council and later in the meeting a report will show an estimated further net loss to the Council of £1.6 million.

The former policy was for 15 years of the commuted sum which amounted to approximately £380,000, however the current policy of 30 years of the commuted sum enables the Kibworths to have the Open Spaces commuted sum with a discount of £380,000. Councillor Graves wanted to point out the implications of the Cabinet's decision and the associated expense to the Council.

Councillor James also raised a number of concerns on the same issue in relation to the cost of management companies maintaining grounds, and where the main contractors and sub-contractors are based etc for residents of Overstone House in Market Harborough and the Farndon Field estate Phases 1 and 2.

Councillor King replied that he had not voted on the item at the meeting and there were not any representations from any of the Members who had just spoken. The issue with the public space at KB1 has been going on for a number of years. In this particular instance the developer and landowner initially approached the Parish Council who declined to take on the maintenance, liabilities and responsibilities

of this this particular open space before approaching the Council. Over time this matter has been considered and Cabinet made a decision based on the information and advice that was provided in the associated report.

Councillor Knowles asked whether the issues of public open spaces could be considered by Scrutiny and Councillor King confirmed that Scrutiny will be considering a review on public Open Spaces.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Councillor Mrs Page presented the Scrutiny Commission report as set out below:

There is only one Scrutiny-related item for me to report on to this meeting of Council – this is the meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Panel, which took place on the 12th March 2020.

The Panel scrutinised:

- Open Space Implementation and Delivery
- Financial Monitoring 2019/20 Quarter 3
- Performance for Quarter 3 2019/20 and
- Regulatory of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000.

Postponed Meetings

A number of meetings of the Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Panels and Scrutiny Task Group had to be postponed due to Covid-19 as follows:

- 19th March Communities Scrutiny Panel
- 2nd April Scrutiny Task Group – S106 Policy
- 4th June Scrutiny Commission
- 18th June Performance Scrutiny Panel
- 25th June Communities Scrutiny Panel

Future Scrutiny Events

The Scrutiny function will re-start with the Scrutiny Commission meeting on the 13th July 2020, where the Scrutiny Workplan will be agreed. Meetings of the Performance Scrutiny Panel and the Communities Scrutiny Panel will then follow on 17th and 24th September respectively.

The Scrutiny Commission will also fix a date for the postponed Task Group to consider the Council's S106 policy.

Scrutiny Annual Report

The Scrutiny Annual report will be delivered to Council at its meeting on 27th July 2020. The report will give the opportunity to look back at the last year, at the same time as anticipating the work of the new Scrutiny membership over the coming months.

Councillor Graves requested a more comprehensive format to the report in order to provide more detail on issues having been previously considered as well as the substantial issues that would be considered imminently by the Scrutiny Commission.

Councillor Nunn commented that there are notes and minutes available on the website for all of the Scrutiny Commission and Performance and Communities Scrutiny panel meetings.

Councillor Mrs Page reported that an Annual Report will be produced for the Council meeting in July, which will be a substantial report looking retrospectively over the past year as well as towards the forthcoming year. She advised that all the recommendations are available on-line and at times circulated to Members. Councillor Mrs Page also reported that she had given Councillors the opportunity to submit any questions or requests in relation to the Scrutiny Workplan. There will be a review on Open Spaces as that had previously been requested by Members.

Councillor Mrs Page stressed that the Scrutiny Workplan will be circulated and due to Covid-19 meetings which had had to be cancelled will need to be considered by the Scrutiny Commission. She asked Members to email her with requests for matters to be considered. She also confirmed that the Section 106 task panel will still take place and be considered by the Scrutiny Commission in relation to the Workplan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 11th MARCH AND 18th JUNE 2020

1. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION – FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

The Cabinet on the 11th March had considered a report on the review of the Financial Procedure Rules, which form part of the Council's Constitution (Part 4(6)) and need to be reviewed regularly to ensure the efficient decision-making and operations of the Council. The Procedure Rules were last updated in 2013 and there was an outstanding audit recommendation that they be reviewed and updated.

The proposed Financial Procedure Rules, which were contained in Appendix A to the report and summarised within the body of the report, had generally been updated for roles, so that they could be more flexible as job roles changed.

Councillor Graves expressed concern regarding the proposed amendment of Rule E as it lowers the contingency from 15% to 10%. Also by writing this detail into the Constitution causes inflexibility and certain projects vary in terms of their risk and financial significance. Councillor Graves also expressed concern in relation to the change to Rule O3, which eliminated the rest of the Cabinet members from the decision and scrutiny of disposals and acquisitions of land and property up to £1 million.

The Chief Officer, Governance and Monitoring Officer reported there is a requirement for the Constitution to record the Financial Procedure Rules and the Contract Procedure Rules. The particular amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules were considered by the previous Section 151 Officer who carried out some benchmarking with other authorities. Rule O3 had been considered by the Performance Scrutiny Panel in 2019.

In relation to Rule O3, Councillor Frenchman queried whether the Chief Executive should be named or whether that should be left blank. The Chief Officer, Monitoring Officer advised that that particular post is the Corporate Property Officer and currently that particular post makes the decision.

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

RESOLVED that the revised Financial Procedure Rules, set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved and adopted, subject to the following amendments:

- (i) That the following Procedure Rules be amended:
 - Rule E – amend E5 to read “... or 10% of the value ...”;
 - Rule O – amend O3 to read “... (as Monitoring Officer) in consultation with The Leader, Deputy leader and the Cabinet Member for Finance”; and
 - Rule Q – amend Q48 to read “... up to and including £10,000 subject to ...”.
- (ii) That Procedure Rules G7 to G10 be amended with a view to the old rules and the revisions circulated to members of the Committee for their agreement.

2. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION – STATEMENT OF REQUIRED PRACTICE FOR PROCUREMENT (SORP)

The Cabinet on the 11th March had considered a report on the review of the Council’s procurement rules. The rules required revision from time to time to reflect changes in legislation and to improve procurement practice. The Council’s Procurement Statement of Required Practice (SORP), which sets out these rules, was adopted in 2013 and had subsequently been revised; further revision was now required to ensure efficiency and compliance. The findings of audits of procurement had been considered and had prompted clarification of some sections of the SORP. The proposed revisions to the SORP were included within Appendix C to the report.

The Cabinet was also informed that the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules require revision to ensure consistency and efficiency: this could be more effectively achieved as a separate exercise once the Procurement SORP was approved.

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

RESOLVED that the proposed revised Procurement SORP, set out in Appendix C to the report, be approved and adopted, subject to the following amendments:

- (i) Paragraph 7.2.1 be amended to read “*The Lead Officer shall certify why the requirement was urgent and seek the agreement of a relevant member of CMT. The decision must be reported to the Cabinet at the first available opportunity*”;
- (ii) Paragraph 16.2.3 be amended to read “... *Written quotes should be obtained in cases where the estimated value is in excess of £5,000 ...*”;
- (iii) Paragraph 16.3 be amended to read “... *Value of a Contract is £5,000 or less ...*”;
- (iv) Paragraph 33 be amended to read “*When the estimated Value of a Contract is between £5,000 and £50,000, it will be necessary ...*”; and
- (v) Paragraph 55.5 be amended to delete the sentence “*The Council will take into account ... procurement of the contracts*”.

3. PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Cabinet on the 18th June considered a report recommending the merging of the Governance and Audit Committee and the Ethical Governance Committee to strengthen the remit and membership of the body. There was some overlap between the two existing committees and this proposal would streamline the procedures. It is suggested that the new committee be called the Audit and Standards

Committee, with terms of reference, amended from the existing two committees, attached at Appendix A to the officer's report.

It is suggested that consideration be given to establishing a Standards Sub-Committee to consider member conduct complaints, which would fall within the remit of the new committee. Terms of reference for the Sub-Committee, including the requirement for at least one non-voting Parish Member to be present when consideration is given to a complaint relating to a town or parish councillor, were included at Appendix A of the officer's report. Town / Parish Councillors had been consulted on the proposals since the report had been written.

The Committee was also asked to consider an amendment to the membership of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee, to reduce the membership of each Committee from twelve to nine. This would bring the membership of these two committee into line with the other regulatory committee, the Planning Committee, the membership of which had been previously reduced from twelve to nine members.

Councillor James commented that the total number of Committee places would be reduced, thereby reducing Member opportunities, which has an impact on the democracy of the organisation. He suggested that opportunities could be made available to members in other activities such as the 'Champion' roles.

Councillor Dr Bremner, as Chair of Governance and Audit, acknowledged the benefit of bringing together internal and external governance which would provide a clear focus.

Councillor Knowles felt that more member involvement should be encouraged and would not be supporting the proposal as it was being undertaken in a piecemeal way.

Councillor Graves stated that he was not in favour of diminishing Members involvement and thereby a reduction of Member's expertise and queried how a reduced number of Members on the proposed Committee would strengthen it.

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

RESOLVED that :

- (i) The existing Governance and Audit Committee and Ethical Governance Committee be merged as the Audit and Standards Committee, with the terms of reference as set out in Appendix A of the officer's report;
- (ii) The membership of the Licensing Committee and the Regulatory Committee be amended from twelve to nine members for each Committee, as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the officer's report.

ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS FOR THE YEAR 2020/21

The Chairman highlighted the relevant Political Balance Calculation and Appointment Allocation report which would now apply given the approval of the Recommendations (3) from the Constitutional Review Committee as detailed above.

The Chief Officer, Governance and Monitoring Officer drew the Council's attention to the late paper distributed to Members which showed that the allocation of the Regulatory Committee would include one ungrouped member, this being Councillor Beadle.

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Bateman and

RESOLVED that the Committee allocations made in line with the overall political balance of Harborough District Council for the 2020/21 year be received and noted.

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Knowles and

RESOLVED that a short comfort break take place.

APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

The Council noted the appointment of Councillors to fill Conservative vacancies as detailed within the report.

The Chief Officer, Governance and Monitoring Officer reported that the appointment of Liberal Democrat Councillors to vacancies on Committees remain as currently stand. However as a result of the approval of the Recommendations (3) from the Constitutional Review Committee, which changed the size of Committees as detailed above, Councillor Knowles will notify the Head of Paid Service of any changes to the appointment of Liberal Democrat Councillors outside the meeting.

The Chief Officer, Governance and Monitoring Officer confirmed that there would be a new Audit and Standards Committee established, that Councillor Mrs Page would remain as the Scrutiny Commissioner for the rest of the civic year and that the Community Governance Committee had been established during the past year.

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Bateman

RESOLVED that the membership of the Scrutiny Commission, Scrutiny Panels and other committees be agreed as detailed above.

APPOINTMENTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Members considered the revised report relating to the Appointments to Outside Bodies, which confirmed the Portfolio Holders and name of the Portfolios.

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Bateman and

RESOLVED that:

- i) those representing the Council on outside bodies over the past year be thanked for their work on behalf of the Council;
- ii) nominations to the vacancies on Outside Bodies (which are not Executive appointments) be considered and appointments made; and
- iii) in the absence of nominations, the Joint Chief Executive (BJ) be given delegated authority to fill the vacancies in consultation with the Political Group Leaders.

APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Members considered the report on the appointment of Independent Persons.

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Bateman and

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Term of Office of the Independent Persons be extended to Annual Council 2021; and
- ii) The joint recruitment exercise be carried out on the basis agreed by Council on 27 January 2020 for the recruitment of Independent Persons from Annual Council 2021.

DISPENSATION UNDER SECTION 85 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Members considered the report on the dispensation under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Knowles thanked the Leader for agreeing that the report be considered by the Council. He commented that all Members are aware that Councillor Johnson has been unwell, and that this dispensation would provide her with time to return to full health.

Best wishes for a full recovery were sent to Councillor Johnson from a large number of Members.

It was moved by Councillor Knowles, seconded by Councillor King and

RESOLVED that having regard to the circumstances of the absence of Councillor Johnson from Council meetings, set out in Appendix A, the requirements of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 be waived until the end of the calendar year for Councillor Johnson from the date of this meeting.

Prior to the consideration of the next item, it was confirmed that a temporary suspension had been lifted to allow additional live streaming time and thanks to Andy Singleton, IT Manager, were placed on record for resolving this issue at very short notice.

COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Prior to the consideration of the report, Councillor King proposed that Appendix A to the report should be considered in public session rather than as an exempt item. He also proposed a third recommendation to the report.

The Council considered the report on the Council's response to the Covid-19 Emergency, which outlines the work undertaken by the Council and other partners to date in responding to the threat posed by the outbreak of COVID-19 and sets out ongoing work being undertaken to ensure that all possible steps are taken to prepare and respond to the challenges arising.

The report summarises the action that has been taken to date to ensure that critical services are maintained, public safety is ensured, support is provided to our communities and businesses as well as providing assurance to our staff, elected members and contractors.

Councillor King reported that whilst the meeting had been taking place an announcement had been made by the Secretary of State, Matt Hancock in the House of Commons and there appears that there will be quite a severe lockdown affecting Leicester and some outer suburbs of Leicestershire, possibly including the Scraftoft area. More detail will be known later in the evening.

Councillor King assured Members that a briefing will be provided as soon as confirmation of information is received and what the impact will be.

Councillor King concluded by stating that the excellent behaviour of staff, the majority of the public and volunteers has ensured that the Harborough District is not a high area of infection or related deaths from Covid-19.

Councillor Knowles stated that a very serious situation is being faced locally as a result of the announcement and a great deal of thought is required as to how the community will be protected within the Harborough district. He supported the establishment of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel. He stated how the Council needs to focus on an evolving situation. He expressed his thoughts and prayers with people in Leicester, and hoped that the matter could be resolved very quickly.

Councillor Nunn stated that it was very important going forward to look at the how the Council has dealt with this crisis and how it is dealt with going forwards. She felt that the Council has acted really responsibly and promptly and supported our community very well. She echoed Councillor King and Councillor Knowles comments regarding the situation in Leicester.

Councillor Graves noted that the net reserves figures in the table in section 7.5 of the report, headed 'Current 2020/21 Budget – rolled forward to 2024/25' are £902,000 different to the budget that was approved in February. He appreciated that the budget was an estimate, however commented on this level of gain in reserves, and has asked Officers for clarification. His view is that within the table the figure of £237,000 (Forecast budget gap to be financed from reserves) is already contained in the £6,899,000 (General Fund (unallocated) reserves). This would therefore mean that the £4,500,000 (Earmarked reserves) could be overstated by £1,400,000. Councillor Graves requested correct reserve figures, given decisions which would be made on reserves in the forthcoming year.

In response to the points raised by Councillor Graves, Councillor Hallam commented that he had been in discussion with the Section 151 Officer regarding the figures.

The Chief Officer, Finance and Assets and Section 151 Officer, reported that the figures produced were based on the provisional outturn at the start of this year. These figures didn't take into account any of the growth that was approved in the budget round earlier in the year because they were estimates at that time. The impact on the figures and the implementation of the growth are still being assessed due to the Covid-19 activity. He reported that the figures are indicative at this time however when the outturn report is produced more accurate figures can be provided.

Councillor Fosker commented on the situation with homeless people who are having to be rehoused outside the District due to capacity issues. He also requested an overview of the plan to deal with the spike in August as outlined in the report, and when the detailed plan would be available ahead of August.

Councillor Rickman reported that had previously been involved in the Covid-19 meetings and had always been very concerned about the likelihood of a second wave and is fully supportive of the establishment of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel.

In response to the comments raised by Councillor Fosker, Councillor King reported that the government required all Local Authorities to house those people who were homeless or rough sleepers and currently all of these people are in temporary accommodation. Currently there is substantial work being undertaken by the Government Homeless Tsar to look at what measures are needed in order to secure accommodation. Funding for this work has been extended. In relation to the peak in August, at the time of the report, the moratorium of landlords and mortgage arrears was going to end in July, however this has now been extended to October, so a peak is now anticipated after October if the moratorium on evictions and mortgage re-possession was to be lifted. Councillor King confirmed that Members would continue to be updated.

It was moved by Councillor Knowles, seconded by Councillor King and

RESOLVED that:

- i) The work that has been undertaken to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak be considered and noted.
- ii) Quarterly reporting to Cabinet on the progress of the Recovery Plan be noted.
- iii) The setting up of a Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel be approved to consider the work that has been undertaken by the Council in response to the Covid-19 crisis, and the plans for the recovery phase be considered and any response required, should a further outbreak occur either locally or nationally.

ANY URGENT ITEMS

Councillor McHugo announced that this Council meeting would be her last meeting and she would be handing in her resignation with effect from the 30th June 2020 due to professional reasons.

Councillor Knowles wished Councillor McHugo well for the future and thanked her for all her services to the Council.

Councillor Knowles also passed on a message to all the Councillors from Councillor Johnson thanking everyone for their best wishes and support which she has received this evening.

Councillor James wished Councillor McHugo very well for the future and commented on how good it was to work with her as a Ward Member.

On behalf of the Conservative Group and the Council, Councillor King wished Councillor McHugo good luck and success for the future in her new professional role and thanked her for everything that she has done.

The Meeting ended at 10.15 p.m.