



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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COUNCIL MEETING

19 May 2020

7.00 pm – 8.09 pm

Remote Meeting

3

Minutes

Membership

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

P = Present A = Absent

Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive
Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Strategic Director of Resources
Strategic Director of Change & Transformation

Interim Head of Legal Services and
Monitoring Officer
Strategic Director of Communities
Corporate Policy and Governance Manager
Democratic Services & Elections Officers

CL.001

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Denney, Job, Marjoram, Mossman, Reed, Robinson, Studdert-Kennedy and Sutton.

CL.002

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

CL.003 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED **That the minutes of the Council's meeting held on 20 February 2020 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.**

CL.004 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair informed Members that Councillor Skeena Rathor had resigned from the Labour Group and Party and would be sitting as an Independent Councillor with immediate effect.

He also thanked the Chief Executive, all officers and employees for all of their work over last few weeks saying that it made us all proud to be Members of the Council.

The Leader echoed the Chair's thank you.

The Chief Executive thanked the Chair and Leader very much, on behalf of herself and staff for their thanks and all of the Members for their support and understanding. Officers had taken on unfamiliar work away from the office and also Members had carried out some excellent work in supporting their communities and supporting staff.

The Chair of Environment Committee echoed the above thanks and also thanked the Ubico crews who had been working exceedingly hard to collect the district's general waste, recycling and garden waste. They had done over and above what was expected of them and wanted to thank them on behalf of the Council.

CL.005 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

CL.006 **AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Chair highlighted a minor amendment proposed to the Standing Order for remote meetings that had been proposed by Councillor Pickering which had been accepted by Councillor Cornell. At paragraph 23.16, the sixth bullet point had been amended to read "One supplementary question will be permitted". This is now the version of the Standing Order that Members would be voting on and replaced the version that had previously been published.

At the request of the Green Group, the resolution in the report had been amended so that the question of quorum was dealt with separately. This was not a substantive change to the resolution and had been accepted by Councillor Cornell. After taking advice from the Monitoring Officer it was confirmed that it was in order for this now to be the substantive motion. The amended resolution was set out on the screen.

Councillor Cornell introduced the report that had clearly set out the reasons why the changes were necessary. The Leader stated that we are living in very challenging times and the Government has enabled us to make decisions in the correct manner wherever possible, part of this was to enable Local Authorities to hold remote meetings. It was also confirmed that there would be a review of the standing orders in six months by the Constitution Working Group.

The Leader took members thorough the main changes proposed, including changes to the standing order, quorum and emergency powers, and provided context where necessary.

Councillor Davies seconded the Motion and reserved the right to speak later.

Clarification was given to Councillor Pearson that the proposed quorum for Audit and Standards Committee would be a minimum of 3 members.

A debate ensued regarding the reduction in the quorum for meetings. Those Members against the decision to lower quorate for meetings cited their reasons. It was their view that this would erode democracy and it would give the wrong message to the public. They did not believe that there was a problem currently with meetings being inquorate and if there were problems with member attendance then the Group Leader should intervene. Members should lead by example, and had the technology available to have meetings remotely. There was no evidence that members are struggling to attend meetings and the numbers should not therefore be reduced. Young people do most things on line and we should be taking steps forward not back.

Members in favour of the motion agreed with the arguments set out within the report and advised that attendance rates were not expected to be lower following the change to the quorum, it would put in place emergency measures.

Councillor Davies had seconded the Motion. He confirmed that there would be a review in 6 months by the Constitution Working Group and advised that this was not an attempt to reduce numbers at committee.

In summing up the Leader said that she hoped most members would support the Motion, she pointed out that during debate there seemed to be a general confusion about attendance at meetings and quorum. She made it clear that this was about putting emergency measures in place for urgent decisions to be taken and would regularise emergency procedures in the Council's Constitution. A further report would be presented to Committee by the Constitution Working Group in the future.

Upon the vote the Motion was carried by 27 votes for, 14 votes against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED a. **To accept the proposed changes to the quorum as set out in Paragraph 2.6 of the report which will be subject to a review by the Constitution Working Group in six months.**

Upon the vote the Motion was carried by 41 votes for and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED b. **The question of quorum having been decided separately, accept the remaining proposed changes to the Constitution which will be subject to a review by the Constitution Working Group in six months.**
 c. **Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make any consequential changes to the Remote Meetings Standing Order as a result of any issues arising from conducting remote meetings in consultation with the Constitution Working Group.**

CL.006 **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The Chair announced that Councillor Davies was to fill the vacancy on Housing Committee.

CL.007 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The following two questions were received from Councillor Stephen Davies and answered by the Leader.

1. How does the Leader think the collaboration between Political Parties is going during this Coronavirus crisis?

The Leader stated that there had been regular consultation with all Group Leaders so that important decisions could be taken quickly and with member involvement collectively, she advised that it was better to make decisions with a diverse group of people. She also said that press statements had been released collectively and they reached a wider community. She stated that it was a challenging balance but the council were good at making good cross party decisions for our residents within the district. She thanked the three other Group Leaders for all of their hard work.

In response to a supplementary question the Leader stated that there was more agreement than disagreement and that cross-party work would continue whilst we were in this emergency.

2. Would the Leader like to join me in thanking all staff for the great work they have done in challenging circumstances in maintaining services and taking on additional work during the Coronavirus crisis?

The Leader thanked everyone, Council Officers and Members (some who were in isolation, some who had suffered from coronavirus) some Officers had even taken on new roles e.g. working in customer services and supporting vulnerable residents. A special thank you was given to the Chief Executive and the team of Directors, who were all in new posts and working remotely.

The meeting closed at 8.09 pm.

Chair