



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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COUNCIL MEETING

16 July 2020

7.00 pm – 9.30 pm

Remote Meeting

Minutes

Membership

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

P = Present A = Absent

Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive
 Head of Property Services
 Buildings Programmes Manager
 Strategic Director of Resources
 Strategic Director of Change & Transformation

Interim Head of Legal Services and
 Monitoring Officer
 Strategic Director of Communities
 Strategic Director of Place
 Democratic Services & Elections Officers

CL.008

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fellows, McKeown, Miles, Mossman and Reed.

CL.009

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

CL.010 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED **That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2020 are approved as a correct record.**

CL.011 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair confirmed that July's Development Control Committee had been cancelled.

The Leader made the following announcements:-

- A special Strategy and Resources Committee would be held on 30 July 2020 to consider support for the reopening of Stratford Park Leisure Centre.
- The Government had recognised a local initiative on a natural flood management scheme, as an exemplary approach to tackle the problem. The project had been delivered by Stroud's Rural Sustainable Drainage Project, a partnership project hosted by the Council who had worked with local groups, landowners and partner organisations such as the Environment Agency and GCC. The Leader thanked everyone involved.
- Stroud District had been awarded the Plastic Free Community status by the marine conservation charity Surfers Against Sewerage. This was testimony to all of the community work that had been involved and a big thank you was given to Councillor Braun who had championed this. Councillor Braun outlined the work that had been undertaken by the group and thanked the co-ordinator and all Members who had supported this.
- An update was given on the progress made to tackle racism raised on 9 July 2020. It was acknowledged that it would be a long term commitment to make progress on this. The Council had joined the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion and all Members would be asked to undertake mandatory training that had been arranged which included an online implicitly test.
- There is a Member/Officer Group updating the Council's Equalities Policy, this included the Leader and Councillors, Curley, Rathor and Oxley.
- The Motion on the Agenda for this meeting regarding the Councillors' Code of Conduct had a recommendation to Audit and Standards Committee.
- Councillor Brine was congratulated on serving the Council for 25 years, having been elected in May 1995. Councillor Ross paid tribute to Councillor Brine and his many achievements. Councillor Brine stated that it had been a long journey and as a Council we were good at working together.

The Chief Executive thanked Ubico and all of the Council's staff who had kept services running in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, working from home. We had created new workstream cells to organise our community response, customer contact and communications and had taken on a lot of additional work such as paying out Government business grants and housing rough sleepers. She also thanked Members for their understanding and support of staff and the Political Group Leaders for the invaluable support that they had given to her and to the Strategic Directors in this unprecedented time.

CL.012 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Questions had been submitted by a member of the public and they were answered by the Leader, Councillor Cornell. (Refer to the Council's [recording](#) of the meeting).

CL.0013 **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The Chair announced the following changes to Committee memberships:-

- **Community Services and Licensing Committee** – Councillor Kay was replaced by Councillor Dewey.
- **Environment Committee** – Councillor Dewey was replaced by Councillor Kay.
- **Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee** – Councillor Dewey was replaced by Councillor Pickering.

RESOLVED **The above Committee changes were noted.**

CL.014 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 18 JUNE AND 9 JULY 2020****Council Tax Hardship Scheme – Covid-19**

Councillor Cornell, Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee, outlined the report to formally adopt the amended Section 13a Hardship Policy, as recommended by Committee on 18 June 2020. This would enable officers to capture people affected by Covid-19 and to give support to residents who had found themselves in hardship. A further report would be presented to Committee later in the year and a review had also been agreed. The Revenue and Benefits Manager and his team were thanked for the support that they have given to local residents and businesses.

The Motion was moved by Councillor Cornell and seconded by Councillor Pickering.

In debate Councillor Davies echoed Councillor Cornell's words and also thanked the teams involved. Councillor Whiteside stated that we are yet to feel the impact of Covid-19 and we do need to do all we can to support the wider community.

When summing up Councillor Cornell reminded Members that we were one of the few Councils already giving Council tax support to those who needed it.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED **To formally adopt the amended Section 13a Hardship Policy as recommended by Strategy and Resources Committee.**

Water-Source Heat Pumps Ebley Mill and Brimscombe Port Mill

Councillor Cornell introduced the above report confirming that the use of water-source heat pumps had been a relatively recent option and would help the Council to reduce its use of fossil fuels. The report focused on the business case with more detail in the Appendices. Officers were present to answer more complex technical questions.

The Motion was moved by Councillor Cornell and seconded by Councillor Pickering.

Officers confirmed the following in response to Members' questions:-

- The timeline for the proposed scheme was very tight, but achievable and we would need to obtain the tariff guarantee for the project to go ahead.
- Consultations had taken place with the Procurement Officer and the project was adhering to the Council's procurement process.
- The contract was out for tender and due back on 24 July 2020. They were looking to make an appointment within 7-10 days after that date. Each building had been evaluated separately and we reserve the right to have one tender or split the contracts. Our consultant would write a report on each returned tender.
- We are hoping that the appointed contractor would lead us through the application process. As owners of the land the application would be submitted in September.
- Recommendations were based on the existing buildings that would have to have enhanced insulation e.g. draught proofing of existing windows and doors. Some works had already been carried out to Ebley Mill.
- If the use of Ebley Mill changed in the future the design of the heating system could be a community heating system.

Members debated the pros and cons of the scheme, agreeing there was a risk but this was the best option both financially and morally. As a Council we are committed to being carbon neutral by 2030 and the project would make a difference to climate change. Councillor Hurst asked for Officers to consider a hybrid scheme at Ebley Mill in order to reuse the three boilers that would be removed from Brimscombe Port Mill.

Councillor Pickering said that Members had had a good debate on this very important decision and technology had moved on. There were very tight timescales and requested Members to support the Officers so that they could make this happen.

Councillor Cornell acknowledged that there was cross-party support and appreciated Councillor Hurst's questions on the detail. Any option would have a financial cost.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED **To allocate capital funding in 2020/2021 to invest in water source heat pumps as follows:-**

- a. the sum of £1.05m at Ebley Mill and**
- b. the sum of £382k at Brimscombe Port Mill and**
- c. that, in consultation with the Leader, the Head of Property Services is given delegated authority to proceed with the procurement and installation of the heat pumps subject to the receipt of the necessary consents from the Environment Agency and a successful application to the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.**

At 8.28 pm the meeting was adjourned and reconvened at 8.33 pm.

CL.015 **GLOUCESTERSHIRE CITY REGION BOARD**

The Chief Executive explained that originally there had been three separate boards and these had been merged into one for a more cohesive approach when talking to Central Government.

In response to Members' questions the Chief Executive confirmed that additional actions would be added to the list at paragraph 3.3. A White Paper on devolution was expected in the autumn.

Gloucestershire had a high proportion of people who worked from home, better broadband would help us in the future.

During debate Councillor Pickering stated that moving to one board was really important. The county needed to build resilience and sustainable delivery of Government strategies. Stroud needed to maximise benefits for its residents.

Councillor Cornell in summing up stated that we had developed good partnership working across the county, which also included GFirstLep and others. If we want to bid for funding we need to have schemes ready. The idea of merging from three to one board was before Covid-19 and priorities may have changed. We would continue to work with our partners and try to get the best for the county.

Upon the vote the Motion was carried by 42 votes for and 1 against.

- RESOLVES**
- a. **To endorse the creation of a single Gloucestershire City Region Board for the county;**
 - b. **To approve the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1;**
 - c. **To note the funding allocations made by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee to support the work of the Board (£2m has been ring-fenced from the Strategic Economic Development Fund, of which £410,000 has been drawn down for Multi-Modal Transport Study); and**
 - d. **To agree that Stroud District Council participates in the activities of the Board.**

CL.016 COVID-19 ENGAGEMENT BOARD

The Chief Executive confirmed that Gloucestershire County Council, as Public Health Authority, had led on the preparation of a Local Outbreak Management Plan (LOMP) for the county. The Plan is designed to anticipate, prevent and contain incidents and outbreaks of Covid-19 and will be in place for the foreseeable future. The report addressed the governance arrangements for the LOMP. Firstly, there will be an executive level Covid-19 Health Protection Board to implement the LOMP chaired by the Director of Public Health. It would have representatives from each of the six district councils and our representative will be our most senior Environmental Health professional, who will report regularly to the Strategic Leadership Team and to the Strategy and Resources Committee as appropriate. Secondly, there will be a Covid-19 Engagement Board to oversee the LOMP and provide the link back to communities, chaired by the Leader of the County Council.

The Covid-19 Engagement Board will provide Member and community oversight of the LOMP, lead engagement with communities and provide understanding of public health actions required to control infection but will not be a decision making body or fulfil a scrutiny function. Decisions on the implementation and enforcement of the LOMP will rest with Sarah Scott, Director of Public Health. Councillor Lydon will be the Council's representative on the Board and provide regular updates to Group Leaders and also provide a member report at Strategy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Cornell did confirm that if there was a serious outbreak then she would also have discussions with the Group Leaders.

Councillor Lydon responded to questions. He had attended the first meeting and confirmed that the key role of the board was communication. The NHS would be conducting a survey

that will be sent to all voluntary groups and Town and Parish Councils. Covid-19 is not over and there are still some critical issues. We must not underestimate the danger of local outbreaks. He also suggested an evening seminar on Covid-19 could be arranged. To ensure that people of different cultures were represented messages were going out in different languages.

In debate, Councillor Whiteside welcomed the setting up of the board and endorsed the need for communication. A voice would also be given to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities because of their experiences and the way Covid-19 had affected them more than any other community and we should take this very seriously. Councillor Whiteside commented that track and trace had been unbelievably ineffective in managing this crisis. We need to get communication down to local level and that meant local knowledge and local involvement would be absolutely key.

In summing up Councillors Pickering and Cornell confirmed that communication was the key. The most significant thing at the moment was the management plan. The south-west was quick to get their plans sorted out and we had some good plans in place.

Upon the vote the Motion was carried by 42 votes for and 1 abstention.

- RESOLVED**
- a. **To appoint Jon Beckett, Head of Health and Wellbeing, as the Councils representative on the Health Protection Board and delegate him authority to make any necessary decisions and to bind the Council in consultation with the Chief Executive and Leader.**
 - b. **To note that Councillor Stephen Lydon is the Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Covid-19 Outbreak Engagement Board and that Councillor Doina Cornell is his substitute.**

CL.017 MOTION

A Motion regarding the Proposed Changes to the Councillors Code of Conduct was proposed by Councillor Curley and seconded by Councillor Pickering.

The Chair confirmed that an amended Motion had been proposed and agreed on a cross party basis to comply with the Council's Standing Orders in relation to the role of the Audit and Standards Committee and to ensure that the Council's arrangements for considering allegations under the Code of Conduct were fit for purpose. The proposer and seconder had agreed to accept this as a friendly amendment so this amended Motion would now be moved and seconded as the substantive Motion.

"Stroud District Council believes, in the light of local, national and international Black Lives Matters protests, and the four Party Group Leaders' commitment to "promoting equality and tackling discrimination" issued on 9 June, that the Council needs to update the Councillors Code of Conduct for councillors and resolves that the draft appended to this motion is strongly recommended to the next meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee for final review before recommendation at a future Council meeting.

Council should also instruct the Audit and Standards Committee to consider the arrangements under which allegations under the Code of Conduct are investigated as a matter of urgency and, in consultation with Group Leaders, provide a response to the consultation currently being undertaken by the Local Government Association into its draft Model Code of Conduct."

Councillor Curley outlined the reasons for the Motion and confirmed that she had also looked at good practice from the public sector, other local authorities, the Nolan Principles and the Equality Act. Recognising that the changes proposed in the Motion and the code were a very small step towards building trust and confidence in our communities and the resolutions are part of wider conversation and work that we need to do some of which were announced in public questions that had been received tonight. Hoping this work and those conversations would be wide ranging, inclusive and involving the residence of colour who had raised their concerns over the past weeks.

There were no questions or debate.

Councillor Pickering concurred with Councillor Curley confirming that the Motion had been put together with a number of Members working together and latterly cross party. We are bound by national Government guidance and the proposal was as strong as possible at the moment to Audit and Standards Committee. All Members were asked to support the Motion and Councillor Curley was thanked for all of her hard work on this option.

In summing up Councillor Curley hoped that she should get strong support for the Motion.

Upon the vote the Motion was carried by 41 votes for and 1 abstention (from the Chair of Audit and Standards Committee).

- RESOLVED**
- a. **That the draft appended to the above Motion was strongly recommended to the next meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee for final review before recommendation at a future Council meeting.**
 - b. **Council instructs the Audit and Standards Committee to consider the arrangements under which allegations under the Code of Conduct are investigated as a matter of urgency and, in consultation with Group Leaders, provide a response to the consultation currently being undertaken by the Local Government Association into its draft Model Code of Conduct.**

CL.018 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

There were none.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Chair