



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB

Tel: (01453) 754 351/754 321

www.stroud.gov.uk

Email: democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

COUNCIL MEETING

22 October 2020

7.00 pm – 10.00 pm

Remote Meeting

Minutes

Membership

Gary Powell (Chair)	A	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	P
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	A	Brian Tipper	P
Gordon Craig	P	Stephen Lydon	P	Jessica Tomblin	P
Rachel Curley	P	John Marjoram	A	Chas Townley	P
Stephen Davies	P	Karen McKeown	P	Ken Tucker	P
Paul Denney	P	Jenny Miles	P	Martin Whiteside	P
Jim Dewey	P	Dave Mossman	P	Tim Williams	P
Jonathan Edmunds	P	Gill Oxley	P	Tom Williams	P
Chas Fellows	P	Keith Pearson	A	Debbie Young	P
Colin Fryer	P	Simon Pickering	P		

P = Present A = Absent

Officers in Attendance

Chief Executive

Strategic Director of Resources

Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring
Officer

Strategic Director of Change & Transformation

Canal Manager

Strategic Director of Place

Head of Community Services

Democratic Services & Elections Officer

Senior Democratic Services & Elections Officer

CL.023

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Powell and Pearson, Marjoram and Loftus.

In the absence of Councillor Gary Powell, Councillor Steve Robinson chaired the meeting. The Chair agreed a change to the order of the Agenda, the Committee agreed to take Agenda Item 12 after Agenda Item 9.

CL.024 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

CL.025 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED **That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2020 and 7 September 2020 are approved as a correct record.**

CL.026 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A minute silence was held for Dennis Collins who was previously the Council's Chief Executive before retiring in the late 1980's and John Stephenson-Oliver was appointed Leader of the Council in 2001.

The chair also announced that 2 additional reports had been added to the Agenda, Items 7d and 12. Whilst the item 'Referrals from Committees' was on the agenda, Item 7d) was not specifically mentioned on the original published agenda. The Chair confirmed that the Monitoring Officer was happy that the summons had included the item and the report had also been in the public domain for some time. The Chair advised that he had accepted Item 12 due to its urgency, in line with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 the special circumstances are that a decision has to be made to accept the grant by the 30 of October 2020.

The Leader provided reassurance that Group Leaders, Officers and the Chief Executive were working together and with partners to ensure that communications regarding Covid-19 were reaching local residents and businesses. The Leader also paid tribute to all who had contributed to the success of the Canal which has led to The National Lottery Heritage Fund's decision to approve the grant.

The Canal Manager gave a presentation which outlined the achievements of the Canal Project and the next steps. It was also confirmed that the National Lottery Heritage Fund had awarded £8.94million to the project, the Canal Manager thanked everyone for the ongoing support that had been provided.

CL.027 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were none.

CL.028 **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The Chair announced the following changes to Committee memberships:-

- Police and Crime Panel - Councillor Ross is to be replaced by Councillor Brine.
- Strategy and Resources Committee – Councillor Steve Robinson is to be replaced by Councillor Rachel Curley.
- Development Control Committee – Councillor John Marjoram is to be replaced by Councillor Norman Kay.
- Audit and Standards Committee – Councillor Rachel Curley is to be replaced by Councillor Colin Fryer.

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

CL.029 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES****Audit and Standards Committee - 25 August 2020 and 6 October 2020**a. **Proposed Amendments to the Code of Conduct for Members and the Arrangements under which Allegations Can Be Investigated**

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the report that had been taken to Audit and Standards Committee in August, following this Committee the Monitoring Officer was instructed to make further amendments which were again considered by the Audit and Standards Committee in October and were now being recommended for Adoption by Council.

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy advised that the Council had a legal duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the authority and that the Code of Conduct applied to all Members of the Council whilst acting in their official capacity as a Councillor, he drew the Members attention to Page 16 onwards which contained further information. Councillor Studdert-Kennedy also recommended the guidance to all Local Councillors.

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy continued by introducing the arrangements of dealing with complaints in District, Town and Parish Councillors. It was advised that all Councillors should read from Page 25 onwards however Councillor Studdert-Kennedy outlined the following:

- The Monitoring Officer would usually appoint a deputy to act when he/she is not available
- The Council appoints independent persons from outside the Council to assist the Monitoring Officer and Standards Panel in dealing with Complaints
- The current appointed independent persons were John Acton and Phyllida Pyper
- No Member or Officer of Stroud District Council or any Parish/Town Council will participate in stage of the arrangements if he/she has or may have any conflict of interest in the matter.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED To adopt the amended Code of Conduct and Arrangement for investigation alleged breaches of the Code with immediate effect.

Audit and Standards Committee - 25 August 2020 and 6 October 2020b. **Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement and Strategy 2020-2023**

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, introduced the above report and advised that the Covid-19 pandemic had had an impact and local authorities had seen a rise in fraud activity in certain areas. The Strategy was based on 5 key themes which were set out on pages 49 and 50, however it was advised that the policy should be read in full.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED To approve the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement and Strategy (including Anti Bribery Policy and Anti Money Laundering Policy) 2020-2023 as recommended by the Audit and Standards Committee.

Community Services and Licensing Committee - 1 October 2020c. Adoption of Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Licensing Policy

Councillor Brine, Chair of Community Services and Licensing Committee, introduced the report and advised that the policy had to be reviewed every 5 years, consultation had been carried out and a working group had been set up to look at the policy before its recommendation from the Community Services and Licensing Committee.

Councillor Braun stated that she was really pleased to see in the Statement of Licensing Policy that the Town and Parish councils were noting the importance of reducing single use plastics.

Councillor Jones thanked the Licensing team for all of their hard work producing the revised policy.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED To Adopt the Final Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003 (Appendix A).

Strategy and Resources Committee - 8 October 2020d. BUDGET STRATEGY 2021/22 TO 2024/25

Councillor Cornell, Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee, introduced the Budget Strategy report and drew the Members attention to the following areas:

- Confirmation of the 4th Tranche of support for Local Government of £100,000 for use in the response to Covid-19.
- The difficulties of making 4 year financial plans during the current pandemic
- Appendix C sets out the estimated financial losses due to Covid-19 impact
- It was announced that the planned 3 year spending review had been cancelled so there would only be a 1-year settlement for local government. This therefore meant that some of the assumptions in the report would be subject to change.
- With regards the Business Rates Pooling Agreement, S151 Officers across the County have consulted external experts on the risks surrounding continuing with the Pool. They are suggesting that we submit a request to government to form a Pool but with the option to withdraw after the local government settlement if the situation at that time is not favourable.

Councillor Townley asked for clarification on the 4th tranche of support for Local Governments. The Strategic Director of Resources confirmed that the criteria used to work out how much each council received is based on a combination of population and deprivation data and comparisons to the funding received in the first 3 tranches.

Councillor Braun asked a question regarding paragraphs 5.6 and 5.10 and retrofitting the HRA properties to meet the Carbon Neutral 2030 commitments. Councillor Cornell advised that work was ongoing regarding retrofitting and the Council had been engaged with the One Public Estate Team.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED

- To approve the Budget Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25 as set out in this report and appendices**
- To continue with the Business Rates pooling agreement, subject to the recommendation of the Section 151 Officer Group**

As recommended by Strategy and Resources Committee.

CL.030**APPOINTMENT TO THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

Councillor Cornell, The Leader, introduced the above report and advised that in January 2020 the Council appointed 4 members to the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), which is shared with Gloucester City Council. Two members of the IRP have since had to step down and an application has been received from Chris Markley, it is now recommended that he is appointed to the IRP. Councillor Cornell also advised that the IRP were interested in Members views on the impact of remote working on Councillors.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED To appoint Mr Chris Markley to the Independent Remuneration Panel for three years.

CL.031**CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the above report and advised the amendments made to the Scheme of Delegation were to reflect the new Senior Management Structure and the move of Legal Services to One Legal as of the 1 October 2020.

Councillor Kay asked to what extent Officers took delegated decisions in consultation with the relevant Committee Chair and Vice-Chair. The Monitoring Officer advised that this would be dependent on the decision but anything of gravity or matters arising from a Council report would be in consultation with the Chair.

Councillor Studdert-Kennedy asked for clarification on the location of the Common Seal of the Council. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the delegation to seal documents was now with One Legal under the S101 agreement.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

RESOLVED To adopt the amended Scheme of Delegation and any consequential changes to rules of procedure arising from the new Scheme.

CL.032**GREEN HOMES GRANT – LOCAL AUTHORITY DELIVERY SCHEME BID**

Councillor Cornell, Leader of Council, presented the report and provided background on the Warm and Well Partnership. It was stated that an analysis was carried out in 2019 on health and housing data which identified a significant issue within the Warm & Well area with those with chronic health problems occupying poorly insulated and heated Park Homes. Park Homes, due to their nature, had usually been ineligible for other Government energy efficiency programmes. A pilot scheme had been carried out where 90 park homes were insulated in the Stroud District. A bid had been submitted for the Green Homes Grant: Local Authority Delivery Scheme and confirmation that the bid was successful was received on the 1 October 2020, the offer must be formally accepted by the 30 October 2020.

Councillor Cornell requested that the Committee accept a 'friendly amendment' to the recommendation in the report by adding paragraph c. in the decision box to read 'Progress on the Grant is to be reported to Housing Committee'.

Councillor Townley advised that he had visited the pilot scheme and had seen how it had had an impact on people's quality of life however asked how we would get further funding so that work could be completed on more properties. Councillor Cornell advised that there was an ongoing process of applying for any funding that arises and that hopefully there would be more funding coming forward. The Housing Renewal Manager advised that it was part of the Warm and Well remit to take advantage of any funding opportunities that arise, she also stated that they were also in conversation with the South West Energy Hub.

Councillor Hurst asked a question regarding longevity and whether the investment in air source heat pumps would have sufficient payback time. The Housing Renewal Manager advised that it would mainly be non park homes that would be allocated an air source heat pump and that many of the park home sites were within gas areas.

It was confirmed that as no objections had been raised the amendment proposed by Councillor Cornell to add section C. to the decision box had been agreed.

The Members debated the topic at length.

Upon the vote the Motion was unanimously carried.

- RESOLVED**
- a. Authorise the Chief Executive to sign the Memorandum of Understanding and accompanying documentation in relation to the Green Homes Grant: Local Authority Delivery Grant Determination Notice at appendix B and take all necessary steps to arrange for delivery of the objectives**
 - b. Add the Green Homes Programme to the Capital Programme, fully funded by the Grant.**
 - c. That progress on the Grant is reported back to the Housing Committee.**

The Chair proposed a short adjournment to the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 9.16pm and reconvened at 9.24pm.

CL.033 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Members' Questions were submitted by Councillor Davies. They were answered by the Chair of Housing Committee, Councillor Ross. Supplementary questions were also answered. ([Refer to the recording of the meeting](#)).

CL.034 MOTION

A Motion regarding making the Stroud District Council more diverse and representative of the residents of our District was proposed by Councillor Whiteside and seconded by Councillor James. Councillor Whiteside advised that the purpose of the Motion was to take a step towards making Stroud District Councillors more representative and diverse with currently 70% of Members identifying as male and approximately 65-70% over the age of 60. Councillor Whiteside advised that due to the current issues the population faced including systemic racism, impact of Coronavirus on different population groups and climate change a truly diverse and representative council was important. He also advised that they would need the governments permission to carry out the following:

- Trial a more proportional voting system
- Enable elected Councillors to job share
- Enable 16 year olds and above to vote in local elections.

Councillor Whiteside advised that he was not proposing a voting system as this would be for discussion should the Government give permission for the Council to trial a different system. It was also stated that job sharing would allow more diversity and help to enable parents to both work and care for their children.

Councillor Davies advised that the Motion was requesting changes that we did not have authority to carry out and he would be abstaining due to the unsuitable use of Member and Officer time.

Councillor Townley asked whether this should be discussed with the Local Government Association (LGA) to look at in more detail and to help build more consensus within Local Authorities. Councillor Whiteside advised that the Motion would enable the Council to take a position and they could also write a letter to the LGA.

Councillor Cornell stated that she wasn't aware of evidence that supported job sharing increasing diversity and that Multi-Member Wards already allowed some job share arrangements. It was also stated that the government should be concentrating on Covid recovery and Officers shouldn't be allocated additional work to bring in an additional voting system.

Councillor Pickering urged all Members to support the Motion and request that the government allow the changes to be implemented.

Councillor James, in summing up, advised that the voting system currently in place weakens democracy. He gave the following examples

- In Lewisham Labour won 52% of the vote and 100% of the seats
- In East Hertfordshire Conservatives won 49% of the vote and 100% of the seats
- In Kingston upon Hull Liberal Democrats won 43% of the vote and were given 9 seats whereas Labour won 40% of the vote and were given 10 seats.

Upon the vote the Motion was carried by 15 votes for, 13 against and 11 abstentions.

RESOLVED

To note that:

- 1. No system of election is perfectly fair, but it is our wish to make those elected to the District Council as representative of the residents' wishes and demographics as is reasonably possible. The Council considers that a more representative and diverse Council can make better decisions and increase the level of ownership of those decisions by our residents.**
- 2. The electoral system used for local elections in England and Wales, First Past the Post (FPTP), is not a fair system, because it means that votes do not have equal weight and many votes are wasted. This can lead to voter apathy and a feeling of disconnection from local democracy. In Stroud District in 2016 we had a number of 3 member wards in which only 41-43% of votes were cast for candidates of a party resulting in all 3 councillors for that party being elected. In effect 57-59% of the electorate's votes didn't count.**
- 3. An alternative to FPTP is a system of proportional representation (PR), where votes cast for parties translate more proportionately into seats won. There are many variants of PR; the Single Transferable Vote system (STV) variant of PR is already in use for local elections in Scotland and Northern Ireland. With this system, voters rank candidates and those who receive the most backing (including second and subsequent preference votes) are elected to serve. The introduction of PR for local elections in Scotland has led to an increase in voter turnout.**

4. Council also recognises that in age, gender and in other protected characteristics the members do not adequately reflect the demographic of our Stroud District Council Agenda Published on 14 October 2020 22 October 2020 residents. Although not guaranteed, a more proportional system like STV may provide a means for improving this that we as a Council could try.
5. Changes in the voting system do not preclude the Council and political parties also using other positive actions to increase diversity of representation that do not require permission from central Government.
6. An additional barrier to a more diverse member make-up is the time commitment required to be an elected councillor. Job sharing is already an established practice in many spheres of professional life. The opportunity to job-share the councillor role might enable younger people, people working inflexible hours and people with caring commitments (often women) to take on this role. It could also increase the range of skills delivered by councillors. Job sharing councillors would only have one vote in a committee between them and share one councillor allowance.
7. Stroud District Council has already passed a motion in favour of votes at 16 years old.
8. This motion does not preclude a more proportional system of election being requested for Town and Parish Councils, but it seems fair to leave them to make the case for what is appropriate to them.

This council therefore requests the Chief Executive to write to Her Majesty's Government to request changes to legislation that would permit Stroud District Council to take steps to increase its diversity and representativeness by:

- (a) Allowing the Council to trial a more proportional voting system in District Council elections;
- (b) Allowing job sharing of the elected councillor role;
- (c) Allowing those aged 16 and over to vote in local elections

The meeting closed at 10:00 pm.

Chair