

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 10 JULY 2019

PRESENT: Councillor K Flunder (Chair)

Councillors J Aberley, R Alcock, C J S Atkins, G Bentley, G Bond, M Bowen, C Brady, B Cawley, S Coleman, J Davies, M A Deaville, P Elkin, B Emery, E Fallows, M Gledhill, T Hall, A Hart, N Hawkins, G Heath, I Herdman, T Holmes, K Hoptroff, B A Hughes, A Hulme, K J Jackson, B Johnson, I Lawson, L D Lea, L A Malyon, K Martin, T McNicol, L Page, I Plant, H Plimley, J Porter, D Price, S E Ralphs MBE, J Redfern, P Roberts, P Routledge, J Salt, S Scalise, D Shaw, P Taylor, E Wain, R Ward, I Whitehouse, P Wilkinson, P Wood, M Worthington and N Yates

APOLOGIES: Councillors J T Jones, T Riley, H Sheldon MBE and L Swindlehurst

20 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

20a **ANNUAL COUNCIL 16 MAY 2019**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 16 May 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations were made:-

Agenda Item	Member Declaring Interest	Nature of Interest
General – any matters arising relating to the Local Plan	Cllr. Hart	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest – any matters relating to site specifics residential in Biddulph
General – any matters arising relating to the Local Plan	Cllr. Hart	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest – any matters relating to site specifics residential in Leek

22 **CHAIRMAN'S OR LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE, IF ANY.**

The Chairman announced that his Civic Service would take place at St Peter's Church and the Community Library in Blythe Bridge on 20 July and that a charity shoot would take place on 7 September 2019.

23 **NOTICES OF MOTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE NO. 8.**

23a **COUNCILLOR M. GLEDHILL - CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

NM: *"That this Council declare a Climate Emergency as many councils have already done all over the UK and will undertake to:*

- 1. Start working with partners across the district and region towards making The Staffordshire Moorlands carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account emissions from both production and consumption.*
- 2. Call on The Government to provide guidance, powers and resources to make carbon neutrality possible by writing to local MPs and all relevant government departments.*
- 3. Develop a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan through a cross party working group with officer support and with a brief to draw on wider expertise to assist with investigative work, establishment of priorities, drafting of the plan and delivery.*
- 4. Ensure that all Council Bodies and Scrutiny Panels consider the impact of climate change and the environment when making decisions and reviewing Council policies and strategies.*
- 5. Review progress made on an annual basis via Scrutiny and Full Council."*

As an **AMENDMENT** it was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** that the Council requests that the Chair of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel establishes a sub committee to undertake detailed research into the effects of climate change in the District, to include consideration of all relevant data and monitoring information available, and to involve evidence from relevant stakeholders, with a view to recommending to the Council an effective, achievable and costed plan of actions to address climate change within the Staffordshire Moorlands.

On being put to the vote, the **AMENDMENT** was declared **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

That this Council declare a Climate Emergency as many councils have already done all over the UK and will undertake to:

1. Start working with partners across the district and region towards making The Staffordshire Moorlands carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account emissions from both production and consumption.
2. Call on The Government to provide guidance, powers and resources to make carbon neutrality possible by writing to local MPs and all relevant government departments.
3. Requests that the Chair of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel establishes a sub committee to undertake detailed research into the effects of

climate change in the District, to include consideration of all relevant data and monitoring information available, and to involve evidence from relevant stakeholders, with a view to recommending to the Council an effective, achievable and costed plan of actions to address climate change within the Staffordshire Moorlands.

4. Ensure that all Council Bodies and Scrutiny Panels consider the impact of climate change and the environment when making decisions and reviewing Council policies and strategies.
5. Review progress made on an annual basis via Scrutiny and Full Council.

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TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10, IF ANY.

1. Question to the Leader of the Council received from Councillor Coleman:

“What representation has the SMDC made to Staffordshire County Council about the state of the roads in Leek?”

Response:

As the County Council is the Highway Authority it was not the job of this Authority other than to pass on the concerns of residents that have been raised. Such concerns are usually conveyed by the relevant County Councillor.

In response to supplementary questions the Leader of the Council stated that she had made representations to the County Council with regards to London Road in Leek and that they have taken on board the issues at the Nicholson War Memorial which have been added to their work schedule.

2. Question to the Leader of the Council received from Councillor Atkins:

“Has the SMDC prevented County Council Highways’ officers from replacing the tree planted in the Derby Street planter opposite Bath Street in Leek with a lower level shrub to uncover the directional road traffic sign which is obscured when the tree is in leaf?”

Response:

A new tree will be planted so that it does not obscure the sign.

In response to a supplementary questions it was reported that arrangements had been made for the tree to be planted.

3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Property received from Councillor Wilkinson:

“Depending on what area you represent why does this council adopt different policies when determining planning applications especially when using the shortfall in houses in the “tilted balance”.”

Response:

It is a fundamental planning principle that each case must be judged on its own individual merits. The Council has different planning policies which it applies in towns, large villages, small villages and the open countryside. These are set out in the Core Strategy. However, as we do not have a 5 year supply of housing land those policies are not up to date and applications are considered in the light of the “tilted balance”. This applies everywhere in the District. The location of the site makes no difference. The policies are applied in the same way. It is the specifics of the site itself (regardless of location) which determines whether planning permission is granted and whether development of that particular site would result in substantial and demonstrable harm which would outweigh the benefits. If no harm is identified an application will be approved wherever it is in the District. Equally if substantial and demonstrable harm is found it will be refused.

In response to supplementary questions it was reported that specific aspects of individual applications were assessed in accordance with the tilted balance principle that applies across the Staffordshire Moorlands. The development plan used was the National Planning Policy Framework, not other policies referred to. The senior planning officer should be contacted with regards to specific planning applications.

4. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Customer Services received from Councillor Brady:

“According to a report by consumer magazine Which? from January, which looks at broadband speeds across the UK, Staffordshire Moorlands is in the bottom 20% of local authorities with a median download speed of 13 mbps. Staffordshire Moorlands are also bottom of district councils in Staffordshire behind Stoke-on-Trent with 20.6 mbps, and Stafford with 16mbps, for example.

What actions has the District Council taken in order to improve the broadband speeds in the district and could we have an update on the rollout of fibre optic broadband in rural areas?”

Response:

The District Council works with Staffordshire County Council who are the lead authority in terms of rolling out fibre and superfast broadband covering the county. They are currently in the latter stages of a £32m investment ((£8.06 million from Staffordshire County Council, £9.62 million from the Government’s Broadband Delivery UK – BDUK and £14.77 million from BT) which will bring superfast broadband to 96% of all premises by end of 2019. An interactive map detailing work exactly which areas have work in progress or planned is available online.

<https://www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk/where-and-when/where-and-when/#.XSR7rOtKiSx>

Ofcom produce a useful broadband checker, which identifies not only broadband availability and speed, but also mobile coverage (and 4G access by provider) for every property <https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/broadband-coverage>

Beyond 2019, the District Council will work with the County Council to address on-going slow speeds and access any new funds available which might be available to deliver improvements.

In response to supplementary questions it was explained that the variances with regard to broadband speed should be addressed by the investment being made. The remaining 4% of premises would be considered when the project is completed in 2019. The Portfolio Holder stated that with regards to arranging for free wifi in the District's towns, although it may be problematic as the Council is not the lead authority, that he would be happy to look at the possibility and report back to councillors.

5. Question to the Leader of the Council received from Councillor Plant:

Why at the AGM when councillors made comments regarding Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees, you highlighted the fact that you were only doing what had happened some 20 years ago with the same situation. Some of the new councillors were not even thinking of becoming a District Councillor then and should not be treated in this way, probably most of the new councillors are wondering what on earth is the Leader talking about, and they would be right. Can we be assured that all councillors be treated with respect and let us move on for the good of SMDC, if this carries on what is the point of becoming a councillor if they are not allowed to do and have a voice what they were elected for. Also when the committees are decided they should be shared equally between all parties, for example, The Moorlands Partnership Board, I think the answer is in the title, ``Partnership``, If I wasn't the representative from Cheadle Town Council, Cheadle would not have been involved with this Committee, surely this is totally wrong. All towns should be equally representative on all committees to get an overall account of the towns views.

Response:

The election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each committee is a decision of Full Council. The Moorlands Partnership Board, although administered by the Council, is an outside body and not a committee of the authority. The Council's representatives to this particular body were agreed by way of a ballot of members at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

In response to supplementary questions it was explained that the appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman was not a matter for scrutiny, it was a matter for Full Council. This does not prohibit a new councillor from doing an effective job that they were elected to do. Chairman and Vice-Chairman of committees facilitate meetings, members of committees ensure that good scrutiny of Council policies takes place.

25 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC:**

RESOLVED:

That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 100 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated.

CABINET - 18 JUNE 2019 - ASCENT - REVIEW OF BUSINESS PLAN / DELIVERY MODEL

The Council approved proposals for a change in the service delivery model for Ascent LLP that had been considered by Cabinet on 18 June 2019 which included the provision of a loan by the Council.

The meeting closed at 8.33 pm

_____Chairman _____Date