

COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the County Council (Virtual Meeting) Wednesday 5 May 2021 at 10.00am.

Present: Cllr M Best, Cllr N Bloomfield, Cllr A Bown, Cllr M Caswell, Cllr M Chilcott, Cllr P Clayton, Cllr S Coles, Cllr A Dance, Cllr M Dimery, Cllr B Filmer, Cllr D Fothergill, Cllr G Frascini, Cllr A Govier, Cllr A Groskop, Cllr D Hall, Cllr P Ham, Cllr M Healey, Cllr N Hewitt-Cooper, Cllr James Hunt, Cllr John Hunt, Cllr D Huxtable, Cllr A Kendall, Cllr C Lawrence, Cllr M Lewis, Cllr L Leyshon, Cllr J Lock, Cllr T Lock, Cllr D Loveridge, Cllr T Munt, Cllr T Napper, Cllr F Nicholson, Cllr G Noel, Cllr L Oliver, Cllr J Parham, Cllr C Paul, Cllr H Prior-Sankey, Cllr M Pullin, Cllr F Purbrick, Cllr L Redman, Cllr B Revans, Cllr D Ruddle, Cllr N Taylor (Chair), Cllr G Verdon, Cllr L Vijeh, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr A Wedderkopp, Cllr J Williams, Cllr R Williams and Cllr J Woodman.

239 **Election of Chair** - Agenda Item 1

The Monitoring Officer called for nominations for the position of Chair of Council, to serve until the next Annual General meeting in May 2022.

There was a question about the status of a complaint that had been made against the Chair of Council regarding comments he had made at the November 2020 meeting. The Monitoring Officer noted that the complaint had been upheld and following the full public apology made by the Chair at the last Council meeting he regarded the matter as being resolved.

Cllr Nigel Taylor was proposed by Cllr David Fothergill and seconded by Cllr Neil Bloomfield. There being no other nominations the Council agreed to appoint Cllr Taylor as Chair of Council until the next Annual General meeting in May 2022.

Cllr Taylor joined the meeting, made and then signed the statutory declaration of office, took the Chair and thanked Members of the Council for re-electing him.

240 **Appointment of Vice Chair** - Agenda Item 2

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice Chair of Council, to serve until the next Annual General meeting in May 2022.

Cllr Mark Keating was proposed by Cllr David Fothergill and seconded by Cllr Mandy Chilcott. There being no other nominations the Council agreed to appoint Cllr Keating as Vice Chair of Council until the next Annual General meeting in May 2022.

Cllr Keating made and then signed the statutory declaration of office and the Chair presented him with a Chain of Office for the position of Vice Chair of Council.

241 **Apologies for absence** – agenda item 3

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Clarke, Cllr M Rigby, Cllr J Thorne.

242 **Declarations of Interest** – agenda item 4

The Chair reminded the meeting that details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils could be viewed on the Council's Website and there was no need for members to individually declare these personal interests in those other councils at the meeting.

243 **Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17 February 2021** - Agenda Item 5

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2021 after some amendments to minute 228 – to record the Chair had made an apology for remarks he had made at the November meeting and to remove the tribute made by Cllr Napper – were accepted as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair of the meeting.

244 **Chair's Announcements** - Agenda Item 6

The Chair referred to:

The events the Chair had attended since the last meeting of the County Council in February 2021, as listed in the Chair's Information Sheet No. 11, circulated, and published with the agenda.

The Chair of Council also noted the death of former County Councillor Mr John Farley who had served the Blackmoor Vale division from 1993 to 2005, serving on many committees and other Members also paid tribute.

The Chair of Council invited the meeting to observe a period of silence following the death of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.

245 **Appointment of the Leader of Council** – Agenda item 7

The Chair called for nominations for the appointment of Leader of the Council, to serve until the post-election Annual General meeting in 2022.

Cllr David Fothergill was proposed by Cllr Rod Williams and seconded by Cllr Ann Bown. There being no other nominations the Council agreed to appoint

Cllr David Fothergill to serve as Leader of the Council until the post-election Annual General Meeting in 2022.

246 **Statement by the Leader of Council** - Agenda Item 8

The Chair invited Cllr Fothergill to address the meeting and he began by thanking his proposer and seconder and he regarded it a privilege to serve as Leader of the Council and he noted that as the Council was in a pre-election period he speak about the last twelve months.

He noted the tremendous progress made since the last Council meeting in fighting the pandemic and he thanked the Council's staff and partner agencies and countless volunteers who had all helped to deliver vaccinations and maintain frontline services.

He praised the Public Health team and how they had helped to mitigate the 1,700 Covid cases in Somerset. He also welcomed the work to support vulnerable people and all those that had helped to ensure over half a million items including meals and medicines had been delivered. He welcomed the additional financial support provided by the Government and he paid tribute to all the care providers across the County. He recognised the tremendous achievement of securing personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure all key workers and key services were kept safe and he paid tribute to Head teachers, teachers, nursery staff and early years staff for their outstanding service.

He noted that the work to ensure safety would be on-going and the Council was still engaged in mitigating the effects of the pandemic and he recognised the fantastic work of Council staff. He noted the 'kick start' programme of offering work placements for young people on universal credit; the on-going investment creating additional 2,400 school places; and funding for school meals would be extended to cover the May half-term, benefitting nearly 15,000 children in Somerset.

He reflected on the excellent work by Adult Social Care and he noted the benefits seen in care provision achieved through collaborative working, and improved provision and outcomes. He thought the challenge of economic recovery would last for years, but the Council was committed to continuing to improving infrastructure.

He reminded members of the pending decision of the Secretary of State for Local Government and Housing on the future of local government in the County and the importance for everyone to come together and work for the benefit of Somerset residents.

He ended by repeating his heartfelt thanks to all staff, volunteers, District Councils and all other agencies and partners who had worked tirelessly for the everyone in Somerset over the last year.

The Chair of Council thanked the Leader for his statement. The Chair thanked members for their support in re-electing him and he pledged his support to all elected members in the forthcoming year and he left the meeting.

247 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 9

Notice was received of Public Questions/Statements/Petitions (under 5000 signatures) and Elected Member Questions regarding:

Anti-social behaviour by Glastonbury Tor

1. From: Joey Barrington

Response from Cllr David Fothergill, Leader of the Council

Plant based School Meals

2. From: Catherine Cannon

Response from Cllr Purbrick, Cabinet Member for Education and Transformation

Cycling in Taunton

3-5. From Chris Waddilove

Responses from Cllr Woodman, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

(Full details of the questions and responses given at the meeting and/or in writing following the meeting are set out in Appendix A to these Minutes).

248 Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel - Agenda Item 10

The Council considered a report from the Monitoring Officer and Mr John Thomson (Chair of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel) to set out the Panel's report and recommendations.

Following presentation of the report by the Chair of the Panel, the Leader of the Council was invited to respond, and he began by thanking Mr Thompson and the Panel for their thorough report.

The Leader proposed an amended recommendation, given the possible changes to the structure of local government in Somerset. He proposed that the Council thank

the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel for its comprehensive work ahead of the scheduled elections in May 2021 and to kindly request that the Panel report back to the Council following the elections to be held in May 2022 and in the meantime for the Council to agree to maintain the current scheme of members allowances for 2021/22. Cllr Jane Lock seconded the proposal.

There was a brief discussion and questions about what was known as the 50% rule and the effect of a Shadow Council and the Chair of the Panel and the Monitoring Officer responded. The Council **RESOLVED** to accept the amended recommendation.

Cllr David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Jane Lock, moved the amended recommendation as the substantive motion. The Council **RESOLVED** to accept the substantive motion and request that the Panel report back following the elections to be held in May 2022 and in the meantime for the Council to maintain the current scheme of members allowances for 2021/22.

(Following a motion by the Vice Chair of the Council, the meeting was adjourned between 12.00pm and 12.10pm)

249 **Report of the Monitoring Officer** – Agenda item 11

The Council considered a report by the Monitoring Officer that set out proposals for decisions and appointments and constitutional matters, required to be made by the Council at its annual meeting.

Cllr David Fothergill, seconded by Cllr Leigh Redman, moved and the Council **RESOLVED** to:

(1) Note the election and appointment of the Chair of the Council, Vice Chair of the Council and Leader of the Council agreed at this Annual General Meeting prior to this agenda item.

(2) Approve the County Council Appointments Schedule as set out in Appendix A for the Council and its committees up to the next Annual General Meeting – as set out in section 3.1 of the report.

(3) Approve the appointments to Internal, Partnership and Outside Bodies up to the next Annual General Meeting as set out in Appendix B of the report.

(4) Approve the revised Constitution as set out in Appendix C, summarised in Appendix D and note the further work to be undertaken during 2021 as set out in section 3.2. of the report.

(5) To agree the dates for the ordinary meetings of the County Council (full council) for 2021 and 2022 up to the next Annual General Meeting in May 2022 as set out in section 3.3. of the report.

The Leader of Council also suggested that each year a written copy of the Council's Constitution be made available for all members.

250 **Covid-19 Update** - Agenda Item 12

The Vice Chair invited the Chief Executive and the Leader of Council to introduce a video presentation that provided an overview and update on the Council's response to the Covid-19 emergency. The video offered an insight from various senior officers about the work completed by their teams and how the Council had maintained its essential services and provided help and support to vulnerable groups during the lockdown and over the course of the pandemic.

251 **Report of the Leader and Cabinet** - Agenda Item 13

The Council received a report by the Leader and Cabinet summarising key decisions which the Leader, other Cabinet Members and Officers had taken since the last Council meeting, including items of business discussed at Cabinet meetings on 17 March and 21 April 2021.

At Cllr David Fothergill's invitation, Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources, presented her Annual report and she recognised and paid tribute to the many members of staff that had volunteered to help during the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cllr David Fothergill and Cabinet Members responded to questions from members as set out below:

Cllr John Woodman responded to a question from Cllr John Hunt concerning signage at a foot bridge in Netherclay.

Cllr John Woodman responded to a question from Cllr Bown about signage for road diversions.

At Cllr David Fothergill's invitation, Cllr Lawrence, Cabinet Member for Customers and Communities, presented her Annual report and she recognised and paid tribute to the work of the Council's staff to improve lives for all Somerset residents.

Cllr Purbrick agreed to provide a written response to a question from Cllr John Hunt about the delayed opening of a new 420 place Primary School at Orchard Grove in Taunton.

Cllr Paul and Cllr Fothergill responded to a question from Cllr Munt regarding the Community Climate Emergency Fund.

The Council's Monitoring Officer in response to a question from Cllr Munt on the Council's decision-making arrangements noted that he was already engaged in a review of the Council's report templates and guidance notes and he would consider Cllr Munt's suggestions.

Full details of the submitted questions and responses given at the meeting and/or in writing following the meeting are set out in Appendix A to these Minutes.

The Council received and noted this report.

(Following a motion from the Chair of the Council, the meeting was adjourned between 1.00pm and 1.35pm)

252 Annual Report of the Health and Well-being Board - Agenda item 14

The Council received and noted the report of the Health and Well-being Board, which was presented by Cllr Paul, Chair of the Board.

The report covered the Board's work over the last year and it was noted that the Board undertakes to progress health improvement through a number of specific workstreams each year, as well as taking an oversight and influencing role across the whole health and wellbeing system.

253 Annual Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee
- Agenda Item 15

The Council received and noted a report by Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee, which was presented by Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered the work of the Committee over the last year and Cllr Prior-Sankey thanked all those who worked across the Care and Health services to look after Somerset residents. Cllr Huxtable, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, stated his appreciation to Cllr Prior-Sankey and her Committee for all their work.

254 Annual Report of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee– Agenda Item 16

The Council received and noted a report by Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee, which was presented by Cllr Leigh Redman, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered the work of the Committee over the last years and he thanked the Vice Chair, Cllr Rod Williams for his support. He noted that the Committee was carrying some vacancies for co-opted Members and encouraged people to join the Committee. Cllr Nicholson, Cabinet Member for Children and Families, stated her

thanks to all Officers that supported the Committee, the Committee and the Chair and Vice-Chair for their hard work.

255 Report of the Scrutiny Committee for Policies and Place – Agenda Item 17

The Council received and noted a report by the Scrutiny for Policies, Adults and Health Committee, which was presented by Cllr Anna Groskop, Chair of the Committee.

The report covered the work of the Committee since its last update to Council and Cllr Groskop welcomed her Committee being able to review reports prior to their submission to Cabinet, and she thanked the Cabinet Member, Director of Finance and his team for their attendance at meetings. She thanked Cllr Filmer and Cllr Munt for their work on the climate change and carbon emissions strategy and Cllr Purbrick for explaining the One Somerset proposal. Cllr Chilcott, Cabinet Member for Resources, stated her thanks to Cllr Groskop and her Committee for their scrutiny of the Council's financial reports as their work was much valued.

(The meeting ended at 1.05pm)

Chair of the Council