

MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on Monday, 15 May 2017 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Shepton Mallet commencing at 6.30pm.

COUNCILLORS

PRESENT: Joanna Beale, Bryan Beha, Eve Berry, Peter Bradshaw, Adam Boyden, John Brunsdon MBE, Carole Bullen, John Carter, Rachel Carter, John Coles, Shane Collins, Nick Cottle, Simon Davies, Edward Drewe, Stina Falle, John Greenhalgh, Philip Ham, Des Harris, Nigel Hewitt-Cooper, Damon Hooton, Alvin Horsfall, Claire Hudson, Lloyd Hughes, Tom Killen, , Jeannette Marsh, Clive Mockford, Terry Napper, Graham Noel, John North, Linda Oliver, John Osman, John Parham, Adam Sen, Harvey Siggs, Helen Sprawson-White (arrived 8.05 pm), Nigel Taylor, Alan Townsend, Danny Unwin, David van Dyk, Nigel Woollcombe-Adams, Ros Wyke

OFFICERS

PRESENT: Stuart Brown	Chief Executive
Paul Deal	Section 151 Officer
Caroline McCafferty	Committee Officer
Donna Nolan	Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer
Tracy Aarons	Deputy Chief Executive

Agenda Item Number	Subject	Actioned by
1 and 2	<p>Evacuation Procedures, Induction Loop and Turning Off Mobile Phones</p> <p>The Chair explained the evacuation procedures and informed everyone on the use of the induction loop and requested that mobile phones be switched to silent.</p> <p>Councillor Coles was invited to offer an opening prayer. People wishing to leave the meeting during the prayer were given the opportunity to do so.</p>	
3	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bente Height, Steve Henderson, Roy Mackenzie, Mike Pullin, Tim Rice and Dick Skidmore. Councillor Helen Sprawson-White had informed the Chair that she would be late arriving.</p>	
4	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	

<p>5</p>	<p>Chairman’s Engagements , Communications and Announcements</p> <p>Sunday 5 March - Wells Cathedral Commemoration Service Thursday 13 April - Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival Thursday 13 April - Somerset Community Transport launch Thursday 11 May - HMS Flying Fox Reception</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Councillor Carole Bullen back to the Council.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked everyone for their support and said that she had thoroughly enjoyed representing the Council at her many engagements.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Election of Chairman of the Council</p> <p>Councillor Philip Ham nominated Councillor Edward Drewe as Chair.</p> <p>The proposal was seconded by Councillor Danny Unwin and agreed by Council.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Councillor Edward Drewe was appointed Chair of the Council.</p> <p>Councillor Drewe thanked all those who had helped him in the past and Councillors Philip Ham and Danny Unwin for proposing and seconding him. He said that he was very honoured to have been elected as the Chairman.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Election of Vice Chairman of the Council</p> <p>Councillor John Parham nominated Councillor Jeannette Marsh as Vice Chair.</p> <p>The proposal was seconded by Councillor Tom Killen and agreed by Council</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Councillor Jeannette Marsh was appointed Vice Chair of the Council.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Public Participation</p> <p>There was none.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Previous Minutes of Council</p> <p>The minutes of 20 February 2017 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.</p>	

<p>10</p>	<p>Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Leader's Update</p> <p>The Leader of the Council stated that there were many issues affecting local government including devolution, metro mayors and national housing initiatives, and with the forthcoming General Election, there would be wide reaching implications with regard to productivity plans, growth deals and the retention of business rates. He further stated that the Council were performing well politically and through the officers, and in order to gain external validation, a Peer Review team from the LGA had been invited to undertake a Peer Review Challenge. The Review Report was a ringing endorsement of the operation of Mendip District Council, which demonstrated the collaborative manner in which the Council was being driven forward.</p> <p>With regard to the recommendations from the report, a Scrutiny workshop had taken place to address the comments to involve more Councillors, and to review work in many different ways. The enlargement of the Scrutiny function would affect proportionality and the membership of other Committees, and the Leader therefore proposed that Item 18 - To Consider Membership of Boards, Committees and Panels, should be postponed to an extra meeting of Full Council in July 2017.</p> <p>The Peer Review Team had accepted the draft work with regard to the Corporate Plan, but due to Purdah restrictions, the Leader again proposed that this be taken to the proposed July meeting of full Council to be adopted. The Leader requested that congratulations and thanks to all Staff and Members be recorded, adding that all should take credit for an outstanding report. He concluded by saying that the work of the Council had been going in the right direction and should continue to do so.</p> <p>The Leader of the Opposition nominated Councillor Nick Cottle to reply, who stated that all had done an excellent job. He stated that Councillor Helen Sprawson-White did not feel valued and received fewer communications as a female Councillor than her male counterparts.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader added thanks to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for their strong leadership, which was echoed by Members.</p> <p>In response to questions from Members, it was clarified that the Peer Team felt that the Council would benefit by giving local communities a narrative of its goals and aspirations. This would be presented in the Corporate Strategy which was deferred until July. Scrutiny would form a large part in how performance was to be measured, with a focus on key services and an annual spotlight on a single service.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council proposed to defer item 18, the Membership of Boards, Committees and Panels to a date in July to be confirmed, to allow for the enlargement of the Scrutiny function.</p> <p>This was seconded by Councillor Bryan Beha.</p>	
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	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Council agreed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the recommendations put forward by the Peer Review Team. • To defer Item 18 the Membership of Boards, Committees and Panels to a date in July to be confirmed, to allow for the enlargement of the Scrutiny function. 	
11	<p>Re-Appointment of the Independent Person to the Standards Committee</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive introduced a report which stated that the Localism Act 2011 required that the Council should appoint at least one Independent Person who must be consulted by the authority before it made a finding as to whether a Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct for Members.</p> <p>The Standards Committee recommended to Council that Mike Hillman be re-appointed as the Council's Independent Person for further 4 year term.</p> <p>The Standards Committee further recommended to Council that in the event a reserve Independent Person was required that an Independent Person from another Somerset Council was authorised to act.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Re-appointed Mike Hillman as the Council's Independent Person to advise on standards matters as required by the Localism Act 2011 for a further 4 year term. 2) Re-confirmed that if a reserve Independent Person was required an Independent Person duly approved by another Somerset Council was authorised to advise on standards matters as required by the Localism Act 2011. 	
12	<p>Verbal Report of the Independent Person on the Standards Committee</p> <p>Mike Hillman, the Independent Person stated that though there were in excess of 400 Parish Councillors and 46 District Councillors, there had only been one formal hearing held by the Standards Board in recent years. He added that the Monitoring Officer and her team had developed successful ways to deal with complaints informally. There would continue to be tension with developers and residents due to the conflict between the national shortage of housing and the desire for green open space, and Mr Hillman felt that by maintaining the current calm, competent, co-operative approach, and help from the planning</p>	

	<p>department, these difficulties could be overcome. He concluded by congratulating all on the robust good health of Standards at Mendip District Council.</p>	
13	<p>Mental Health Update</p> <p>Councillor Peter Bradshaw informed Full Council that since he had been appointed Mental Health Champion in March 2016, with the help of the Deputy Chief Executive, a Mental Health Policy had been agreed and published. His aim had been to focus at a local level and identify the approach the Council could take to support agencies in delivering Mental Health support.</p> <p>He had advocated Mental Health issues in Council meetings, and the Scrutiny Board had been identified as the primary Committee to embed Mental Health into Council policies. He stated that as the corporate aim for the Health and Wellbeing of Mendip residents was to include Mental Health, the policy documents had been amended to reflect this. Councillors had attended Dementia training in Dec 2016 and Dementia Champions had been identified. The Member Support Officer had attended training to provide an informed point of contact for the future.</p> <p>The Council's leisure partner Fusion had agreed to supply free passes, via Mental Health professionals at Mendip Hospital and GP Surgeries, to residents to benefit from exercise at an early stage to increase wellbeing. Councillor Bradshaw thanked Rob Taylor from Fusion for his input into the scheme.</p> <p>A publication called Sadsville, a book for children aged 9 – 10 providing problem solving skills, would be available for each child of that age in Somerset schools by September 2017, as a result of sponsorship via the Sadsville Project. Councillor Bradshaw had raised £1700 towards this.</p> <p>He had encouraged the Council to support the Mental Health of its workforce and contractors, and training had taken place from which Mental Health first aiders had been appointed.</p> <p>He concluded by adding that fresh air, exercise and animal interaction were all known to be beneficial to mental health and that he hoped to partner with an outdoor venue.</p> <p>Members thanked Councillor Bradshaw and commended the work and the report.</p>	
14	<p>Re-Appointment of the Independent Person to the Somerset Joint Independent Remuneration Panel</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the Council was required to make a scheme providing for allowances to be paid to Members each year in accordance with Regulations. In making this scheme Members were to take into account the recommendations of the Somerset Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.</p>	

	<p>On 2 October 2014 Council agreed to appoint Graham Russell as Mendip's representative on the Somerset Joint Independent Remuneration Panel. This appointment was for a 3 year term which would expire in 2017.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council was happy to extend the appointment, but believed the post should be readvertised when this term expired.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Council re-appointed Graham Russell as the Council's representative on Somerset's Joint Independent Remuneration Panel for a further period of 3 years commencing on 2 October 2017.</p>	
<p>15</p>	<p>The Council's Constitution</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive stated that pursuant to Section 4 of the Councils Constitution the Council was required to confirm the Constitution for the coming year (including the Scheme of Delegation to officers set out in Section 18) and approve any changes.</p> <p>Further to the recent imposition of deadlines to "make" the Frome Town Plan, it was proposed that the Scheme of Delegation be amended to allow Cabinet to execute this function.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15a Council adopted the Constitution, • 15b in line with the Cabinet recommendation of the 10 April 2017, Full Council approved the proposed amendment to the scheme of delegation to allow the Cabinet to "make" Neighbourhood Plans. 	
<p>16</p>	<p>Approve the Calendar of Meetings for the Coming Year</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Corporate Services stated that the Council were asked to consider the timetable of public meetings for the forthcoming year. He added that there may be amendments when the Scrutiny function was enlarged.</p> <p>Councillor Clare Hudson stated that the Audit Committee had been moved to 3pm, which was difficult for working Members. The Leader of the Council had spoken with the Chair of the Audit Committee who had agreed to revert to 5.30pm. Other Members agreed that day time meetings were difficult for those who worked.</p> <p>The Leader commended the Member Support Officer for her work planning the meetings. He said that the calendar needed to be flexible.</p>	

	<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Council agreed the calendar of meetings for 2017-18 subject to any amendment with regard to the Scrutiny Board and the Audit Committee reverting to a 5.30pm start.</p>	
17	<p>Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2016-2017</p> <p>The Chair of Scrutiny introduced a report which provided an outline of the work undertaken by Scrutiny Board Members over the course of the 2016-17 municipal year.</p> <p>The Chair of the Scrutiny Board thanked Tracy Aarons as Lead Officer and Stuart Cave as former Lead Officer, and all Members for their hard work and input. He added that he was eager to work with a changed and improved Scrutiny function. The next meeting of Scrutiny would be dedicated to dealing with the changes and all Members were invited to attend, regardless of their membership to the Scrutiny Board.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Council noted the annual report.</p>	
18	<p>To Consider Membership of Boards, Committees and Panels</p> <p>The Leader of the Council suggested that this item be deferred until after the General Election on 8 June 2017.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Council agreed that this item be deferred until after the General Election.</p>	
19	<p>Member Development Activity During 2016-17 and Member Development for 2017-18</p> <p>Councillor Peter Bradshaw stated that there was the opportunity to review Member Development to ensure alignment and consistency across the Council's activities. This was necessary in view of the recent organisational changes, and had the significant advantage of paving the way to obtain the Member Development Charter Plus status when the current charter expired in June 2017.</p> <p>He added that in order to facilitate this upgrade in status, it would be necessary that Full Council reconfirm both the Terms of Reference and the Membership. He concluded by thanking Members for their commitment and sound judgement.</p> <p>One Member suggested that the Planning Board could look back at historic decisions to evaluate them. The Leader of the Council stated that the Planning Board was the Committee with the largest amount of compulsory training due to the in depth knowledge required to make decisions. The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Growth and Housing stated</p>	

	<p>that he would, together with the Chair of the Planning Board, pick out 10 past decisions to look at in depth.</p> <p>Members further suggested a structured minimum training package, a Mentor system, Section 106 Agreement training and a programme of Continuous Professional Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Full Council;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approved the updated Member Development Policy and Strategy (also known as Appendix O of the Council's Constitution). b) Approved the updated Terms of Reference of the Member Development Group and re-confirmed its Membership. c) Confirmed the Council's commitment to the Member Development Charter Plus. d) Noted the outcomes following Member development activity during 2016-17, and e) Suggested topics for inclusion in the Member Development Programme for 2017-18. f) Noted that as part of the emerging organisation development workstreams the Strategy, Policy and Programme would be reviewed, with further reports coming back to full Council as necessary. 	
<p>20</p>	<p>Policies Relating to Politically Restricted Posts</p> <p>Councillor Nigel Woollcombe-Adams left the meeting at 8.00pm.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Corporate Services introduced a report which described the proposed minor amendments of the Council's policies in relation to politically restricted posts, following the recent management restructure</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Full Council approved the updates to the Council's policy in relation to politically restricted posts as set out in the report.</p>	
<p>21</p>	<p>Equalities Update – Changing Places</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Transformation stated that since the agreement at last Full Council, he had looked at ways to support Changing Places.</p> <p>He had received construction costings from ID Verde of around £20,000. There was a small amount of Section 106 funding available to create a facility in Frome with support from Frome Town Council. Fair Frome had held an awareness event and were committed to working with the Council towards the provision of facilities. Work was ongoing to understand the implications of installing a facility in the Cattle Market toilet block.</p>	

	<p>Councillor Helen Sprawson White arrived at 8.05pm.</p> <p>A business owner in Wells was investigating the possibility of installing a facility in his own building.</p> <p>Clarks Shopping Village in Street was to integrate the installation of a Changing Places facility into their facilities management programme. This would be without cost to the Council.</p> <p>Discussions had commenced with Street Parish Council regarding the possibility of incorporating a facility into their Merriman Works.</p> <p>Glastonbury Town Council had been briefed by Councillor Steve Henderson who had joined the Equalities Group, and the Mayor had expressed a desire to work with the Council and help engage the community to raise funding, and to look at the feasibility of using their own land to provide a facility</p> <p>It was noted that should Mendip be the owner of these facilities, they would be costly to create and maintain. It was hoped that some provision could be gained from each of the five settlements without financial commitment to the Council.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder thanked all Members of the Equality Group and officers for their hard work.</p>	
22	<p>Update on Climate Change – question from the Meeting of 12 December 2016</p> <p>The meeting planned for the 8 May to discuss this issue had been cancelled due to lack of availability of attendees. The update was therefore deferred.</p>	
23	<p>Motions to Council</p> <p>There were no motions to Council.</p>	
24	<p>Questions from the Public</p> <p>No questions had been submitted from the public</p>	
25	<p>Questions from Members</p> <p>Councillor Helen Sprawson-White asked the following question;</p> <p>Can this Council please advise as to what, if any, provision is put in place to facilitate and encourage voting from residents with Learning Disabilities? This is a large and easily disenfranchised part of our community, who obviously have the same rights as anyone else to have their say on Election Day and I feel strongly that we have a duty to support them in their democratic right.</p>	

For example, do we run any events to assist people with additional needs with registration, including the options for postal and proxy voting? Do we provide information in an easy read format?

If not, can we please explore with other authorities about how this can be achieved, urgently, to enable us to do what we can for the upcoming General Election.

I have a Mendip resident who helps manage a local Learning Disability service who has offered to assist the Council on a practical level.

The Chief Executive gave the following reply;

The current provisions that the Electoral Services Team offer to people with disabilities include the following:

1. The Electoral Registration Officer's presumption is that all electors are eligible to be registered, irrespective of their ability to actually vote. Since the change to individual electoral registration, this is more difficult to achieve as all electors need to provide their National Insurance Number and date of birth in order to be registered. It is sometimes difficult to obtain these from the individual concerned or their carer.
2. There is a member of staff whose role includes the visiting of care homes to ensure that as many residents as possible are registered.
3. If requested, we are able to provide a "Register to Vote" leaflet in a large print version, easy to read version, and audio version.
4. We can also provide the Mencap guide to registration and voting.
5. Although we can provide enlarged copies of registration forms, the application to vote by post or proxy has to be signed within a statutorily predetermined size box. However, if the elector is unable to sign for any reason, we will send a form which grants a waiver from the signature requirement.
6. Within all polling stations, there is a device to help people who have sight difficulties to cast their vote. There is also an enlarged version of the ballot paper which the individual can take into the polling booth to assist in identifying the candidate's positions on the ballot paper.
7. Electors can be accompanied by a companion who can assist them in the polling station. If they do not have a companion to help, the Presiding Officer can also assist if asked. The training given to Polling Station Staff also points out that not all disabilities are visible, and they need to treat everybody with respect.

	<p>8. At the County Council Election, a survey of polling places was undertaken to determine their suitability for use by people with disabilities. It is too soon to have analysed the results, as this is programmed for 2018, but input will be sought from disability groups.</p> <p>9. Electoral Services correspondence contains direct line numbers to the Team so that informed advice can be given to all callers.</p> <p>Councillor Sprawson-White thanked the Chief Executive for his reply.</p>	
26	<p>Urgent Business</p> <p>The Chief Executive introduced Alan Jones from Somerset County Council who would be working closely with the Council with regard to further developing the relationship with Somerset County Council, and the opportunities that this might bring.</p> <p>Councillor John Brunson stated that the ventilation in the Council Chamber was poor.</p> <p>Councillor John Parham explained that his wife had taken up the challenge to take part in Walk All Over Cancer and asked if anyone would like to contribute.</p>	

The meeting closed at approximately 8.15pm.