

Councillor Gareth Jones (Mayor)

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

J A Barron	W J Kemp
R J Barron	R Kenney
F Beatty	P A Leason
A R G Brown	A M Loughran
R P Cooke	B McKeown
A G Cooper	D McNaughton
B M Cross	A Nixon
M G Dodson	J A Nixon
A P Edgeller	L Nixon
P M M Farrington	G P K Pardesi
I D Fordham	A N Pearce
A T A Godfrey	J M Pert
M Green	M Phillips
A S Harp	J K Price
A D Hobbs	P Roycroft
M V Holmes	R M Smith
J Hood	R M Sutherland
R A James	C V Trowbridge
P W Jones	M J Winnington

Officers in attendance:-

Mr T Clegg	-	Chief Executive
Mr R Simpson	-	Head of Operations
Mr I Curran	-	Head of Law and Administration
Dr T Redpath	-	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager
Mr W Conaghan	-	Press and Communication Manager
Mr A Bailey	-	Scrutiny Officer
Mr J Dean	-	Democratic Services Officer

C74 Minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

C75 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C A Baron.

C76 Announcements

The Mayor informed Members that Remembrance wreaths had been laid on behalf of the Council (observing social distancing protocols) and updated Members regarding the recent reopening of Victoria Park, Stafford.

C77 Public Question Time

The following Public Questions had been received pursuant to Paragraph 11.1 of the Council Procedure Rules:-

(a) Sarah Burgess:

- 1 Both climate change and the Covid crisis have heightened the desirability of encouraging integrated transport systems and promoting walking and cycling for short-distance journeys. How does the Council propose to do this, and which other partners is it working with to improve, for example, the inadequate provision of safe cycling options?
- 2 What means has the Council identified to manage the open land for which it has responsibility to maximise carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation – e.g. by large-scale tree planting and protection, and avoiding further damage to sensitive and rare habitat or encroachment on flood sensitive land such as Doxey Marshes hinterland?

(b) Ann Elphick:

'Would the Council be open to the idea of involving its residents in addressing climate targets, perhaps by consultation with a group such as the Citizens' Assembly and dialogue with interested groups, individuals and local communities, with regular reporting of progress? It would be very uplifting for residents to feel part of it, in a world where there is so much divisiveness.'

(c) Netta Cartwright:

The report on the Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy refers to the setting up of an 'Internal Climate Change and Recovery Group'. Could I ask who will lead this group, who the members will be, and will they be elected? I wonder if there might be scope for a residents' group from the Stafford Borough to have a presence in the group?

(d) Roisin Chambers:

- 1 The draft strategy is well- intentioned but short on specifics. How soon will there be a plan with specific, time-constrained and

measurable targets, with clear, named responsibilities ready for implementation?

- 2 The report proposes the establishment of an 18 month fixed term contract to 'coordinate this work'. Given that the report covers 3 years of the strategy from 2021 -2024, why is the appointment for only half of that term and will the salary attached to the post enable the appointment of a suitably qualified person of calibre?

(e) Douglas Rouxel:

Question 1. Section CC3 - Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change - begins by pointing out that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report stated that humankind has 12 years to ensure global warming is limited to a maximum of 1.5 degrees and that if this is not achieved, this would "significantly worsen the risks posed to humans and wildlife on a global scale."

This report was published in 2018, making 2030 the year by which this should be achieved.

How has the Council determined that 2040 should be the year when the Council achieves zero carbon emissions?

Question 2. I am concerned that there doesn't seem to be a roadmap set out for the Council itself and the community of Stafford Borough to achieve major carbon emission reductions.

There is so much negativity around, having a clear target would be something Stafford could feel part of, and feel proud of.

Would it be possible for the Council to integrate targets and deadlines, giving the community a clear path on how this will be achieved?

Question (e)(2) was not considered and therefore no answer was provided.

(f) Damon Hoppe:

"How is it possible to tackle the ecological emergency when at the same time the no.1 priority is to increase the activities that contribute to that emergency. ie more growth, homes, etc which means more traffic/congestion, consumption, habitat destruction, pollution, etc?"

(g) James Greenhalgh:

- 1 Given the Council's commitment to promote Green Travel (CC1 of Climate Change and Green Recovery Plan), what practical measures will SBC take to increase the availability of public

transport in its service areas e.g. reinstatement of lost bus services, and to ensure that such public transport will have zero or very low emissions?

- 2 Given that emissions from dwellings are a massive contribution total emissions, what proposals in the plan will require all new planning permissions for dwellings to provide a breakdown of the emissions that they will produce and evidence that all measures will be taken to reduce these to as close to zero as possible?

Councillor J K Price, Cabinet Member, Environment Portfolio, responded as follows:-

- (a) 1 The Government had invited local transport authorities to publish Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) to help deliver their Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS) and Staffordshire County Council had risen to the challenge to help Government achieve its ambition to deliver:

- Better Safety - A safe and reliable way to travel for short journeys
- Better Mobility - More people cycling and walking – easy, normal and enjoyable
- Better Streets - Places that have cycling and walking at their heart

Staffordshire County Council's LCWIP has been approved by the County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and would be pivotal in helping the County Council to continue to make the case future walking and cycling funding.

Around £31m of investment was required up to 2030/31 on the priority cycle networks and core walking zones in Burton upon Trent, Cannock, Lichfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stafford and Tamworth. The 200 potential schemes identified in the LCWIP had been allocated for short, medium or long-term delivery during this period.

Further information could be obtained at:

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Transport/transportplanning/Walking-and-cycling.aspx>

- 2 The Council was currently looking at opportunities for tree planting and a new tree policy was being formulated to look at this issue.

The Council would be considering factors such as site assessment, biodiversity, climate change, carbon sequestration, air and water quality, plus landscape character.

It was essential that new tree planting was managed correctly. “The right tree in the right place” would be a guiding principle. A number of potential sites were being assessed for tree planting.

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust had recently produced a Nature Recovery Network for the Council indicating priority areas for habitats across the Borough.

This would also help guide new habitat enhancement work, allowing a more strategic landscape scale approach. This document would inform the new Local Plan and guide development away from sensitive areas.

- (b) Climate Change was everybody’s responsibility. To achieve the goals contained in the strategy, we need to work with our residents and a broad range of public, private and voluntary sector partners. We will need to lobby Central Government for resources to assist us in achieving carbon neutrality. We will need to work with elected Members to encourage all residents to take action that will contribute to carbon neutrality and sustainable development in all our communities.

As provided for under Paragraph 11.9 of the Council Procedure Rules, the following supplementary question was asked of Councillor Price:-

“Would it be possible to have further dialogue as to how said groups might be involved?”

Councillor Price confirmed that he would be pleased to discuss the matter with Mrs Elphick.

- (c) The Group will be led by the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager and will involve a range of Officers from across the authority who have the appropriate knowledge and expertise to support the progression of work in the following areas:

- Reduce our energy and water consumption
- Promote green travel and transport for our staff and within our service areas
- Reduce waste and improve recycling
- Undertake a comprehensive risk-based assessment of vulnerabilities to weather and the climate
- Refresh the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy
- Develop blue and green infrastructure networks and public realm
- Protect and enhance our environment
- Adopt our new local plan
- Facilitate development that is resilient to climate change

As provided for under Paragraph 11.9 of the Council Procedure Rules, the following supplementary question was asked of Councillor Price:-

“Would local residents be invited to join the Group?”

Councillor Price confirmed he would discuss Membership of the Group with the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager.

- (d) 1 The Council was currently in the process of commissioning a carbon audit of all of its activities. Once this had been completed the information would be utilised as a baseline for the development of targets and performance measures that would be contained in a delivery plan.

As provided for under Paragraph 11.9 of the Council Procedure Rules, the following supplementary question was asked of Councillor Price:-

“When would the delivery plan identify specific targets?”

Councillor Price reported that the delivery plan would be formed once the carbon audit of its activities had been completed.

- 2 Since the report was agreed by Cabinet I am pleased to state that the Council would be funding a full time permanent position from existing resources to support the development of this work.

- (e) 1 The Council had conducted and followed research that recommended efforts to reduce carbon emissions should be concentrated on Council’s own operations as a starting point, as early action on own operations could be a staging post to helping build momentum while policies to reduce emissions across the area were developed with partner organisations. Both Nottingham and Manchester Authorities recommended this approach. At this stage we do not have a proper gauge of what our carbon usage and output was for our own operations and that of the borough, which is why we were commissioning a carbon audit.

- 282 of 400 LA have declared a climate emergency – only 24 have published plans
- 52% aim to make their own operations net zero

IPCC report stated that we faced an emergency and needed to achieve a net zero target of emissions by 2050, the priority was to start cutting emissions as soon as possible rather than worrying about how to eliminate them altogether, which the Council has started to do as detailed on page 7 of the Strategy.

- (f) A key action for the Council to progress needed to focus on new standards of design and environmental quality at the local level, reflecting national priorities through the new Planning system and the emerging Environment Act.

Stafford Borough Council's Design Advisor to progress high quality design and climate adaptation projects through the New Local Plan and new developments.

As set out in the Council's Corporate Business Plan 2021-2024 (currently out for consultation) there were a range of important priorities to be delivered in the next few years across social, economic and environmental sectors. One example of addressing these matters would be through the new Local Plan, which was currently being prepared, with one of the key drivers being to achieve our ambitions towards carbon neutrality. The plan would promote sustainable construction and house building, protect and enhance the natural environment, mitigate the risk of flooding, promote carbon reduction in travel and encourage renewable energy production. In the refresh of the Local Plan we would be promoting:

- Carbon saving installations such as electric vehicle charging points;
- Policies to support the building of sustainable/carbon neutral homes and communities;
- The installation of renewable energy infrastructure;
- Designs for community heating;
- Green and Blue Infrastructure and habitat management.

C78 Time Limit

The Mayor noted the expiration of the time limit associated with Public Question Time. As provided for under Paragraph 11.11 of the Council Procedure Rules, Councillor Price undertook to provide a written answer to questions not reached.

C79 Notice of Motion

Councillors A N Pearce and A D Hobbs had given the following Notice of Motion in pursuant of Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules:-

“This Council notes the successful test and trace action taken by this Council in dealing with an outbreak of Covid 19 in Stone earlier this year. It believes this illustrates how using the expertise and knowledge in local authorities is far more effective than handing contracts to national for-profit organisations with no such experience or knowledge which has led to the abysmal failure of the current test and trace arrangements.”

The Notice of Motion was moved by Councillor A N Pearce and Seconded by Councillor A D Hobbs.

The Leader of the Council responded:-

“I wish to praise the efforts of the Officers of the Council in dealing with the ongoing global Coronavirus pandemic and for developing highly effective partnership working to address the uppermost priority of addressing the wellbeing of residents of the Borough; we must not forget that those on the front line in fighting this crisis included our own colleagues.

Governments do make mistakes, but as national restrictions were entered into on 2 December 2020 it was more important than ever that everyone in society pulled together to achieve a return to normality.

This was not the time to politicise the issue, it was far more prudent to focus on the wellbeing of our residents.”

At the conclusion of the debate Members voted on the recommendation which was declared to be lost.

C80 Fees and Charges Review 2021

Considered the report of the Head of Finance.

The Cabinet Member - Resources Portfolio introduced the report and concluded his comments be moving the recommendation as set out in paragraph 2 of the report be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor J K Price.

Members considered the Fees and Charges booklet, during which time Cabinet Members addressed those points arising from the debate, including:-

- Garden waste collection service
- Hire of facilities, Victoria Park, Stafford

At the conclusion of the debate Members voted on the recommendation which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that the proposed Fees and Charges for 2021 be approved.

The Cabinet Member, Environment Portfolio, undertook to provide Members with a rationale for the charge for garden waste collection.

C81 Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy

Considered the report of the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager.

The Cabinet Member - Environment Portfolio, introduced the report by commending the work of Officers in formulating the Strategy.

Preparation of the document had been delayed by the continuing global pandemic but was now subject to public consultation. Councillor Price acknowledged the Council's leadership role within the community in respect of this matter whilst noting that climate change was everyone's responsibility.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor R A James.

Arising from the debate, Members encouraged residents to respond to the consultation, noting the clear interest in the issue as confirmed by the public questions considered earlier in the meeting.

At the conclusion of the debate Members voted on the recommendation as set out in the report, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that the Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy (as contained in the appendix to the report) be approved.

C82 Local Authority Statement of Licensing Policy 2020 – 2025

Considered the report of the Head of Operations.

The Cabinet Member - Environment Portfolio, noted the requirement for the refresh of the Policy by paraphrasing Section 4 of the report, and the associated appendix. Councillor Price concluded his comments by praising Officers efforts in preparing the Policy and by moving the recommendation as set out in Paragraph 2 be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor A P Edgeller.

Members subsequently voted on the recommendation as set out in the report, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that adoption and publication of the Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.

Prior to closing the meeting the Mayor passed on his best wishes to all present for the forthcoming festive period.

MAYOR