

Councillor Tony Nixon (Mayor)

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

Councillors:

F Beatty	W J Kemp
A R G Brown	P A Leason
R P Cooke	A M Loughran
A G Cooper	D McNaughton
B M Cross	J A Nixon
A P Edgeller	L Nixon
P M M Farrington	G P K Pardesi
A T A Godfrey	A N Pearce
A D Hobbs	J M Pert
M V Holmes	J K Price
J Hood	R M Smith
R A James	R M Sutherland
E G R Jones	C V Trowbridge
P W Jones	

Officers in attendance:-

Mr T Clegg	-	Chief Executive
Mr B Kean	-	Head of Finance
Mr I Curran	-	Head of Law and Administration
Mr W Conaghan	-	Press and Communication Manager
Mr A Bailey	-	Scrutiny Officer
Mr J Dean	-	Democratic Services Officer

**C19 Minutes**

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 May 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

**C20 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C A Baron, J A Barron, R J Barron, M G Dodson, I D Fordham, M Green, A S Harp, R Kenney, B McKeown, M Phillips, P Roycroft and M J Winnington.

## **C21 Announcements**

The Leader of the Council was pleased to acknowledge that Mr Bob Kean, Head of Finance was present, although he was sad to report that it would be Bob's final meeting of the Council, due to Bob's imminent retirement. Councillor Farrington thanked Bob for his years of hard work and commitment to the Council, and wished him a long and happy retirement.

Councillor A T A Godfrey also paid tribute to Bob, thanking him for his advice and guidance over many years service.

Continuing, the Leader of the Council provided an update detailing the current position relating to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and noting that the 7 day rate of infection in the Borough stood at 424.7 per 100,000 people. The Council continued to deliver its services, however due to rising infection levels some Officers had reverted back to response rather than recovery work within previously established 'bubbles'. Councillor Farrington concluded his comments by wishing all Colleagues well during these challenging times.

## **C22 Public Question Time**

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

### **(a) Neil Thomas**

- “1 Has the Leader read the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England as they affect the 12 Parliamentary Constituencies of Staffordshire and, in particular, the three to be largely in the Borough of Stafford, as published on June 8, 2021?
- 2 What action does the Leader propose the Council should take in order to respond to the public consultation on these proposals (which are very controversial) closing on August 2, 2021?
- 3 Will he now make a full statement on this?”

Councillor P M M Farrington, Leader of the Council, responded as follows:-

“In response to question 1, yes, I have read the proposals. In answer to questions 2 and 3 the Boundary Commission for England is an independent and impartial body who had set out a number of proposals relating to parliamentary constituencies across the Country, to which any individual or group was entitled to make representations. Based on population/electorate figures Stafford would require at least 2 constituencies, with Stone being the most affected by the proposals. I suggest individuals make direct representations on said proposals, as it is not appropriate for the Council as a whole to respond”.

**(b) Maureen Alecock**

“In view of the fact that there has been a great increase in vehicular traffic in Stafford over the past six months, and knowing that car emissions are one of the chief causes of atmospheric pollution, what measures do you propose to put in place to encourage people to use their cars less, thus empowering them to play their part in working towards the Borough's Green Strategy to reduce carbon emissions by 2040. Though indeed 2030 would be a more realistic target if we are seriously talking about a climate emergency”.

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

“The adoption of the New Local Plan will seek to make provision to propose that new development supports active travel throughout the Borough by:

- Allocating land for new development in the most sustainable locations which enables residents to walk or cycle to services and facilities in existing settlements.
- Proposing fibre optic broadband is embedded in new development, enabling people to work from home and negating the need to travel to the office. Where possible, improvements to networks will also benefit existing development.
- Proposing that new development which is likely to result in an increased volume of traffic is located close to transport hubs where feasible, such as railway stations.
- Seeking to ensure sustainable development through design principles, integrating Green Infrastructure principles that encourage walking and cycling.

Although the transition to electric vehicles will not result in a reduced number of cars on the road, it will mean that travel by private car will not contribute to the carbon emissions in the local area. Therefore, the New Local Plan will seek to enable the transition to Super Low Emission Vehicles by:

- Proposing that the design of new development allows for the installation of electric vehicle charging points.

As well as the measures enabled through the New Local Plan, there are a number of projects being progressed through the council's wider Climate Change and Green Recovery work programme which will result in a reduction of private car usage. These include:

- The adoption of a “health in all we do” approach. This has seen the Health and Housing and Environment and Health departments work to encourage local communities to participate in a more active lifestyle, including taking shorter journeys on foot or by bicycle.
- The council’s website provides links to a range of resources which explains the importance of active travel when an individual is looking to reduce their carbon footprint.
- In 2020, the council adopted its Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy. Objective 2 of this strategy is to work in partnership with members and local communities to take action which will contribute to carbon neutrality and sustainable development. It is anticipated that through this work, the importance of active travel and the electrification of vehicles will enable an individual to reduce their own carbon footprint.
- The council has already installed cycle parking in schools and community centres across the Borough, allowing residents to travel by bicycle.

At this stage, it is important to acknowledge that the provision of electric vehicle charging points is the responsibility of several organisations, including both the public and private sectors. However, the council acknowledges their role in the distribution of charge points, and is taking steps to make its contribution on the car parks it owns. For example:

- An application for Government funding to provide electric charging points on SBC car parks adjacent to residential clusters is nearing the point of submission. This includes the potential for a charging hub on the Doxey Road car park.
- Existing charging points on SBC car parks will be upgraded, e.g. at the Windmill and Civic Offices car parks.
- Those car parks not covered in 1 and 2 will have charging points provided when they are refurbished, with Victoria Park car park due to be refurbished this year.
- There will be provision of electric charging points for use by both taxis and privately owned cars on South Walls, Broad Street (Wilkinson’s) and Crown Street Stone this financial year as part of a grant award already obtained from central government.

The Council is committed to ensuring the air quality of the Borough is regularly monitored, ensuring a safe environment for local residents. The most recently produced Air Quality Annual Status Report, produced in line with Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, found that the air quality standards are met in Stafford Borough and that no air quality management

areas (AQMA) will be required. The findings of the 2021 ASR remains that the air quality standards in Stafford Borough will be complied with and that there is no need to declare an air quality management area. The council will continue to monitor air quality in the Borough”.

Councillor F Beatty, Cabinet Member, Economic Development and Planning Portfolio added:-

“Current development plans for the Borough are to increase people living in Stafford and live/work units:

- North end of town centre - Market Square along Goalgate; 200 homes.
- Eastgate 100+ homes.
- Gateway 900 homes.
- Windfall sites for example 300 homes at Alstom – others will come forward through permitted development.
- Overall 5 year supply requires 3981 over the plan period, and we have a new plan in progress to emphasise in town living.
- The modelling for the large sites north of the town centre and Castefields requires detailed transport mitigation – bus, walking and cycling routes included in the planning permissions.
- We have a design guide for developers and applicants that addresses green issues, but this will be strengthened once the Local Plan and supporting policies are in place”.

**(c) Roger Oldfield (as read by Maureen Alecock)**

“This month sees the second anniversary of the Declaration of a Climate Emergency. In a press release about the January 2020 consultation on the Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy Councillor Price said: ‘This is everybody’s responsibility – and we need to work with, and have the support of, our whole community.’ How has the Council over the last two years worked with the whole community and sought to gain its support”?

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

“Indeed the climate emergency is everybody’s responsibility and we do need to work with, and have the support of our whole community. It is widely publicised that the Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and committed to reduce emissions from its own activities by 2040. Since that date officers have formulated a Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy that was subject to public consultation. The approval of the strategy was delayed because the country went into a national

lockdown during March 2020, the impact of this meant that all of the resources in the Council were redirected to providing support to vulnerable residents, communities and businesses, and quite rightly so. Our strategy was approved by this council in November 2020 and implemented in December. The strategy set out the direction of travel for the authority and the first priority area was to get our own house in order which is in line with the declaration we made of reducing emissions from our own activities. That said, we have appointed to a full time Climate Change Officer and we have been working in partnership with all Staffordshire districts, Keele University and Centre for Alternative Technology to map out what is required to enable all authorities to meet their carbon zero targets. In addition to this we are currently in the process of setting up a small working group that will consist of stakeholders and community representatives and this group will work with us to start developing our approach to community engagement. Membership of this group will be by invitation only”.

As provided for under Paragraph 11.9 of the Council Procedure Rules, the following supplementary question was asked of Councillor Price:-  
“There has been no engagement on this matter with the wider community, emails are not responded to, there was no acknowledgement of a 400 signature petition and questions can only be asked at Council meetings every 6 months.”

Councillor Price replied:-

“Public consultation on the issue is engagement and many different organisations and community groups were involved. The Council’s Constitution did not allow for similar questions to be raised at Council meetings within 6 months of each other. Please contact me should you wish to discuss this further”.

## **C23 Councillor Session**

Councillor A N Pearce had submitted the following item for consideration in accordance with Paragraph 12.3(b) of the Council Procedure Rules:-

“The need for Stafford Borough Council to be pro-active in promoting the planting of more trees in the Borough, both as part of a carbon reduction strategy and a way of increasing biodiversity, has been raised in motions to Council on two previous occasions. Both motions were defeated.

Assurances were given that the Council is developing a tree strategy but this has not materialised. It would seem that a tree strategy will be part of the revised Local Plan. However, this will only apply in relation to new development proposals.

With regard to the Council’s own stock of trees, it is understood that a plan is being developed in relation to maintenance but that this does not extend to plans for new planting on Council owned land.

Neither, it would seem, are there any proposals to promote tree planting with other land owners.

I suggest that the time has come for a comprehensive tree promotion and protection plan to be developed by the Council”.

Councillor J K Price, Cabinet Member - Environment Portfolio, responded by explaining the current position with regards to the Tree Strategy noting that the Strategic Planning and Placemaking team (formerly known as Forward Planning) would consider policies, including those relating to trees, through the new Local Plan process and would lead on the production of a Tree Strategy for the Council with input from suitably qualified arboriculturists. The New Local Plan was currently scheduled for adoption in October 2022 before policy requirements can be applied to new developments through the planning application process.

The Council was responsible for a number of trees in the Borough and the Operations service already had a maintenance plan for its existing tree stock.

In addition to this the Council were currently investigating options for carbon sequestration, (removing carbon from our atmosphere) for example by planting more trees and would be working with landowners in relation to this.

## **C24 Notice of Motion**

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

“This Council: Is concerned about the number of cases reported to the RSPCA each year regarding pets given as prizes via fairgrounds, social media and other channels in England - and notes the issue predominantly concerns goldfish;

Is concerned for the welfare of those animals that are being given as prizes;

Recognises that many cases of pets being given as prizes may go unreported each year;

Supports a move to ban the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form on Stafford Borough Council land.

The Council agrees to:

Ban outright the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Stafford Borough Council land;

Write to the UK Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land”.

The Notice of Motion was moved by Councillor R P Cooke and Seconded by Councillor A D Hobbs.

Councillor J K Price responded:-

“We can make it a condition of hiring Council owned land that the giving of live animals as prizes is not allowed.

As regards writing to the Government, that is a political call, but cannot see the need; we will look after issues that affect Stafford Borough”.

Members discussed the Motion as provided by paragraph 15 of the Council Procedure Rules, and at the conclusion of the debate voted on the motion which was declared to be carried.

## **C25 Draft Equalities and Inclusion Policy 2021 - 2024**

Considered the report of the Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager.

The Deputy Leader of the Council introduced the report and concluded his comments by moving that the recommendation as set out in paragraph 2 be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor J M Pert.

The matter was duly put to the vote and subsequently declared to be unanimously carried.

RESOLVED:- That the revised Equality and Inclusion Policy 2021 - 2024 be agreed for implementation in July 2021.

## **C26 Stone Town Neighbourhood Plan - Adoption**

Considered the report of the Head of Development.

The Cabinet Member, Economic Development and Planning Portfolio introduced the report and concluded her comments by moving that the recommendation as set out in paragraph 2 be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor J Hood who highlighted the hard work which had gone into preparing the Plan which reflected the views of the people of Stone.

The matter was duly put to the vote and subsequently declared to be unanimously carried.

RESOLVED:- That the Stone Town Neighbourhood Plan (as set out in the booklet circulated with the agenda) be formally adopted and consequently 'made' to form part of statutory Development Plan for Stafford Borough and be used when determining planning applications in Stone Town (Appendix 1 to the report sets out the Decision Notice).

MAYOR