

Councillor Philip A Leason MBE JP (Mayor)

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

Councillors:

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

Officers in attendance:-

Mr T Clegg	-	Chief Executive
Mr I Curran	-	Head of Law and Administration
Mr W Conaghan	-	Press and Communication Manager
Mr J Dean	-	Democratic Services Officer

Prior to commencing proceedings, the Mayor invited all present to join him in observing a minutes silence in memory of the late former Member of the Council Ravi Rai Bhakhri.

C24 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2022 were agreed as a true and correct record.

C25 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F Beatty, M Green, I D Fordham and M V Holmes.

C26 Announcements

The Mayor was sad to announce the passing of Lily Cross, wife of Councillor Bryan Cross.

The Mayor thanked those Members who attended the Remembrance Sunday event on 13 November 2022.

Finally, the Mayor thanked those Members who attended the Stafford town centre Christmas lights switch on event on 19 November 2022.

C27 Notice of Motion

A Notice of Motion pursuant to Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules had been submitted proposed by Councillor R P Cooke and seconded by Councillor A T A Godfrey as follows:-

“Standing up for Responsible Tax Conduct

Stafford Borough Council notes that:

- The pressure on organisations to pay their fair share of tax has never been stronger.
- Polling from the Institute for Business Ethics finds that “corporate tax avoidance” has, since 2013, been the clear number one concern of the British public when it comes to business conduct.
- Two thirds of people (66%) believe the Government and local councils should at least consider a company’s ethics and how they pay their tax, as well as value for money and quality of service provided, when awarding contracts to companies.
- Around 17.5% of public contracts in the UK have been won by companies with links to tax havens.
- It has been conservatively estimated that losses from multinational profit-shifting (just one form of tax avoidance) could be costing the UK some £17bn per annum in lost corporation tax revenues.
- The Fair Tax Mark offers a means for business to demonstrate good tax conduct and has been secured by a wide range of businesses across the UK, including FTSE-listed PLCs, cooperatives, social enterprises and large private businesses.

Stafford Borough Council believes that:

- Paying tax is often presented as a burden, but it should not be.

- Tax enables us to provide services from education, health and social care, to flood defence, roads, policing and defence. It also helps to counter financial inequalities and rebalance distorted economies.
- As recipients of significant public funding, local authorities should take the lead in the promotion of exemplary tax conduct; be that by ensuring contractors are paying their proper share of tax, or by refusing to go along with offshore tax dodging when buying land and property.
- Where councils hold substantive stakes in private enterprises, influence should be wielded to ensure that such businesses are exemplars of tax transparency and tax avoidance is shunned.
- More action is needed, however, as current and proposed new UK procurement law significantly restricts councils' ability to either penalise poor tax conduct (as exclusion grounds are rarely triggered) or reward good tax conduct, when buying goods or services.
- UK cities, counties and towns can and should stand up for responsible tax conduct - doing what they can within existing frameworks and pledging to do more given the opportunity, as active supporters of international tax justice.

Stafford Borough Council resolves to:

- Approve the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration.
- Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities.
- Ensure IR35 is implemented robustly and contract workers pay a fair share of employment taxes.
- Not use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.
- Undertake due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately by suppliers as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.
- Demand clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers in the UK and overseas, given lack of clarity could be strong indicators of poor financial probity.
- Support calls for urgent reform of UK procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies”.

Councillor R P Cooke and Councillor A T A Godfrey also proposed an alteration of the Motion to include the following additional resolutions:

“Full Council resolves to:-

- Promote Fair Tax Mark certification especially for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due.
- Support Fair Tax Week events in the area and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses who are proud to promote responsible tax conduct and pay their fair share of corporation tax.
- Support calls for urgent reform of UK procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies.

Members discussed the Motion, as altered, in accordance with Rule 15 of the Council Procedure Rules.

Members then voted on the altered motion as set out above which was duly declared to have fallen.

C28 Notice of Motion

A Notice of Motion pursuant to Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules had been submitted proposed by Councillor A N Pearce and seconded by Councillor A D Hobbs as follows:-

“This council believes that:

- Everyone has the right to a warm home that is affordable to heat;
- Improving energy efficiency is central to tackling the energy crisis and cost of living crisis;
- Fossil fuels should be left in the ground, and investment in energy supply should instead be targeted at renewables;
- All new homes and workplaces should be built to the highest possible energy efficiency standards.

The council notes that:

- Stafford Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019.
- Buildings account for 23% of UK greenhouse gas emissions;
- Stafford Borough Council needs far more support from central government to help families and businesses improve energy efficiency

- Current UK government investment in energy efficiency is nowhere near the level required to address fuel poverty or meet our legally binding UK climate targets.

The council therefore calls on the executive to write to the Prime Minister and to the Borough MPs to call for:

- Additional financial support to help people to manage the cost of living crisis, with most support provided to low income households;
- A fully funded nationwide action plan to insulate all homes and businesses as quickly as possible to improve energy efficiency and reduce bills;
- A commitment to keep fossil fuels in the ground, and to invest instead in developing the renewable energy technologies and businesses that are essential for our future energy security”

Members discussed the Motion as provided by paragraph 15 of the Council Procedure Rules.

Members then voted on the motion as set out above which was duly declared to have fallen.

C29 Fees and Charges Review 2023

Considered the report of the Head of Finance (V1 10/11/2022).

Councillor R M Smith introduced the report by detailing the content of Paragraphs 3 and 5, noting that the general increase of 5% was less than half the current rate of inflation. Continuing, Councillor Smith was pleased to announce freezes to the following charges:-

- All car parking;
- Hackney carriage and private hire licenses and associated charges;
- Garden waste collection;
- Market charges

Continuing, the Portfolio holder stated that the Cabinet were mindful of the suggested increases which were modest when compared to the Retail Price Index, before concluding his comments by recommending that the proposal as set out in Paragraph 2 be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor P M M Farrington.

Members of the Council then voted on the proposal as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that the proposed Fees and Charges for 2023 be approved, specifically the new charges as set out in

paragraph 5.5 and the increases above 12.3% in paragraph 5.6 of the report.

C30 Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2022/23

Considered the report of the Deputy Head of Finance and the updated current investment list as at 10 November 2022, as circulated at the meeting.

Councillor R M Smith introduced the report by noting its recent approval by the Audit and Accounts Committee before detailing Paragraphs 3 and 5. The Cabinet Member 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.

Members of the Council then voted on the proposal as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that the report and the treasury activity and the Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 be noted.

C31 Climate Change and Green Recovery - Annual Update

Considered the report of the Interim Head of Corporate Business and Partnerships (V1 10/11/22).

Councillor J K Price introduced the report by noting its approval at the recent meeting of Cabinet before detailing the content of Paragraphs 3 and 5 and was pleased to report the progress made despite the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the continuing cost of living crisis. The Cabinet Member paid tribute to Officers for their efforts in this area of work.

The Portfolio holder concluded his comments by recommending that the proposal as set out in Paragraph 2 be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor J M Pert.

Members of the Council then voted on the proposal as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that the progress as detailed in the report be noted.

MAYOR