

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

3 JUNE 2020

Present:

Councillor Nigel Robbins - Chair
Councillor Dilys Neill - Vice-Chair

Councillors -

Stephen Andrews	Stephen Hirst
Mark Annett	Roly Hughes
Julian Beale	Robin Hughes
Gina Blomefield	Sue Jepson
Claire Bloomer	Julia Judd
Tony Berry	Richard Keeling
Ray Brassington	Juliet Layton
Patrick Coleman	Andrew Maclean
Rachel Coxcoon	Nick Maunder
Tony Dale	Richard Morgan
Andrew Doherty	Richard Norris
Mike Evemy	Gary Selwyn
Jenny Forde	Lisa Spivey
Joe Harris	Ray Theodoulou
Mark Harris	Steve Trotter
Nikki Ind	Clive Webster

CL.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest by Members.

The Head of Paid Service, Mr. Nigel Adams, declared an interest in respect of Exempt Agenda Item (14), and confirmed he would leave the Meeting while that item was being discussed.

CL.2 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

The Vice-Chair took the Chair and then reported/invited nominations for Chair of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor Nigel Robbins had been Proposed by Councillor Brassington and Seconded by Councillor Spivey. They commented that Councillor Robbins was an experienced Member at County, District and Town Council levels; and had served the Council well as Chair during the 2019-20 Council Year.

In the absence of further nominations, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Nigel Robbins be elected Chair of the Council, to hold office until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2021.

Notes:

- (i) Councillor Robbins read out his Declaration of Office, which he duly signed.
- (ii) Councillor Robbins then took the Chair.
- (iii) Councillor Robbins thanked Members for electing him as Chair of the Council and explained that it was a matter of pride to represent the Council.

CL.3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

The Chair reported/invited nominations.

Councillor Dilys Neill had been Proposed by Councillor Layton and Seconded by Councillor Webster.

In the absence of further nominations, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Dilys Neill be elected Vice-Chair of the Council, to hold office until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2021.

Notes:

- (i) Councillor Neill then read out her Declaration of Acceptance of Office, which she duly signed.
- (ii) Councillor Neill thanked Members for the confidence expressed in appointing her as Vice-Chair of the Council.

CL.4 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR, LEADER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Chair wished to express his thanks to all Members who he considered had, and were continuing to do, a remarkable job during the Covid-19 virus outbreak in regard to assisting residents and ensuring help reached where it was needed.

The Leader then explained that he wished to echo the thanks of the Chair and, in addition, extend his thanks to all Council and Public Officers, in addition to NHS workers and those from the emergency services, particularly responding to the crisis within Gloucestershire. He also highlighted how individual communities had assisted the Council by showing their resilience via their own responses and how this gave him confidence that the virus outbreak would soon be beaten.

The Head of Paid Service echoed earlier comments, especially relating to Council Officers, many of whom had been redeployed to assist with the Council's response and recovery to the virus outbreak.

CL.5 RECORD OF ATTENDANCES

The Council received the Record of Attendances at Meetings during the past Council Year.

CL.6 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

It was noted that, by virtue of the Constitution, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Joe Harris, having been appointed to serve at the May 2019 Annual Council Meeting, would remain in post until the Annual Council Meeting 2023.

RESOLVED that it be noted that Councillor Joe Harris continue to serve as the appointed Leader of the Council, to hold Office until the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2023.

Notes:

(i) It was noted that, by virtue of the Constitution, the Leader of the Council would also be Chair of the Cabinet. It was also noted that, under the 'Strong Leader' executive arrangement, the Leader appointment was for the term of the Council rather than on an annual basis.

CL.7 APPOINTMENT OF THE CABINET

It was noted that Councillor Joe Harris, as Leader of the Council, had made the following Cabinet appointments for the 2020/21 Council Year:-

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Portfolio Area</u>
Mike Evemy (Deputy Leader)	Finance
Rachel Coxcoon	Climate Change and Forward Planning
Tony Dale	Economy and Skills
Andrew Doherty	Environment, Waste and Recycling
Jenny Forde	Health and Well-being
Lisa Spivey	Housing and Homelessness
Clive Webster	Planning Department and Town and Parish Councils

The Leader explained that he had previously announced that the Cabinet Member positions and numbers would be reviewed following one year in office. He added that the reason there had initially been nine appointments to the Cabinet was owing to the ambitious manifesto of the administration and that he now wished to thank Councillor Mark Harris for his contribution to the Cabinet over the past 12 months, particularly regarding his work in relation to the Waterloo Car Park and as Chair of the Parking Board, as he was now standing

down from the Cabinet. The Leader continued that parking matters would now be required to be reviewed, given the impact of the Covid-19 virus outbreak and reminded Members that Councillor Mark Harris would continue to serve residents' needs as a 'back-bench' Member.

With regard to the appointments to the Cabinet for 2021, the Leader explained that Councillor Webster would now be responsible for town and parish council matters as this combined with his already existing role for development management; tourism would be part of Councillor Dale's role; a parking strategy, questioning the future reliance upon the car given car usage had drastically decreased due to the recent virus outbreak, would now form part of Councillor Coxcoo's role; work in relation to 'pay on exit' car parks was being developed and would now form part of the Deputy Leader's role, with the Leader continuing as the Member responsible for the Council's recovery from the virus outbreak. The Leader concluded that he had also received indication from Councillor Morgan, Leader of the Opposition Group, that there was an intention of the Group to establish a shadow cabinet and that he as Leader fully welcomed this approach.

CL.8

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

The Council was requested to make appointments to the various Committees of the Council for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

The Deputy Leader informed the Council that the proposals included a reduction in the size of the Planning and Licensing Committee, whilst increasing the size of both the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Deputy Leader also informed Members that historically, the Council had appointed Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees at separate Annual Committee Meetings and that the proposals now included the recommendation that these appointments be made by the Council during its Annual Council Meeting. In addition, the recommendations also included the addition of a Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an annual remuneration of £2,500 for the post.

The Deputy Leader then Proposed the Motion as detailed and circulated, this was then duly Seconded.

Councillor Andrews, as the existing Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed that he welcomed the administration's emphasis being given to the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee but that he considered the reason behind introducing a Vice-Chair to the Committee was based solely upon increasing the size of the Committee and not upon recommendations of the Peer Review or from a recommendation by the Constitution Working Group.

Councillor Andrews then Proposed an Amendment in that he considered there should also be an appointment made to the position of Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee. This Proposal was then duly Seconded by Councillor Morgan.

Commenting upon the Amendment, Councillor Coleman as existing Chair of the Audit Committee explained that he considered the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was greater than that of the Audit Committee and that he considered the position could be reviewed in 12 months' time.

Councillor Andrews then indicated he wished to withdraw the Amendment.

Attention was again drawn to the Briefing Note from the Head of Paid Service, which set out the allocations of each of the political groups within the Council to the various Committee and it was

RESOLVED that:

- (i) **Council agrees the committee sizes as proposed in 1.4 and agrees the nominations made by the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Groups and those of Councillors Ind and Maclean to the Planning and Licensing, Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees as listed;**
- (ii) **Council agrees that the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs shall be made by the full Council with immediate effect, removing the requirement for committee meetings following the conclusion of the Annual Council Meeting and that the Constitution be amended accordingly;**
- (iii) **Council agrees to the appointment of a Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an associated Special Responsibility Allowance of £2,500 per annum; and**
- (iv) **Council agrees the nominations to Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning and Licensing Committee, Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chair of Audit Committee proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee proposed by the Conservative Group.**

Record of Voting - for 33, against 0, abstentions 1, absent 0.

Note:

Details of the various appointments are set out in the Appendix to these Minutes.

CL.9 A REVIEW OF THE ADOPTED COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN (2011-2031)

Councillor Coxcoon, as the relevant Cabinet Member, introduced the report and explained that the item had been discussed at the June 2020 Cabinet Meeting from which recommendation (b) to undertake a partial update of the Local Plan had been recommended to the Council. She informed Members that the Plan covered the period from 2011 to 2031, but had not been adopted by the Council until 2018. Councillor Coxcoon added that the requirement was that the Plan be reviewed every five years, but that this would now commence sooner given that a number of the Plan's messages were no longer in line with national plans and there was an urgent need for local housing; the Council's Corporate Strategy had changed considerably since adoption; and the current Plan was outdated specifically in regard to economic development in town centres, which had also been affected by the Covid-19 virus outbreak. In concluding, Councillor Coxcoon explained that the alternative, to undertake a whole Plan rewrite, would be a considerable expense and one the Council would be unable to commit to at this time.

The Forward Planning Manager was invited to address the Council and in doing so reminded Members that the Plan remained fit for purpose, but a partial update would enable 'horizon scanning' and the opportunity for Officers to trial different approaches. He added the Council's Development Strategy remained robust as had been demonstrated by the applications that had been coming forward to the Council for consideration.

Various Members expressed support for the recommendation of a partial update and thanked the Officer for a comprehensive report.

In regard to specific questions raised by Members, the Forward Planning Manager confirmed that the increase in housing land supply had been based on population figures and the Council was considered to be the 10th fastest growing population and was therefore comparable to Tewkesbury District and other rural areas within the South East. The Officer also confirmed that a report would be presented to the Cabinet in summer 2020 regarding the financial aspects and considerations of undertaking an update.

Councillor Morgan expressed that whilst his Group were happy to support the recommendation of a partial update as they recognised the Plan was a living document; he advised that his Group's Members would scrutinise any review carefully on behalf of the District's residents.

The Leader of the Council advised Members that the Plan would set out to embody the Council's Corporate Priorities and ensure the Plan was 'green to the core' to enable the Council to tackle climate change and commit to undertaking development in a sustainable way.

Other Members highlighted the unknown impact of the Covid-19 virus outbreak on development going forward, but highlighted the need for the Council to assist residents with ensuring employment and housing opportunities were available to all going forward.

Councillor Coxcoon was invited to address the Council again and thanked Members for their comments and indications of support. She added that the Council would be very mindful of any slippage on the five year housing land supply and she reminded Members of a report produced in January 2020 regarding the New Homes Standard, but the requirements for which were dependent upon the Government. She therefore explained that she would welcome all Members' support in lobbying for this change and thanked the Forward Planning Officers for their work and commended the recommendation to Council for approval.

RESOLVED that Option B, as set out in the report (i.e. to undertake a partial update of the Local Plan) be approved by the Council.

Record of Voting - for 34, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CL.10 HONORARY ALDERMAN

Council was requested to consider the existing scheme for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen; and determine whether any new appointments should be made.

Councillor Jepson was invited to address the Council. She explained that the Honorary Alderman scheme had been in place since the 1980s and was not a political award but given to former Members who had provided eminent service to the Council and their communities. Councillor Jepson added that the award had been received by Members of all political and non-political persuasions and that the cost to the Council was very small with the recipients being invited to the Annual Council Meeting and previously to the Members' Christmas Lunch. Councillor Jepson expressed that she could not understand that the administration would not consider those Members of their party who had previously received the award and what they would think of the current view that the scheme should be removed and she concluded that any Member could refuse to accept the award if they were so minded.

Councillor Berry was invited to address the Council. He explained that the award recognised the input put in by former Members over a period of time and whilst he understood there was a need to review the system, considered that it was appropriate to recognise the contribution those nominated had made.

Councillor Jepson then Proposed that:-

- (i) the existing scheme for the appointment of Honorary Alderman in recognition of public service remains unchanged and that former councillors Sue Coakley, David Fowles, Chris Hancock, Nick Parsons, Lynden Stowe and Len Wilkins be bestowed the honour of Honorary Alderman.
- (ii) in addition to honouring the aforementioned ex-councillors this Council makes special note of the current circumstances and the superlative efforts made by some of our residents by appointing up to 10 Covid Community Champions proposed by a public request for nominations, to be judged by a panel of Councillors. These awards would be a framed certificate.
- (iii) A special full Council meeting should be arranged with immediate effect for the presentation of Honorary Alderman and Covid awards.

This Proposal was then duly Seconded by Councillor Berry.

The Head of Paid Service advised Members that as the Covid awards was a separate matter to that of the Honorary Alderman extant scheme; it should be voted on separately by the Council.

The Deputy Leader then addressed the Council and explained the administration considered that Members served the Council on behalf of the public and not for each other. He added that the administration agreed that there was not a requirement to award Members for long service, especially given the options to nominate individuals for more prestigious awards such as MBEs or OBEs. The Deputy Leader continued by stating that the administration felt that awarding Honorary Aldermanship sent the wrong message to the public that being a Member of the Council was similar to being a member of a private club and whilst there was no intention to remove the title from current recipients, it was disappointing that the opposition group had presented the proposal for Covid awards without any prior notice as he considered this would have received cross party support. He concluded that

the Honorary Alderman scheme was 'past its sell by date' and was not a good use of Council time.

Various Members expressed support for removal of the scheme highlighting that given its long continuation, a review was needed to ensure any awards were presented appropriately.

Other Members commented that the advice that could be gained from former Members awarded the title was far greater than any small financial cost in awarding the title and should therefore result in the scheme continuing.

Councillor Jepson was invited to address the Council again and explained that the award was often awarded to Members retiring after long service and that she could not understand the administration's intention to remove the scheme.

On being put to the vote, the first Proposition was LOST.

Record of Voting - for 16, against 17, abstentions 0, could not vote 1, absent 0.

The Leader was then invited to address the Council and commented that he was very disappointed that this had been the only item brought forward to the Council by the opposition group. He then proposed that:-

- (i) the Council make no further appointments under its Honorary Alderman scheme and therefore asks Officers to remove this scheme from its Constitution;
- (ii) the Council allow existing holders of this honorific to continue to use it if they so wish, but will not provide any special recognition or treatment for them that is not offered to other former members of the Council.

This Proposition was then duly Seconded by the Deputy Leader.

The Deputy Leader explained that he felt the scheme cost the Council in terms of its reputation and no special recognition should be given to any title holder that was not offered to other former Members.

On being put to the vote, the second Proposition was APPROVED.

Record of Voting - for 18, against 15, abstentions 1, absent 0.

A subsequent, third Proposition was then Proposed by the Deputy Leader:-

- (iii) That Officers be tasked with presenting suggestions for suitable Covid-19 community awards to the July 2020 Council Meeting.

This Proposition was then duly Seconded by the Leader.

On being put to the vote, the third Proposition was APPROVED.

Record of Voting - for 34, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CL.11 REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP

Council was requested to consider further suggestions/issues arising out of the second meeting of the Constitution Working Group, relating to a number of the Council's Procedure Rules; and other associated items.

The Leader, as Chair of the Working Group, introduced the item and highlighted various aspects of the report. With specific regard to meeting times and locations, he explained this had changed greatly as a result of virtual meetings due to the Covid-19 virus outbreak. Also, with regard to formal Public Questions, the leader explained that the proposed changes would result in the removal of the current, elongated system of public questions and was in the hope of increasing the transparency arrangements of the Council.

The Leader then proposed the following Proposition, arising directly out of the report:-

- (i) The Council re-appoints the Constitution Working Group for the municipal year for 2020/21 with the nominations as submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group (4) and Conservative Group (2) and Cllr Ind;
- (ii) Council agrees the recommendations in paragraph 2.2.4 of the report concerning questions at Council meetings;
- (iii) Council agrees the Working Group's proposals in 2.3.1 and 2.4.1 concerning the rules around submission of motions and debate;
- (iv) Council agrees the proposal in 2.6.1 to remove the requirement for Members to sign the record of attendance;
- (v) Council agrees the proposal in 2.8.1 to change the requirement for notice of substitution at committee meetings;
- (vi) Council agrees to delete the restriction around chairing committees listed in 2.9.1 of the report;
- (vii) Council agrees to the change for submission of items for discussion as described in 2.10.1;
- (viii) Council agrees to establish a Statutory Officer Appointments and Performance Committee with the membership, duties and responsibilities as described in paragraphs 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 of the report. This role of this Committee will replace the existing arrangements within the Constitution dealing with Statutory Officers referred to in 3.1. Council also agrees the five nominations to the new Committee made by the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Groups in addition to the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the largest Opposition Group.
- (ix) As part of the agreed local arrangements, if there is a need to have an Investigatory and Disciplinary Committee in relation to the Chief Executive, the membership of that Committee shall comprise three members drawn from the Statutory Officer Appointments and Performance Committee, to be politically balanced; and
- (x) This local arrangement will form part of the contractual arrangements to be agreed with the Chief Executive at the time of appointment (albeit with his/her right to revert to the entitlement specified within the JNC Conditions of Service).

This Proposition was then duly Seconded by the Deputy Leader.

In response to various questions from Members, the Deputy Leader confirmed that there should be annual reviews of all staff including senior and retained Officers of the Council; Members were limited to a speech lasting no longer

than five minutes during a debate; the intention of removing the right to reply was specifically due to this matter being also covered within personal explanation and the intention was to remove the overuse of Members replying when they had been named during a debate.

A Member expressed concern regarding the prior circulation of amendments given the current setup of virtual meetings. He also highlighted that amendments for the Meeting had been circulated shortly beforehand and this had not resulted in proper consideration by Members prior to the Meeting. The Member added that he considered that Section 3 of the report, regarding Statutory Officers, should be referred back to the next Meeting of the Constitution Working Group.

Another Member highlighted the fact that Democratic Services would be conducting a survey of Members views regarding meeting timings and locations. The Leader responded that given the recent move to virtual meetings, there would now be a period where these virtual meetings were tested to enable Members to contribute further to the survey in due course.

The Deputy Leader was invited to address the Council again and explained that he did not consider Section 3 should be referred back to the Working Group as the proposals had come about as a result of tidying and updating the sections of the Constitution and was not to be considered an overall re-write. He urged Members to support the Proposition as originally included within the report, and confirmed that any further concerns Members had should be fed back to the Leader as Chair of the Group.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the recommendations arising from the second meeting of the Constitution Working Group be agreed;**
- (b) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution arising out of the decisions made by the Council.**

Record of Voting - for 34, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.

CL.12 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and Press be excluded from the Meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involved likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs (1) and (3) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the said Act (Information relating to an individual) and (Information relating to financial or business affairs) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemptions outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information concerned.

Record of Voting - for 23, against 0, abstentions 11, absent 0.

CL.13 SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Council received an exempt report regarding the senior management structure.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the Council agrees to the early retirement of the current Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer on the terms detailed in the report;**
- (b) delegated authority be given to the Leader, in consultation with the Group Manager - Legal Services and the Section 151 Officer, to complete the necessary arrangements;**
- (c) Council approves the appointment of Dr Christine Gore as the interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service;**
- (d) Council approves the appointment of Jan Britton as the interim Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer; and**
- (e) Council gives delegated authority to the Statutory Officers Appointments and Performance Committee to recommend the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer.**

Record of Voting - for 19, against 13, abstentions 2, absent 0.

The Meeting commenced at 2.12 p.m., adjourned between 4.15 p.m. and 4.25 p.m., and 5.20 p.m. and 5.25 p.m., and closed at 6.40 p.m.

Chair

(END)

APPENDIX

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES - COUNCIL YEAR 2019/20

PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Liberal Democrat Group Representation (6):	Ray Brassington Patrick Coleman Juliet Layton Dilys Neill Gary Selwyn Clive Webster
Conservative Group Representation (4):	Stephen Hirst Sue Jepson Julia Judd Richard Keeling
Non-Grouped Member Representation (1):	Nikki Ind
Total Members: 11	

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Liberal Democrat Group Representation (5):	Claire Bloomer Patrick Coleman Roly Hughes Dilys Neill Gary Selwyn
Conservative Group Representation (4):	Stephen Andrews Gina Blomefield Richard Norris Ray Theodoulou
Non-Grouped Member Representation (1):	Andrew Maclean

Total Members: 10

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Liberal Democrat Group Representation (4): Patrick Coleman

Mark Harris

Roly Hughes

Nick Maunder

Conservative Group Representation (3): Stephen Andrews

Tony Berry

Ray Theodoulou

Total Members: 7

(END)