

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of Council

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 25 MAY 2023

Councillors Present: Antony Amirtharaj, Phil Barnett, Dennis Benneyworth, Dominic Boeck, Jeff Brooks, Nick Carter, Patrick Clark, Heather Codling, Martin Colston, Jeremy Cottam, Iain Cottingham, Carolyne Culver, Paul Dick, Lee Dillon, Billy Drummond, Nigel Foot, Denise Gaines, Stuart Gourley, Clive Hooker, Adrian Abbs, Paul Kander, Jane Langford, Janine Lewis, Ross Mackinnon, Alan Macro, David Marsh, Geoff Mayes, Biyi Oloko, Erik Pattenden, Justin Pemberton, Vicky Poole, Christopher Read, Matt Shakespeare, Owen Jeffery, Richard Somner, Stephanie Steevenson, Joanne Stewart, Louise Sturgess, Clive Taylor, Martha Vickers, Tony Vickers and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Honorary Alderman Andrew Rowles

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Honorary Alderman Graham Jones, Councillor Laura Coyle, Councillor Lynne Doherty, Councillor Rick Jones and Councillor Alan Law

PART I

1. Election of the Chairman for the Municipal Year 2023/2024

Sarah Clarke, Monitoring Officer, in the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, requested nominations for the position of Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2023/2024.

Councillor Phil Barnett proposed Councillor Jeremy Cottam be elected Chairman of the Council for the Municipal Year 2023/2024. This was seconded by Councillor Heather Codling. There were no further nominations.

Councillor Barnett in proposing Councillor Cottam for the role of Chairman stated that it gave him great pleasure to propose Councillor Cottam as Chairman as he had served the local community for decades, be it working in voluntary groups or as a Town Councillor and District Councillor. He had sat on a variety of committees, including chairing some, since he had been elected in 1991. He had driven through several projects since becoming a councillor including the Hungerford, Thatcham and Northcroft Leisure Centres. There was also the Corn Exchange and the handing over of Greenham Common to the Council. When putting yourself forward for public life the support of your family was paramount and his wife, who was in attendance, had been ever present in supporting him. With his experience, especially being a past Chairman, he would be able to carry out this role with an impeccable and impartial way. He commended to Council that Councillor Cottam be elected as Chairman.

Councillor Codling stated that she had known Councillor Cottam since they had both been elected in 1991 and was someone who was always happy to offer assistance and advice. He had vast experience as a councillor at both a district and town level. He had served as Chairman of the Eastern Area Planning Committee as well as being Chairman of Council where he welcomed the Queen and Princess Anne to the district. He ran his own business as well as being community focused such as collecting clothing for Ukrainian refugees. She was honoured to second the proposal.

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RESOLVED that Councillor Jeremy Cottam be elected as Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2023/2024.

The Chairman signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Chairman thanked the Council for electing him which he regarded as an honour, and he appreciated the confidence and trust placed in him to fulfil the requirements of the new Council.

2. **Election of Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2023/2024**

The Chairman requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2023/2024.

In response to this request, Councillor Billy Drummond was proposed by Councillor Adrian Abbs and the proposal was seconded by Councillor Denise Gaines. There were no further nominations.

Councillor Abbs said that he first came across Councillor Drummond because of his long service in Greenham and when he had helped him out with a planning application. It had been over a decade and he still supported him when he was elected as a Councillor in 2019. He was a trustworthy man and had always tried to do the best for the community, and thus he was privileged to recommend him as Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Gaines, in seconding the proposal, said that she had known Councillor Drummond since 2003 and since then he had played an important part of the Opposition's back bench and been an excellent community Councillor who always put his residents first.

RESOLVED that Councillor Billy Drummond be elected as Vice-Chairman of Council for the Municipal Year 2023/2024.

The Vice-Chairman read and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Councillor Drummond thanked all those who voted for him and said he would represent all residents in his ward. He thanked Members for putting their faith in him in being the Vice Chairman for the Municipal Year. He made reference to when Councillor Cottam was a past Chairman and cut the padlock in the Greenham flood gate and also mentioned the purchase of Greenham Common for £1 bringing it back to the Council. He was in excellent hands with the Chairman and looked forward to supporting him.

3. **Chairman's Remarks**

The Chairman, Councillor Jeremy Cottam, informed that the past Chairman and Vice-Chairman had given their apologies but he had agreed to read the following statement from the outgoing Chairman, Councillor Rick Jones:

"Members, my apologies for not being with you to open the meeting and take part in the handover ceremony.

Thanks to you all for supporting me as Chairman for the past year. Chairing West Berkshire Council meetings can be interesting, even challenging at times, but also rewarding, and I think we represent our residents well.

Thanks especially to my Vice-Chairman Councillor Alan Law and to Councillor Clive Hooker and former Councillor Graham Pask who have deputised on various occasions. Thanks mostly to Sarah Clarke and her staff, who work tirelessly to make the meetings work and the Chairman's life feasible. Also to Jake Carpenter, who stepped in to help manage the diary and events. I am most grateful to all.

It was a momentous year to be Chairman of the Council, taking part in unique royal occasions alongside the more usual events. I have also been fortunate to visit, and sometimes help, many voluntary organisations and meet some inspirational people. West

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Berkshire is a wonderful place to live, where people are glad to help each other in so many ways.

Good luck to the new Chairman, Councillor Jeremy Cottam, and to all Members, new and old.”

The Chairman welcomed both returning and newly elected Councillors and said he looked forward to working with them over the coming year. He added the importance of continuing the culture of respectful debate within the Chamber.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

5. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 2 March 2023 were approved as a true record subject to the following amendment; that the vote on the Revenue Budget showed Councillor Steve Masters as voting for and abstaining, this was amended to note as only voting for.

The Minutes of the extraordinary meeting on 2 March 2023 were approved as a true record.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2023 were approved as a true record subject to the following amendment: that on the item Creation of an Additional Executive Director (People), and a Transformation Service Director Role, that the last paragraph be attributed to Councillor Doherty and not Councillor Stewart.

6. **Election of the strong Leader of the Council for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year**

The Council considered nominations for the Strong Leader of the Council. The Monitoring Officer informed that the appointment would be for four years.

Councillor Jeff Brooks nominated Councillor Lee Dillon. Councillor Erik Pattenden seconded the nomination.

MOTION: that Councillor Lee Dillon be appointed as the Strong Leader of the Council for the next four years.

Councillor Brooks said that he had known Councillor Dillon since he was 15 years old and attended a branch meeting of the Thatcham Liberal Democrats, where Councillor Dillon told him how to be a politician. It had been a delight to know him for the past 26 years. His dedication to do well for the people of West Berkshire was admirable. He had high levels of integrity, inclusivity and was respectful. His desire to do well would continue to be a great benefit to the Council.

Councillor Erik Pattenden said that Councillor Dillon had lived in West Berkshire for 40 years, attended local schools and had been a Councillor since 2007. He was the natural Strong Leader of the Council who believed in fairness and equality.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Lee Dillon, was thankful for the support for him to become the Leader of West Berkshire Council. The district showcased some of the best of the country such as its outstanding natural beauty, a great place to live and a great place to do business. He thanked his family for their support and mentioned that his first role in politics was at 11 years of age when he campaigned to save the spinney behind his home, this started his passion for politics. The Manifesto made clear commitments to residents stating what the new Administration would do and where they would work to get

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better outcomes. They were working on bringing a new Council Strategy back for approval and had already started on bringing football back to Faraday Road, extending pedestrianisation in the Town Centre to support the night time economy, making improvements in planning and dealing with pot holes. Decision making would be improved involving more Councillors who wished to participate. Advisory Boards would be introduced by Portfolio Holders and the Chairman of Scrutiny would be an Opposition Member. The Administration would not mark their own homework. There were many challenges ahead but they would work through them with innovation and imagination, and they would put the Council's finances back on a stable position. He mentioned that the motto of the Council was 'Forward Together' and he hoped Members would keep this in mind.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon offered his congratulations to the new Leader of the Council. He said his party would be a robust and responsible Opposition challenging those decisions they disagreed with but supporting the others. He wished the Administration well.

7. **Appointment of the Executive by the Leader of the Council for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year**

Councillor Lee Dillon, Leader of the Council (and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Communications and Public Safety), announced the appointment of Members to the Executive for 2023/2024 as follows:

Councillor Jeff Brooks - Deputy Leader of Council and Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation

Councillor Iain Cottingham - Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services

Councillor Martin Colston - Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Growth and Strategy Development

Councillor Alan Macro - Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health Integration

Councillor Heather Codling - Portfolio Holder for Children, Education and Young People's Services

Councillor Janine Lewis - Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside

Councillor Adrian Abbs - Portfolio Holder for Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity

Councillor Denise Gaines - Portfolio Holder for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel

Councillor Tony Vickers - Portfolio Holder for Planning & Community Engagement

Councillor Lee Dillon said that it would be of no surprise to see Councillor Jeff Brooks being Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Governance and Transformation. With a Deputy Leader you want someone who was on your shoulder supporting you and he had never failed to do that. He said he would not go through the whole list, but the Executive had been designed to break down silo working across the Council. The Executive was made up of half existing Councillors and half new Councillors, which meant new ideas coming into the heart of decision making for the Council. The Executive was represented with Councillors from the west and the east of the District and from Thatcham and Newbury. There was also a bigger percentage of women on the Executive than there was a percentage in the party. He commended his Executive to the Council.

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8. **Appointment of and Allocation of Seats on Committees for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year**

The Council considered the report (Agenda Item 9) regarding the appointment and allocation of seats on Committees for the next Municipal Year in accordance with the duty under section 15 of the Local Government Housing Act 1989, that reflects the latest political make-up of the Council and that reflects the new Political Administration's proposed revisions to this allocation. A supplementary pack had been circulated to Members proposing the allocation of seats in accordance with political balance.

The report sought agreement of the Council's Policy Framework for 2023/24 as set out in paragraph 5.22 of the report, reflective of the Policies reserved for Full Council.

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Lee Dillon and seconded by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

"That the Council:

Notes that under paragraph 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, notice has been received that the Members set out in paragraph 5.1 are to be regarded as Members of the Liberal Democrat and Conservative Groups respectively.

That the Council agrees to the appointment of the various Committees and to the number of places on each as set out in Table A, at paragraph 5.5.

That the Council agrees to the allocation of seats to the Political Groups in accordance with section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1989 as set out in Table B at paragraph 5.14 of the report.

That the number of substitutes on each of the Committees and Commissions be as set out in Table C, at paragraph 5.17.

In respect of the District and Area Planning Committees, the substitute Members are all drawn from Members representing wards within the Committee's area who are not appointed to the Committee. Where substitutes attend the District Planning meeting they need to be drawn from the same Area Planning meeting as the Member they are substituting for.

That the Council approves the appointment of Members to the Committees as set out in Appendix A and notes the appointments set out in Appendix B which are in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups.

That the Council, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 as amended, agrees that the Council's Policy Framework for 2023/24 be as set out in paragraph 5.22 of this report, and that any necessary amendments be made to the Council's Constitution.

That the Council notes that other plans, policies and strategies requiring approval which are not included in the approved Policy Framework and which are not otherwise reserved by law to Council, will be the responsibility of the Council's Executive in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

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That the Council notes that Paragraph 6.2 of Article 6 of the Constitution will be amended to reflect any changes made to the Executive by the Leader of the Council at the Annual Council meeting.

That the appointment of two non-voting co-opted Parish/Town Councillors be made to the Governance Committee as detailed in Appendix A.

To re-appoint three Independent Persons (standards) namely Lindsey Appleton, Mike Wall and Alan Penrith, and to appoint Simon Carey as an Independent Person (Audit) to focus on the risk and audit functions of the Governance Committee. To note the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in Appendix A.

That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any changes required to the Constitution as a result of the changes to the number of Members of the Council and following the appointments to Committees.

Council is asked to note the Council Bodies Rules as detailed at Appendix D.”

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

9. **Appointments to Outside Bodies 2023/2024**

The Council considered a report (Agenda Item 10) concerning the annual nominations to the following Outside Bodies:

- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel
- Local Government Association General Assembly

MOTION: Proposed by Councillor Lee Dillon and seconded by Councillor Ross Mackinnon:

“That the Council:

Approve the appointments for the Municipal Year 2023/24, in accordance with Appendix A, of Member representatives to the following outside bodies:

- Royal Berkshire Fire Authority – Councillors Jeff Brooks, Billy Drummond, Owen Jeffery and Dennis Benneyworth.
- Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel – Councillor Vicky Poole.

Note the appointments as detailed in Appendix A of Member representatives to the Local Government Association General Assembly. Councillors Jeff Brooks, Martin Colston, Lee Dillon and Ross Mackinnon.

The Motion was put to the meeting and duly **RESOLVED**.

10. **Licensing Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Licensing Committee had not met.

11. **Personnel Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Personnel Committee had not met.

12. **Governance Committee**

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Governance Committee had met on 20 March 2023.

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13. District Planning Committee

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the District Planning Committee had not met.

14. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission had not met.

15. Health Scrutiny Committee

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Health Scrutiny Committee had not met.

16. Health and Wellbeing Board

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Health and Wellbeing Board had met on 20 April 2023.

17. Joint Public Protection Committee

The Council noted that, since its last meeting, the Joint Public Protection Committee had not met.

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 7.46 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature