

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 23rd September, 2020

Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Simon White (Chair)

Councillors:	John Cooper	Simon Tagg	Ruth Wright
	June Walklate	Silvia Burgess	Gary White
	Ian Wilkes	Mike Stubbs	Jill Waring
	Gillian Williams	Amelia Rout	Andrew Fox-Hewitt
	John Williams	John Tagg	Brian Johnson
	Andrew Fear	Paul Northcott	Annabel Lawley
	Tony Kearon	Bert Proctor	Sue Moffat
	Paul Waring	Sylvia Dymond	Jennifer Cooper
	Mark Holland	Trevor Johnson	Gillian Burnett
	Julie Cooper	Andrew Parker	Helena Maxfield
	Marion Reddish	Sarah Pickup	Kenneth Owen
	Kyle Robinson	Mark Olszewski	Graham Hutton
	Elizabeth Shenton	Dave Jones	David Grocott
	Gill Heesom	Allison Gardner	
	Stephen Sweeney	Barry Panter	

Officers:	David Adams	Executive Director Operational Services
	Geoff Durham	Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer
	Jan Willis	Interim Executive Director - Resources and Support Services and Section 151 Officer
	Martin Hamilton	Chief Executive
	Simon McEneny	Executive Director - Commercial Development & Economic Growth
	Daniel Dickinson	Head of Legal & Governance /Monitoring Officer
	David Elkington	Head of Customer and Digital Services

Note: In line with Government directions for the CV-19 pandemic, this meeting was conducted using a hybrid method through video conferencing and attendance in person, whilst observing social distancing - in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

1. **ALDERMAN DAVID BECKET**

Following a minute's silence, Members paid tribute to Alderman David Becket who passed away in April. Alderman Becket had held many roles during his time with the Authority including that of Mayor.

Members described David as a true politician and a sincere gentleman who was determined and dedicated in everything that he did.

On behalf of the Council, the Leader passed on best wishes to Ann and her family.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February, 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

5. ELECTION OF MAYOR 2020/21

It was moved by Councillor Simon Tagg and seconded by Councillor Sweeney that Councillor John Cooper be appointed as Mayor for the 2020/21 municipal year.

Resolved: That Councillor John Cooper be appointed as Mayor for the 2020/21 municipal year.

The Mayor made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

6. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR 2020/21

Two nominations were received

Councillor Owen. Proposed by Councillor Proctor and seconded by Councillor Simon Tagg.

Councillor Shenton. Proposed by Councillor Stubbs and seconded by Councillor Jones.

Results of the vote:

Cllr Shenton - 20

Cllr Owen - 24

Abstain – 0

Resolved: That Councillor Ken Owen be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the 2020/21 municipal year.

The Deputy Mayor made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

7. MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS

Mayoress –	Mrs Angela Cooper
High Constables –	Sean Cooper and Isaac Nixon
Chaplain –	Father Chris Routledge
Mace Bearers –	Mrs Angela Mayer and Alderman Chris Malkin
Mayor’s Cadet -	Cadet Bromley – 435 Squadron

8. MAYORAL ADDRESS

The Mayor thanked the Council for affording him the honour of the appointment and paid tribute to the hard work, enthusiasm and commitment of his predecessor.

9. VOTE OF THANKS TO THE RETIRING MAYOR AND CONSORT

On behalf of the Council, The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg expressed gratitude and appreciation to the retiring Mayor and his Consort for their tireless dedication to the role and their services to the Borough and its communities. Councillor Tagg added that the Borough had been served well by the retiring Mayor during his extended term of office due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Although engagements had been fewer, the Mayor had adapted the role through the use of video conferencing and social media and some socially distanced events.

The Group Leaders thanked the retiring Mayor for his enthusiasm, drive and commitment in raising the profile of the Borough and Mayoralty and said that he was a credit to the Borough

10. RESPONSE OF THE RETIRING MAYOR AND SUMMARY OF THE MAYORAL YEAR

The retiring Mayor thanked Members of the Council and congratulated Councillor John Cooper on his appointment. Councillor Simon White stated that this had been his second term of office and that this year had been affected by the pandemic, starting with with the postponement of his main event – the Mayor’s Ball in April.

Only a few Mayoral engagements had been carried out, some being virtual and some with social distancing – including the eightieth anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

Some fundraising events had taken place such as the charity curry evening and just over £4000 had been raised throughout the year with donations and other collection events. The Mayor’s Ball in 2021 would be a joint event with the Mayor, Councillor John Cooper and monies raised would be split between their two charities.

The Mayor thanked everyone who had helped him throughout his year including his Consort, Sergeant, High Constable, Chaplain and Secretary.

Special thanks were given to Jim Worgan who had stepped down as Macebearer this year.

11. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor stated that this was a shorter term of office than normal with very few engagements coming in at the present time but he looked forward to carrying out more engagements in the near future.

The Mayor announced that his chosen charity for this year would be the Alice Charity.

Members were asked to consider the granting of Freedom of the Borough to the Royal Stoke University Hospital. The Borough owed a great debt to the hospital for their hard work during the current pandemic.

12. **APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET**

The Leader confirmed Councillor Sweeney as Deputy Leader and the following as members of the Cabinet for 2020/21:

Councillor Maxfield
 Councillor T Johnson
 Councillor Northcott
 Councillor J Waring
 Councillor S Sweeney
 Councillor S Tagg

13. **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS FOR 2020/21**

It was proposed by Councillor S Tagg and seconded by Councillor Sweeney that the appointments to committees, chairs, vice-chairs for 2020/21 be as set out in the agenda and that the appointments to outside bodies be noted.

Committee Membership

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the appointments to committees, as set out in the agenda, be approved
 - (ii) That the appointments to outside bodies, as agreed at the 2019 Annual Council, be noted.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs

Where there were more than one nomination for Chair or Vice- Chair a vote was taken.

Resolved: That the following Chair and Vice-Chair appointments be approved:

COMMITTEE	CHAIR	VICE - CHAIR
Audit and Standards	P. Waring	K.Owen
Conservation Advisory	Julie Cooper	T. Johnson
Employment Committee	Portfolio Holder	No nomination required

Licensing & Public Protection	S. White	G. Hutton
Planning	A. Fear	M. Reddish*
Health, Wellbeing & Partnerships Scrutiny	I. Wilkes	Julie Cooper
Economy, Environment & Place Scrutiny	G. White	G. Heesom
Finance, Assets & Performance Scrutiny	M. Holland	B. Proctor

*Denotes where a vote was not taken as only one nomination was received.

14. **CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL**

Consideration was given to a report asking Members to approve changes made by the Audit and Standards Committee in respect of changes to the Constitution for Financial Regulations/Procedures and Taxi Licensing Delegations.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney advised Members that, in addition to the changes recommended in the appended Audit and Standards report, a further change to the Financial Regulations was required. This was to alter references therein to the Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) so that they referred to the Section 151 Officer instead. Whilst these roles were currently being discharged by the same post holder, that may not always be so in the future. The change was necessary so that it was clear the relevant responsibilities sat with the role of Section 151 Officer.

The proposed changes to the Taxi Licensing Delegations would remove the need for minor policy transgressions to be taken to the Public Protection Sub Committee.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the recommendations made by the Audit and Standards committee be approved as follows:-
 - (a) on 9 March 2020 in respect of changes to the Financial Regulations and Procedures; and,
 - (b) on 1 May 2020 in respect of the delegation of Taxi Licensing Delegations
 - (ii) That the Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority to make any consequential changes to the Constitution necessary to give effect to or as a result the same, including correcting references to the Section 151 officer where necessary.

15. **URGENT DECISION TAKEN ON 28 APRIL, 2020**

Consideration was given to a report regarding an urgent decision, taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with Group Leaders regarding exemption of the six month rule.

The Leader advised that this was a decision that had been taken at the beginning of the pandemic lockdown to ensure that Members were not penalised for non-attendance at meetings.

The report also asked whether Members wished to extend the exemption given the current uncertainty of when things could return to normal. The Leader proposed that the exemption be extended to the Annual Council in May, 2021. This was seconded by Councillor Stubbs stating that Members should be allowed to shield from the virus if they needed to.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, on 28 April 2020, be noted.
 - (ii) That the dispensation granted, which prevents Councillors ceasing to be members of the authority if they do not attend a council meeting for a period of 6 months, be extended to the next Annual Council.

16. **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO CHAPEL AND HILL CHORLTON PARISH COUNCIL**

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval to use its powers under s. 91 of the Local Government Act, 1972 to enable Chapel and Hill Chorlton Parish Council to function until an election is held.

The Leader advised that issues had led to members resigning. This Council can use its powers to get the Parish Council up and running through the appointment of Borough Councillors to the role. Councillors Hutton, Northcott and Panter would be appointed until the elections in 2021.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make an Order under section 91 Local Government Act 1972, in respect of Chapel Chorlton & Hill Chorlton Parish Council, in the form of the draft order in the Appendix.
 - (ii) That the Head of Legal and Governance be instructed to procure that an election be held for all Chapel Chorlton & Hill Chorlton Parish Council seats on 6 May 2021.

17. **KIDSGROVE SPORTS CENTRE REFURBISHMENT UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report providing an update on the refurbishment of Kidsgrove Sports Centre.

The Leader stated that he was pleased to bring this item to Council.

The Council had worked closely with Staffordshire County Council, the Kidsgrove Community Group and Willmot Dixon to put a plan together and thanks were given to everyone involved in the process.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.4 which showed an increase in costs to £5.998m but assurance was given that funding was in place. Paragraph 7.2 gave a funding summary.

Work on the refurbishment would get underway by the end of this year with completion in 2021. Once completed, it would be a quality multi-sports facility for the whole of the north of the Borough.

Councillor Sweeney said that the Leader deserved a vote of thanks for the work that he had done on the project and stated that Kidsgrove needed this sports centre.

Councillor Stubbs welcomed the report and implored Council's support stating that it was important that the project was put forward – not just for Kidsgrove but Cheshire, Stoke on Trent and Newcastle too.

Councillor Jill Waring advised Members that the Sports Centre had originally opened in 1976. It was a very hot summer and there had been queues to get into the pool. The Centre was still in demand when it closed in 2017.

All Members were fully supportive of the project and thanked the Community Group for their hard work.

Councillor Gary White fully supported the project and made reference to the increased costs. He asked the Leader for assurances that there would not be any further increases or burden on this Council.

The Leader shared the concerns of Councillor White and reassured Members that other funding was being looked at from The Town Deal and through contacting the local MP.

The Community Group were also talking to the Tennis Association and the Football Association for grants.

The project had taken time but there was now a timescale in place to bring contractors in before Christmas with a completion date of the end of 2021.

The vote was taken by roll call rather than a show of hands. The vote in favour of the recommendation was unanimous.

Resolved: That the decisions of Cabinet be noted and endorsed and
That the work that has taken place with Council Officers, the
Kidsgrove Sports Centre Community Group and the contractor over
the past few months to finalise the refurbishment plans, be
acknowledged.

18. **STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The Leader, Councillor Simon Tagg submitted a report which provided an update to Members on the activities and decisions of the Cabinet, together with the Forward Plan.

The Leader thanked officers for their work in preparing for this evening's hybrid meeting and preparation of the room to create a safe environment.

The Statement was taken a paragraph at a time to allow for questions to be asked.

Paragraph 2:

Councillor Paul Waring referred to the Cabinet meeting of 22 April, 2020, where a 'worse case scenario' of asking the Section 151 Officer to issue a S.114 Notice had been discussed. Councillor Waring asked the Leader if he could update Council as to what government funding had been received.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency, Councillor Stephen Sweeney stated that, a few months ago, the Council did not know where money would come from. Through lobbying MP's, and other networks, the government listened and responded with an initial £1.292m, with a further £215,000 later allocated on top of that. There was also a scheme to compensate for lost income whereby, of any income losses made compared to the budget, the Council would bear the first 5% and 75% of the remainder would be paid back by Central Government.

A New Burdens Grant of £170,000 had been received from the Government to meet the costs of administering the business support grants and with the prospect of up to £3.5m coming in, the Council's finances were now on a more stable footing.

Councillor Hutton stated that the waste collection teams had continued to collect waste throughout the pandemic and asked the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling to thank the teams for the delivery of the new blue bins. Councillor Hutton asked how Newcastle compared with other Councils.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Recycling, Councillor Trevor Johnson stated that a press statement had been done to thank all of those involved. The new scheme was several weeks in and the average tonnage was 200 tonnes per week, compared to the old scheme which brought in 160 tonnes per week.

Councillor Trevor Johnson stated that garden waste collections had also kept going throughout the lockdown and Newcastle was the only Authority in Staffordshire to do so and with a reduced number of staff.

Councillor Panter asked about the Council's Planning function.

Councillor Northcott stated that in the last couple of years, the Planning Department had gone through a major transformation with staffing and also, Newcastle was one of the first Authorities to move to virtual meetings during the current pandemic. The ability to work from home made it possible for applications to continue to be submitted and decisions made and the internet made it possible to continue holding Planning Committees.

In terms of performance, the Council was in the top percentile having achieved 100% in major and minor applications. The Pre Validation Check Scheme that had been introduced would ensure the quality of applications submitted. Also, the Local Plan Enforcement Plan had been updated.

Councillor Jones stated that a number of Borough residents had either passed away or lost a loved one. He asked if the Leader would commit to a memorial in the Borough.

The Leader stated that there were lots of ways to commemorate those who had lost their lives to the virus. The pandemic was not yet over but once it was, the Council could then look at this further.

Paragraph 3.1:

Councillor Heesom welcomed the investment in the new CCTV System in the town centre and asked if there were any plans to extend the coverage – especially into subways.

The Leader confirmed that some of the Town Deal money was for the expansion of CCTV in subways, particularly the sunken roundabout area. This would help to increase safety.

Paragraph 3.2:

Councillor Brian Johnson stated that it was clear that Aspire were key partners of the Joint Housing Allocations Policy. However, residents were raising concerns about the lack of family homes available in the Borough. He asked the Leader if he would work closely with Aspire to streamline services for homes to be found urgently for families.

The Leader stated that, through the joint Policy, the Council could work closely with Aspire and there was a close working relationship. Councillor Johnson was asked to pass the information on to the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Councillor Helena Maxfield.

Paragraph 3.4:

Councillor Holland welcomed the awarding of the contract for the A53 Bus Retrofit and asked the Leader to confirm that the Council would work with partners to avoid the introduction of a chargeable clean air zone.

The Leader stated that the Cabinet wished to avoid a chargeable clean air zone which would be disastrous for the local economy.

This was delivery of a scheme that would get the buses retrofitted.

Paragraph 3.6:

Councillor Hutton had had a number of Planning breaches brought to his attention and asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth, Councillor Paul Northcott to thank The Head of Planning and his staff for their prompt response to the instances that had been brought to their attention.

Councillor Northcott agreed to pass Councillor Hutton's comments on.

Paragraph 3.7:

Councillor Parker stated that it was good to see people shopping in the town centre and observing social distancing and asked the Leader what the Future High Streets Fund and Advanced Town Deal Funding would be used for.

The Leader stated that anyone going into the town centre in the week or on a Sunday will have seen advancement there and the lockdown was helping people to shop local. With regard to the Future High Streets Fund, a good bid had been put in to redevelop the Ryecroft area and should be hearing from the Government shortly. It was hoped that the regeneration could be got up and running in the town – getting people living in and around the town centre.

Councillor Burnett stated that this funding was long overdue and was glad that it had been brought forward.

Councillor Stubbs asked if the Leader could confirm had received acknowledgement of the Advanced Town Deal Funding and when the funding was expected.

The Leader confirmed that this was imminent. The Council was working on a bigger Town Deal Plan for Newcastle and Kildgrove and working towards getting the bids in.

Paragraph 3.8:

Councillor Fear echoed Councillor Hutton's comments about the Council's Recycling Service and thanked all those working with it. Councillor Fear referred to the subscription for garden waste collection and asked the Leader if there had been any increase in fly tipping since its introduction.

The Leader stated that the whole new recycling system was a great advance. The new bins and bag had gone down well with residents and it was a much better for the staff collecting the waste.

Councillor Trevor Johnson stated that there had been no noticeable cases of fly tipping. There had been one instance that was a County Highways problem but it had been sorted.

Paragraph 4:

Councillor Brian Johnson stated that when he tried to view the Forward Plan it had looped back so he was unable to view it.

The Leader said that when he had tried the link it had given a drop down menu with an option to view the Forward Plan but would check that it was working.

Resolved: That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received and noted.

19. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Written reports were submitted for the Committees that had met since the last Council meeting.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

20. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Written reports had been submitted for the Scrutiny Committees which had met since the last Council Meeting.

Councillor Holland gave a verbal update on the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee stating that the Committee had met remotely on 25 June to discuss the Coronavirus recovery plan and had met again last Thursday with a fuller agenda. Councillor Holland was hopeful that the next meeting, in December would be in person.

Resolved: That the reports be received.

21. QUESTIONS TO THE MAYOR, CABINET MEMBERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Councillor Brian Johnson asked the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage to confirm what actions had been taken and support given in respect of Knutton Community Centre.

Actions taken to ensure repairs were completed swiftly

Councillor Jill Waring responded, stating that The Council's Facilities Team had been asked to investigate the concerns raised and had commissioned a structural engineer to determine the cause of the failures. A specification had been done and a quote had been obtained.

Support offered to community groups by the Borough Council

The management committee of the community centre had been contacted by officers requesting contact details and the requirements of users of the facility and they would be contacted to find potential alternative venues.

Actions to ensure a swift solution to the issues

Further information was required as to the extent of the repairs of the Community Centre. Officers were progressing, however, due to the current situation there was no guarantee as to if and when the works could be carried out. Stock condition reports had been provided which were used to determine the estimated cost of the works. Due to the current pandemic, spending must be prioritised on a case by case basis. The total figure for the repairs to the centre would be £265,000, assuming all went to plan. The Council could not afford to cover all of the repairs showing up in the stock condition report at one time.

Councillor Brian Johnson asked the Portfolio Holder if she would write to the groups concerned to offer full support in finding alternative venues and speak with them in order for them to continue functioning.

The Portfolio Holder agreed that she would write to them offering support.

Councillor Elizabeth Shenton asked the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and Heritage for an update on the main swimming pool at J2.

The Portfolio Holder advised that a decision had been taken to close the main pool due to a water leakage which had been identified as a fracture in the pipework. The

location was found by Stirling Hydrotec and repair works commenced on 14 September. On 17 September, more leaks had been identified. Officers took the decision to hand over the works to Morgan Sindall.

Representatives of Morgan Sindall have attended at key stages of the work to witness the work carried out. Proposals have been submitted and upon the agreement of Morgan Sindall, Members and customers can then be advised when the main pool is likely to reopen.

Councillor Shenton asked what arrangements had been made in the interim for classes and school swims and also, if members of the Council would be advised of the costs involved and whether there was money in the budget.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the learner pool was still operating and advised that Members would be advised of the costs involved.

22. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

No petitions were handed in.

23. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR SIMON WHITE
Chair

COUNCILLOR JOHN COOPER
Chair

Meeting concluded at 9.30 pm