

Council
6 SEPTEMBER 2023

- Present: Councillors: David Skipp (Chairman), Nigel Emery (Vice-Chairman), Mark Baynham, Emma Beard, Tony Bevis, Martin Boffey, Colette Blackburn, Peter van der Borgh, James Brookes, Jon Campbell, Philip Circus, Paul Clarke, Mike Croker, Joy Dennis, Len Ellis-Brown, Victoria Finnegan, Claudia Fisher, Ruth Fletcher, Chris Franke, Anthony Frankland, Nick Grant, Joan Grech, Kasia Greenwood, Tony Hogben, Alex Jeffery, Liz Kitchen, Joanne Knowles, Lynn Lambert, Dennis Livingstone, Nicholas Marks, John Milne, Colin Minto, Roger Noel, Jon Olson, Sam Raby, Mike Wood and Tricia Youtan
- Apologies: Councillors: Sam Bateman, Malcolm Eastwood, Warwick Hellawell, Richard Landeryou, Alan Manton, Jay Mercer, Josh Potts, Jonathan Taylor, Clive Trott and Belinda Walters
- Absent: Councillors: John Trollope

CO/34 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 June and of the extraordinary meeting of the Council held on 20 July were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

CO/35 **MINUTES - EXEMPT**

The exempt minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Council held on 20 July were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CO/36 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

CO/37 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor David Skipp, Chairman of the Council, announced that he had sent flowers, on behalf of the Council, to ex-Councillor Claire Vickers following the death of her husband.

Councillor Boffey, Leader of the Council announced that two Deputy Cabinet Members had been appointed: Councillor Joanne Knowles for the Local Economy & Place portfolio; and Councillor James Brookes for the Leisure, Culture & Green Spaces portfolio.

Councillor John Milne, Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, announced that a number of consultation meetings with Parish and

Neighbourhood Councils were being held before the proposed Local Plan was considered by Council. Focus would be on local sites relevant to that area. The first meeting had taken place in Rusper this week, and Members are welcome to attend future sessions.

Councillor Ruth Fletcher, Cabinet Member for Local Economy & Place, made two announcements:

- The Horsham District Job Skills fair was taking place on Saturday 30 September in the Drill Hall. The event has proved successful in the past and gives job seekers the opportunity to talk to a variety of businesses and find out about voluntary work, apprenticeships and training opportunities.
- As part of the Council's ambition to support active travel, the Council was supporting improvements to the White Bridge Link pathway linking Bramber and Upper Beeding to Steyning. This is a car-free cycling and walking route of value to children travelling to school. Unfortunately, WSCC has had to close the bridge due to structural concerns. The Cabinet Member has asked officers to work with WSCC to expedite a solution so the scheme can go ahead as planned.

Councillor Sam Raby, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities & Wellbeing made three announcements:

- New software, known as LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) has been implemented by the Council. This enables data from the Revenues and Benefits service to identify households who are not accessing all the financial benefits available to them. HDC has recruited a dedicated LIFT Officer who will work with Revenues and Benefits to support people in accessing state benefits they are entitled to and also identify other cost savings people could benefit from for services such as water and broadband, where they may also be able to access social tariffs.
- HDC have been working in partnership with Saxon Weald on a number of projects including a new housing development at Page Court, Horsham, to provide 48 new homes comprising 40 1- or 2-bedroom flats and eight 2- or 3-bedroom houses. He had visited the site with the Leader last week and was impressed with the high quality of the accommodation. The homes will facilitate people moving to appropriate accommodation while freeing up other accommodation for others on the housing register.
- The Horsham District Crime Reduction Partnership had been launched, with the Council working in partnership with Sussex Police, the Horsham Business Improvement Initiative, Horsham Pubwatch and Swan Walk Management. A secure app, using a system known as DISC, allows businesses and pubs to share information and can be used to report crime and anti-social behaviour quickly. Funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner means there is no cost to businesses for three years. The system has proved highly effective elsewhere and is proving popular with businesses in Horsham.

Councillor Colette Blackburn, Cabinet Member for Climate Action & Nature Recovery announced that public consultation on the draft Climate Action Strategy, which took place over the summer, had received 754 responses. The

results were being analysed and would be used to refine and reshape the Strategy before it is considered for approval later in the year. This week engagement with businesses had begun to ensure that the Strategy meets their needs and supports them to deliver carbon improvements. Some businesses in the district were already undertaking exciting and innovative initiatives to reduce their carbon impact and the Cabinet Member hopes to create an opportunity to showcase these and allow businesses to learn from each other.

CO/38 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions relevant to the business of the meeting had been received.

CO/39 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES**

Standards Committee – 26 July 2023

Councillor Tony Bevis, Chairman of Standards Committee, outlined the proposed changes to the current Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure. The procedure had been revised in December 2021 when an amended Members' Code of Conduct had been adopted.

The current procedure only allows the Monitoring Officer to deal with complaints, apart from during periods of absence when the Deputy Monitoring Officer can do so. The proposed revisions would allow the Monitoring Officer to delegate any standards related work to nominated deputies at any time. They would also allow the Monitoring Officer to vary the procedure when appropriate to do so as long as that variation does not conflict with statutory requirements. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Joan Grech.

Councillor Lynn Lambert reminded Members that the 2021 revision of the procedure had been Member-led with ex-Councillor Diana van der Klugt chairing a sub-committee that undertook the review. She extended her thanks to Diana and acknowledged her hard work and commitment.

Members agreed that the current volume of standards work generated by parish councils was such that it was sensible and proper to make this delegation. It was noted that the statutory requirements were still met.

RESOLVED

That the proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure be approved.

REASON

To provide the Monitoring Officer and Standards Team a greater degree of flexibility when dealing with code of conduct complaints.

CO/40 **INTERIM REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

Jane Eaton, Chief Executive, introduced the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and then invited Alan Ladley, Chairman of the IRP, to speak and answer questions. The IRP had undertaken an interim review, as recommended after the last full review in 2021. The next full review would be in 2025.

Alan Ladley summarised his report, including the intention to undertake a review of Parish Council allowances in 2025. He reminded Members that the fixed-sum pay rise for staff last year had required the Panel to calculate a percentage increase for Members Allowances, which had been approved by Council in February. Index linking Members' allowances in line with officers' percentage increases was already part of the Scheme of Allowances and in the constitution. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Governance Committee would look at changing the constitution to include how to deal with fixed-sum pay rises.

Councillor Philip Circus congratulated the IRP for their hard work and diligence and emphasised the importance of having Members' allowances independently reviewed. The recommendations were moved by Councillor Martin Boffey and seconded by Councillor Philip Circus.

RESOLVED

- (i) To note the report of the IRP and its recommendations which are contained in the appendix to the report.
- ii) To approve the payment of an honorarium, in the sum of £500, to each IRP member in respect of this interim review, and the review completed in February 2023.

REASON

- (i) To note the IRP's recommendations.
- (ii) To approve the payment of an honorarium to the members of the IRP.

CO/41 **HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND GRANT**

Councillor Sam Raby, Cabinet Member for Housing, Communities & Wellbeing, advised that WSCC had allocated the Household Support Fund grant of £255,000 to HDC. Notification of this grant was received in August, after the community development budgets had been set as part of the Council's annual budget in February. As the grant was required to be spent this financial year, Council was required to increase the budgets.

The grant was to be spent on a number of areas, as set out in the report, including food and fuel vouchers, financial support and advice, targeted support

for households that are financially vulnerable and multi-agency network and information sharing. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Mark Baynham.

RESOLVED

- (i) To approve the receipt and expenditure of the grant in the sum of £255,000 for Household Support Fund.
- (ii) To approve an increase in the community development team's 2023/24 revenue income and expenditure budgets of £255,000 to cater for the receipt of the grant.

REASON

- (i) Increasing the revenue income and expenditure budgets in the community development service will allow the Council to receive and spend the grant offered by WSCC.
- (ii) Full Council must approve an increase to the community development team's budget.
- (iii) To provide appropriate support for residents and organisations supporting residents affected by the cost of living as specified in the grant conditions.

CO/42 **APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED PARISH REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Monitoring Officer explained that a new Parish Representative to the Standards Committee was required because Parish Councillor Philip Baxter had resigned in May. It was therefore necessary to fill the vacancy for this co-optee position on the Standards Committee.

David Green had been nominated by HALC (Horsham Association of Local Councils). The appointment was proposed by Councillor Tony Bevis and seconded by Councillor Joan Grech.

RESOLVED

To appoint Councillor David Green of West Grinstead Parish Council to the Standards Committee as a Parish Representative for a term of office ending on the fourth day after the Local Elections in May 2027.

REASON

- (i) To fill the Parish Representative vacancy on the Standards Committee that was created following the retirement of Parish Councillor Philip Baxter, and

- (ii) To satisfy the constitutional requirements in relation to the Standard Committee's composition.

CO/43 **REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES**

There were no reports to receive.

CO/44 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

- (a) Councillor Liz Kitchen asked Councillor John Milne, Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, the following question about the use of bore holes to overcome water neutrality issues, particularly for larger developments:

“Before any more larger scale developments are granted, will the Cabinet Member get the assurance from the Environment Agency and from the water companies that we are not permanently damaging our ecology by abstracting too much water from the aquifers which are already at a low level and that run dry when we have a prolonged dry spell?”

The Cabinet Member replied:

“Any development which proposes to abstract more than 20 cubic metres of water per day is required by law to obtain an abstraction license from the Environment Agency. To give you an idea of that that means in terms of size of the development, 20 cubic metres* per day is enough to supply about 80 homes. The process of gaining an abstraction license requires the applicant to satisfy the Environment Agency on matters of water volumes, water quality and ecological impact. For those developments proposing to abstract less than 20,000 litres per day Horsham District Council have provided detailed guidance and online FAQs on the information required. This guidance has been prepared in close consultation with, and with the formal agreement of, the Environment Agency and Natural England.*

“Senior Planning Officers... and Environmental Health Officers met with the Environment Agency and Natural England on more than one occasion and exchanged communications in preparing our draft FAQ wording so as to find an agreed form of words ahead of publication on our website. Therefore, in any submission proposing a borehole we require clear evidence from professionally qualified persons on a number of points including: checking the hydrological connectivity of the water source with other aquifers in the area; checking that there is sufficient and reliable yield from the borehole; checking the water quality can be treated to a potable standard; and to confirm there will not be adverse impacts on nearby ecological sites or features. We are also required by law to consult Natural England on all water neutrality proposals, including any which propose private boreholes. Putting all this together, the Council is confident that the impact of boreholes on water supply and ecology in the district and wider area is being suitably considered in consultation with all the relevant bodies and in line with our

statutory obligations. Whilst we understand a large number of boreholes are being proposed, only a handful, three, have actually received approval.”

[*The Director of Place clarified that the correct amount of water was 20 cubic metres (or 20,000 litres), not 20,000 cubic metres as stated by the Cabinet Member. She confirmed all other details in the statement were accurate.]

The Cabinet Member concluded by reminding Members that it is open to any Member to request any planning application involving a bore hole to be considered by a Planning Committee for closer examination.

Councillor Kitchen thanked the Cabinet Member and said that her concern that there should be a protocol of guidelines for sustainable boreholes had been partially answered, and she requested that these guidelines should be kept under review.

The Cabinet Member said that he would raise this with officers.

- (b) Councillor Philip Circus asked Councillor John Milne, Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, the following question:

“Is the Cabinet Member aware that Westminster City Council is working on a scheme whereby its fleet of refuse vehicles will be powered by electricity generated by the energy from waste incinerator to which the Council sends its residual waste?”

“Does he consider this could prove a worthwhile idea to pursue in conjunction with the incinerator being built near the Horsham MBT plant, and would the incinerator have a role to play in providing heat for local homes and businesses as well?”

The Cabinet Member, who was answering the question on behalf of Councillor Jay Mercer, Cabinet Member for Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste, thanked Councillor Circus for his question and replied:

“Local authorities up and down the country are coming up with a variety of ways to tackle climate change. In particular they’re looking for ways to reduce their reliance on both gas and traditional vehicle fuel.

“It’s important that all local authorities keep up to date with new trials and initiatives in case there are any innovations which could be applied locally for the benefit of Horsham District. We are aware for instance that St Helen’s Borough Council are trialling a hydrogen fuelled refuse collection vehicle and we’ll be monitoring the success of that.

“In the example you give in Westminster, the idea of locally generated energy from waste going directly into local homes is certainly appealing. However, our circumstances are very different. Westminster City Council is a unitary council serving a small geographic area. They face a completely different set

of challenges and opportunities to Horsham District Council in providing their waste service. In particular, they are able to provide an integrated collection and disposal service. Their incinerator is situated adjacent to their Council Depot which makes it practical for them to use the energy generated to power their electric vehicles. This isn't something that would be easily achievable for Horsham District Council as it would require a new Depot to be built adjacent to the Qair site.

"It is also worth noting that Westminster has very different local conditions. They have a high number of flats and low number of large gardens, which is the exact opposite to Horsham District. In 2021 for example Westminster had a much higher amount of residual waste than us. Their recycling rate is about 24%, while ours is currently 53%. As a result they typically generate far more waste for incineration and therefore more to gain from harnessing any resulting energy.

"Going back to the intentions for Horsham, Qair have said that their development will provide up to 23 megawatts of baseload sustainable electricity, which will be fed into the grid. So local houses will be powered by it one way or another.

"The possibility of providing heat directly to the new housing estate at Mowbray was also considered at an earlier stage of the process, but it was judged that the distances made it impractical. Bear in mind that Qair is a private operation so what arrangements they make are essentially up to them."

Councillor Circus stated that he knew how important cooperation was to ensure waste is processed to maximum effect and asked a supplementary question:

"Will the Cabinet Member assure us that whatever differences he may perceive between Westminster and Horsham he will keep this idea on the books and not dismiss it as we move forward?"

The Cabinet Member replied:

"All things are on the table... it would be a while in any case before we reach this stage because, as you know, our vehicles were converted to HVO fuel fairly recently and it will be a while before we switch to electric vehicles and at this point we haven't found a satisfactory vehicle to get up Bury Hill amongst other issues. And of course our district covers a much wider area than Westminster, which is also a factor. As yet the technology and the cost haven't really come to light but we will certainly keep everything under consideration."

The Cabinet Member concluded by saying that as Councillor Circus had a lot of knowledge and experience in this area, having held this portfolio for a long time, he would appreciate any input from him in the future.

Councillor circus made a closing statement:

“I believe that several local authorities, I think including Sheffield... are looking at exploiting the energy from waste incinerators in order to fuel council vehicles. Therefore... there are a number of precedents and this is not something to be easily dismissed and I hope the Cabinet Member will have a look at those examples.”

Councillor Circus concluded by asking if information on the progress and results of trials by other local authorities could be brought to an Environmental Health, Recycling & Waste Policy Development Advisory Group for discussion in the future.

CO/45 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm having commenced at 6.00 pm

CHAIRMAN