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COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 24 June 2020 remotely via Zoom at 6.00 pm

Members Present:

Mr T Adams	Mr D Baker
Ms P Bevan Jones	Mr D Birch
Mr H Blathwayt	Mr A Brown
Dr P Bütikofer	Mrs S Bütikofer
Mr C Cushing	Mr N Dixon
Mr P Fisher	Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
Mr T FitzPatrick	Mr V FitzPatrick
Mrs W Fredericks	Ms V Gay
Mrs P Grove-Jones	Mr G Hayman
Mr C Heinink	Mr P Heinrich
Mr N Housden	Mr R Kershaw
Mr N Lloyd	Mr G Mancini-Boyle
Mrs M Millership	Mr N Pearce
Mr S Penfold	Mrs G Perry-Warnes
Mr J Punchard	Mr J Rest
Mr E Seward	Miss L Shires
Mrs E Spagnola	Mrs J Stenton
Dr C Stockton	Mr J Toye
Mr A Varley	Ms L Withington
Mr A Yiasimi	

Also in attendance: The Interim Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny)

1 A MINUTE OF REFLECTION

The Chairman welcomed Members to the meeting. He said that it would begin with one minutes silence in memory of everyone who had lost their lives to the pandemic and their family and loved ones who had been so sadly affected.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr K Ward.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 26th February were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

Cllr S Penfold was present at the meeting.
Cllr G Perry-Warnes had sent her apologies for the meeting.

4 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

5 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

None.

6 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman began by saying that it should be remembered that the pandemic had much wider effects than purely physical. The lockdown had impacted heavily on people's mental health too and thought and consideration should be given to this. He said that the recent terrorist attack in Reading had emphasised how difficult life could be under such strict rules. He asked Members to take extra care of people in their communities.

The Chairman concluded by asking Members for ideas and suggestions on raising money for his chosen charity, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, following the cancellation of several activities due to the pandemic. He said that he was open to all suggestions, including virtual activities.

7 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader began by saying that a huge amount had happened since the last meeting of Full Council. She said that she wanted to thank all of the staff who had worked so tirelessly for the local community during what had been an unprecedented event. She had found their efforts truly inspiring. The hard work would continue as towns and villages opened up safely for residents and ready for visitors. She asked all members to record a vote of thanks.

The Leader then outlined key points from the Council's response to the Covid 19 pandemic:

An emergency helpline number had been quickly set up and actively promoted and the website was maintained and kept up to date with key information. Ten co-ordination centres were established to deliver food and supplies, and council officers and members had liaised with local communities and worked alongside them to support the most vulnerable. Work was undertaken in conjunction with the army to set up temporary testing stations in local towns. The Council had worked with impacted businesses to deliver business rates support and administered the largest business support grant programme in Norfolk, processing £52m in payments to date. Officers were currently reviewing applications to the discretionary grants scheme.

The Leader then spoke about the recovery phase and informed Members that work was being undertaken to put signage up in local high streets and improve safety by installing sanitation stations and ensuring the regular cleansing of public conveniences. Officers were also working on projects aimed at supporting growth in the Norfolk economy. She went on to say that Norfolk Leaders had been meeting weekly throughout the crisis and they were now moving towards a newly established board to support the recovery phase – the Norfolk Public Services Leaders Board.

The Leader then spoke about the recent devastating fire at the Budgens supermarket in Holt. She said that the Council had responded quickly and assessed the need for a rest centre or emergency accommodation. The Fire Service had been excellent and their quick response had ensured that no other buildings had been affected. However, there was no doubt that the fire was devastating for the town and Budgens' staff. She said that herself and the Chief Executive had met with local councillors, representatives from Holt Town Council and Love Holt and the Fire Service. The Council's Economic Growth Team had offered support to the owners of

Budgens, Bakers & Larners, and the Council was providing free parking across its car parks in the town until the end of July.

8 TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman informed Members that the Council had been copied into a petition relating to the removal of a memorial in Southern Rhodesian Avenue, Southrepps. Details of the petition were available on the Council's website. He said that the memorial was on private land and that the owners had removed it and agreed not to hold any more commemorative ceremonies.

9 PUBLIC QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS

None received.

10 PORTFOLIO REPORTS

The Chairman invited Cabinet Members to introduce their reports:

1. Cllr A Brown, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, made reference to the backlog of approximately 300 planning cases. He explained that it had occurred since the start of lockdown and was partly due to a third of the staff in the Planning department being redeployed. In addition, they had had to adapt to home-working and there had been challenges in the early days of lockdown around restrictions on putting up site notices, which was crucial to the planning process. He said that a significant amount of that backlog had been cleared and 438 cases had been approved since the start of lockdown. Currently there were 392 cases, of which 122 (31%) had been decided.

Regarding the Planning Policy & Built Heritage Working Party, he said that the site allocations were in the process of being considered. The Working Party had met in June and future meetings would take place on the scheduled dates.

2. Cllr S Butikofer, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Corporate Services, said that the written reports provided the detail for her portfolio but that she wanted to extend her thanks to the Democratic Services team for their support in organising meetings and helping Members adapt to the use of new technology.

Cllr D Baker said that he had spent a considerable amount of time, in his role as MP, liaising with the Revenues Manager regarding support for businesses and he wanted to extend his thanks to him.

3. Cllr A Fitch-Tillett, Portfolio Holder for Coast, drew Members attention to a recent article in the Eastern Daily Press (EDP) which included a profile of the Council's trainee Coastal Engineer, highlighting her as an example of women working in the engineering sector. Cllr Fitch-Tillett then informed Members that it was intended that the next meeting of the Coastal Forum would be held virtually. She encouraged all Members with an interest in coastal matters to attend.

Cllr H Blathwayt asked about the access to the beach at Sea Palling, saying that it was becoming a danger to the public due to sand erosion. Cllr Fitch-Tillett replied that this had been a problem for several years and that there

was an issue regarding the ownership. The Council was working hard with the Crown Estate to resolve it.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle asked whether there would be more lifeguard coverage now that lockdown was easing. Cllr Fitch-Tillett said that this fell within Cllr Gay's responsibility as portfolio holder for leisure.

4. Cllr Gay, Portfolio Holder for Culture & Wellbeing, introduced her report. She highlighted some of the key activities that had continued throughout the pandemic – including the awarding of some grants from the Arts & Culture fund. Some of the countryside sites had been closed temporarily and staff had used this opportunity to make improvements. In response to Cllr Mancini-Boyle's question regarding lifeguards, Cllr Gay said that from 4th July there would be lifeguards on three additional beaches – Wells, Mundesley and Sheringham West. There was already a lifeguard service at Cromer East and Sea Palling. Beach wardens would be on patrol at other beaches.
5. Cllr G Hayman, Portfolio Holder for Commercialisation & Assets said that his written report outlined the detail. Given the nature of his portfolio, he said that many of the staff working in the Property and Assets team had been seconded during the pandemic. Regarding car parking, he said that the Council was considering ways to extend the current provision to boost capacity for businesses.
6. Cllr R Kershaw, Portfolio Holder for Economic & Career Development, introduced his report. He started by updating Members on grants payments to businesses. Regarding the small business rate relief grant (£10k) the Council supported 3420 businesses, a total of £34.2m. For the retail, hospitality and leisure (£10k grant) the Council supported 951 businesses, with a further 319 businesses supported via the £25k grant. This was a total of 4690 businesses that had received financial support of £51.68m. Speaking about the discretionary grants scheme, he advised Members that 224 applications had been received so far, with 106 being approved and 31 pending approval subject to further information being received. It was intended that payments would commence on 29th June. He praised the officers for consistently delivering an outstanding service and he had received positive feedback from several businesses. He said that businesses would continue to struggle as the country began to recover from the pandemic. Many self-employed people had not been eligible for funding and it was imperative that the Council continued to lobby the government for support.

Cllr D Baker said that he was pleased to see an extra £2.7m for businesses that did not receive support in the first tranche. He asked of the 224 businesses that had received help, how many, percentage-wise had been bed and breakfast businesses and what was the overall breakdown by business type. He then asked what would happen to the money that was left over from this fund. Cllr Kershaw replied that claims from Bed and Breakfast were not as high as expected. Support for leisure businesses that did not have a retail outlet – such as marquee companies had been provided. He acknowledged that the full £2.7m would not be used and the intention was to explore opportunities for businesses that had not yet been supported. Cllr Baker thanked him for his response and said that he had been lobbying the Government to allow the Council to use the full allocation to provide support to businesses that had so far not been eligible.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle referred to the discretionary grant pot of £93,400 and asked for information on how it had been shared out across the District. Cllr Kershaw replied that this pot related to the funding to support high streets. He said that this had been apportioned through the town councils. Cllr Mancini-Boyle replied that Hoveton had not received anything via this scheme. Cllr Kershaw said that he would check and come back to him.

7. Cllr Lloyd began by saying that he wished to highlight that the new waste contract was operating very well and so far no complaints had been received. This was due to the hard work of both the contractors and the Head of Environmental Health.

Cllr D Baker said that transport emissions were the highest contributor to climate change and he wondered what progress the Council was making with regards to de-carbonising the waste collection fleet and whether consideration was being given to going fully electric. Cllr Lloyd replied that it was unfortunate that the Government did not include air or shipping transport in its calculations as they were far higher contributors to climate change. He said that it was the Council's intention to move to using electric vehicles but this was not always an option. Ideally he would like to see all of the Council's vehicles moving to electric. He went on to say that one of the benefits of this crisis was that staff had not been travelling into the office to work and this had a significant impact on reducing emissions.

Cllr G Mancini-Boyle asked about food waste collection and whether this was part of the new waste contract if the Council was required by the Government to implement it. Cllr Lloyd replied that the Council was supportive of collecting food waste but it was not clear how it would be funded. It would cost approximately £600k so Government funding would be required. He said that the contract did include a provision for food waste collection but additional funding would be needed to implement it. The same approach applied to garden waste collections.

Cllr L Shires referred to garden waste bin orders, which had been put on hold temporarily, leading to an increase in garden fires. She asked whether there had been a significant uptake in new garden bins. Cllr Lloyd confirmed that this was the case now the service had resumed.

Cllr Kershaw commented that Members had recently received a presentation from Serco on the new fleet and it showed that the waste vehicles would all have electric hoists and that the smaller vehicles would be hybrid. In addition, all of the tools used to maintain verges and parks would be electric rather than petrol-powered.

8. Cllr Seward, Portfolio Holder for Finance, introduced his report. He said that financial forecasting was particularly challenging during the current crisis. He referred to funding for the Big Society Fund (now the North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund) and confirmed that funding had been retained at the current level of £242k, with an additional £50k for environmental initiatives.

Cllr V Gay, Chairman of the Constitution Working Party, introduced this item. She explained that there were two recommendations. The first related to a change in legislation and the protocol to support the implementation of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulation 2020 No. 392. The second recommendation related to the revised Employee Code of Conduct.

It was proposed by Cllr V Gay, seconded by Cllr P Grove-Jones and

RESOLVED

1. That the Constitution is amended to reflect the changes required by the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulation 2020 No.392
2. That the draft Remote Meetings Protocol is adopted
3. That the revised Employee Code of Conduct is approved and included in the Constitution.

12 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE EMPLOYMENT & APPEALS COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chairman of the Employment & Appeals Committee, Cllr J Rest, introduced this item. He said that the committee had been impressed with the presentation made at the meeting by the Interim Chief Executive and the recommendation to confirm his appointment had been unanimous.

The Leader, Cllr SA Butikofer, in seconding the proposal said that Mr Blatch brought a wealth of experience to the position and had already demonstrated that he could develop strong relationships with strategic partners and the local community. She said looked forward to working with him.

It was proposed by Cllr J Rest, seconded by Cllr S Butikofer and

RESOLVED unanimously

To offer the position of Chief Executive to the Corporate Director (Stephen Blatch) as a 'suitable alternative employment' position

13 QUESTIONS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS

None received.

14 OPPOSITION BUSINESS

None received.

15 NOTICE(S) OF MOTION

Cllr R Kershaw introduced the following notice of motion:

'Council notes to support local farmers in the production of food eaten in the UK. COVID- 19 has highlighted the importance of food security and traceability.

Council further notes to support the National Farmers Union stance on maintaining food standards in the UK and call for the Government and our local MP to put into law rules that prevent food being imported into the UK which is produced in ways that would be illegal here or to lower UK food standards. It is essential that food standards and animal welfare conditions are not diminished for the UK food industry.

Council further notes that on June 12th this year Government announced the relaxing of border controls on the import of goods and food in the event of Brexit. It is essential to protect local farmers from food and animals entering the country that do not meet UK food and welfare standards at that time'.

Cllr Kershaw said that the most important farming legislation for many years passed its third reading in Parliament. He said that amendments to protect minimum food safety standards had been defeated. The local MP, Cllr Duncan Baker had spoken previously about the importance of the farming industry to the local economy and promised to fight to protect it. Cllr Kershaw said that he was becoming increasingly concerned that the opportunity to protect the farming industry from cheap food imports and lower welfare standards was slipping by. He said that he would like to see a commitment from Cllr Baker to ensure that this would not happen.

The Chairman invited Members to speak:

- a) Cllr P Heinrich said that he came from a farming family and he believed if you looked after the land it would look after you. Thanks to existing UK law and EU law many pesticides are banned and food was properly certified, unlike in the United States. Such low standards had not been acceptable in Europe for decades and should not be acceptable now. He said that the Council should support the stance of the National Farmers Union and he would be supporting the motion.
- b) Cllr C Cushing said that he was surprised by Cllr Kershaw's reference to the local MP. He said that there were two Members of Parliament for Norfolk, the second being Jerome Mayhew MP, who represented the west of the District. He said that the electorate had made their views clear by opting to leave the European Union. This would leave Britain free to negotiate trade deals with other countries, including the United States. He said that the Conservative Group supported the NFU's high standards of animal husbandry and food standards and that he believed the Government had no intention of reducing these. He said that the new legislation would automatically transfer the EUs current standards into UK law. In effect the law was already in place. He said that this was this was the first agriculture bill for 60 years and would transform the sector by improving biodiversity, environmental stewardship and connecting public money with the provision of public good. He concluded by saying the motion did not acknowledge the huge export potential of the UK's agricultural sector.
- c) Cllr N Housden said that he supported the motion and found it very disappointing that 3 Norfolk MPs voted in support of the legislation. He said that anything that would dilute the UKs very high food standards was completely unacceptable.
- d) Cllr H Blathwayt commented that farmers did not share the Conservative Group's confidence and many were horrified at the legislation going through with the support of local MPs.

- e) Cllr D Baker said that he had received a lot of correspondence about this issue and had spoken to the NFU. He said that he wanted to be absolutely clear that the Government would not be compromising on existing food safety and animal welfare standards. He said he understood the sentiment of the motion and it was an important issue. He reiterated Cllr Cushing's point that the exiting EU law regarding food standards and animal welfare would be transferred into UK legislation at the end of the transition period. He said that when he explained this to constituents they understood why he voted in support of the legislation. He said that when a free trade agreement with the EU was forthcoming, he would be looking for increased welfare and safety standards.

Cllr Kershaw thanked everyone for their comments and Cllr Baker for his clear commitment to high standards. He sought reassurance from Cllr Baker that if no deal could be reached with the EU and the UK had to fall back onto World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, which did not support current high standards, that he would fight on the District Council's behalf. Cllr Baker replied that there was no indication that the Government was seeking no-deal. He acknowledged that under WTO rules the UK could not impose production and welfare standards as part of a trade deal. He said that there was absolutely no way that he would want to see standards reduced in any circumstances.

Cllr L Shires requested a recorded vote.

It was proposed by Cllr R Kershaw, seconded by Cllr H Blathwayt

and **RESOLVED** by 31 votes, with 8 abstentions

To support the Motion.

Before moving onto the second Motion, the Chairman referred to two videos that had been circulated in advance of the meeting and he requested that Members observed one minute of silent reflection.

The following notice of motion had been proposed by Cllr R Kershaw:
Council notes that after the recent protest marches in the UK as a result of the killing of George Floyd in the USA there has been a noticeable rise in racial tension in the country.

Council further notes the release of the Government's reporting the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people.

Council notes that there is no place for racism and that far more needs to be done to eradicate race discrimination in society.

Council commits to lead by example to ensure equal opportunities for all regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability.

Norfolk has a proud tradition of welcoming people from overseas. We need to reinforce that reputation. It is our responsibility to respond thoughtfully and improve our ignorance and educate with the aid of the BAME community.

Cllr Kershaw introduced the motion. He said that this was about fairness. Black

people comprised 3% of the population in England and Wales yet accounted for 12% of the prison population. This was a higher disproportionality than the USA. He said that 48% of young people held in custody were from black or ethnic minorities. People from BAME backgrounds had to submit 60% more applications to get the same level of interviews for jobs. Similarly, they were twice as likely to be unemployed as white people. Black students were given lower predicted grades despite regularly over-achieving and people from BAME backgrounds also accounted for more than a third of COVID 19 patients admitted to ICU. He said that intolerance and hate crimes had increased since the referendum to leave the EU. Now was the time to address these issues and educate ourselves, youngsters and the community as a whole. The challenges were great and should be faced together. Passive acceptance was not good enough – people needed to be pro-active about stopping racism.

The Chairman invited Members to speak:

- a) Cllr Cushing said that the Conservative Group abhorred racism and they would be supporting the motion.
- b) Cllr E Withington said that she welcomed the opportunity to discuss this issue in an area which was predominantly white. Many people had little understanding of what it was like to belong to a BAME group and it was important that people worked together to show their support for minority groups. She said that it was not a question of saying that black lives mattered more than other lives but it sent an important message that racism significantly impacted on the lives of black people globally. In the UK, history had placed black people in a position which indicated that their lives did not matter as much as their white counterparts.
- c) Cllr N Lloyd said that he supported the motion and it was important that in the light of global events, the Council actively took a stance on the black lives matter movement.
- d) Cllr S Butikofer said that in the UK, 26% of cases where the police used firearms were against people from BAME backgrounds. She said that everyone needed to challenge themselves as individuals and highlight the dangers around unconscious bias. Everyone needed to reflect on the injustices of racism and should ask themselves what more could be done to eradicate racism once and for all. Standing by was not an option.
- e) Cllr J Rest said that he would like to have seen a bit more detail included in the Motion.
- f) Cllr L Shires said that it was a very important motion for the future of children growing up in the District. She had attended safeguarding training and had heard from many families from the BAME community about how their children just had to live with racism and the effects that it had on their lives. Now was the time to re-commit to re-educating ourselves and equality and the future that we want to see for North Norfolk children.

The Chairman said that there was a simple truth that we were all human and all one race and to deny this was absurd and an affront to humanity.

Cllr Kershaw thanked everyone for their comments. He said that this was an opportunity to embrace real change and work with schools and local communities on educating people about racism and all hate crimes and how to eliminate them.

It was proposed by Cllr R Kershaw, seconded by Cllr L Shires and

RESOLVED

To support the motion.

16 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

17 PRIVATE BUSINESS

The meeting ended at 7.47 pm.

Chairman