

Council

Tuesday, 17 October 2023

7.30 pm

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor, Gurdip Bungar
The Deputy Mayor, Daniel Adewale King

Councillors

Derek Ashenden	Lyn Milner
Helen Ashenden	Shane Mochrie-Cox
Ejaz Aslam	Emma Morley
Rajinder Atwal	Karina O'Malley
Gurjit Bains	Leslie Pearton
John Burden	Tony Rana
Deborah Croxton	Alan Ridgers
Lee Croxton	Christina Rolles
Dakota Dibben	Lenny Rolles
Aaron Elliott	Benjamin Sizer
Emma Elliott	Lauren Sullivan
Gary Harding	Ektaveen Thandi
Jo Hart	Narinderjit Singh Thandi
Leslie Hills	Jenny Wallace
Samir Jassal	Frank Wardle
Gavin Larkins	Alison Williams
Jordan Meade	
Alan Metcalf	

Stuart Bobby	Chief Executive
Nick Brown	Director (Environment) & Deputy Chief Executive
Jamie Izzard	Director (Communities & Inclusive Growth)
Daniel Killian	Director (Housing)
Sarah Parfitt	Director (Corporate Services)
Vicky Nutley	Head of Legal Services
Simon Walsh	Head of Democratic Services
Andy Rayfield	Communications Manager
Carlie Simmonds	Committee Services Manager

32. Minutes Silence

The meeting observed a minutes silence for all victims of the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

33. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Beattie, Baljit Hayre and Peter Scollard.

34. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 20 June 2023 were signed by the Mayor.

35. Declarations of Interest

The Chief Executive advised that, in accordance with advice received from the Council's Monitoring Officer, Members only needed to declare interests which had not already been listed within their Disclosable Pecuniary Interests form.

No declarations of interest were made.

36. To answer any questions received from members of the public of which notice has been given under Council Procedure Rule 13

The following questions had been submitted:-

Questions from John Milner (on behalf of Gravesham and Dartford Extinction Rebellion)

1. *Are GBC able to locate (on a map) all the trees that GBC are responsible for and would the Council consider allowing local residents to adopt a tree and water it , in addition to the Councils maintenance regime, and report ill health or poor condition to a nominated officer?*

Response by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council:

The Council's trees are not currently mapped, however this is something that is under consideration as we understand maintaining the trees that we have in the borough is just as important as planting more.

The Council have initiated the 'Adopt an open space' scheme, which builds on the success of the street champions giving people the opportunity to share a little time to flag issues in our parks and open spaces and allow residents to adopt a tree. Gravesham Borough Council will continue to explore this further to utilise technology and marketing to promote this program.

2. *Do the Council report trees that were planted on National Highways land as part of highway improvements works (within the borough) and have died to National Highways and what results from this reporting?*

Response by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council:

If we become aware of failed tree planting on highway land, then we report via the Kent County Council website and this is acknowledged directly on the software that is used to highlight problems or issues. It would then be for Kent County Council or National Highways to take action as they feel appropriate.

3. *In respect of the published update to the GBC climate delivery plan, specifically items 2.3.1/2.3.2 and 2.9.5, can the Council confirm that low carbon renewable heat is now mandated in the Council's Employers Requirements to avoid expensive retrofitting of heating systems in the future?*

Response by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council:

Low-carbon renewable heating will be specified in the Employer's Requirements for new housing developments where appropriate and practical. The recent specification of heat pumps for the design and build of housing at St Columba's Close and Worcester Close shows this being implemented.

4. *In respect of the published update to the GBC climate delivery plan, specifically item 1.4.1, can the Council confirm what percentage of renewable energy has been targeted in the 'extended contract' with Lazer?*

Response by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council:

Whilst no specific percentage of renewable energy has been targeted, the energy framework with Lazer provides significant flexibility for increasing the use of renewable energy where it is cost-effective to do so. This could include selling any electricity generated by the Council through the framework (Power Purchase Agreements), use of renewable energy generated by others through Power Purchase Agreements (sleeving facilitation) or directly from the framework via a Green Basket, and the purchase of Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin and Renewable Gas Guarantees of Origin certificates.

Question from Mrs Catherine Marshall/Miss Tina Brooker (on behalf of concerned residents)

5. *I would like to know why Gravesham Borough Council called a Climate Emergency in June 2019 when it has been proven that CO2 is plant food, (photosynthesis) the basis of all life on Earth, as it remains unclear from the Minutes of the meeting in June 2019 why this motion was passed and could you please provide the irrefutable evidence that CO2 emissions are the main driver of global warming?*

The above question was received with supplementary information together with a 53 page document which is available via the following link:- <https://clintel.org/world-climate-declaration>

Response by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council:

In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency based on the evidence set out by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC informs governments about the state of knowledge of climate change. It does this by examining all the relevant scientific literature on the subject. This includes the natural, economic and social impacts and risks. It also covers possible response options. Thousands of scientists and other experts volunteer to review the publications. They compile key findings into "Assessment Reports" for policymakers and the general public. Experts have described this work as the biggest peer review process in the scientific community.

37. Minutes of Committees

Motions that proceedings, reports and recommendations of Committees, except those reserved under Council Procedure 5.2(6) as referred to below be received and adopted and where applicable the Orders made by them be ratified and confirmed were duly proposed, seconded and resolved in each case.

- Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 26 June 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 6 July 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee held on Tuesday, 18 July 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday, 26 July 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on Monday, 4 September 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 11 September 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Audit Committee held on Tuesday, 19 September 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 21 September 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday, 27 September 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 2 October 2023
- Minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 12 October 2023

38. Reserved Minutes

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox that:-

- The reserved Minute of Cabinet (Events Review) held on 26 June 2023 be ratified and confirmed.
- The reserved Minute of Cabinet (Interests in land and assets belonging to the council) held on 11 September 2023 be ratified and confirmed.

The Council thanked the Chief Executive and Finance Team on the work that had been undertaken to date.

- The reserved Minute of Cabinet (Market Procurement) held on 2 October 2023 be ratified and confirmed.

39. Corporate Plan: 2023-27

The Council was presented with the draft Corporate Plan 2023-27 for approval and adoption into the authority's Policy Framework.

During the debate, reference was made to crime and anti-social behaviour, the Leader advised that crime statistics within Gravesham had decreased and that there would be the opportunity for a debate at the next meeting of Council.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox that:-

the Council adopt the proposed Corporate Plan 2023-27 and provide delegated authority for any final amendments to be made by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Executive.

The motion was put to the meeting and a vote by show of hands was taken; the motion was declared to be carried by 20 votes to 16.

At the conclusion of the item, the meeting was adjourned in order to provide the Palantypist with an appropriate break.

40. Review of the Constitution (Phase 1)

The Council was presented with proposed amendments to the Summary and Explanation and The Articles of the Constitution for formal approval and adoption.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox that the Council:-

1. approves the amendments to the Summary and Explanation of the Constitution as set out in section two of the report and appendix one; and
2. approves the amendments to The Articles of the Constitution as set out in section three of the report and appendix two.

The motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously.

41. Urgency Decision - Amendment to the 2023/24 Capital Programme

The report informed the Council of an urgent decision taken by the Director (Housing) in consultation with the Leader of the Administration, the Leader of the Opposition, the Mayor and Section 151 Officer as per the constitution, to accept government grant funding of £810,000 to facilitate participation in the Local Authority Fund (LAHF) Round 2 which was designed to increase the availability of affordable housing for the governments Afghan Refugee Resettlement Programme.

Accepting the grant funding will require an amendment to the Council's 2023/24 agreed Capital Programme.

The report was noted.

42. Appointments to the Independent Remuneration Panel

The Council was presented with the results of the recruitment and selection process to the Independent Remuneration Panel which will enable the 2023 review of the Members' Allowances Scheme to be carried out in a timely manner.

The Chief Executive advised that, following publication of the agenda, the Council was informed that Mr Jag Sidhu sadly passed away last year. The Council passed on its sincere condolences to Mr Sidhu's wife and family.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox that:-

1. the Council terminates the appointment of one of its current Panel Members, Mr Jag Sidhu;
2. the following persons be appointed to serve on the Independent Remuneration Panel, with their term of office expiring on 1 October 2027:-

Ms Claudette Bramble
Mr Kevin Burbidge
Mr Jason Owen

3. a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme be commenced immediately with a report being submitted to Full Council on 5 December 2023 setting out the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations.

The motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously.

43. Live Streaming Council Meetings

The Council was presented with a report which provided an overview of a project to refurbish the Council Chamber with new audio-visual (AV) equipment that would allow Council meetings to be live streamed and held in a hybrid manner which, if approved, would require an in-year amendment to the 2023-24 Capital Programme to reflect the project expenditure.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox that the Council agrees:-

1. the procurement of products and services be supported to enable the live streaming of Council and Committee meetings and the associated improvements in the audio-visual facilities in the Council Chamber as set out in section three of the report;
2. the AV Equipment Project for the Council Chamber proceeds, and authority be delegated to the Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services to conduct the procurement process, award a contract and enter into the necessary associated legal agreements on behalf of the Council; and
3. an amount of £150,000 be added to the approved Capital Programme for 2023/24 for the purpose of procuring AV equipment for the Council Chamber.

The motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously.

44. Renewal of Town Centre Public Space Protection Order

The Council was presented with a report which detailed the outcome of the public consultation in respect of the proposed renewal of the Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for an Alcohol Control Zone for three-years and sought approval to renew the Order.

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox that the Council:-

1. notes the contents of the report, considers the consultation responses and endorses the draft Town Centre PSPO;
2. agrees to renew the Town Centre Alcohol Control Public Space Protection Order; and
3. delegate powers to extend the PSPO to the Chief Executive.

The motion was put to the meeting and declared to be carried unanimously.

45. Finance and Audit Committee - Annual Report

The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee, Councillor Gavin Larkins., presented the Council with a report which provided information on the work of the Finance and Audit Committee during the year 2022/23.

Resolved that the Annual Report presented at Appendix 1 of the report be endorsed.

46. To consider questions from Members of the Council of which notice has been given under Council Procedure Rule 14.

No questions had been received.

47. To receive the Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that, on 2 October 2023, he hosted a guided tour of the Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara, Gravesend and that the tour was well received. The Mayor thanked the President of the Gurdwara for hosting the tour and providing refreshments.

The Mayor stated that the Boundary Walk had taken place over the weekend of 7/8 October 2023. The Mayor thanked all those that supported and sponsored the walk.

The Mayor invited Members to attend his Charity Chinese Meal at Twin Dynasty on 16 November 2023.

The Mayor wished a Happy Diwali to all those celebrating.

The Mayor invited those present to join him in the Parlour for refreshments.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.58 pm