

Cherwell District Council

Council

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Council held as a virtual meeting on 20 May 2020 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor David Hughes (Chairman)
Councillor Hannah Banfield (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Andrew Beere
Councillor Nathan Bignell
Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Hugo Brown
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Colin Clarke
Councillor Conrad Copeland
Councillor Ian Corkin
Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor Surinder Dhesi
Councillor John Donaldson
Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Timothy Hallchurch MBE
Councillor Chris Heath
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Shaida Hussain
Councillor Tony Illott
Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes
Councillor James Macnamara
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Andrew McHugh
Councillor Tony Mephram
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Perran Moon
Councillor Richard Mould
Councillor Cassi Perry
Councillor Lynn Pratt
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Barry Richards
Councillor Dan Sames
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Katherine Tyson
Councillor Tom Wallis
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Fraser Webster
Councillor Lucinda Wing
Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Apologies for absence: Councillor Carmen Griffiths
Councillor Jason Slaymaker
Councillor Bryn Williams

Officers: Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Steve Jorden, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets & Investment & (Interim) Monitoring Officer
Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Nick Graham, Director of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

1 **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed councillors, officers and members of the public and press to this extraordinary and historic meeting of Full Council explaining that this was the first time that a virtual meeting involving all Members had been held. In these difficult times it was very good that Members could still meet to ensure the important work of local democratic decision-making continued.

On behalf of Council, the Chairman thanked officers in ICT and Democratic Services, who had worked hard to facilitate the meeting and other virtual Council meetings that were taking place.

The Chairman introduced the Vice-Chairman, Councillor Hannah Banfield, and explained that if he had any technical issues and had to drop out of the meeting, Councillor Banfield would take the Chair until he was reconnected.

The Chairman reminded Members of the protocol and etiquette for virtual meetings.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

10. Appointment of Interim Monitoring Officer.
Steve Jorden, Declaration, as he was to be proposed to be appointed Monitoring Officer for Cherwell District Council on an interim basis and would leave the meeting for the duration of the item.

3 **Communications**

Covid-19

The Chairman made the following statement:

“Twelve months ago, when I took on the role of Chairman of Cherwell District Council, I could not have imagined my year ending in the unprecedented times the world now finds itself in, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since May 2019 I have been lucky enough to spend time with different services and have seen the excellent work our council officers provide and are continuing to provide at this difficult time.

If there is one positive thing that has come out of this pandemic it is the way that the community has come together that reflects very well on our district and the wider area. People have found ways – often with excellent help from the council – to do valuable work in their communities while still complying with national guidelines to keep them and others safe from the virus.

Across the district, people have come together, and I would like to recognise the significant contribution made by volunteers and commend them for their ongoing and tireless efforts.

I'm sure Members will join me in also paying tribute to our dedicated staff, who have responded magnificently to the challenges presented. The flexibility and responsiveness with which teams across the council have adapted over the past weeks has been exemplary and has enabled crucial services to continue to be delivered as close to normal.

We as councillors have benefitted from the efforts of the IT team, who have enabled us to do our jobs from home representing the interests of our local residents.

We are here this evening at our first full council meeting since Covid-19 changed our everyday lives. It is good to see the world of democracy overcoming the challenges and restrictions we are living with. Social distancing is likely to be with us for some time to come so I imagine our roles as councillors and the democratic process will need to continue to adapt throughout 2020.

My thanks once again to our staff, to you as councillors and the residents of Cherwell for your hard work and dedication and support to others during these difficult times. Please do look after yourselves and stay safe.”

Councillor Wood, Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor Woodcock, Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Tyson, Leader of the progressive Oxfordshire Group, and Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group, each addressed Council echoing the comments of the Chairman and extending their gratitude to officers, partners, communities, voluntary organisations and all residents who had, and continued, to support residents across the district during this unprecedented time.

Tony Brace, former Chief Executive of Cherwell District Council

The Chairman referred to the sad passing of Tony Brace, former Chief Executive of Cherwell District Council (CDC), on 9 May 2020

Mr Brace dedicated his working life to local government, coming to Banbury from Bicester Urban Council in 1973 to become the first Chief Executive of Cherwell District Council, with the task of building the new council out of the former, small authorities. Mr Brace remained Chief Executive until 1991.

Mr Brace was a member of the Freemasons in Bicester when he took up his post at CDC and he joined Banbury Rotary Club in 1979.

Mr Brace was also a tireless worker for community causes. He was Patron of Banbury Operatic Society and President of the Volunteer Bureau. After his retirement from CDC, Mr Brace continued his community interests and worked at Katherine House Hospice.

A Thanksgiving Service for Mr Brace would be held in due course. In the meantime, on behalf of the council, the Chairman extended condolences to Mr Brace's wife and family.

A number of Members paid tribute to Mr Brace.

Members held a period of silence in memory of Mr Tony Brace, Cherwell District Council's first Chief Executive.

Annual Meeting

The Chairman explained that Members should today have been attending the Annual Meeting and he would have been passing on the Chairman's chains. In light of the current situation, an Extraordinary Council meeting to deal with some essential items of business rather than the Annual Meeting was being held. As an Extraordinary Meeting, the minutes of committees were not taken and there were no questions or motions on the agenda. These items would be included on the agenda at the next scheduled Council meeting on 20 July.

The Chairman confirmed that the usual meeting procedure rules apply in terms of Members speaking on items, including the length of speeches were still applicable.

The Chairman advised that this would be covered in more detail at agenda item 7, and confirmed that as the Annual Meeting was not being held, there would be no changes to committee membership, committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen or Council appointed outside body representatives.

VE Day Celebrations

The Chairman referred to the 75th anniversary of VE Day and the celebrations that had been due to take place on Friday, 8 May, which sadly but understandably had to be cancelled.

The Chairman commented that he and many Members would have been involved a number of celebrations around the County and hoped Members had still managed to mark the occasion and pay gratitude to those who fought at home and abroad during the second world war. The Chairman further commented that the country would be able to commemorate those whose war did not end in May when the 75th anniversary of VJ Day was commemorated in August.

Nick Graham, Monitoring Officer

The Chairman reported that this was the Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer, Nick Graham's last Council meeting as he would be leaving Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council in June to take up a role in the newly created Buckinghamshire Council.

Mr Graham had been Monitoring Officer at CDC since October 2018. On behalf of Council, the Chairman thanked the Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer for his service to the Council and wished him all the best in his new role. The Chairman added his personal thanks for the support the Director Law and Governance had given him during some challenging Council meetings.

4 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

The Chairman advised the meeting that there were no petitions but there was one request to address the meeting, on agenda item 8, Community Governance Review for Adderbury. The public speaker would be able to speak for up to 5 minutes and would be called to address the meeting at the start of the relevant agenda item.

5 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

6 **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman in due course.

7 **Constitution Changes**

The Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer submitted a report to advise Council of proposed temporary changes necessary for the effective running of remote meetings during the restrictions brought about by the corona virus pandemic. The changes were in line with, and gave practical effect to, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 that came into force on 4 April 2020. The Regulations enabled all local authority meetings before 7 May 2021 to be held remotely and removed the requirement for the annual meeting this year.

Resolved

- (1) That the Virtual Meetings Procedure Rules (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) and Councillor Protocol for Virtual Meetings (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) that the Monitoring Officer has drafted following publication of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 to give effect to the principles of open decision making and public engagement be noted.
- (2) That it be agreed to postpone the holding of an Annual Council meeting until the scheduled Annual Council meeting in May 2021.

- (3) That the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of Council, be authorised to make minor changes to the process and, as necessary, the Constitution in light of the practical experience of remote working and virtual meetings.

8 **Community Governance Review for Adderbury**

Prior to Council considering the report, Denise Mobbs, on behalf of West Adderbury Residents Association, addressed the meeting.

The Chief Executive submitted a report to provide details of a Community Governance Review to be undertaken for Adderbury and requested the formation of a Community Governance Review Working Group. The report also sought approval of the Terms of Reference for the review with authority delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the working group, to make minor amendments to the Terms of Reference and timetable for the review, if required.

Resolved

- (1) That the Terms of Reference for the Adderbury Community Governance Review (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with group leaders/spokespeople, to appoint two members from each of the Conservative and Labour groups, and one member from each of the Progressive Oxfordshire and Independent groups, to a Community Governance Review working group.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Community Governance Review working group, to make minor amendments to the Terms of Reference, including the timetable for the review, if required.

9 **Pension Fund - Advance Payment**

The Director of Finance submitted a report to consider and approve advance payments to the Oxfordshire Pension Fund in order to lower the overall cost over a three-year period.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, making an advance payment at the end of May 2020 of £3.4m to the Oxfordshire Pension Fund covering the payments due of £1.7m for 2021/22 and 2022/23, reducing the overall cost to the Council be approved.

10 **Appointment of Interim Monitoring Officer**

The Chief Executive submitted a report to appoint a Monitoring Officer on an interim basis in place of Nick Graham, Director Law and Governance and current Monitoring Officer, who would leave his employment with Cherwell District Council in June 2020.

Resolved

- (1) That Steve Jordan be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer on an interim basis with effect from 11 June 2020.

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Dispensations

The Chairman advised Council that no Member had requested a dispensation and therefore this item was not required.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Chairman:

Date: