

## **EXTRA-ORDINARY COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2020**

**Present:** Councillor Joan Hully in the Chair, Mayor Mike Starkie, Councillors David Banks, Jackie Bowman, Hugh Branney, Graham Calvin, James Date, Gemma Dinsdale, Gwynneth Everett, Allan Forster, Fred Gleaves, Mike Hawkins, Charles Maudling, Ged McGrath, Sam Meteer, Graham Minshaw, David Moore, Steven Morgan, Brian O'Kane, Sam Pollen, Andy Pratt, Russell Studholme, Peter Tyson, Doug Wilson and Felicity Wilson.

**Officers:** Pat Graham (Chief Executive), Julie Betteridge (Director of Growth and Inclusive Communities), Sarah Pemberton (Director of Corporate Services and Commercial Strategy (Monitoring Officer)), Steven Brown (Director of Financial Resources), Stephanie Shaw (Electoral and Democratic Services Manager), Clinton Boyce (Solicitor), Mike Graham (Political Advisor), Clive Willoughby (Democratic Services Officer), Rose Blaney (Electoral Services Officer), Andrew Clarke (Communications and Engagement Manager) and Lesley Taylor (PA to the Mayor).

#### **C 19/77      Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Jeanette Forster, Jeffrey Hailes, Linda Jones-Bulman, John Kane, Michael McVeigh, Carl Walmsley and Eileen Weir.

#### **C 19/78      Declarations of Interest in Agenda Items**

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

#### **C 19/79      Petition regarding Parton Parish Council**

Consideration was given to a report advising that a petition had been received by Copeland Borough Council (Principal Authority) requesting that "Copeland Borough Council dissolve Parton Parish Council and hold fresh elections".

Councillor David Moore introduced the report and provided a brief overview.

It was then stated that, since the agenda report was written, a Counter Petition had been received, which read:

“We the undersigned oppose the terms of the petition submitted to Copeland Borough Council relating to Parton Parish Council. We fully support the present group of councillors and continue to do so, to make Parton great again. This is a petition to support, and need for the parish council to remain and for Parton’s voice to be heard through democracy. If my name is on any prior petition, we wish it to be removed”

In moving the report, Councillor Moore advised that the recommendation was to be amended and would now read “That Council delegates responsibility for consideration of the petition and counter petition to the Standards and Ethics Committee”

The report and revised recommendation was seconded by Councillor Doug Wilson.

Question from Councillor Sam Meteer – Signatures of at least 340 electors of Parton are required for a Community Governance Review, is that a correct number, if it is, why are we proceeding with this Review?

In response, Councillor David Moore advised that a Community Governance Review had not been requested.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Sam Meteer stated that there were 193 names on the original petition and 300 on the second, unverified petition, this is short of the 340, and asked if the number on the petition was sufficient.

In reply Councillor Moore stated that the counter petition had only just been received and the signatures had not yet been verified.

At this point the Council’s Solicitor provided clarity by confirming that the correct figure for a Community Governance Review to be triggered by a petition would be 187 electors. However, petitions can be submitted for a number of reasons, not just a Community Governance Review.

A Community Governance Review can also take a long time and would not come into effect until the next Parish Council election in about three years.

In this instance, a quicker solution is required and the recommendation is for both petitions to go to the Standards and Ethics Committee who can find the best way forward and hopefully offer some kind of mediation that brings the community together for the benefit of the community.

Councillor Brian O’Kane expressed his concern at the number of Code of Conduct complaints received, and pending, from Parton Parish Council and the waste of Copeland Borough Council officer time.

In response, Councillor David Moore agreed that the cost to this council was huge, but as lead authority, we are duty bound to investigate the complaints that come forward.

Councillor Gemma Dinsdale referred to the four of nine complaints where a breach of the Code of Conduct had occurred and asked that something be done about them.

In response, Councillor David Moore stated that nine Code of Conduct complaints had been heard and there were many more in the pipeline. The results of Code of Conduct complaints could be found on the Copeland Borough Council website.

Councillor Felicity Wilson stated that in 2019, Council set up a Standards and Ethics Committee to deal with matters such as this and supported the recommendation that this item be referred to them

**RESOLVED:** that the responsibility for consideration of the petition and counter petition be delegated to the Standards and Ethics Committee.

**C 19/80      Adoption of the Working Definition of Anti-Semitism Report**

Consideration was given to a request from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government that Copeland Borough Council adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of Anti-Semitism.

The Mayor moved the report, which was seconded by Councillor David Moore.

Councillor Dave Banks stated “I just wonder how many Members here agree with me that Anti-Semitism is not an attack on Jews or the Jewish faith, it is an attack on the Israeli state.

Israeli state who can have soldiers, snipers who are instructed to shoot Arab children, the Israeli state who can attack with the backing of tanks, drive bulldozers into Arab areas and completely destroy those areas and then build their own townships on top of them.

Now, I support everybody’s right to pray, to worship in whatever sect or religion they want to and I object to this because it’s saying that Anti-Semitism is a perception of Jews. It is not. It is a perception of the state they are part of.”

Councillor Felicity Wilson then stated “As somebody who was old enough to see reports of actions of Anti-Semitism in this world, I think it is important that we show solidarity to the Jewish community in our country by adopting this legislation.

I will rest my case there and I am shocked because this was brought forward because of actions taken against Jewish people going back and now, and I think we shouldn’t be diverted from considering this.

At this point, the Mayor reminded Council of the recommendation.

Councillor Mike Hawkins stated “I agree, Anti-Semitism has absolutely no place in the modern world. I’ve been fortunate enough to visit a concentration camp when I was visiting Poland, and it left a lasting impression on me and everybody that goes there, and we should wholeheartedly agree with the Mayor and I thank the Mayor for bringing to the Council today. We should adopt that without any hesitation whatsoever.”

Councillor Graham Calvin added, “What Mike (Hawkins) says is perfectly true. I think there is a bit of confusion here. We’re accepting the IHRA’s view on Anti-Semitism, which is totally right. Dave (Banks) is right, you can accept this, but you can still criticise an Israeli government. It’s two different things. What we are signing here I back totally.”

**RESOLVED:** that

- a) The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of Anti- Semitism be adopted, and
- b) The Council’s Equality and Diversity policy be amended to reflect the working definition.

**C 19/81      Vote of Thanks**

Before closing the meeting, the Chair advised that Julie Betteridge (Director of Growth and Inclusive Communities) was leaving the Council and wished her a long and healthy retirement. Also leaving was Denise James (Democratic Services Officer).

**The Meeting closed at 3.30 pm**

Chair

