

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 21 MAY 2020

Present: Charles Maudling (Chair), Mayor Mile Starkie, Councillors David Banks, Jackie Bowman, Graham Calvin, James Date, Gemma Dinsdale, Gwynneth Everett, Allan Forster, Jeanette Forster, Fred Gleaves, Jeffrey Hailes, Mike Hawkins, Joan Hully, Linda Jones-Bulman, John Kane, Ged McGrath, Michael McVeigh, Sam Meteer, Graham Minshaw, David Moore, Steven Morgan, Brian O'Kane, Sam Pollen, Andy Pratt, Russell Studholme, Carl Walmsley, Eileen Weir, Doug Wilson and Felicity Wilson.

Officers: Pat Graham (Chief Executive), Sarah Pemberton (Director of Corporate Services and Commercial Strategy (Monitoring Officer)), Steven Brown (Director of Financial Resources), Clinton Boyce (Solicitor), Stephanie Shaw (Electoral and Democratic Services Manager), Clive Willoughby (Democratic Services Officer) and Andrew Clarke (Communications and Engagement Manager)

C 20/9 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hugh Branney and Peter Tyson

C 20/10 Declarations of Interest in Agenda Items

Councillors Joan Hully declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 (Mayor's Executive Report) due to being a Cleator Moor Town Councillor and a member of Regeneration North East Copeland.

Councillors Linda Jones-Bulman declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 (Mayor's Executive Report) due to being a Cleator Moor Town Councillor.

C 20/11 Chair's Announcements

The Chair thanked his fellow Councillors for electing him to the position of Chair. He was honoured and proud to be a member of Copeland Borough Council, particularly at this time with Covid-19.

He continued that the people of Copeland are special, with a great community spirit, and thanked the emergency services.

Special mention was made to all the Copeland staff for their work during this crisis, and thanked the Democratic Services team for their patience in getting all Members to the current position and able to meet virtually.

C 20/12 Petitions

It was noted that no petitions had been received from members of the public.

C 20/13 Questions from Members of the Public

It was noted that no questions had been received from members of the public.

C 20/14 Questions by Members

a) Written Questions

Question from Councillor Mike Hawkins regarding Agenda item 8 on Page 7.

As stated the total grants from government to help the council deal with the Covid-19 outbreak are expected to total £715,512, it is stated that it's unclear if this will be sufficient to meet the financial pressures. I appreciate that this is an ongoing crisis but can the Mayor give the council an indication of how much the crisis has cost the council so far. In terms of lost revenue from car parks as an example. Also has any work been undertaken on any final cost?

In response the Mayor stated that on Friday we submitted our second COVID finance return to Government along with all other local authorities. In this return we estimated that to the end of May 2020 the Crisis would have cost us £994k; this is made up of additional costs in response to the crisis and lost revenue, for example we estimate we have lost £68k from our car parks income, a further £60k from our trade waste collections and £126k in Council Tax and Business Rates income. In our return Government also asked us to calculate the potential cost for the year if the current restrictions were in place until the end of July, we estimated the full year impact at approximately £2m.

Question from Councillor Jackie Bowman.

Whilst the Audit meeting of April 16th (which being a quarterly meeting should have been February) was cancelled due to Covid19 surely we should still have had accounts papers?

In response the Mayor stated that papers were not prepared for the cancelled meeting but will be prepared for the rearranged meeting in June. Our Corporate

reporting officer was redeployed very early on in the response phase to Covid19 as a Welfare Coordinator; it was agreed by Corporate Leadership Team that this important community work took priority over preparing papers for a meeting that had already been cancelled

b) Oral Questions

It was noted that there were no oral questions from Members.

C 20/15 Dispensation for Non-Attendance at Meetings

Consideration was given to a report recommending Council to grant a dispensation for non-attendance at meetings to those Members unable to attend meetings between the 28th February 2020 and 21st May 2020, such dispensation being restricted to that period.

The motion was moved by Councillor David Moore and duly seconded by Councillor Michael McVeigh. Following a 30 second pause to allow for any Member to indicate otherwise, it was

RESOLVED – That, for the purpose of section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the reasons as set out in the agenda report for Members' absence from meetings between 28th February 2020 and 21st May 2020 be approved.

C 20/16 Covid-19 Financial Report

Council received an report updating them on two Officer Decisions relating to financial matters as a result of Covid-19 that were taken as it was not practical to wait to the next Council meeting. These relate to the receipt and distribution of grants relating to business rates and council tax.

Members were also updated on further central government emergency funding grants totalling £715,512.

Following a 30 second pause to allow for any Member to indicate otherwise, it was

RESOLVED – That the Covid-19 Financial Report be noted.

In asking the Mayor and his Executive to introduce the Executive Report, Members were advised that questions would be taken at the end of the portfolio report.

Following updates from the Mayor and Portfolio Holders, Questions were then invited from Members.

Question from Councillor John Kane regarding Agenda item 9 on Page 23.

Given that Cumbria has 4 districts in top ten Covid19 highest rates per head of population including Copeland and given that one of the two major Cumbrian hospitals is in Whitehaven why is the nearest Covid19 testing facility in Penrith? And what are we as a council doing to rectify this government's oversight. I think there are genuine concerns as the lockdown restrictions are eased.

In response the Mayor stated that the siting of the Penrith test facility was through the SCG on behalf of the LRF and it was a multi-agency agreement. Prior to the final agreed site at Penrith rugby club there were several other sites which were explored for suitability in line with the specific criteria which had been laid down, unfortunately other sites did not meet the required criteria. Initially the sites were for clinical and key workers and one of the main criteria was a 90 mile return journey radius in order to facilitate as many tests as possible. There are also other mobile test units within the county which are being run by the military, and, Copeland has the benefit of a local test facility in Whitehaven for clinical staff. This local and convenient site has been used many times already by our own HR dept. to book tests for our staff members.

I hope to offer some further reassurance that the testing operation that has been in place at Lillyhall for some weeks now will shortly, as part of a Cumbria Local Resilience Forum response arrangements, move into a new location within Copeland, reducing further the travel distance

Question from Councillor John Kane regarding Agenda item 9 on Page 27.

Money, we were made custodians for the Harbour commissioner's government grant. This was for improvements (bike facility, overnight accommodation, water sports etc) but the money runs from April 2020 to April 2021 and had to be spent in that timeframe.

Obviously the project hasn't started so is it/ will, it go ahead.

In response the Mayor stated that the Commissioners are still waiting on central government to approve the 2020/21 element of the funding which is crucial to the project proceeding. Subject to that funding being confirmed and subject to the Commissioners giving the go ahead it is likely that the contract for the construction of the new slip way, being the first phase of the development will be let shortly, with work starting at the beginning of July. For the main build it is likely that tenders for that work will be invited shortly. Overall, due to Covid-19 the project is about 8 weeks behind schedule but still on the Commissioner's target.

Question from Councillor John Kane regarding Agenda item 9 on Page 43.

Regarding the ever changing scene with the crematorium, funerals, churches and cemeteries. We need to be immediately informed of any changes. Where are we now and what arrangements are being put in place with the lockdown easing?

In response the Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services, Councillor Steven Morgan stated that we continue to follow the Government's guidance 'for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic' as published on 19 April (and updated on 18 May 2020). This guidance has been developed to ensure that:

- bereaved people are treated with sensitivity , dignity and respect
- mourners and workers involved in the management of funerals are protected from infection

Through our regular Bereavement Services Bulletin, Copeland Matters and Members Updates, we continue to provide members, residents and our key stakeholders (including funeral directors, clergy and celebrants) with updates and key messages from the Government's guidance. Currently this means that for funerals services at the crematorium and cemeteries only the following should attend, alongside the Funeral Director and funeral staff:

- members of the person's household
- close family members, or close friends
- attendance of a celebrant of choice

We have a range of operational measures in place with our stakeholders including funeral directors and remain in regular communication with them at this time; we are grateful for their continued support with managing funerals at the crematorium and in our cemeteries.

The Council does not manage churches, however, there is currently no new update on the opening of churches for funeral services.

The original Government Guidance was published on 19 April 2020; an update to this guidance was issued on 18 May 2020 with the following two key updates:

Any mourner who is showing coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms (a new continuous cough, a high temperature, or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell) should not attend the funeral as they pose a risk to others; remote participation should be considered.

Mourners should also follow the advice on social distancing when travelling to and from the funeral. If mourners are using shared transport with others that they do not normally meet and where social distancing is not possible, they should consider wearing a face covering.

This information is shared with our funeral directors who will support families with this guidance.

We will continue to communicate changes in guidance to Members through the Bereavement Services Bulletin and Member Updates.

Question from Councillor Jackie Bowman.

Have any of our staff been furloughed also have any of our staff developed Covid19 and if so are we doing anything to support them?

In response the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear and Corporate Services, Councillor David Moore stated that we have furloughed 45 staff members, in agreement with individuals, Executive decision, CLT and Trade Union support. The minimum furlough time is 3 weeks; business requirements are being managed and reviewed on a weekly basis.

We have had 23 employees who have displayed Covid 19 symptoms. With the local test facility, HR have arranged for 5 staff members to be tested, and, I am pleased to say that all tests came back negative. The turnaround of results testing is within 24 hrs, which aids greatly in relieving anxiety for our staff and their families.

In the initial few weeks of lockdown, HR were supporting employees with symptoms by calling them and assuring that themselves and their families were ok and offering any services we have in place to support them, i.e. counselling, the employee assistance program and information regarding the community

hub. Managers have also been encouraged to keep in contact with employees and offer support where needed.

We have also arranged appointments with occupational health for employees who are struggling following their illness, this provides us with more guidance on how best to support them.

We will continue to arrange testing appointments for any staff member who contacts HR and thinks that they may be displaying symptoms of Covid 19.

Question from Councillor Eileen Weir regarding Agenda Item 9, Page 27-28.

Would there have been an indemnity clause against pestilence in the Council's Future High Street bid to PROTECT the Council from any additional loss's incurred In the event that our bid is SUCCESSFUL But is stalled by the Government for an Indefinite length of time?"

In response the Mayor stated that normally a grant will be awarded with a spend by date being included. That end date is usually realistic and by the time Future High Street Fund grants are awarded the Government should have a clear handle on any future delays which might arise from pestilence, in particular Covid-19, and so set a realistic completion date. In this case funding will be paid annually in advance and must be spent (not just committed) by 31 March 2024. However, this does not mean that all work must be delivered by this date. Co-funding can be utilised for projects with a delivery schedule that extends beyond 31 March 2024. It is not usual to have an indemnity clause in a grant approval to enable further amounts to be claimed if pestilence occurs. It is for the grant funder and grant receiver to work together to ensure that projects are managed within the set timescales.

So if we are successful, the implication is that the funding will be in place each year in advance - as has occurred with our Coastal Communities projects, which are also rung through MHCLG.

Question from Councillor Joan Hully.

Has the issue of new Laptops has been a costly loading for the council?

The Mayor replied that cost of laptops based on actual invoices from March to now is £79,626 (ex VAT) which was for the purchase of 109 new laptops for staff and councillors.

Question from Councillor Michael McVeigh regarding Agenda Item 9 on Page 32

Cumbria Clean Energy Development Company. Who are the Members? How often do they meet? Where would we access Agenda , Business Etc,?

In response the Portfolio Holder for Nuclear and Corporate Services, Councillor David Moore stated that the short answer is that there is no development company yet. The Cumbria LEP has set up an informal Clean Energy Development Team under the Clean Energy Panel chaired by Rebecca Weston from Sellafield. The team is made up of members of the Clean Energy Panel, including me, and is being led by former Director of the Centre of Nuclear Excellence, Ken McEwan.

As this is a working group, there are no formally published agendas per se, but a report on the team is included at page 180 of the latest Cumbria LEP board papers, which can be accessed on the LEP website.

Over the coming year, the team will develop a proposal for a longer term solution, which might be a development company if appropriate.

Question from Councillor Linda Jones-Bulman.

As Older Persons Champion (when the role starts), What is Copeland doing or can do to ensure social inclusion works for all in Copeland?

The Government is investing in cycling and walking schemes, routes etc, Copeland developing cycling hubs, my question is how can we enable and encourage those in our deprived areas to be included, those who do not qualify for a 'cycle to work scheme', and would benefit from an electric bike, Repair-vouchers, in order to be a part of the future green, healthier living plans?

In response the Mayor stated that we will continue to work with voluntary and third sectors, as we have a great track record of doing so, to support all those in deprived areas as best we possibly can. With regard to cycling specifically, the Govt. recently announced an initiative around walking and cycling and a huge investment of £2bn infrastructure to encourage and facilitate this. With regard to equipment, it is too early to give specific detail, but we will look out for further detail and announcements from the Govt., and in the meantime continue to respond positively and appropriately to individual needs as a Council as they are raised.

Question from Councillor Sam Pollen regarding Agenda Item 9 on Pages 25 & 26.

We all welcome the latest news of the Future High Streets and Town Deal Funding that could potentially transform Whitehaven, Cleator Moor and Milliom.

Could the Mayor please update Council on investment opportunities for Egremont and the Borderlands scheme.

In response the Mayor stated the we have been liaising with Cumbria County Council on Borderlands and jointly agreed that Egremont was to be the area proposed for inclusion in the Borderlands Place Programme.

This is still subject to government approval for the Borderlands Place Programme as identified in the Heads of Terms from July 2019.

The next step would then be for the Outline Business Case, for the whole Borderlands wide programme, to be considered and if approved by government, those areas selected will then have to work in partnership to put forward a Place Plan.

Due to Coronavirus the timescales for this are uncertain but further information will be shared as and when it becomes available

Question from Councillor Jackie Bowman.

Firstly I would like to commend the Waste Management Teams for their sensitivity when on rounds and a funeral cortege is coming through.

Have any Teams come across problems with any extra vehicles parked, or with members of the public?

The Director of Corporate Services and Commercial Strategy responded by providing an update, stating that there have been some issues with staffing levels and that the number of crew in a cab had been reduced from three to two.

There had also been some issues with extra recycling being put out and with parked cars on some streets, but the crews were liaising with residents to resolve these.

Councillor Sam Pollen regarding Agenda 9 on Page 35 regarding Homelessness.

Thanked the Homelessness team and all staff for the work they are doing during the current Covid-19 crisis.

In response the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Place, Councillor Michael McVeigh agreed with the remarks regarding the Homelessness team and stated that a spokesperson from MHCLG said;

“Councils were given £3.2m at the start of the Covid- 19 Pandemic so that immediate action could be taken to help get rough sleepers off the streets.

Dame Louise Casey who is responsible for the Governments Covid -19 rough sleeping response taskforce will spearhead the next phase of Government support for rough sleepers during the pandemic.

Whilst council’s continue to provide accommodation to those that need it, it is only responsible that we work with partners to ensure rough sleepers can move into long term safe accommodation once the immediate crisis is over.”

Following a 30 second pause to allow for any Member to indicate otherwise, it was

RESOLVED: That the Mayor’s Executive report be noted.

C 20/18 Date and Time of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next virtual meeting of Council would be held at 2:00pm on Tuesday 30th June 2020.

The Meeting closed at 4.22 pm

Chair