



Minutes of the meeting of COUNCIL
6th March 2023, at 7.30pm
At The Congregational Church, Bedford Street, Stroud

Present

Cllrs Shyam Ananthan (from Item 5), Geoffrey Andrews (from Item 6), Kevin Cranston, Tony Davey, Mike Elliot (from Item 8), Mick Fealty, Susan Fenton, Mark Graham (from Item 6), Rob Green, Camilla Hale, Adrian Oldman, Stella Parkes (Chair), Lucas Schoemaker (from Item 6), Naomi Seffar and Louisa Stinton

Absent

None

In attendance

Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Kate Montgomery (Deputy Clerk), Marianne Sweet (Communications Contractor), Cllr David Drew

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Liz Child, Laurie Davies and Megan Sheer (all personal)

2. Declarations of interest and requests for dispensations

None

3. Elections to fill vacancies on Committees

Councillor Louisa Stinton was **elected** to join the Community Working Group and the Consultations and Highways Committee.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the Council meeting on 16th January were **approved** by the members present and will be signed as a correct record by the Chair at the next opportunity.

5. Mayor's Remarks

The Mayor reported that she had attended a meeting on Universal Basic Income, one regarding Warm Spaces and the Police organised 'Male Violence Against Women' meeting. The Mayor also joined two demonstrations in the town against cuts to bus services.

The Mayor assisted the Deputy Clerk with interviewing students seeking industrial placements as part of their T Levels. The Mayor joined the Town Clerk to deliver a presentation on High Street regeneration to the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum

The Mayor also reported that she had been interviewed by BBC Radio Gloucestershire regarding bank closures in the town.

Councillor Ananthan arrived during this item.

6. Questions from members of the public

None

Councillors Andrews, Graham and Schoemaker arrived during this item.

7. Reports from County and District Councillors

Gloucestershire County Councillor David Drew updated the meeting regarding highways matters. Electric vehicle charging points were being deployed along Stratford Road. The resurfacing on the town centre was reported to be beginning soon. The roadworks along Merrywalks had now been completed and the works at Nelson Street were due to be completed in the next few weeks.

A serious case review has been requested regarding the murder in Chapel Street in September 2022.

The County Council hot meals delivered contract was reported to have been withdrawn by the current suppliers Apetito and new suppliers were being sought.

Local health services have had significant issues regarding out of hours availability. Councillors requested that the Clerk ask Sarah Scott, Executive Director of Adult Social Care, Wellbeing & Communities to attend a future Council meeting to enable Councillors to gain a better understanding of the pressures on the health services in the town.

Stroud District Councillor Lucas Schoemaker reported that the new District Council budget had been agreed with a focus on Health and Wellbeing. Stratford Park Leisure Centre would be upgraded with new ground source heat pumps. Councillor Schoemaker reported that there was huge pressure currently on the housing team, but a new Head of Housing had been employed. The District Council were purchasing fifteen homes for refugees which will eventually revert back to housing stock.

Councillor Seffar raised a concern regarding housing for agricultural workers in the town. Councillor Schoemaker confirmed that agricultural workers were assessed in the same way as others on the list and that this was based on need.

Councillor Fealty asked if there was a District Council policy to only use local contractors. Councillor Schoemaker confirmed that there was, however current shortages of skilled and manual workers meant that sometimes the District Council had to engage works and contractors from a wider geographical area to ensure service delivery.

8. Clerk's Report

The Clerk's written report was noted.

Councillor Kevin Cranston asked if there had been much uptake on the warm spaces in the town. The Clerk confirmed that all the town's warm spaces had been well used, however many of the community hubs were struggling to retain volunteers. The Clerk confirmed that this issue would be highlighted in the next edition of the

About Town newsletter which was due to be distributed over the Easter holiday period.

Councillor Rob Green asked if the Town Council would be assessing the impact of the Levelling Up Fund bid on the staff and its resources. The Clerk confirmed that this would form part of the analysis being undertaken by officers and partners.

The agenda was reordered.

22. Exclusion of the press and public

It was **resolved** in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, that the press and public be excluded for Item 23.

23. Office Relocation

The Clerk reminded Councillors of the previously agreed priorities for the office relocation.

Councillors discussed the merits of the prospective location. Councillor Rob Green requested that should any offer be put forward, an architect is commissioned to ensure best use of the available space. The Clerk confirmed that this can be accommodated within current budget parameters.

The Council **approved** the recommendation that the Clerk enter into negotiations with the owner of the potential location.

Councillors asked that a draft of the consultation required for any borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board be submitted for discussion at the next meeting of the Council.

Action: Clerk

9. Approval of Payments

The payments from December 2022 to February 2023 as shown in **Appendix 1** were approved.

10. Delegation arrangements for committees and working groups

The Clerk introduced the item and reminded members that the Community, Environment, Finance and Policy and Regeneration Committees have been meeting as working groups with delegation to the Clerk to act on their recommendations. The Clerk noted that while this approach was legal, it was not an ideal arrangement.

Councillors highlighted how beneficial remote meetings have been, particularly for Regeneration Committee which has co-opted members from other partners such as Gloucestershire County Council and Stroud District Council.

Councillor Green proposed that working groups could continue to meet either in person or online, depending on availability of members.

Councillor Schoemaker asked that the installation of hybrid meeting technology be prioritised before the start of the next civic year.

Councillors will review the delegations once a proposed amendment to the Levelling Up Bill which would permit council meetings to be held remotely meetings has been through parliament.

The Council **approved** the continuation of meeting as working groups, and continued delegations to the Clerk and **recommended** that the Clerk prioritise the purchase of relevant technology to allow hybrid meetings to be conducted at Thanet House.

11. Lease for Depot at Libby's Drive

A recommendation to delegate the renewal of the lease to the Clerk was **approved**.

12. Leazes Transfer

The Clerk introduced the item and noted that the transfer negotiations with Stroud District Council had been ongoing for many years.

Councillors noted several spelling, grammar and wording errors in the transfer document which officers were asked to amend and feedback to the solicitors.

Councillor Fenton raised an issue regarding the boundary responsibilities adjacent to Cotswold Playhouse as these had previously fallen to SDC/property owners. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that this will be raised with the solicitors and relevant adjustments made to the final boundary map.

The Council **approved** the transfer providing the boundary responsibility issue had been resolved.

Action: Deputy Clerk

13. Wildlife Cameras

The Clerk introduced proposals to amend the Council's policy relating to data protection to cover the use of wildlife cameras. Councillors noted that wildlife monitoring would be beneficial and interesting for both the Green Spaces Team and wider public. It was noted that communications and PR around the installation should be considered carefully.

Councillors asked that the cameras are piloted and reviewed over the coming months.

Action: Deputy Clerk / Green Spaces Manager

14. Protest Protocol

The Clerk introduced the item. Councillors discussed the wording in the report and raised concerns around recent national legislation which appears to target the rights of members of the public to protest peacefully. It was also noted that Stroud has a strong and rich history of protest and activism and that this was to be celebrated.

Councillors suggested that re-writing the drafted protocol as "useful guidance to aid successful and safe protests" would be more beneficial to event organisers. Councillors also requested that additional information regarding marshalling was included.

Councillors **rejected** the proposal in its current format and requested that a new version be brought before them at the next available opportunity.

15. Internal Control Checks

The internal control checks were **approved**.

16. Town and Parish Charter

The Stroud District Council Town and Parish Charter was formally **adopted**.

17. Uplands Allotments Association

A new seven-year lease for the Uplands Allotment Association was **approved**.

18. Disposal of Mower

The Council **approved** the disposal of the asset Grillo MD24 AWD ride on mower.

19. Infectious Diseases Policy

The Council **approved** the adoption of the policy as recommended by the Personnel Committee.

20. Council's Risk Assessment

The Council **approved** the updated risk assessment as recommended by the Finance and Policy Working Group.

21. Committee and Working Group Reports

The reports were **received** by the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm

Chair

Date