

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the consultative meeting of Council held at Online via the Zoom App on 20 October 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.55 pm

37 Public speaking

The Chair welcomed members of the public and Councillors to the meeting and explained that all participants were taking part remotely and the meeting was also being viewed online and recorded.

He outlined that due to concerns related to COVID risk, the Council had delegated much of its decision taking power to its Senior Officers for the period up to 17th January 2022. Consequently, the meeting was being held on a consultative basis only, and the normal procedural rules as detailed in the Council's Constitution, would continue to be closely adhered to.

However, where the meeting would have normally decided a matter, it will now make recommendation to a Senior Officer. The Officer will then take that recommendation into account, when making their decision.

The Chair then started the meeting by doing a roll call of those present, and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

During the meeting the public would be able to participate if they had pre-registered to speak. No members of the public had pre-registered to speak at this meeting.

38 Minutes of the previous meetings

There have been four meetings with minutes to consider at the meeting, specifically the Extraordinary Council meeting on 26th July, Full Council meeting on 27th July, and two Extraordinary Council meetings on 7th September held separately but consecutively at 6pm and 6.30pm.

The Chair asked for comments on the Minutes from the Extraordinary meeting of Council held in person on 26th July at Westpoint.

He then invited Cllrs to vote in favour, against or abstaining recommending approval of the Minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed the minutes of 26th July were recommended for approval.

The Chair then asked for comments on the subsequent three consultative Council meetings held on 27th July, on 7th September at 6pm and on 7th September at 6.30pm.

He then invited Cllrs to vote in favour, against or abstaining receiving and noting the minutes.

Following a vote the Chair confirmed the minutes of 27th July, 7th September at 6pm and 7th September at 6.30pm were all received and noted.

RECOMMENDATION: to approve the minutes of 26th July following a vote of those present.

39 **Declarations of interest**

44b. Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 July 2021. Minute numbers 44 - 53. Councillor Sam Hawkins, Personal, Item 51 Cranbrook Local Infrastructure Fund. Ward member and resident of Cranbrook.

46. Proposed Temporary Car Park Management Arrangements, Webster's Garage site, Axminster.

Councillor Tom Wright, Personal, A constant visitor to Axminster.

47. Motion: Universal Credit Cut.

Councillor Jess Bailey, Personal, Devon County Councillor.

47. Motion: Universal Credit Cut.

Councillor Ian Hall, Personal, Devon County Councillor.

40 **Matters of urgency**

There was one matter of urgency to be dealt with under agenda item 11.

41 **Announcements from the Chairman and Leader**

The Chair had three announcements to make.

Firstly, the Chair acknowledged the tragic and horrific murder of MP Sir David Amess, at his constituency surgery in Leigh-on Sea, on Friday 15th October. On behalf of all associated with East Devon District Council, he had written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson to express their sincere condolences to Sir David's family, and Westminster colleagues. Residents in East Devon greatly value direct access to local MP's, Simon Jupp, Neil Parish and Mel Stride. Similarly, community representatives within Local Government meet with those they are proud to represent, in numerous different roles, each playing a part at the core of British democracy. It is just five years since the murder of Jo Cox, and the recent events of last week will inevitably cause MP's and other political representatives to question personal security. In East Devon, it is considered important to work together, in an atmosphere of renewed tolerance, understand and respect, and the Council must continue to make it clear that violence or intimidation have no place at any level of politics, to ensure that all elected representatives can continue to carry out their duties safely. Thoughts at this difficult time are with Sir David's family.

The Chair went on to acknowledge the passing of former Exeter City Council Leader, Pete Edwards, who died recently in hospital after a short illness. Pete had served Exeter City Council for thirty years, eight as Leader, from 2011 until his retirement in 2019. A proud former bus driver, Pete introduced the Living Wage to the Council and was prominent in attracting landmark retailers to the city, including John Lewis and Ikea, together with fixtures from the 2015 Rugby World Cup to Sandy Park. It was fitting that one of Pete's last engagements (post retirement) was the opening of the new council funded Exeter Bus Station.

The Chair remembered Pete fondly from several meetings, when his enthusiasm and skill in working together as an effective partnership, meant they were able to pursue many initiatives to the benefit of both the city of Exeter, and East Devon. He said that he was fortunate, as Council Leader in 2018, to inherit a unique cross-party relationship that Pete, as Exeter's Labour leader, had established with EDDC's former Conservative Leader, Paul Diviani. Thoughts are with Pete's wife and family.

The Chair invited any colleagues, who wished to make brief reference to either Sir David Amess or Pete Edwards to do so.

Cllr Moulding, Cllr Skinner and Cllr Gazzard said a few words in fond remembrance of Pete Edwards.

Cllr Jarvis said that he had met Jo Cox on several occasions, before the shocking events which took her life, and reminded the meeting that this had been considered to be an event which could not happen again.

The Chair then held a minute of silent reflection in respect to both losses.

On a happier note he then announced the election of Cllr Jamie Kemp as an EDDC Cllr and Ward Cllr for Exe Valley at the recent By-election on 23rd September, and welcomed him to the Council.

42 **Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There were no confidential or exempt items.

43 **To answer questions asked by Members of the Council pursuant to Procedure Rules No. 9.2 and 9.5**

Eleven questions had been received from Cllrs and all had been responded to in writing and published prior to the meeting.

Ten questions were submitted by Cllr Millar, who confirmed that he had no supplementary questions to raise.

Q11 Cllr Twiss asked a supplementary question enquiring whether Council would support an immediate COVID safe return to all EDDC meetings which required them to be held in person?

In response, the Leader confirmed that a full written explanation had been provided to Cllr Twiss. This this matter had been led from, and by the Chair in full consultation with all Group Leaders and Cllrs. Some meetings, such as Cabinet and Planning Committee which could meet safely with limited numbers and without officers being present, had done so, until it was clear that agreement could not be reached on other matters without a full meeting of Council when a vote could be taken. A meeting for Cllrs to meet in person took place at Westpoint for this purpose, when the decision of Council was made clear, and remains the current situation. He re-iterated that it is not possible for Full Council to meet in Blackdown House in a COVID safe way so there will be no meetings in person until 18th January 2022 in line with the decision agreed or unless prevailing circumstances change significantly.

The Chair added that an item relating to these matters will going forward to the next Full Council meeting on 8th December, which will provide an opportunity to properly debate

and determine options available in the New Year, and confirmed there will be no immediate return to in person meetings.

44 **Reports from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees and questions on those reports**

This item is to receive the minutes of Committees, and invite members to vote in favour or against recommending passing recommendations contained therein for approval to Senior Officers if appropriate, or receiving and noting them when there are none.

The Chair invited the Leader and Chairs of Committees to present their minutes.

With the agreement of the meeting, the Chair took the minutes at item 9q on the agenda before any other minutes, to enable the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee to leave to attend another meeting.

DECISION:

The recommendations were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

- (a) **Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee meeting held on 23 September 2021. Minute numbers 1 - 16.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (b) **Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 July 2021. Minute numbers 44 - 53**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.
- (c) **Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 1 September 2021. Minute numbers 54 - 58.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.
- (d) **Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8 September 2021. Minute numbers 59 - 74.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.
- (e) **Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6 October 2021. Minute numbers 75 - 93**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.

Cllr Loudoun confirmed that by acceptance of the minutes of Cabinet on 6th October, Council was effectively approving the updated Council Plan.

Accordingly he wanted to thank a number of people who had assisted in the development of the Plan over the previous six months, specifically, Ann Reeder who had facilitated four Member Workshops; all Cllrs who had participated in the process; all officers who had assisted in various ways; the Chief Executive who had helped steer the process through and Jo Avery who had put in a lot of hard work to get the Plan drafted in its current form.

- (f) **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29 July 2021. Minute numbers 1 -10.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (g) **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7 October 2021. Minute numbers 11- 19.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (h) **Minutes of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees meeting held on 16 September 2021. Minute numbers 1 - 6.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (i) **Minutes of the Housing Review Board meeting held on 16 September 2021. Minute numbers 1 - 15.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (j) **Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 20 July 2021. Minute numbers 14 - 21.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (k) **Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 7 September 2021. Minute numbers 22 - 32.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.
- (l) **Minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee held on 5 October 2021. Minute numbers 33 - 41**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (m) **Minutes of the Planning Committee held on 4 August 2021. Minute numbers 28 - 37.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (n) **Minutes of the Planning Committee held on 1 September 2021. Minute numbers 38 - 47.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.

- (o) Minutes of the Planning Committee held on 29 September 2021. Minute numbers 48 - 56.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (p) Minutes of the Licensing & Enforcement Sub-committee meeting on 11 August 2021. Minute numbers 11 - 15.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (q) Minutes of the Licensing & Enforcement Sub-committee meeting on 8 September 2021. Minute numbers 16 - 20.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (r) Minutes of the Personnel Committee held on 2 September 2021. Minute numbers 1 - 6.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted.
- (s) Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 14 September 2021. Minute numbers 1 - 6.**
Following a vote the Chair confirmed that the above minutes were received and noted and recommendations contained therein recommended for approval.

45 **Changes to Councillor appointments**

The Chair invited the Monitoring Officer to address his report, who confirmed that this was a short report necessary to implement a number of changes following the recent resignations of Cllrs.

The Chair moved the report and invited members to vote in favour or against recommending approval of the report.

Following a vote, the Chair confirmed that the report and its recommendations contained therein were recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION: to approve the report and its recommendations contained therein.

DECISION:

The recommendations were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

46 **Proposed Temporary Car Park Management Arrangements, Webster's Garage site, Axminster**

The Chair outlined that he had agreed to deal with this as an urgent matter, in order to enable the car park to be reopened as soon as possible as it is important to convey the message that Axminster is "open for business" and to offer increased parking availability in the run up to Christmas.

He invited Strategic Lead for Health, Housing & Environment, John Golding, to address the report.

The report described a proposal for the Council's car parks team to enter into an agreement with the owners and developers of the former Webster's Garage site in Axminster to manage temporary car park pending long-term redevelopment of the site. The car park is currently closed and it is felt to be in the best interests of the town economy, the council and the site owner to implement this agreement and to reopen the car park without delay.

The Monitoring Officer pointed out that one of the requirements to action the recommendation had been omitted, and read out additional wording to be included in the recommendation and considered by the meeting.

On this basis, Cllr Tom Wright proposed and Cllr Ian Hall seconded that the recommendation as follows is accepted;

"That the Council enters into a temporary contract with the site owner to manage the public car park at the former Webster's Garage site in Axminster with delegated authority being given to Service Lead Environmental Health and Car Parks in consultation with Strategic Lead Finance and Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing to negotiate and agree the commercial terms and enter into the commercial agreement."

The Chair invited members to vote in favour or against recommending approval of the report.

Following a vote, the Chair confirmed that the report and its recommendation contained therein were recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION: to approve the report and its recommendation as follows;
That the Council enters into a temporary contract with the site owner to manage the public car park at the former Webster's Garage site in Axminster with delegated authority being given to Service Lead Environmental Health and Car Parks in consultation with Strategic Lead Finance and Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing to negotiate and agree the commercial terms and enter into the commercial agreement.

DECISION:

The recommendations were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

47 **Motion: Universal Credit Cut**

The Chair invited Cllr Millar as the proposer to speak to the motion.

Cllr Millar thanked those officers who had assisted him in drafting a motion which had received cross-party support. As a motion in three parts, the intention was to actively support young people at financial risk; request that Cabinet seeks further funding to support the Council's work on poverty, and make a stand as a Council to request that the Government re-instates the Universal Credit uplift, which affects an area like East Devon very much. Since he was aware of many approaches to the Council from those facing hardship, he wanted to indicate its solidarity in helping tackle a desperate situation for many, in the hope that the Government might perform a U-turn.

In the absence of Cllr Bonetta (due to temporary IT difficulties), Cllr Allen seconded this motion by stating that this was the wrong time for the uplift to go, when it could have been reviewed next spring as part of the budget process. He requested that all Cllrs review any funds available to them which could go towards helping the most vulnerable in local communities.

Comments during the debate on this motion included the following;

- That funds were already available to support the Council's Poverty Strategy and a lot of work was underway.
- That the second part of this motion should be referred to the Poverty Working panel for an informed report to be compiled by officers before going to Cabinet.
- Waiting for the intervention of more groups or meetings would delay opportunities to assist people in hardship as soon as possible.
- The period for budget setting is fast approaching and so timing is crucial to consider the direction or re-direction of funds available.
- There were concerns about the impact of multiple changes on families next year, with increases to National Insurance, increasing fuel prices, rising costs of living, the end of furlough and increasing costs of accommodation.
- The Government was setting up a Household Support Fund (£5m), some of which would go to Devon Councils via small grants for basic commodities, and available at the end of the month, but could not support the extension of existing funds such as the Universal Credit uplift.
- £20 is a lot for people who need support urgently, and is the reason bodies such as Honiton Food Safe exist, founded by Cllr Bonetta and open four times each week.
- More names are being presented to Food Banks, and even if the Government do not change their view on the uplift, the Council would be being proactive rather than reactive by putting political views aside and supporting the motion unanimously.
- Poverty appears to be the 'new normal' instead of a crime against people. There is no morally sound reason to defend the taking away of Universal Credit uplift, when families may be forced to choose whether they have heating or food as an option, but not both.
- The uplift was a benefit to the local economy when people have money to shop on High Streets suffering after the pandemic. £20 per week remains lower than the £25 allowance for MPs meals when they are in London.
- There is a widening gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots'.
- Those listening to the debate may take the view this Council does not care, if it does not do all it can to tackle poverty.

The Leader proposed and Cllr Loudoun seconded that the motion now be put.

Cllr Whibley proposed and Cllr Jackson seconded a Recorded vote.

The Chair invited Cllr Millar as the proposer to give his right of reply.

Cllr Millar thanked everyone for their comments and encouraged those present to vote for the motion rather than along party lines.

The Chair invited those present to vote in favour or against holding a recorded vote. This was carried following a vote.

The Chair then invited those present to vote on the proposal that the motion now be put. This was carried following a vote.

Recorded vote on the motion:

Councillors Mike Allen, Megan Armstrong, Paul Arnott, Jess Bailey, Denise Bickley, Jake Bonetta, Sarah Chamberlain, Olly Davey, Peter Faithfull, Steve Gazzard, Nick Hookway, Sarah Jackson, Vicky Johns, Geoff Jung, Jamie Kemp, John Loudoun, Dawn Manley, Paul Millar, Geoff Pratt, Val Ranger, Marianne Rixson, Jack Rowland, Eleanor Rylance, Brenda Taylor, Ian Thomas, Joe Whibley, Eileen Wragg – voted for - 27

Councillors Colin Brown, Alasdair Bruce, Fred Caygill, De Saram, Alan Dent, Ian Hall, Marcus Hartnell, Stuart Hughes, Ben Ingham, Richard Lawrence, Andrew Moulding, Helen Parr, Philip Skinner, Tom Wright – abstained - 14

Following the recorded vote the motion proposed by Cllr Millar was carried.

RECOMMENDATION; that the following recommendations from the motion be approved following a recorded vote.

Our Council recognises the significant impact on residents, particularly children and young people, of the deplorable decision of the Government to remove the Uplift provision for those on Universal Credit that will push many struggling families further into poverty.

This Council will therefore;

- Ensure we are doing all we can to work with our partners to more visibly promote take up of Schemes such as Kickstart, and are actively signposting local businesses to two new Devon programmes, 'SMART SKILLS' and 'Skills Support for the Workforce', in order to support those at risk of financial difficulties by offering solutions to local employers, and including those aged 16 - 24 on Universal Credit, to gain employment for a minimum of 6 months.
- Request an urgent report to a forthcoming Cabinet meeting setting out potential options for directing additional resources into the Anti-Poverty Strategy to support the District in helping the most vulnerable residents this winter, in the light of unexpected rising living costs.
- Write to the Chancellor and Prime Minister (copying in the District MPs) calling for the government to re-introduce this payment as a matter of urgency to the thousands of individuals, families and their children in East Devon that will be adversely affected by this cut in financial support to the most vulnerable.

DECISION:

The recommendations were approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 7.55pm.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

V Ranger (Vice-Chair)	J Loudoun	G Jung
M Armstrong	D Bickley	H Parr
P Jarvis	J Bailey	G Pook
S Jackson	S Hawkins	G Pratt
S Chamberlain	A Moulding	M Rixson
P Arnott	M Allen	E Rylance
K Blakey	D Manley	B De Saram
K Bloxham	C Brown	P Skinner
F Caygill	M Chapman	B Taylor
P Millar	I Chubb	I Thomas (Chair)
R Lawrence	A Dent	P Twiss
N Hookway	D Barrow	E Wragg
O Davey	P Faithfull	T Wright
J Whibley	S Gazzard	S Hughes
T McCollum	I Hall	A Bruce
V Johns	M Hartnell	J Kemp
J Rowland	B Ingham	

Officers in attendance:

Mark Williams, Chief Executive
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Hopkins, Communications Consultant
Anita Williams, Principal Solicitor (and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

Councillor apologies:

A Colman
T Woodward
P Hayward
D Key
C Gardner
M Howe

Chair

Date: