

Minutes

Meeting name	Meeting of the Council
Date	Wednesday, 23 September 2020
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	By remote video conference

Present:

Chair Councillor M. Graham MBE
(Chair)

Councillors

P. Faulkner (Vice-Chair)	T. Bains
R. Bindloss	R. Browne
S. Carter	P. Chandler
R. Child	P. Cumbers
J. Douglas	C. Evans
C. Fisher	A. Freer-Jones
A. Hewson	L. Higgins
E. Holmes	J. Illingworth
S. Lumley	J. Orson
A. Pearson	P. Posnett MBE
D. Pritchett	R. Smedley
M. Steadman	J. Wilkinson
P. Wood	

Officers

Chief Executive
 Director for Corporate Services
 Director for Growth and Regeneration
 Director for Governance and Regulatory Services and Monitoring
 Officer
 Assistant Director for Planning and Delivery
 Democratic Services Manager
 Democratic Services Officer (SE)

The Reverend Kevin Ashby offered prayers

Minute No.	Minute
	<p>MAYOR'S INTRODUCTION</p> <p>The Mayor announced that as the meeting was to be held as a remote conference on Zoom, any Member participating by remote link who declared an interest in any item of business in terms which required them to leave the room must ensure that they cannot be seen or heard during the agenda item.</p> <p>He explained the process for connection failure and that should the link not be re-established before the end of the meeting then the presumption would be that the meeting should continue to deal with the item providing the meeting remains quorate. Should the meeting no longer be quorate the meeting shall be adjourned and any remaining items of business would be deferred. Any Member who had been absent from the debate on a particular item due to connection failure must abstain from the vote on that item.</p> <p>The Mayor explained that Members would use the functionality of the software to speak and each Member would be asked in turn for their vote at the appropriate time.</p> <p>He advised that the meeting would be recorded and live-streamed on YouTube.</p>
CO31	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors de Burle and Glancy.</p>
CO32	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>Councillor Lumley requested that his comments on the Anti-Racism motion (Minute CO26) be included in the minutes. It was agreed that Councillor Lumley liaise with the Chief Executive and the minutes be amended accordingly.</p> <p>Subject to the foregoing the minutes of the 22 July 2020 were confirmed and authorised to be signed by the Mayor.</p>
CO33	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Councillor Orson requested that there be a standing item included on Council agendas for the Leicestershire County Councillors personal interests in any matters relating to the Leicestershire County Council. He advised that the interest applied to Councillors Orson, Pearson and Posnett MBE for that meeting.</p>
CO34	<p>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMARKS</p> <p>The Mayor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wished Councillor Glancy a 'Happy Birthday' • in early August he and the Mayoress had recorded a personal video tribute for VJ day which had been available on the Council's website • in September he had laid a wreath at Parkside to mark the Battle of Britain

	<p>commemoration accompanied by the Mayor's Cadet, who had made a short speech, the video for which had received over 3000 hits on social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ex councillor, Norman Slater, had fundraised for Rainbows hospice and this had been reported on the regional news
CO35	<p>ELECTION OF MAYOR</p> <p>The Mayor announced that in accordance with the Council resolution in May 2020 the Council had hoped to elect a new Mayor at that meeting, however this was not possible due to the statement made by the Prime Minister on the previous evening and the heightened restrictions that were due to be put in place to address the rising tide of Coronavirus cases. It was clear that the revised guidelines would impose stricter measures on everyone, making the ceremonial aspects of the mayor-making impossible to achieve in a safe and sensible way. Therefore the Council would look forward to the mayor-making at a future date once the national restrictions had been lifted.</p> <p>Councillor Orson moved the recommendation. Councillor Higgins seconded the motion.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>To APPROVE that the current arrangements for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor should remain in place, until such time that circumstances have changed sufficiently to enable the mayor-making to take place, or until the Annual Meeting in May 2021, whichever is sooner.</p> <p>(Unanimous)</p>
CO36	<p>VOTE OF THANKS TO RETIRING MAYOR</p> <p>This item was withdrawn due to the resolution at minute CO35.</p>
CO37	<p>ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR</p> <p>This item was withdrawn due to the resolution at minute CO35.</p>
CO38	<p>NEW MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>This item was withdrawn due to the resolution at minute CO35.</p>
CO39	<p>LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The Leader congratulated the Mayor on continuing in the role and stated</p> <p><i>'Earlier this year we approved our new Corporate Strategy and set a balanced budget to support it. Not long afterwards, the world changed and we faced and continue to face one of the greatest challenges for a generation. Following a comprehensive review, tonight we will approve our refreshed Strategy and I look forward to setting out our key priorities later in the agenda.</i></p> <p><i>When Covid hit we, alongside our community and volunteers, responded magnificently. Over the summer we have worked with our partners to support the</i></p>

reopening of the town centre and hospitality sector. It is now exactly six months to the day when the Prime Minister ordered a national Lockdown and we now face another significant period as Covid cases rise across the country and restrictions on society are being re-imposed. As we confront what are likely to be challenging months over the winter, Melton Borough Council will continue to lead the local recovery. We will support our communities and businesses, whilst promoting vital public health messages and asking everyone to play their role in defeating the virus.

Covid has impacted on many things over the last few months. We have been working closely with event organisers to see what might be possible. Whilst understandable, it was disappointing that our famous Food Festival had to be cancelled and we continue to work with Matthew on establishing how we might create a sustainable events programme next year. We continue to work with the RBL on Remembrance Day and hope to mark the occasion appropriately, albeit in a more modest way and without the usual parade. Similarly, any Christmas festivities will inevitably be significantly reduced this year.

On other matters, we continue to explore whether there is a way in which the southern section of the road can be delivered. As you will recall we delivered a credible and robust Masterplan for the southern neighbourhood and have now undertaken a viability appraisal for it. We have made it very clear to the County Council that we are prepared to be flexible and to do what it takes to ensure infrastructure costs are covered by any approved developments. We will continue to seek to persuade the County Council to accept the Housing Infrastructure Funding and make the necessary investment and will continue to reiterate our offer to work together in a collaborative way for the benefit of our communities.

In relation to the anticipated Devolution White paper, we understand the timescales for this are slipping and that the messages around any potential need for re-organisation to support it are changing. Of course we must wait for the final document to be published, but I was struck by the recent news from Surrey which confirmed that the Secretary of State did not support their proposals for a single unitary council and was essentially recommending they should proceed no further. The District Council Network has made some strong arguments on this point recently, advocating that local councils need to focus on recovery and delivery and not get bogged down over arguments relating to structures. This is something I know our MPs feel extremely strongly about too, something which they have conveyed to government directly. It will be interesting to watch how the County Council respond to this given the lack of support for the proposals they set out at their Cabinet last week. As I mentioned before, Melton Borough Council's focus needs to be on leading the local recovery and continuing to deliver for our residents at this time of national crisis.'

CO40	<p>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</p> <p>There were no questions received.</p>
CO41	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS</p> <p>In accordance with the requirements of the Constitution, the following question was received from Councillor Lumley:</p> <p><i>‘Can Melton Borough Council improve the condition of alleyways and bridleways in the Borough by;</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. establishing ownership of all alleyways/bridleways within the Borough to enable swift action to be taken on ad-hoc cleaning/fly-tipping issues;</i> <i>2. introducing a cleaning maintenance programme for alleyways and bridleways within the Borough that are within its ownership; and</i> <i>3. encouraging partner organisations to introduce a similar cleaning maintenance programme where alleyways and bridleways are within their ownership/responsibility.’</i> <p>The Leader responded as follows:</p> <p><i>‘We are fortunate that Melton Borough contains so many attractive locations, not only in our rural areas but also within Melton Mowbray town centre. Fly tipping of course is not only a blight on these locations, but also an environmental concern. As acknowledged in the question, Council Officers and contractors work hard to respond swiftly and appropriately to instances of fly tipping and this work has continued throughout the Covid 19 response whilst there has been unprecedented demand on the Council. This of course follows the creation of the Regulatory Services Team and the increase in enforcement resources that the Council has achieved in recent years. Only recently did we receive some positive feedback from Melton Matters regarding the good work being done by the Regulatory Services Team and in particular the Environment Enforcement Officer, David Walker, and his outstanding attitude to work. This is a testament to the important work being carried out by this team.</i></p> <p><i>I would refer to agenda item on the refreshed Corporate Strategy that will be considered later in this meeting. In the Strategy, Priority Four contains a clear commitment to tackle the environmental and place based issues that matter to our communities. That said, we must operate within our limited resources and be mindful of the need for the Council to prioritise effectively through these uncertain times. Officers will however continue to engage both with community groups, residents and businesses right across the Borough in relation to the issues raised.’</i></p> <p>Councillor Lumley declined the opportunity to ask a supplementary question.</p>
CO42	<p>MOTIONS ON NOTICE</p> <p>There were no motions on notice received.</p>

ADOPTION OF REFRESHED CORPORATE STRATEGY 2020-2024 AND COVID-19 RECOVERY UPDATE

The Leader moved the recommendations in the report. He explained that the report referred to Appendix A and Appendix 1, and it was Appendix A that was attached to the report that was proposed for approval.

Councillor Higgins seconded and thanked those involved in producing the Corporate Strategy video and in delivering on key aspects of the strategy.

A video on the refreshed [Corporate Strategy](#) was shown and well received by Members. It was noted that it would be used as much as possible to promote the Council's priorities and what the Council was aiming to achieve. Using social media and web channels, partners' websites as well as in reception at Parkside.

The Mayor said that although the strategy was very impressive, he felt it did not emphasise enough what the Council did do so well which was looking after weaker members of the community. He appreciated what the Leader and Councillor Pearson had said in the video about continued focus on priority neighbourhoods which was welcomed but he considered hardship came in various forms in sundry places not just in convenient areas. He explained that if you relied on focus groups to formulate policy, few would say look after those who found life difficult, in many cases through no fault of their own. If you were elected you were there to represent everyone including the less fortunate and do what you felt was right, everything was a balance. He was supportive of the Strategy and wished to stress that he wanted a vibrant economy but felt the community could only progress as fast as its slowest section. He asked that the political leadership continue to invest in and look after this group because it was very important.

The Leader stated:

'Back in February we approved our Corporate Strategy for the next four years. Within weeks we were in lockdown and focussing on responding to a global crisis. Understandably we had to suspend our plans to launch the Strategy in April, but as things stabilised over the late spring and early summer we were able to review our strategy against the new challenges from covid and assess what, if any, changes were required. As a Council, officers and members have, once again, worked well to consider the implications and impacts caused by Covid with opportunities for all members to feed in. Tonight we consider the outcomes from that review but we must remember that our strategy will never be set in stone, it will continue to adapt as the challenges facing our community adapt and I welcome the ongoing review of our two Scrutiny task and finish groups who will feed in ideas over the coming months.

It was pleasing that even faced with the changing situation caused by covid, the 6 priorities we set ourselves in February remained relevant and appropriate. We have also retained an absolute commitment to being a caring and a compassionate council, which runs through the core of our organisation and is underpinned by our values. What we have though done is refine the focus of our priorities to emphasise

those issues that will now be most pressing over the coming months and years.

Firstly, as we anticipate an increase in unemployment and financial, and mental well-being needs, we are placing an even greater emphasis on supporting our community, particularly the most vulnerable, learning from and sustaining the fantastic approach taken through our Community Support hub.

The Council's commitment to improve council homes and landlord services remains unchanged, but now includes an additional focus on utilising existing and new stock to provide better temporary accommodation for those who need it; particularly when risks of homelessness are increasing.

The Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated inequalities and made them more pronounced. The Council's commitment to inclusive growth, aligned with the government's levelling up agenda, has never been more important. The strategy retains the clear focus on delivering a number of key priorities; including the Manufacturing Zones, using our assets for housing, securing a sustainable future for the Melton Sports Village and lobbying for a second GP surgery. It also refocuses activity on supporting the town centre recovery and expanding the rural pub scheme to support the wider hospitality and farming sector; so affected by the current situation.

Despite the huge challenges of lockdown, an unintended benefit was the reduction in carbon emissions and improvements in air quality. As many continue to work from home, traffic levels and resultant pollution have not returned to pre-lockdown levels. There is an opportunity to reinforce and sustain increased utilisation of sustainable transport like cycling and to make the most of our rural natural environment.

Finally, the Council will take the lessons from the last six months and consider how it will implement a new operating model, that maximise our flexible working practices and makes the best use of our office space. The Council's commitment to increase our community focus remains, but has been intensified to harness the tremendous community response and connections made through the crisis. It is hoped the Council can strike a new 'deal' to fundamentally reset how we work with and support those we serve.

I am proud of this strategy and I am proud of the way our council continues to support our community. The report highlights some of the many things we have done in responding to covid over the last six months and it goes to show what can be achieved by local councils, working closely with their communities.'

Councillor Evans felt the video was too focussed on the town and there was little that related to the rural areas of the Borough. He considered there was nothing on tourism and development in the rural areas. He said this was a tough time for everyone and positive policies were needed setting out what the Council wanted to achieve in a measured way. He felt the strategy showed no way of measuring achievement over 4 years as there were no aims or objectives. He felt there

needed to more to boost business and employment in the area and the document was bland on those areas. He congratulated those involved in the producing the document would like to see more facts and rural related content.

The Leader responded that some of the filming had been done in rural areas and that priority 4 supported the rural environment and economy. He added that the strategy was a high level document and would be underpinned by a delivery plan.

Councillor Holmes agreed in part with Councillor Evans that the strategy did not demonstrate enough focus on rural aspects of the community and felt that the Council needed to care and understand the needs of the rural life of the Borough. She felt satisfied that Councillor Pearson was supporting the most vulnerable and the Council must continue with that. She considered the strategy was good but just lacked on its reflection of the rural community.

Councillor Chandler stated that support and encouragement for jobs and industry was needed in the rural areas. She mentioned that neighbouring Councils were more supportive of rural businesses around the Bottesford area than Melton as these Councils could see that potential businesses had the capital and just needed support. She considered that business growth brought employment to the rural area and improved the economy and new businesses needed to be encouraged.

The Leader responded that the Council was available to support rural businesses and they just needed to get in touch with officers. He further mentioned that the 500 homes due to be built in Bottesford would bring employment and boost the economy. He agreed to contact Councillor Chandler to discuss further following the meeting.

Councillor Lumley wished to record thanks to several individuals who had helped him with his ward issues on areas such as fly-tipping and the vagrant cells at St Mary's Hospital. He also paid tribute to Glynn Cartwright for his community leadership. He asked if the Council could be more forward thinking on its protection of historic sites such as the War Memorial Hospital and the St Mary's site.

Councillor Pearson responded that there were grants available for rural companies and for the armed forces covenant which was a joint venture with Charnwood, Melton and Rushcliffe to support those who been in military service. He advised that the Council was working closely with the vulnerable and they would not lose focus and keep moving forward.

Councillor Pritchett was supportive of the strategy but would abstain as he intended to monitor and hold those to account who were responsible for its delivery. He added that he would be pursuing its aims in his own ward to help make it work.

The Leader expressed appreciation for Members' comments and agreed with Councillor Lumley on his gratitude to David Walker and Tony Ebbs for their commitment.

(Councillor Illingworth was reported as having left the meeting due to connectivity

	<p>issues and had requested it be noted that he was supportive of the recommendations.)</p> <p>Councillor Cumbers explained that two scrutiny reviews were in the pipeline, one on place and the other on people. She added that young people had been badly affected by the pandemic and there was high unemployment. Although the Council could not directly address this, the Council could support the bigger picture as a caring organisation. She added that Jobcentre Plus was supporting young people to find work and reduce unemployment.</p> <p>The Leader advised Members to contact the relevant Portfolio Holder with any concerns.</p> <p>Councillor Freer-Jones added that the Customer Services function supported people from all over the Borough.</p> <p>The Mayor informed the Council that he had been delighted to present a 30 years' service certificate to Diana Faulks in Customer Services who had given excellent service to the Council.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>(1) To APPROVE the updated Corporate Strategy as set out at Appendix A;</p> <p>(2) To NOTE the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and the actions the Council is taking as a result.</p> <p>(21 for, 4 abstentions)</p>
CO44	<p>CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL</p> <p>There were no recommendations from Cabinet to Council.</p>
CO45	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES</p> <p>There were no recommendations and reports from Committees.</p>

The meeting closed at: 7.45 pm

Mayor