

Minutes

Meeting name	Council
Date	Thursday, 27 October 2022
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor A. Hewson (Chair)

Councillors

E. Holmes (Vice-Chair)	S. Atherton
R. Bindloss	R. Browne
S. Carter	P. Chandler
R. Child	P. Cumbers
R. de Burle	J. Douglas
C. Evans	C. Fisher
A. Freer	M. Glancy
M. Graham MBE	L. Higgins
J. Illingworth	S. Lumley
R. Smith	T. Webster
J. Wilkinson	

Officers

- Chief Executive
- Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
- Director for Corporate Services
- Director for Growth and Regeneration
- Assistant Director for Governance & Democracy
- Democratic Services Manager
- Democratic Services Officer (HA)
- Democratic Services Officer (SE)
- Democratic Services Officer (CT)

Pastor Neal Swettenham offered prayers

Minute No.	Minute
CO29	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Faulkner, Orson, Posnett, Pritchett and Wood.</p>
CO30	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 July 2022 and the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 14 September 2022 were both confirmed as a true record.</p>
CO31	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
CO32	<p>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The Mayor advised that he had met so many unsung heroes during his time as Mayor that were helping people and doing voluntary work around the town and Borough. He informed Members that he had attended the following events since the last Council meeting held in July :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unveiling of the golden bench by local Melton resident Iman Barlow for becoming 'World Thai Boxing Champion & World Games Gold Medallist 2022' • Tilton Brownie Camp • Melton in Bloom presentations for hidden gems of cafes with outdoor seating • Let's get moving Melton Day in the Play Close • Ukrainian Independence Day at St Mary's Church • DATR for the unveiling of a Leicestershire Green Plaque award • An event at the Council to hear the views of young people • Wreath laying on the death of Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II • Visits associated with enabling residents to sign the Book of Condolence • Proclamation of King Charles III • National Sheep Association Ram Sale at the Cattle Market • Battle of Britain Parade and Church Service • Official Civic Service for Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II at Leicester Cathedral • Update tour on youth activities in the town • Presentation at Langar Airfield for the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate the loss of 16 United States pilots • Presentations by Melton in Bloom to Long Field School • 151/156 Parachute Battalion Reunion • Furniture Project update on how they help people furnish their homes on a budget • 1279 Squadron Cadets event • Meeting with RAFA at their HQ on Asfordby Road • Joined the Rotary Club in the planting of crocuses on the bank near Parkside to raise awareness for polio • Various Civic Services around the county and neighbouring areas • It was announced that Melton Young Farmers Tug of War team of girls came 6th in the world and the juniors came 6th in the world

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deputy Mayor had also attended a Civic Service and a ball on behalf of the Mayor <p>Formal appointment of the Mayor's Cadet</p> <p>The Mayor introduced the role of Mayor's Cadet and advised that the role provided a close and visible association between the Mayoralty and the 1279 Air Cadet Squadron and it was an honour for those cadets nominated to take up this position.</p> <p>The Mayor invited the outgoing Mayor's Cadet, Cadet Corporal Daniel Bartram, to make a presentation on his year in office. The Mayor presented a certificate and thanked Cadet Corporal Bartram for his service to the Mayoralty.</p> <p>The Mayor announced the new Mayor's Cadet for the ensuing year, Cadet Corporal Wilf Burrows, and presented the brassard that denoted the role when wearing with his uniform.</p>
CO33	<p>LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>In the Leader's absence, the Deputy Leader made the following speech :</p> <p><i>'Members, whilst I recognise, we held an extraordinary meeting in honour of Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in September, given this is the first Leaders Notifications since her passing, I wanted to once again acknowledge her incredible contribution to our country and Commonwealth, and place on record our allegiance and best wishes to King Charles III.</i></p> <p><i>For the same reason, I also want to again formally acknowledge the tragic and untimely passing of our dear friend and colleague, Mel Steadman, and also place on record my sincere appreciation for her passion, contribution and commitment to her community and this council. As well as for the humour and bravery she continued to show at all times. We continue to offer our thoughts and prayers to her friends and family.</i></p> <p><i>Over recent years, you will have heard us talk a lot about the pace of our housing improvements and following the commitment and investment we made in 2019, and a lot of hard work since, we have seen the benefit of those decisions, and that determination, come to fruition in recent months.</i></p> <p><i>I must continue to pay tribute to our committed staff team and portfolio holder and wanted to share a few notable highlights. In the last month, I know that a number of you were able to attend a demonstration of our new housing management IT system, which you may recall was something the council invested in through the Housing Improvement Plan. A number of housing management policies have been approved by the Cabinet with more to follow, and our housing asset management plan has been considered by the scrutiny committee ahead of consideration by full</i></p>

council later this year. We continue to build a clear, robust and evidence-based approach to managing and investing in our homes.

One of our proudest moments though, and perhaps the greatest signal of the transformation over the last 3 years, has been the conclusion of the most recent landlord health and safety audit, which is due to be considered in more detail at the next Audit and Standards Committee. The original audit in 2019, which offered limited assurance, was a key trigger for the changes brought forward in the Housing Improvement Plan. The recent audit provides substantial assurance for the controls we now have and demonstrates the complete transformation of the service and the grip the team now have on this most important issue. There is no room for complacency of course but we should all be proud of what we have achieved and be confident in the measures we have both taken and will continue to take in our housing service.

On community safety, I would like to thank our Scrutiny Committee members who arranged for the Police and Crime Commissioner, Rupert Matthews, to come to Melton to discuss Crime and Disorder issues within our Borough. The session was both positive and productive and followed the PCC's visit to a number of key locations within the area, alongside discussions with myself on our safer communities work. I was pleased to hear that the PCC has expressed an interest in following up on the work our teams will be doing in priority neighbourhoods over the next few weeks.

Over the summer, in partnership with Rutland, we submitted our ambitious Levelling Up Fund bid for a total of £23m. If successful it would enable significant investment at the cattle market, and improvements to the theatre, which would create jobs and improve the local offer in Melton. We had expected a decision on the outcome of our bid in October but have since been advised that decisions on funding will not now be made until the new year.

As you know we also submitted our £1.2m UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan (also known as UKSPF) and similarly understood we would receive an update on this in the early Autumn. We again await an update on revised timescales and will keep members updated as we learn more.

Pleasingly, through the recently announced Rural England Prosperity Fund, Melton has been awarded a further £400k capital funding. This welcome funding needs to be incorporated into our 3 year UKSPF plan, and provides additional resources to respond to challenges felt particularly by rural communities. We are working hard to meet the submission deadline in November.

A cornerstone of our UKSPF plan, and a key focus for us over the last year, is how we can better support and create opportunities for young people. As a council we have actively supported the development of the AMY project (Action for Melton Youth) led by Mark Frisby and the Access all Areas team. We recently hosted an

interactive session for the young people at the council, and I am pleased to say that there is an AMY meeting of young people happening right now, and that this evening they will be considering how they can more effectively link in with some of our existing groups and structures to enable their voice to be heard more clearly as we make decisions. This might include, for example, our Safer Melton partnership or tenant engagement and we wish them every success and look forward to working with them in the future.

In less positive news, barely a day goes by where we don't hear about the terrible impacts the cost-of-living crisis is having on our communities right now.

We have taken positive action to do all we can to help, and our teams are supporting residents across the Borough, with a clear action plan in place which focusses very much on communication and support. Our discretionary energy rebate scheme has been implemented, and eligible residents will have started to receive payments. In addition, we have launched an energy rebate hardship scheme and are currently accepting applications, with a deadline of 4th November.

I'm grateful to those members who were able to attend the recent cost of living briefing and I understand a further briefing session will be added to member calendars shortly to update on our work in more detail. One of the things we know, is that the support we give to people can only be effective if people know it is there, and how to access it. We have available this evening a number of leaflets and posters for you to take away should you wish to do so. I would be grateful if you could take them into your communities and if you come across anybody who is struggling, please ask them to contact us so we can do whatever we can to help.

Inflationary pressures are also having an impact on public finances. As we heard at the recent State of Melton Debate, inflation is putting significant pressure on our own finances, and you will have seen the recent announcements by the Leader of the County Council about their own significant funding gaps. As the new Prime Minister has made clear, there are going to be some tough decisions and tough times ahead.

We know the County Council are considering how to manage their financial challenge, and they may have to make some difficult choices, but we also know they, and we, will do all we can to ensure the MMDR can proceed as planned.

Whilst we celebrate and warmly welcome the recent principle commitment made by our health partners to develop proposals for a second GP surgery with us, we must remember that the funding package for this and any new leisure provision is not yet in place and raising the required capital will, inevitably, now be harder due to the current economic climate. We will continue to explore every possible option for this over the coming months, as we work to develop our leisure procurement strategy for provision post April 2024.

Increasing our resilience, and our financial stability, is one of the reasons we have agreed to explore the establishment of a strategic partnership with Harborough District Council. Following the briefings provided a few weeks ago, you will have seen that in early October, the Cabinets both here and at Harborough, gave the green light to develop a business case for consideration at our Council meetings in December.

The business case will set out the rationale, potential benefits and risks of any partnership, alongside, crucially 'how' any strategic partnership would work, and the framework for establishing and operating any shared roles or services. This work will ensure we have done sufficient due diligence, but also will ensure that we have a solid basis upon which to build our partnership, and a shared understanding across both councils of what could be achieved.

The work is moving at considerable pace and members will have received an invite to an all member briefing next Wednesday where a more detailed update on progress will be provided. Before our Cabinet consider the proposals in early December, our Scrutiny Committee will consider the draft business case, and our Audit Committee will consider the draft memorandum of agreement and we continue to welcome wide input and engagement as this work progresses.

I want to finish by acknowledging a few recent achievements from our teams. Firstly, for their great work during covid, our Regeneration Team was recently shortlisted in the 'Programme of Business Support' category in the regional Federation of Small Businesses Local Government Awards. We know how hard our team worked to provide support to businesses during that very challenging time so many congratulations to them.

Secondly, I wanted to pay tribute to our Environmental Health and Legal teams for their recent successful prosecution in relation to a food safety offence. After pleading guilty to a number of offences, Krispy Kreme were fined over £200k which attracted praise from the Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency and received international media coverage. Councils are guardians of public safety and whilst we focus on encouraging positive behaviours, when breaches occur it is important, we take action to safeguard our residents. Again, well done to those involved.

Thirdly, as you know, as a Council we are committed to supporting our armed forces and I am proud that for the first time the Council recently achieved a Gold Award for the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – this is the highest badge of honour for employers who support those who serve in the armed forces, veterans, and their families.

We are one of only three employers in Leicestershire to receive this award this year and it did not happen by accident. To bring this to life we have updated our policies and practices to support veterans in our workforce, provided guaranteed interview

	<p><i>where they meet the criteria, prioritised housing allocations and strengthened our ties with the armed forces community. I am extremely proud to be joining a team of officers who worked so hard to achieve this, to collect our Gold Award on behalf of Melton Borough Council at the National Memorial Arboretum next week.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, I want to draw your attention to the latest update from the Boundary Commission on the revised proposals for parliamentary constituencies. We understand these are due to be published on 8th November, when a third and final consultation will commence lasting 4 weeks. We will promote the consultation widely and I'd encourage any member who wishes to do so, to feed into the process. In addition, with the upcoming Borough / Parish Elections in May 2023, officers are preparing to host two prospective Councillor events on 15 November 2022 and we also have posters for these events available this evening for you to pass on to your communities / groups.</i></p> <p><i>I know that there is a lot to take in in this report and I can tell you that many things we are doing have been left out as it would not be possible to cover everything in the time available. If you would like a copy of what I have said, please do contact Democratic Services. Thank you.'</i></p>
CO34	<p>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</p> <p>There were no questions received.</p> <p>(Councillor Child left the meeting at 7.15 pm.)</p>
CO35	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS</p> <p>There were two questions received however one question was withdrawn on the day of the meeting.</p> <p>Before reading his question Councillor Lumley paid tribute to late Councillor Mel Steadman and referred to her being a hard-working Councillor.</p> <p>Councillor Lumley asked the following question :</p> <p><i>'Can the Member strongly consider free or reduced MBC-operated car parking charges in the Melton town area after 3pm Monday-Saturday, to help town centre businesses, assuming existing very low revenue after this time is confirmed?</i></p> <p><i>This would greatly help due to the inefficiency of our current car parking payment machines (where there is complimentary individual central government money to upgrade Council-maintained car parking payment machines) where feedback is that people are put off by not having the correct change denomination and no change is given, to generally to uplift a quieter time of day throughout the town centre, and with a key time of day of where parents and guardians pick up their children from nursery and school, which could then entice them into the Town Centre.'</i></p>

The Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity, Councillor Bindloss, responded as follows :

'I appreciate and thank the member for his question and I agree as I'm sure we all do that supporting town centre businesses particularly at this difficult time is important for the vitality and prosperity of our town. We are indeed listening to the businesses not just in the town but across the Borough and we welcome your feedback on the issues faced by those attempting to utilise the car parks to visit and shop in the town area.

As we all know we have gone from one national crisis to another with people now feeling a financial squeeze and indeed a genuine hardship through the cost of living crisis, with so many now identifying this it is now also becoming a cost of business crisis.

We are keen to support town centre businesses where possible and to that end we have allocated significant funding to support the wider town centre and ultimately attract more people into it through the recently submitted UKSPF fund and I can say we are always keen to do more and look at more options.

The question of car parking is rightly something that should be considered as part of the budgeting process for the authority and to this end I have requested that officers look into this further so as to advise members on the financial impact of this and to consider other scenarios to try and balance our commitment to the town centre alongside our need to remain fiscally responsible and maintain the financial sustainability of the Council.

With regard to the car parking machines themselves we plan to undertake a car parking needs assessment to ensure we future proof accessibility to the town and provide enough space for future users and visitors taking into consideration the expected growth within the area over the next 10-15 years.

As part of this we are looking at not only the costs and the viability but also the wide-ranging methods for alternative parking and ticketing measures which make it as easy as possible for people to use the car parks.

Whilst this is ongoing, we acknowledge the concerns of those who currently use our parking machines and have installed a cashless option within all our car parks in 2020 this is increasingly being used on a yearly basis and now accounts for around 20% of total ticket sales.

Naturally the findings of this report will be sent to the appropriate committees for consideration and evaluation and this process has already started and is being dealt with now. This is a very broad subject and there are lots of possibilities and

	<p><i>variables. We need to make sure that we maximise the benefits to the town and its businesses and in the decisions we make towards this.'</i></p> <p>Councillor Lumley was invited to ask a supplementary question however as the supplementary question raised by Councillor Lumley was not directly related to the original question the Mayor indicated no response was required.</p> <p>(Councillor Child re-entered the meeting at 7.20 pm during the preceding item.)</p>
CO36	<p>MOTIONS ON NOTICE</p> <p>There were no motions on notice received.</p>
CO37	<p>REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer presented a report on the review of political balance and allocation of seats to political groups following recent changes which altered the political balance between the groups. She advised that nominations had been received from the Groups for Councillor Carter to take up the Opposition seat on the Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Posnett to take up the Conservative seat on the Licensing Committee. She also reported there was an error in the recommendations at 2.2, which should refer to paragraph 5.3 and not paragraph 5.2.</p> <p>Some members expressed concerns about committee appointments and advised that they would vote against the motion.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Council :</p> <p>(1) Approves the political balance calculation set out at paragraph 5.1;</p> <p>(2) Approves the allocation of committee seats to political groups as set out in paragraph 5.3 and notes the membership of each committee as set out in Appendix A.</p> <p>(16 for, 4 against, 1 abstention)</p> <p>Before closing the meeting, the Mayor announced that the next Council Meeting would be held on Tuesday 20 December and not on Thursday 15 December as previously notified. This was to allow for the finalisation of the documentation for the strategic partnership.</p>

The meeting closed at: 7.35 pm