

Minutes

Meeting name	Council
Date	Thursday, 23 February 2023
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	S. Carter
P. Chandler	R. Child
P. Cumbers	R. de Burle
J. Douglas	C. Evans
P. Faulkner	A. Freer
M. Glancy	M. Graham MBE
L. Higgins	J. Illingworth
S. Lumley	D. Pritchett
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
- Monitoring Officer
- Assistant Director for Resources
- Democratic Services Manager
- Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
- Democratic Services Officer (HA)

Pastor Neal Swettenham offered prayers.

Minute No.	Minute
CO53	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Browne, Fisher, Orson and Posnett. In addition to the apologies received, Councillor Wood was absent.</p>
CO54	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2022 were confirmed.</p>
CO55	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Councillor Carter declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Number CO61, as he is a tenant of a Council-owned property.</p> <p>Councillor Illingworth declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Number CO61, as he is a tenant of a Council-owned property.</p>
CO56	<p>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The Mayor informed Members that he had attended the following events since the last Council meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended Gretton Court for a meeting with the residents. • Midnight mass at St Mary's Church. • Hosted the Mayor's Quiz Night at Parkside. There were 120 people in attendance and £761.70 was raised for the Mayor's charities. • Attended the John Ferneley Arts and Performance concert. • Oadby and Wigston Civic Service. • Harby Pantomime • Charity Race Night hosted by Councillor Helen Crawford, Chairman of South Kesteven District Council. • Melton Lions Seniors Variety Concert at Melton Theatre.
CO57	<p>LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>In the absence of the Leader, the Deputy Leader provided the following update on his behalf.</p> <p><i>"Thank you, Mr Mayor. Members, with the Leader unable to attend this evening it falls to me to provide his update at tonight's meeting.</i></p> <p><i>Since the last meeting we've had a number of significant and positive developments which I am pleased to be able to report. Firstly, I'm delighted to confirm that we have been shortlisted in this year's prestigious LGC Awards in the most improved Council category. This is fantastic recognition of a tremendous progress we've made over recent years and I'd like to congratulate all officers and Members for this terrific achievement. There were over 700 submissions across 22 categories for the awards and we are one of only five councils to have been shortlisted in this category. As finalists we are now required to present to a judging</i></p>

panel in April before finding out whether we have won in June.

Since the last Council meeting, we also had the brilliant news regarding the success of our levelling up fund bid. This will see Melton receive a share of £23m to invest in the stockyard development, theatre improvements and enhance rural transport linked with Rutland. Again can I congratulate our officers for developing such strong and credible bid. We have recently received further details on the next steps from government and these are currently being reviewed by the Levelling-up Fund Board, including Leaders and Chief Executives from Rutland and Melton, met earlier this week. Our intention is to receive a formal update at Cabinet in March with a view to confirm acceptance of a grant at Council later that month. The Leader is also due to attend the Audit and Standards Committee at the end of March, so we can consider the role that committee will play in supporting effective oversight and governance of his important project.

At Cabinet earlier this month we considered an update on our asset development programme. Since the County Council left 18 months ago and the adoption of our hybrid working model we, like many organizations, need less office space and therefore maintaining the status quo is not an option and does not represent good value for money. Recognizing this in the update on the asset development program we received in April last year, full Council made an explicit commitment to explore commercial options for greater utilization of Parkside so we could cut costs while also boosting the local economy. Since then we've been reviewing options which seek to strike the right balance between costs and benefit both for the Council and the wider community. This work was supported by our scrutiny colleagues through a workshop in November last year. A Cabinet report summarized the analysis and without doubt the hotel represents an exciting and innovative option that should be explored further. This is very an important decision and one we must get right so, at our meeting, we agreed to build on the options appraisal already undertaken and, before proceeding to the next stage, to bring back the more detailed analysis on the alternate options to our June meeting. This will include an economic impact assessment and I recognize we've got a motion on this later in our agenda, it is worth reiterating with any final decision on the best option for the site will be reserved for full Council in due course.

At our last Council meeting, we approved investment in our new CCTV cameras and installation has already started and the new system is on track to be operational next month.

Our cost of living work continues and we are mobilizing various projects within our UK SPF investment plan with updates on both also due to be considered at Cabinet in March.

Earlier this week and, following the success of our Jubilee Grant scheme, we launched our Coronation Grant fund which will support community groups, charities and Parish Councils who want to hold their own Coronation celebrations events or projects. More details are on the website and bids need to be submitted by Monday 20th March.

Finally, it won't, I'm sure, of escaped Members attention that we are approaching another election in May. You will be aware that the Election Act 2022 has introduced new requirements for voter ID and we are promoting the new requirement widely on our social media channels. We have also ensured coverage in the Melton Times and every household in a Borough will receive explicit notification of a new requirement on their poll card and council will continue to do all it can to ensure anyone who wishes to vote is able to do so in May. On behalf of our Chief Executive and returning officer, can I also highlight that there is a prospective candidate and agent's briefing on the 3rd March at 5:30pm in the council chamber. The session is available to anyone who is considering standing for elections in May. Please contact our Elections team if you wish to reserve a place.

Thank you very much."

CO58	<p>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME No questions from the public had been received.</p>
CO59	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS No questions from Members had been received.</p>
CO60	<p>MOTIONS ON NOTICE Prior to hearing the motions on notice, Council paid tribute to Parish Councillor Andy Holland, who had recently died.</p> <p>Anti-Bullying Motion The following motion was proposed by Councillor Higgins and seconded by Councillor Faulkner.</p> <p>Bullying and victimisation comes in various forms but can be described as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting; • an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone. <p>The bullying might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident; • happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or calls; • happen at work or in other work-related situations; • not always be obvious or noticed by others. <p>Examples of bullying could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • someone has spread a malicious rumour about you; • someone keeps putting you down in meetings; • someone in a senior position keeps giving you a heavier workload than everyone else; • someone has put humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos

on social media.

Cllr Higgins requested that Members join him in supporting the following motion:

Melton Borough Council understands the impacts of bullying and encourages all those young and old alike to take action against acts of bullying; and underlines the horrid effects bullying has on individuals' self-confidence and the ongoing impacts it can have on people.

The Council extends its support to victims of bullying and affirms its belief that the behaviours described above are not acceptable in a civilised society, schools, businesses and organisations, or wider community of the Borough of Melton.

During the debate the following comments were made:

- The Deputy Leader welcomed the motion and will review how it fits with the bullying policy and the Members Code of Conduct.
- It was noted that bullying also includes the following:
 - deliberately attempting to damage a person's reputation or career,
 - uncovering irrelevant information from a person's past with the intent to sully their reputation or career.
 - Contacting a person's workplace with the intent of damaging a person's reputation or career.
 - Falsifying information in relation to a person's private life with the intent to tarnish their reputation.
- It was commented that bullying and harassment are defined as certain behaviours and actions which cause someone to feel either intimidated or offended and this covers a wide range of behaviours such as spreading rumours, isolating individuals and making derogatory remarks.
- A Member commented that bullying should not be tolerated and noted that common forms of bullying is based on gender, race and religion. In any situation where bullying has taken place the bully should be made to apologise unconditionally.
- The comment was made that it is very important that bullying is stamped out. Complaints should be seen and sorted immediately.
- It was recognised how important combating bullying is.

RESOLVED

Council

Understands the impacts of bullying and encourages all those young and old alike to take action against acts of bullying; and underlines the horrid effects bullying has on individuals' self-confidence and the ongoing impacts it can have on people.

The Council extended its support to victims of bullying and affirms its belief that the behaviours described above are not acceptable in a civilised society,

schools, businesses and organisations, or wider community of the Borough of Melton.

(20 For, 0 Against, 2 Abstentions)

Proposal for Diversification of the Parkside Offices Motion

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Faulkner and seconded by Councillor Lumley.

Councillor Faulkner requested that Members join him in supporting the following motion:

- 1) To note the Cabinet decision made on 8 February 2023 in relation to the Proposal for Diversification of the Parkside Offices and request that the economic impact assessment referenced as part of that decision (Resolution 3.2) includes the following information (subject to availability):**
 - **the current hotel room availability and usage to include the Harboro Hotel, Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Quorn Lodge Hotel and Premier Inn and details regarding the impact of an extra 65 room hotel on these businesses.**
 - **the date that Scalford Hall will be available again for public use and what impact the additional room availability would have on any proposed new hotel's viability at Parkside.**
- 2) The above information to be reported to Cabinet in June 2023 as part of the aforementioned economic impact assessment.**

During the debate the following comments were made:

- Deputy Leader assured Members that the information requested would be included within the information which Cabinet will receive in June.
- It was recognised that the Council needs to make use of its assets whether that means the development of a hotel at Parkside or at another Council owned site. Whatever the decision, there needs to be a forum to debate this issue comprehensively.
- It was noted that the Council now has a record of its assets and accessing whether it is getting value for money.
- The concern is, is that the Council would be the party to convert Parkside, therefore making the project high risk.
- A Member commented that the Council shouldn't be making major decisions before an election. The decision should be carried forward for the next Council to make.
- The comment was made that if a hotel chain wants to come to Melton Mowbray and convert Parkside, then they should take the risk.
- It was agreed that an economic impact assessment is important when deciding what to do.
- A Member wasn't sure what date Scalford Hall will be made available for public use.

RESOLVED

Council

- 1) **Noted the Cabinet decision made on 8 February 2023 in relation to the Proposal for Diversification of the Parkside Offices and request that the economic impact assessment referenced as part of that decision (Resolution 3.2) includes the following information (subject to availability):**
 - **the current hotel room availability and usage to include the Harboro Hotel, Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Quorn Lodge Hotel and Premier Inn and details regarding the impact of an extra 65 room hotel on these businesses.**
 - **the date that Scalford Hall will be available again for public use and what impact the additional room availability would have on any proposed new hotel's viability at Parkside.**
- 2) **The above information to be reported to Cabinet in June 2023 as part of the aforementioned economic impact assessment.**

(Unanimous)

CO61

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL - REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2023/24 - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

At 7:37pm, Councillors Carter and Illingworth left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources introduced the report on his behalf and moved the recommendation.

The Deputy Leader seconded the motion.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- It was noted that the percentage increase will be a challenge to some tenants, however there is a wider challenge with the rented sector whereby landlords are selling off their stock which will put pressure on the public sector landlords and increase the risk of a rise in homelessness.
- Following a query on the hardship fund it was noted that the money for the fund would come from the HRA. It is important to recognise that some tenants will struggle with the increase in costs and the hardship fund is a means to mitigate this.
- A Member commented that it is pleasing that money is spent to improve condition of the stock.
- The comment was made on whether a credit on the rent account could be made if the tenant is in arrears, as opposed to a voucher. Members were informed that as it had not been decided what the voucher could be spent on, a credit on the rent account could be an option.

RESOLVED

Council

- (1) APPROVED the budget estimates for 2023/24.**
- (2) APPROVED an average rent increase of 7.21% for all Council dwellings be approved with effect from 1 April 2023.**
- (3) APPROVED that a hardship fund to be developed for the benefit of those tenants in need to a maximum of £50k, and for awards granted to be in the form of vouchers.**
- (4) APPROVED the 2023-24 capital programme Council Report Cabinet recommendations to Council: Revenue Budget Proposals 2023/24 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**
- (5) APPROVED that delegated authority be given to the Director for Housing and Communities in consultation with the Director for Corporate Services and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services to approve virements within the HRA capital programme during the year to provide flexibility to meet emerging needs and maintain decent homes.**
- (6) APPROVED that delegated authority be given to the Director for Housing and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Landlord Services to finalise and implement the policy and criteria for a hardship fund for tenants.**

(Unanimous)

CO62

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL - CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022-2027 - GENERAL FUND AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2023/24

At 7:52pm, prior to the consideration of this item, Councillors Carter and Illingworth returned to the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources introduced the report and moved the recommendation. Councillor Atherton seconded the motion.

RESOLVED

Council

- (1) APPROVED the addition to the 2022/23 General Fund Capital Programme of a further £104k for Environmental maintenance vehicle replacement programme funded from the renewals and repair fund;**

- (2) APPROVED the removal from the 2022/23 General Fund Capital Programme of £550k of LAD 3 MEH sustainable warmth budget;**
- (3) APPROVED the reduction in the 2022/23 General Fund Capital Programme of £62k on property condition survey works;**
- (4) APPROVED the General Fund Capital Programme for 2023-27 as attached at Appendix B;**
- (5) APPROVED the sources of funding for the General Fund capital programme for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix C;**
- (6) APPROVED delegating authority to the Director for Corporate Services to amend the amount in the capital programme for Disabled Facilities Grants once funding confirmation has been received as referred to in paragraph 5.9 of the report at Appendix 1;**
- (7) APPROVED The Capital Strategy 2022-23 as attached at Appendix D.**

(Unanimous)

CO63

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL - GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 TO 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources introduced the report and moved the recommendation. Councillor Smith seconded the motion.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- Following a query relating to the cost of enforcement action, Members were informed that the Council will make application to court for recovery of any costs, however the applications are means tested and the decision on whether to award costs would come down to the defendant's ability to pay.
- It was confirmed that the budget for planning includes the leadership post.
- It was recognised that there is scrutiny on everything that is spent within the Council.
- Following a query regarding the Cemetery Lodge, it was noted that the Cabinet is due to consider a paper in March.

RESOLVED

Council

- (1) APPROVED the revenue budget for 2023/24 for General and Special Expenses as set out in Appendix B and summarised in section 4.5 of the report at Appendix 1 resulting in an overall council tax increase of 2.99%, with the individual council tax levels being as set out in paragraph 4.5.5 of the report at Appendix 1;**
- (2) APPROVED that the council continues to disregard 100% of any war**

widows (widowers)/war disablement scheme/armed forces compensation scheme payments in any benefits assessment.

- (3) **APPROVED** any underspend on general expenses at 31 March 2023 be used to increase the current level of the working balance in order to move closer to the target level of £1m and any overspend be met by reducing the budgeted transfer to the Regeneration and Innovation Reserve with any further shortfall being met from the Corporate Priorities Reserve in order to maintain the current level at £850k;
- (4) **APPROVED** that the general expenses working balance be increased to the £1m level recommended by the LGA in 2023/24 by transferring £150k from the Corporate Priorities Reserve;
- (5) **APPROVED** any surplus/deficit for Special Expenses Melton Mowbray be transferred to/from the Special Expenses Reserve thereby bringing the actual working balance back to the target;
- (6) **NOTED** the changes made to the risk categorisation of budgets as set out in paragraph 4.8.1 of the report at Appendix 1 and Appendix E.

The above resolution was considered through a recorded vote as follows:

FOR THE MOTION (22)

Atherton, Bindloss, Carter, Chandler, Child, Cumbers, de Burle, Douglas, Evans, Faulkner, Freer, Glancy, Graham, Hewson, Higgins, Holmes, Illingworth, Lumley, Pritchett, Smith, Webster, Wilkinson.

AGAINST THE MOTION (0)

ABSTAINING FROM THE MOTION (0)

At 8:09pm, following the conclusion of this item, Councillor Child left the meeting and did not return.

CO64

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL - TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources introduced the report and moved the recommendation. Councillor Smith seconded the motion.

RESOLVED

Council

- (1) **APPROVED and ADOPTED** the prudential indicators and limits as outlined in Section 2 of Appendix A.
- (2) **APPROVED** the Treasury Management Strategy as outlined in

Appendix A.

(3) APPROVED the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement which sets out the Council's policy on MRP as outlined in paragraph 5.4 of the report at Appendix 1.

(Unanimous)

CO65

COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Finance and Resources introduced the report and moved the recommendation. The Deputy Leader seconded the motion.

During the debate, the following points were raised:

- It was noted that seven Parish Councils have reduced their precepts for 2023/24.
- It was recognised that the Fire Authority is increasing its precept by 6.73%.

RESOLVED

Council

NOTED the calculations and set the Council Tax for the year 2023/24 made in accordance with regulations set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The above resolution was considered through a recorded vote as follows:

FOR THE MOTION (19)

Atherton, Bindloss, Chandler, Cumbers, de Burle, Douglas, Evans, Faulkner, Freer, Glancy, Graham, Hewson, Higgins, Holmes, Illingworth, Pritchett, Smith, Webster, Wilkinson.

AGAINST THE MOTION (2)

Carter, Lumley.

ABSTAINING FROM THE MOTION (0)

CO66

REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS

The Monitoring Officer introduced the review of political balance and allocation of seats to political groups report. The Deputy Leader moved the recommendations and Cllr Illingworth seconded the motion.

During the debate, the following points were raised:

- Following a question regarding the non-inclusion of the Constitution Review Working Group, Members were informed that the Working Groups included in the paper are subject to political balance rules.

- In response to the question on how the non-aligned Members decide who sits on which Committees, Council was informed that Officers would liaise with non-aligned Members in the first instance to see if an arrangement could be made. If no arrangement is agreed and there is more than one nomination, then Council would vote and appoint.
- It was noted that contrary to Appendix A, Councillor Carter sits on the Joint Staff Working Group and not Councillor Holmes.

RESOLVED

Council

- (1) NOTED how the rules operate;**
- (2) APPROVED the political balance calculation set out at paragraphs 5.10 and 5.11;**
- (3) APPROVED the allocation of seats on the Committees as set out in paragraph 5.12;**
- (4) NOTED the appointments for the Committees and Working Groups put forward by Political Groups as set out in Appendix A;**
- (5) APPOINTED non-aligned members to their allocation of seats on Committees and Working Groups as set out in Appendix A;**
- (6) DELEGATED authority to the Monitoring Officer to make consequential changes to the Substitution Procedure Rules (MBC Constitution Chapter 3 – Part 8) and Licensing Procedure Rules (MBC Constitution Chapter 2 – Part 8) to reflect the inclusion of non-aligned members in the political balance calculation and the amendments to the Licensing Committee as set out in the report; and**
- (7) NOTED the appointment to the PATROL Joint Committee, as outlined in paragraph 5.17.**

(18 For, 0 Against, 3 Abstentions)

As per Chapter 3, Part 1, Procedure Rule 17.6, Councillors Chandler, Glancy and Higgins wished that their abstentions be recorded.

CO67

REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES - ANNUAL INCREASE

The Deputy Leader introduced the review of Members' Allowances and moved the recommendations. Councillor de Burle seconded the motion.

During the debate, the following points were raised:

- It was recognised that the allowance is important to ensure becoming a councillor remains accessible to everyone and the increase might be the

push that is required for some, particularly those from lower income households, to consider standing for election to the Council. Another Member added that if the Council wants democracy it needs to be paid in order to encourage new Members.

- A Member commented that considering the cost of living crisis, a rise in inflation and an increase in Council Tax, that an increase to the Member remuneration is not appropriate.
- Some Members commented that they would donate any uplift received to charities.
- The comment was made that Members are given an allowance which is reflective of the time that is put in.

RESOLVED

Council

- (1) NOTED the options for applying the annual 2022/23 uplift of Members' Allowances as set out at Paragraph 6;**
- (2) APPROVED an increase in the basic allowance for 2022/23, backdated to April 2022, in line with that applied to NJC allowances of 4.04%, while the level of special responsibility allowances should be frozen; and**
- (3) NOTED that the Members' Allowances Scheme will be reviewed as part of the next scheduled scheme review in 2024.**

(20 For, 1 Against, 0 Abstentions)

As per Chapter 3, Part 1, Procedure Rule 17.6, Councillor Faulkner wished that his vote against be recorded.

The meeting closed at: 8.41 pm

Chair