

COUNCIL
(HELD AS A VIRTUAL MEETING)

Tuesday 21 April 2020

Present:-

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor Councillor Peter Holland (Lord Mayor)
Councillor Mrs Yolonda Henson (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillors Atkinson, Begley, Bialyk, Branston, Buswell, Foale, Foggin, Ghusain, Hannaford, Harvey, Henson, D, Leadbetter, Lyons, Mitchell, K, Mitchell, M, Moore, D, Moore, J, Morse, Newby, Oliver, Owen, Packham, Pattison, Pearson, Martin, A, Quance, I, Sheldon, Sills, Sparkes, Sutton, Vizard, Wardle, Warwick, Williams, Wood and Wright

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MINUTES

The minutes of the Extraordinary and Ordinary meetings of the Council held on 25 February 2020 were moved by the Leader, seconded by the Deputy Leader Councillor Sutton, taken as read and approved for signing as correct at the earliest possible convenience.

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APOLOGIES

Apology for absence was received from Councillor Lamb.

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POSTPONEMENT OF THE 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Lord Mayor announced that Part 2, Regulation 4 (2) of The Local Authorities and Police Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, allowed for the postponement of an Annual General Meeting of Councils, and for any existing appointments to continue until the rescheduling of the Annual General Meeting.

Councillor K. Mitchell, speaking as a group leader, welcomed the proposal to postpone the City Council's Annual General Meeting in light of the exceptional circumstances facing the nation.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the proposals which were agreed with one abstention.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the Annual General Meeting scheduled for 19 May 2020, be postponed until at least December 2020, subject to the necessary Government guidance being received before that time, that it is appropriate to hold such a meeting; and
- (2) as a consequence of (1) above, all current appointments for Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor, Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs, continue until the meeting identified in paragraph (1) above takes place.

OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Lord Mayor passed on his condolences, and those of Council Members, to Councillor Morse, whose Aunty, Mary Long, a former City Councillor and Mayoress, had passed away. She was the widow of former Alderman Norman Long, a Mayor of the City in 1978.

The Lord Mayor welcomed Councillor Ian Quance who, because of his recent illness, was amongst those identified as being shielded in the current situation and thanked him for his attendance. The Lord Mayor wished Councillor Quance well in his recovery.

The Lord Mayor also:-

- referred to a letter from the Mayor of Yaroslavl, wishing the City of Exeter well in the current coronavirus crisis;
- on behalf of all Members thanked officers of the City Council for their hard work during the ongoing pandemic, ensuring that the critical business of the Council carried on, whilst responding to the pressures of the current situation; and
- congratulated Councillor Robert Lamb and his wife Sarah, on the birth, the previous week, of their son Lawrence Lucas Lamb.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Lord Mayor reported that no questions had been received from members of the public.

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 11 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee of 11 March 2020 were presented by the Chair, Councillor Wardle, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 14 (Code of Corporate Governance 2020/21)**, the Chair moved and the Deputy Chair seconded the recommendation and it was carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 15 (Review and Update of Whistleblowing Policy)**, the Chair moved and the Deputy Chair seconded the recommendation and it was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 11 March 2020 be received and, where appropriate, adopted.

EXECUTIVE - 10 MARCH 2020

The minutes of the Executive of the 10 March 2020 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 33 (Skills Strategy for Exeter)**, and in response to a query from a Member, the Leader stated that the Council was leading on, and supporting, a number of initiatives in response to the current crisis, referring in particular to its "City of Apprenticeships" status and confirmed that the Council would continue to review its policies and commit as much as possible of its resources to support the recovery of the city, its businesses and residents.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 34 (Port Marine Safety Code – Pathway to Compliance)**, Councillor Leadbetter, speaking as a group leader, welcomed and supported the recommendations.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 36 (Lord Mayoralty)**, it was noted that because of the coronavirus pandemic it was the intention for the 2020/21 Lord Mayoralty to commence from the December Council meeting (Min. No.16 above refers).

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendation and it was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive held on 10 March 2020 be received, and where appropriate, adopted.

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EXECUTIVE - 7 APRIL 2020

The minutes of the Executive of the 7 April 2020 were presented by the Leader, Councillor Bialyk, and taken as read.

In respect of **Minute No. 40 (Update on the Council's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic)**, and in response to a query from a Member, the Leader stated that the City Council was one of the first Council's in Devon to set up a Community Wellbeing hub in response to the many needs of the citizens of Exeter. This hub was being publicised as widely as possible through social media and the distribution of 50,000 advisory leaflets in the city. He was aware that some areas of the city were yet to receive the leaflets and that this was being addressed by the Portfolio Holder and officers.

In respect of **Minute No. 41 (Overview of General Fund Revenue Budget 2019/20 – Quarter 3)**, the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 42 (General Fund Capital Monitoring Statement 2019/20 – Quarter 3)**, the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendation and it was carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 43 (HRA Budget Monitoring Report 2019/20 – Quarter 3)**, the Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations and they were carried unanimously.

In respect of **Minute No. 45 (Urgent Changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers)**, Members discussed the proposed changes to the scheme.

Whilst welcoming the commitment to continue to allow public speaking and the submission of petitions at Council meetings, some Members were concerned that the proposals in respect of delegated powers were too extensive and should be examined further in greater detail. Two Members also expressed reservations relating to the suspension of Articles 14 and 15 and certain Standing Orders as proposed in recommendation 4.

The Leader and another Member stated that the recommendations were a responsible and appropriate response to the coronavirus crisis.

Councillor D. Moore moved and Councillor K. Mitchell seconded that recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5 be voted on together and that a separate vote be undertaken in respect of recommendation 4.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations, to be voted upon separately as set out above.

Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5 were voted upon and carried unanimously.

Recommendation 4 was voted upon and carried by majority.

In respect of **Minute No. 47 (Repatriate Chief Crowfoot's Regalia to the Siksika Nation, Canada)**, and in response to a Member, the Leader confirmed the positive publicity resulting from the proposed repatriation.

The Leader moved and the Deputy Leader seconded the recommendation and it was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive held on 7 April 2020 be received, and where appropriate, adopted.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8

A In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following question was put by Councillor Sills to the Leader.

Question

Can the Leader update Members on the loss of revenue because of the virus, and what the Government's support package means to Exeter City Council?

Leader's response:-

The restrictions put in place to protect the public and the NHS have had a significant impact on the Council's income. Car Park income has reduced from £170,000 to around £1,000 a week. This is income that we will be unable to recover. On top of that, our visitor attractions, entertainment venues, Museum and Livestock Centre are all closed. Income for our statutory services is also heavily impacted and we expect there to be a negative effect on the collection of Council Tax, Business Rates, Commercial Rent and other debts. The Council sent its return to the Government last week outlining an estimated loss of income totalling £0.315m for March and £1.584m for April. It is also projected that there is a risk of losing an additional £0.681m in Council Tax and Business Rates bad debts in April alone based on current payments received compared to last year.

To date, the Government has provided £23,400 to support rough sleepers and £72,737 in general grant. The additional cost of providing emergency accommodation for rough sleepers has itself amounted to £193,000, far in excess of the grants received. In total, it is estimated that the Council has spent an extra £0.238m in March and April over and above the amounts provided by Government.

The additional £1.6bn is welcome, but the Government are yet to announce how this will be allocated to individual Councils. I will ensure that the Section 151 Officer provides the allocation as and when the Government announce it.

Councillor Sills asked a supplementary question as to whether it was the intention to discuss issues with Leaders of other authorities to ensure a concerted response to the current problems.

The Leader confirmed that the Chief Executive & Growth Director was in regular contact with his counterparts in other authorities and that the Devon Districts, together with other authorities, continued to lobby the Government through the Local Government Association seeking the necessary financial commitment to local Councils who were in the best position to support their communities through the crisis.

B In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following question was put by Councillor Martin to the Leader.

Can the Leader update Members on what actions have been taken in regards to the travellers currently in the city and what is, and can be done to resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction?

Leader's response:-

Firstly I would like to thank the residents of Lakeside Avenue for their patience. I understand their frustration and I have spent a significant amount of time with officers trying to resolve the concerns.

It is critical at this time to reduce the spread of coronavirus by minimising non-essential travel in line with Government rules. The Government guidance for dealing with travellers during the current outbreak is very clear in that we should not be moving groups on. Instead we should be tolerating them where they currently are, or offering alternative sites with improved sanitary facilities. This unique situation, combined with the suspension of our usual route to regain possession via the courts, has provided unique challenges.

Two alternative sites, with facilities, were offered to the group of travellers and both were declined. Following a productive meeting yesterday with our colleagues at Devon and Cornwall Police, a direction was issued yesterday evening, ordering the travellers to move and relocate to one of the more appropriate sites that we had proposed. All travellers have now left Lakeside but decided not to use the sites provided and have left the city. Our Public and Green Spaces Teams started the clean-up of the site this morning and I thank them for their work and commitment in response to this difficult situation. I have spoken to the Director and options are now being considered on the best means to secure the site in consultation with the local community.

C In accordance with Standing Order No. 8, the following question was put by Councillor D. Moore to the Leader.

While schools remain shut the Department of Education launched a national scheme on 31 March for schools in England providing free school meals, whereby weekly shopping vouchers are available worth £15 to spend at a limited number of supermarkets including Sainsbury's, Waitrose and M&S Food. The Department for Education and their contractor, Edenred, chose not to include the Co-op, other supermarkets, small and independent retailers and other local food supplier's

example local suppliers of fresh vegetables when they launched the scheme. It is vital that families can access affordable food, including fresh food, as close to home as possible.

Please can the Council write to the Department of Education as a matter of urgency and ask them to review the scheme.

Leader's response:-

I agree that it is vital that families can access affordable food - especially at this time.

Prior to the national scheme you talk about, our colleagues at Devon had put in place a scheme to provide free school meals to certain children.

For those now based at home, schools had used a variety of strategies including pack lunch collection from schools, food hamper deliveries, gift cards for local stores and online vouchers for bigger stores.

The National scheme was designed to support families and schools by putting in place a simpler system which schools/families could use as an alternative to the local provision.

However, over the Easter holiday period, there were some issues with the national vouchers not arriving with parents in a timely manner. In these cases schools have intervened to try and ensure children still received the meal to which they were entitled.

Devon County Council along with other Local Authorities have already escalated this to the Department of Education and we understand these initial problems have now been resolved. It was also asked that more local and budget shops could be included. It was agreed that this would be looked into and it is understood that both Aldi and Tesco have now joined the scheme.

It will now be important for the Leaders of all Devon Districts and the Leader of Devon County Council to work in unison to ensure that mechanisms continue to be in place to ensure appropriate delivery of meals to those children in need.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.19 pm)

Chair