

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL
HELD ON**

16 July 2020

7.30 - 9.05 pm

PRESENT

COUNCILLORS

Maggie Hulcoop (Chair)
Bob Davis (Vice-Chair)

David Carter	Andrew Johnson
Simon Carter	Eddie Johnson
Joel Charles	Shona Johnson
Nick Churchill	Sue Livings
Jean Clark	Frances Mason
Mike Danvers	Russell Perrin
Jodi Dunne	Danny Purton
Tony Durcan	Lanie Shears
Tony Edwards	Clive Souter
Michael Garnett	John Strachan
Michael Hardware	Chris Vince
Eugenie Harvey	Phil Waite
Mark Ingall	Nancy Watson

OFFICERS

Brian Keane, Chief Executive
Simon Hill, Head of
Governance
Adam Rees, Governance
Support Officer
Lisa Thornett, Corporate
Governance Support Officer

1. **MINUTE'S SILENCE**

A minute's silence was held to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Shannon Jezzard, Stefan Mullard, Emma Toal and Mark Wilkinson.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

4. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2020 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

The Chair said that although she had been unable to attend events because of Covid-19, she had continued to have virtual meetings with her chosen charities.

6. **PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

7. **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

8. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

The questions, together with the answers, are appended to the minutes.

9. **RESIGNATION OF COUNCILLOR**

The Chair, Councillor Andrew Johnson and Councillor Tony Durcan paid tribute to the service of Tony Hall as a Councillor.

RESOLVED that Full Council noted the resignation of Tony Hall as Councillor and that under Section 5 of the Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, the vacancy will be filled on 6 May 2021.

10. **MOTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

11. **MAIN DEBATE**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.3, the Chair called on the Leader of the Council to introduce the debate on the work undertaken by the Council in 2019/20 municipal year together with any highlights, pressures and potential issues for the coming year. The Leader of the Opposition was given the opportunity to respond to the debate. The Leader of the Council outlined the Council's approach to meeting with challenges so as to provide services to the Town for the benefit of its residents.

12. **REFERENCES FROM CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

- a) Referral from Licensing Committee - Electronic Payment of Fares in Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles - Outcome of Consultation

Full Council received a referral from the Licencing Committee on the electronic payment of fares in Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles.

Proposed by Councillor Mark Ingall (seconded by Councillor Mike Danvers) it was:

RESOLVED that:

- A** A condition be attached to Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences to require that Hackney Carriage Vehicles be equipped with electronic payment facilities as set out in the proposals in paragraphs 54 to 61 of the report.
- B** Subject to A, authority to approve the details of the conditions is delegated to the Environment and Licensing Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Licensing Committee.

- b) Referral from Audit and Standards Committee - Audit and Standards Committee Annual Report 2019/20

Full Council received the Audit and Standards Committee Annual Report for 2019/20.

Proposed by Councillor Mark Ingall (seconded by Councillor Mike Danvers) it was:

RESOLVED that the Audit and Standards Committee's annual report for 2019/20 be noted.

- c) Referral from Scrutiny Committee - Review of Overview and Scrutiny - Final Report

Full Council considered a referral from the Scrutiny Committee which recommended changes to the governance arrangements surrounding the Council's overview and scrutiny functions.

Proposed by Councillor Phil Waite (seconded by Councillor Eugenie Harvey) it was:

RESOLVED that the Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol (attached as Appendix A to the report), the revised Scrutiny Procedure Rules (attached as Appendix B to the report) and the revised Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference (attached as Appendix C to the report) be adopted.

13. **REPORTS FROM OFFICERS**

- a) Annual Reports from Councillors Appointed to Outside Bodies

RESOLVED that the annual reports from Councillors appointed to Outside Bodies be noted.

14. **MINUTES OF CABINET AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

- a) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 21 January 2020 of Licensing Committee
- b) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 23 January 2020 of Cabinet
- c) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 18 February 2020 of Scrutiny Committee
- d) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 27 February 2020 of Cabinet
- e) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 4 March 2020 of Audit and Standards Committee
- f) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 10 March 2020 of Licensing Committee
- g) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 27 May 2020 of Development Management Committee
- h) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 3 June 2020 of Development Management Committee
- i) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 10 June 2020 of Audit & Standards Committee
- j) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 1 July 2020 of Development Management Committee

15. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL

Full Council – 16 July 2020

Questions from the Public

1 Kiki Banjoko to Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

During the Covid-19 pandemic the national media have reported an increase in Xenophobia in the Asian Community. Also we are aware of recent events in America and the overwhelming support for the Black Lives Matter campaign. How does the Council plan to continue to educate people about hate crime/racism within the community? At a local level are there any plans to address these issues and/or support national campaigns?

Reply from Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

Thank you for your question and I am pleased that you have the opportunity to put it forward at this council meeting in front of all of us. I would also like to thank Harlow Youth Council for work they have done during this terrible period of lock down both on mental health and the BLM campaign.

As you will know, October is Black History Month and the Council are keen to support the black community in Harlow by holding an event which will celebrate the rich diversity that our town has to offer. Having met with organisers this week I am keen to involve youth councillors in this event.

On the wider issue of xenophobia, sadly we know that this sort of discrimination exists in the world and we would be naive to think it only exists in the US. In the UK we have seen vile comments directed towards the Asian community, and in particular the Chinese community, with regards to Covid-19. As the new Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing I want to speak to as many members of our community as possible. Having already met, alongside Councillor Mason, with Rabbi Irit, I am also hoping to organise meetings with the Chinese community and other faith and cultural groups over the coming months, albeit virtually.

Hate Crime continues to be a priority for the Safer Harlow Partnership and the Council leads on a multi-agency working group to raise awareness of the impact of Hate Crime on both individuals and the wider community. I am pleased to hear that there are plans for the Youth Council to be represented at the Hate Crime subgroup to ensure that young people's views on the topic can be heard and taken into consideration.

Supplementary question from Kiki Banjoko:

What additional support will be provided for Black History Month?

Reply to supplementary question from Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

The Council is looking to be even more involved in Black History Month than it has been. I want to continue engaging with Youth Council on this matter and welcome further ideas on how to increase the Council's involvement

2 Leslie Appiah to Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

On a local level how do you plan to support young people to catch up with the education they have missed during lockdown. Lots of young people are concerned that they will not be returning to school until September and feel they will be under lots of pressure to catch up ready for exams.

Reply from Councillor Chris Vince (Portfolio Holder for Community and Wellbeing):

As a teacher myself I recognise the stress and anxiety caused by this terrible period, for young people, many of whom will have suffered a bereavement, the loss of a family member or of friends. I am pleased that Harlow Council are looking in to a program of activities for young people over the summer period but must emphasise that this should not just be a catch up of academic skills but instead an opportunity for young people to take part in art and cultural activities in a safe and inclusive environment.

We feel confident that schools will have robust plans in place to assist students to catch up on missed learning opportunities. If children and young people have concerns about their studies they should speak to their parents and/or school staff at the earliest opportunity. The Council is working with partners through the Early Help and Start Well subgroup of the Health and Wellbeing Board to identify opportunities for new initiatives that will support children and young people's emotional wellbeing as they return to school. We are also leading on an initiative to help provide devices and connectivity to assist students to access learning opportunities at home.

Full Council – 16 July 2020

Questions from Councillors

1 Councillor Mike Garnett to Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

Members and social networks are inundated with complaints about the method and introduction of car parking charges. Payment has only been possible through a mobile phone and apps. Will you now reconsider that decision and either continue with free parking or bring back the ticket machines into use with immediate effect?

Reply from Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

Charges in Harlow Council-owned car parks in the town centre, town park, River Way and neighbourhood shopping centres were reintroduced last week. The free hour's parking remained in place in all neighbourhood car parks. Having carried out risk assessments based on government guidance immediately prior to the recommencement of the charging and local Covid-19 case numbers the Council made the decision to limit payment options to the MiPermit App and payment telephone line only.

The Council always put health and safety first and the choice only to have cashless payments was aimed at minimising any risk of transmission of COVID 19 through touching the machines and tickets, and handling coins

As part of the Council's Covid-19 response and recovery activities it reviews its services regularly and reassesses the risk to service users in light of changes to government guidance and local transmission numbers. The British Parking and Local Government Associations issued new guidance within the past week after the Council's decision to reintroduced car park charges had been taken. This guidance has now been reviewed and assessed.

In light of the new guidance and in response to comments and feedback from the public and car park users the Council has amended payment methods in its pay and display car parks to accept cash payments with the new options for contactless methods introduced last week also continuing to be available to car park users.

For car park users choosing to make cash payments or use the free parking periods without using the app/payment line the machines are operating as normal and users should follow the instructions on the machines and car park signage and ensure that a valid ticket is displayed in their vehicle. Car

park users choosing to make cash payments are advised to wash their hands or use sanitizer very frequently.

The ability to use the MiPermit app and payment line remains, and residents who would prefer a contactless method of paying for their parking are encouraged to continue to use these. Where the app and payment line are used there is no need to display a paper ticket in your vehicle.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mike Garnett:

Will any issued fixed penalty notices be cancelled?

Reply to supplementary question from Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

No fixed penalty notices have been issued during the period that cash payments have not been possible.

2 Councillor Mike Garnett to Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

What consultation, if any, was undertaken prior to the introduction of cash free parking?

Reply from Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

There was no consultation undertaken prior to the reintroduction of car park charging as the charges were covered by the existing Traffic Regulation Order and the payment method was based on guidance to limit the spread of Covid-19.

Supplementary question from Councillor Mike Garnett:

Will the Portfolio Holder review the charges?

Reply to supplementary question from Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

Yes.

3 Councillor Simon Carter to Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

The Council has made monthly returns to the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government on its financial position. In a spirit of openness and cross-party working for dealing with the Coronavirus epidemic, will you share these with the Opposition tonight?

Reply from Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

I can confirm that Councillor Carter is correct that monthly returns have been made to the Government and indeed a further data template is due to be released on 24 July with a return date of 31 July.

The situation is constantly changing as you will appreciate and will continue to be so for some time to come with ongoing government announcements, new guidance and changing local circumstances. Further central Government support is anticipated based upon announcements made on 2 July but to date no further information is available at a local level.

An update has been provided to Cabinet only last week and further updates are planned for future cabinet meetings as part of the normal financial reporting process. The Cabinet also agreed a process for the ongoing management of the Covid Crisis and the Council's recovery planning at its meeting on 9 July and any financial details specifically related to the Covid crisis will be dealt with through those governance arrangements in the first instance.

Supplementary question from Councillor Simon Carter:

Will the financial information be circulated to the Opposition?

Reply to supplementary question from Councillor Mike Danvers (Portfolio Holder for Resources):

I have kept the relevant Opposition spokesperson involved in discussions about the Council's finances.

4 Councillor Simon Carter to Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):

At Cabinet last week we all expressed our thanks to our staff for the way they have been dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic, in particular those working from home. With nearly four months of working from home, what support has been provided to them with regard to their wellbeing?

Reply from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):

The health and wellbeing of our staff is important to the Council, never more so than through these unprecedented times. All of our staff whether working from home or coming into the workplace have been working in a national crisis, balancing work life with home life with all the challenges the pandemic backdrop has brought and we continue to recognise the brilliant response from staff and thank them for their continued efforts.

Over the pandemic it was important to set up and maintain regular communication with staff, both at the corporate and managerial levels, supported by Human Resources. This has taken a number of forms the most notable of which have been:

- Daily (at the start) and then weekly bulletins from the Chief Executive direct to staff.
 - Imparting information and ensuring staff are up to date with latest developments
 - Providing and communicating with staff regularly specifically on health and wellbeing signposting staff to websites, support lines, videos, and apps with some great tips to help them to look after their emotional health.
 - Supporting staff on the move (where operationally possible) to home working, coupled with continued ready access for advice and support from the ICT team.
- Briefings for managers and employees on a variety of issues such as annual leave, ensuring this is still booked and that breaks are built into the working week, supporting vulnerable and shielding employees as well as those who have been redeployed.
- Virtual full staff briefings from the Chief Executive.
- Changing management processes to meet with staff and/or teams on-line and virtually rather than face to face.
- HR continuing to liaise with our occupational health and engaging in maintaining support from the start for staff, where identified with the provision of services including – individual assessments, medical referrals to discuss mental health.

- The Council in addition continues to provide staff with access to an Employee Assistance Programme, this includes Freephone access 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year to access counsellors and advisors who can provide both practical and emotional support on a variety of issues.

Supplementary question from Councillor Simon Carter:

What other equipment has been provided to Officers to help them work from home?

Reply to supplementary question from Councillor Mark Ingall (Leader of the Council):

I will provide a written response to you outside of the meeting.