

Full Council

Minutes of meeting held in Council Chamber, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1UE on 20 November 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Ian Alexander (Chairman).

Councillors Lesley Boniface (Vice-Chair), Graham Amy, Lucy Agace, Janet Baah, Christina Bristow, Julie Carr, Ciarron Clarkson, Roy Clay, Graham Clews, Ezra Cohen, Chris Collier, Johnny Denis, Nikki Fabry, Becky Francomb, Stephen Gauntlett, Freddie Hoareau, Olivia Honeyman, Charlotte Keenan, Paul Keene, Nick Kortalla-Bird, James MacCleary, Sean MacLeod, Imogen Makepeace, Wendy Maples, James Meek, Paul Mellor, Zoe Nicholson, Emily O'Brien, Laurence O'Connor, Joa Saunders, Isobel Sharkey, Mark Slater, Stella Spiteri and Daniel Stewart-Roberts.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer), Kate Slattery (Head of Legal Services), Sarah Lawrence (Committee Team Manager), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Homira Javadi (Director of Finance and Performance (Section 151 Officer)), Leigh Palmer (Head of Planning First) and Jennifer Norman (Committee Officer, Democratic Services).

47 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2023

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record.

48 Minute of Silence

The Council held a minutes silence at the start of the meeting for the tragic conflict that was taking place in Gaza and Israel and for the loss of life on both sides.

49 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brett, Coupland, Davies, Gallagher, von Kurthy and Robinson.

50 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interests on this item.

51 Announcements

The Chair drew attention of the Council to the list of his engagements since the

last Council meeting. There were no other announcements.

52 Urgent items

There was no urgent items.

53 Questions from members of the public

There were no questions from members of the public.

54 Petitions

There were no petitions to be presented to the Council.

55 Urgent decisions taken by the Cabinet or Cabinet members

There were no urgent decisions by the Cabinet to be reported.

56 Code of Conduct Matter

The Chair advised that following completion of a Code of Conduct investigation in relation to a social media post made in March 2023, Councillor Macleod had accepted in full the conclusions of an investigation and the decision of the Monitoring Officer on the matter and would issue an apology at this meeting, but that this was not a matter for debate by Full council.

Councillor Macleod read out a statement, apologising for his actions and any hurt or distress caused by them, and confirmed that he had undertaken training.

(Councillor Macleod left the meeting at the end of this agenda item).

57 Recommendations from Cabinet, Committees and Other Bodies

57a Updated and Aligned Scheme of Delegation to Officers

Councillor Collier moved and Councillor Gauntlett seconded the recommendations of the report of the Monitoring Officer on updating and aligning the Scheme of Delegations to Officers.

In moving the report, Councillor Collier extended his thanks to the Councillors who had considered the revised scheme as part of the Constitution Working Group and the Audit and Governance Committee, and in particular to Oliver Dixon (Lawyer and Data Protection Officer) for his work on the scheme.

The recommendations were put to a vote and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED –

- (1) To consider the draft updated and aligned Scheme at report Appendix 1 and approve all council delegations; and
- (2) To note Cabinet's approval of all executive delegations.

57b Lewes Local Plan - Preferred Options and Policies Directions

Councillor Collier moved and Councillor Keenan seconded the recommendations of the Cabinet of 9 November, subject to an amendment to Policy E3: Newhaven Port, as set out in an agenda supplement, to go out to consultation.

The Council debated the matter. It was recognised that there were some difficult decisions to make, and some of the options that were technically feasible may not make sense or be viable for local communities, and as part of the consultation it was important for the Council to hear from as many people as possible, from residents, local organisations and from businesses. Councillor O'Connor thanked the Planning Policy Team for its work on the documents to date.

The recommendations were put to a vote and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

(1) To approve the Local Plan Regulation 18: Towards a spatial strategy and policies directions document, as set out in report Appendix 1 (as amended by the agenda supplement in relation to Policy E3), together with the supporting documents for public consultation in accordance with the regulations and the Local Development Scheme; and

(2) To agree delegated authority to the Director of Regeneration and Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure to make any minor changes to the appearance, format and text of the Local Plan and supporting documents in the interests

57c Housing Benefit War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Policy

Councillor Nicholson moved and Councillor Stewart-Roberts (as Armed Forces Champion) seconded the recommendations of the Cabinet held of 9 November 2023 in relation to disregarding, in the assessment of Housing Benefit, War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation income above the statutory disregard.

It was recognised that this was a practice that had already been in place for the Council, but had not been set out in policy, and this formalisation was welcomed.

The recommendations were put to a vote and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: To agree the disregarding in full of War Pensions income and the Armed Forces Compensation income in the assessment of Housing Benefit.

58 Polling Districts and Polling Places Review

Councillor Collier moved and Councillor MacCleary seconded the recommendations of the Head of Elections and Local Land Charges to approve the arrangements in respect of polling districts and polling places in the District

of Lewes.

It was recognised that this was part of a regularly review of polling arrangements. Councillor Collier in moving the report extended his thanks to Tracey Pannett (Head of Elections and Local Land Charges) and her team for carrying out the consultation.

The recommendations were put to a vote and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Acting Returning Officer's proposals as set out in the report be approved; and
- (2) That the Head of Elections and Local Land Charges, on behalf of the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, be authorised to implement the Council's decisions in respect of the review.

59 Notices of motion.

59a Motion for the Ocean

Councillor Francomb moved and Councillor Fabry seconded a motion as set out on the agenda, 'Motion for the Ocean'.

It was highlighted that the motion was the fifth in a series of water quality motions passed by Lewes District Council, and this was based on the LGA model coastal special interest group for a holistic approach to ocean recovery. It was noted that there were fourteen and a half km of coastline in the district and approximately half of the residents of Lewes District lived in coastal town areas, but that it had an impact the quality of life of all residents.

The motion was debated and received support from across the Council. It was hoped that a methodology could be found to measure the impact of the actions contained in the recommendations.

The motion was put to a vote and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED –

That this Council declares an urgent need for Ocean Recovery and pledges to:

1. To ensure that key strategies, including the Council's Climate and Nature Strategy, puts ocean-based and nature-based solutions at the heart of a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.
2. Ensure that local planning seeks to support ocean recovery by focusing on green and blue infrastructure for nature recovery across the local plan area, working with partners including East Sussex County Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust.
3. Work with partners to deliver increased sustainability in marine industries and develop a sustainable and equitable 'blue economy' that

delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity, including East Sussex County Council, Sussex Bay, The Living Coast, the local fishing industry, the Reimagining Newhaven Board overseeing the 'Capturing the value of the catch' project, Sussex IFCA and the Marine Management Organisation.

4. Work with Sussex College group to continue to build on its work embedding sustainable marine and maritime training at the heart of training provision as well as with technical / apprenticeship training providers where appropriate and increase understanding in the role our oceans and rivers can play in sequestering carbon.
5. Promote opportunities to grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in our district, including via our website and social media, and seek to promote sustainable and equitable access to the sea for all residents.
6. That the Leader writes to the Government asking it to seek to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 by:
 - a) Ensuring Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities have the resources they need to effectively research and monitor our growing number of marine protected areas, and to set and enforce appropriate fishing levels that support local economies and deliver environmental sustainability.
 - b) Working with coastal, estuarine and maritime communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.
 - c) Appointing a dedicated Minister for the Coast.
 - d) Embedding 'ocean and civic literacy' into the national curriculum.
 - e) Stopping plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle and support the solutions needed to address the threat posed by historic coastal landfill sites.
 - f) Improving the water quality of our rivers, estuarine and coastal waters leading to the ocean to benefit nature and the health and wellbeing of all UK residents, including by stopping the regular pollution of our rivers and seas.
 - g) Optimise the potential to gain multiple benefits from coastal ecosystems including tidal marshes and seagrass meadows, and use marine ecosystems to absorb and sequester

greenhouse gases through the carbon cycle.

- h) Optimise the potential to develop off-shore wind farms and marine renewable energy (hydrokinetic energy) in harmony with the natural environment; and.
- i) By listening to marine and social scientific advice to update the Marine Policy Statement and produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will:
 - i. Enable the recovery of marine ecosystems rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state.
 - ii. Consider levelling up, marine conservation, energy, industrial growth, flood and coastal erosion risk management, climate adaptation and fisheries policy holistically rather than as competing interests.
 - iii. Develop a smarter approach to managing the health of the entire ocean that moves beyond Marine Protected Areas and enables links to be made across sectors towards sustainability.
 - iv. Establish improved processes for understanding the benefits of ocean recovery, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing.

60 Motion on Puppy Farms

Councillor Hoareau moved and Councillor Bristow seconded a motion as set out on the agenda against Puppy Farms.

It was advised that the motion had the support of Reystede Centre for Animal Welfare in Ringmer, who would welcome working with the Council, and from Dr Marc Abraham, the vet who spearheaded the Lucy's Law campaign, banning the third-party sale of puppies in the first 6 months of their life. Councillor Hoareau and Councillor Bristow read out comments from Dr Abraham and from the Reystede Centre.

The motion was debated and received support from across the Council. It was recognised that puppy farms were often connected to serious crime networks, and that there was illegal trade involving other animals, such as kittens.

The motion was put to a vote and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

1. To publish an up to date list of locally licensed dog breeders on its website so local residents who wish to buy a puppy are signposted to reputable

breeders;

2. To publish a list of DEFRA-registered local animal rescue and rehoming centres so that prospective adopters are signposted to reputable rehoming centres in the District;
3. To promote publicity campaigns to raise awareness of illegal puppy breeding and signs to look for when buying a puppy that suggest it might come from a puppy farm, and how to report suspicious activity, and promote guidance on how to buy a puppy responsibly; and
4. To request the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs calling for the Kept Animals Bill to be revived to make it more difficult for puppy farmers and smugglers to operate.

61 Written questions from Councillors

No written questions from Councillors had been received.

62 Questions to the Leader of the Council

There were no questions to the Leader.

63 Ward issues

No ward issues had been raised.

64 Reporting back on meetings of outside bodies

The following reports had been received on outside bodies set out in the agenda and were noted:

- Wave Leisure Trust – Councillor O'Connor
- Lewes Citizens Advice Bureau – Councillor Makepeace
- Greater Brighton Economic Board – Councillor Nicholson
- Team East Sussex (TES) – Councillor Nicholson
- Newhaven Town Deal Board – Councillors Nicholson and Robinson
- South Downs National Park Authority and Armed Forces Champion - Councillor Stewart-Roberts
- Water Champion – Councillor O'Brien,
- Upper Ouse Flood Protection and Water Retention Works Working Group – Councillor O'Brien
- Lewes District Food Partnership Steering Group and Food Summit – Councillor O'Brien
- Ouse Valley Climate Action Delivery Board – Councillor O'Brien

The Chair advised that an updated report would be circulated after the meeting (this would include an update from Councillor Denis on South East Councils).

65 Date of Next Meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Full Council was scheduled for 19 February 2024 at 6 pm.

The meeting ended at 6.52 pm

Councillor Ian Alexander (Chairman)