

COUNCIL

Monday, 20 July 2020

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Tony Smith) in the Chair
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor George Davies)

Councillors	T Anderson	EA Grey	C Muspratt
	J Bird	P Hackett	T Norbury
	A Brame	S Hayes	L Rennie
	D Burgess-Joyce	A Hodson	J Robinson
	C Carubia	K Hodson	L Rowlands
	P Cleary	C Jones	C Spriggs
	C Cooke	T Jones	T Usher
	A Corkhill	B Kenny	I Williams
	S Foulkes	I Lewis	KJ Williams
	A Gardner	M McLaughlin	J Williamson
	P Gilchrist	J McManus	
	K Greaney	D Mitchell	

<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	B Berry	S Kelly
		H Cameron	A Leech
		K Cannon	Y Nolan
		W Clements	C Povall
		M Collins	S Spoor
		T Cottier	J Stapleton
		T Cox	P Stuart
		WJ Davies	M Sullivan
		S Frost	J Walsh
		JE Green	G Watt
		P Hayes	S Whittingham
		J Johnson	S Williams
		AER Jones	G Wood
		S Jones	A Wright
		M Jordan	

127 WELCOME

The Civic Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting, including members of the public watching the webcast, and explained the meeting etiquette for all those Members present. He then asked the Director of Law and Governance to undertake a roll call of those Members present. Any Member not present would be recorded as having given their apologies.

128 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members of the Council were invited to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary and / or any other relevant interest in connection with any matters to be determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

129 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Civic Mayor made a statement in which he expressed his gratitude to everyone on Wirral, all of whom had played a part in Wirral's response to the unprecedented global health crisis. He thanked the leadership of the Council, both Members and officers. Wirral had undoubtedly led the way in many areas, including the emergency food hub and co-ordination of the delivery of personal protective equipment across the Liverpool City Region. Staff had also worked around the clock processing payments of approximately £50m in grants to local businesses affected by the 'lockdown'. He also thanked staff in libraries, leisure centres, children's services and museums who had put so much effort in to providing services online whilst their services were closed.

The Civic Mayor referred to the more than 400 residents who had sadly lost their lives due to the pandemic and that Wirral should never lose sight of the impact on more than 400 grieving families and friends.

In conclusion, the Civic Mayor expressed his thanks once again, that as a Council and a community, Wirral could be proud as to how it had come together at an uncertain and unprecedented time.

The Civic Mayor then, on behalf of all the Council, sent his best wishes to those Councillors who were currently ill.

The Civic Mayor then invited the Leader of the Council to make a statement.

Councillor Pat Hackett, made the following statement:

"I would like to reiterate my deepest sympathies to Mr and Mrs Stear and their family. I know there are no words that could make things any better for the family, but on behalf of Wirral Council I would like to apologise unreservedly for the failings which contributed to their tragic loss.

The issues that were highlighted as a result of the investigation that followed Lucia's death – and which formed the basis of this case - have led to substantial investment by Wirral Council in how it now manages tree inspections.

Improvements and changes have been put in place and extensive works have already been carried out by in-house experts, working alongside external tree specialists. These plans and works will continue and form part of Wirral's first comprehensive 10-year tree and woodland strategy, which should be approved this month."

130 **MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL OR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL**

In accordance with Standing Order 5(2) two matters had been submitted for approval by the Council (see minutes 131 and 132 post).

131 **SIX MONTH ATTENDANCE RULE S85 (1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

The first item requiring approval by the Council was in relation to section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the requirement of Members of the Authority to attend at least one meeting within a six month period in order to avoid being disqualified as a Councillor.

The Coronavirus emergency had resulted in the cancellation of a number of committees and meetings and, without prior permission to be absent, several Members would shortly fall foul of this six-month rule. Members would be able to attend meetings remotely for so long as the Regulations under the Coronavirus Act 2020 allowed, but that the nature of these meetings and other issues concerning the Coronavirus emergency introduced some concerns. Accordingly, as a safeguard, it was proposed that all Members be given permission to be absent from Council meetings for the period of the emergency.

On a motion by Councillor Pat Hackett, seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, it was -

Resolved (36:0) – That the absence of any Members from all Council and Committee Meetings be authorised and approved for the period that the provisions of the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 are in force or until the Annual Meeting of Council 2021, whichever is the sooner, pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

132 **REMOTE MEETINGS – PROCEDURE RULES**

The second item requiring approval was in relation to proposed changes necessary for the effective running of remote meetings during the restrictions brought about by the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Following the Government's guidance to limit the spread of Coronavirus and restrictions around gatherings of more than two people, the Government had introduced new legislation enabling Councils to conduct their meetings remotely. The Regulations came into force on 4 April 2020 and applied to local authority meetings (and Police and Crime Panel meetings) which were required to be held before 7 May 2021.

Furthermore, the Regulations made provision for authorities to make changes to their standing orders, at a remote meeting convened under this new power, to enable them to deal with the practicalities of holding remote meetings. Such practicalities included voting, member and public access to documents and remote access of public and press.

A Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure document had been produced for the conduct of remote meetings by Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) and the Association of Democratic Services Officers. Meetings would continue to be webcast and could be watched from the relevant meeting page on the Council's website.

On a motion by Councillor Pat Hackett, seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary, it was -

Resolved (36:0) - That the Council adopts the draft Remote Meetings Procedural Rules as appended to the Director of Law and Governance's report, for use until 6 May 2021, if it continues to be necessary because of Coronavirus.

133 **A STATEMENT BY COUNCILLOR BURGESS-JOYCE**

Further to a decision made by the Standards Panel at a meeting on 4 December 2019, Councillor Burgess-Joyce made a personal statement to the Council apologising for breaching the Council's Code of Conduct.

"On 17 July 2019, I wrote a tweet in response to what I believed was a racist inference from the MP David Lammy. My tweet, though I believed well intentioned used an analogy which was quite unacceptable and well below the standard that you would have expected of me and what I would demand from myself. Having previously been in a mixed-race relationship I know only too well the issues here so cannot defend the tweet regardless of the context. I make no excuse for myself, but I forgot that you should never use Twitter when you are tired. It is true I was very tired having supported my partner through the death of her mother and brother within the previous month. It was not a great time, but I unreservedly apologise for that poor choice of language and have made significant efforts to address this since.

Mr Mayor, having lost nearly £40,000 worth of business contracts that I had to rescind I intended saying more today regarding the legal procedures I am

taking against certain Members for their actions made since July, 2019 but I will take those offline for private discussions as you requested.

Mr Mayor, may I thank you for your time today and the rest of the Councillors and be assured that I will continue to work hard for the residents of Greasby, Frankby and Irby and the wider Wirral populous especially at this difficult time which you have alluded to at the beginning of this meeting and why I believe we need to put aside as much of the political issues to ensure that we work to keep everyone safe and healthy and I know that you concur with that Mr Mayor given the excellent points you made at the beginning of the Council meeting.”

The Civic Mayor thanked Councillor Burgess-Joyce and then having thanked all the Councillors in attendance and officers who had arranged the meeting, drew the meeting to a close.