

Council Meeting

Monday 7th September 2020 at 7.30pm

Online at zoom.us (or via your device app)



Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of the Council.

PRESENT

Councillors:

P Davies	M Mallows
A Dearlove	M McNeill
J Durman	J Moody
P Giesberg	D Rouane
E Hards (Mayor)	A Sandiford
V Haval	P Siggers
S Hewardine	A Thompson
M Khan (Deputy Mayor)	M Walsh
A Macdonald	C Wilson
D Macdonald	

Officers:

Janet Wheeler - Town Clerk

Also present:

Cllr Ian Snowden - SODC

The Mayor opened the meeting by suspending Standing Order 71 – standing to address the Chair. The vote was unanimous.

34. To receive apologies

Cllr A Hudson sent his apologies.

35. To receive declarations of interests

There were no declarations.

36. To receive petitions

No petitions received.

37. To approve and adopt the minutes of the Council meeting held on 29th June 2020 and the Extra Ordinary meeting held on 24th August 2020.

The Mayor paged through the minutes for accuracy and to allow for questions. Minute 26 should be amended to read: "The outline planning application was due to go to the Planning and Development Committee on 15th July 2020" – not 19th July 2020.

Cllrs P Davies and D Rouane queried minute 16 regarding the meetings of the Emergency Pandemic Crisis Group. The notes of the meetings had been circulated to Councillors every week and listed on the DTC website. Both Councillors thought that there was general assent that the notes should be reviewed at full Council.

It was proposed by Cllr E Hards and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting of the full Council held on 29th June 2020. There were three against and 1 abstention.

The minutes of the Extra Ordinary Council meeting held on 24th August 2020 were paged through for accuracy. There was an amendment at Minute 32 where it should read "Finance and General Purposes Committee".

It was proposed by Cllr E Hards and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Council meeting held on 24th August 2020. There were three abstentions.

Cllr A Thompson joined the meeting.

38. To consider recommendations of Committees to Council in accordance with Standing Orders 95 - 112

a) Planning and Development Committee

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **24th June 2020**. There were two abstentions.

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **15th July 2020**. There were two abstentions.

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr D Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **5th August 2020**. There was one amendment at Minute 64 which should read: "HarBUG were considering ..." not "contracting". There were two abstentions.

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr M. Mallows and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **26th August 2020**. It was noted that the land supply figures should be transposed. There were two abstentions.

(i) Recommendation – to form a working group to respond to the Government White Paper – “Planning for the Future”.

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED that a working group to respond to the Government’s White Paper – “Planning for the Future” - would consist of the following Councillors:

Cllr D Macdonald

Cllr C Wilson

Cllr M Walsh

Cllr P Giesberg

Cllr P Davies

Cllr A Dearlove

Cllr S Hewerdine

The working group would have delegated powers to formulate a response which would be sent before the deadline at the end of October. Cllr A Dearlove encouraged all Councillors to respond in an individual capacity in addition to the official Council response.

b) Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **22nd June 2020**. There was one abstention.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **27th July 2020**. There was one abstention.

(i) Recommendation – Minute 45 – It was RESOLVED to vire £13,415.50 from the contingency cost centre 1171 to the 1160 cost centre to cover the cost of the unbudgeted expenditure caused by the delay in the supply of the new hardware and the new Councillor mailboxes. There were two abstentions.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **24th August 2020**. The vote was unanimous.

c) Personnel and Administration Committee

It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes for the meeting held on **3rd August 2020**.

Cllr D Rouane noted the two staff resignations (Minute 25) and asked if there were exit interviews to find out the reasons why they had left. Cllr M Khan confirmed that exit interviews would be held where possible and that a staff re-structure would be

considered by the Personnel and Administration Committee. There was one abstention.

d) Environment and Climate Committee

It was proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr A Macdonald and RESOLVED to receive the minutes from the meeting held on **20th July 2020**. There was one abstention.

e) Civic Hall Management Committee

It was proposed by Cllr P Siggers and seconded by Cllr M. Mallows and RESOLVED to receive the Minutes of the meeting held on **22nd July 2020**. There were two abstentions.

39. To receive the Mayors' Reports

The report from the Mayor and Deputy Mayor was noted.

40. To appoint Cllr M Mallows as the sub for the Personnel and Administration Committee – subbing for Cllr A Sandiford. It was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr A Dearlove and RESOLVED to appoint Cllr M Mallows. The seat had been allocated to the Procedure Group but was vacant when Cllr A Sandiford volunteered to fill it.

The vote was unanimous.

41. To note the temporary finance appointments of DCK Accounting Solutions to organise payroll and accounts on a temporary basis

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to appoint DCK Accounting Solutions on a temporary basis to take over this work. This would give the next meeting of the Personnel and Administration Committee time to review alternative staffing arrangements. There was one abstention.

42. To receive and agree the financial payments made during June and July 2020

It was AGREED to approve these payments. The vote was 16 – IN FAVOUR; 1 – AGAINST and 2 – ABSTENTIONS. Queries were raised by Cllr P Davies regarding transactions in the Civic Hall bank account.

43. To note the casual vacancy for a Town Councillor to represent the Ladygrove Ward (LGA 1972, Section 85.) It was proposed by Cllr S Hewerdine and seconded by Cllr P Davies to suspend standing orders to allow the Councillors to debate this matter. A recorded vote was requested.

Recorded vote

	For	Against	Abstention
Cllr J Durman	x		
Cllr P Davies	x		
Cllr A Dearlove		x	
Cllr P Giesberg	X		
Cllr E Hards		x	
Vacant seat			
Cllr V Haval	X		
Cllr S Hewerdine	x		
Cllr A Hudson	-		
Cllr M Khan		x	
Cllr A Macdonald		x	
Cllr D Macdonald		x	
Cllr M Mallows	x		
Cllr M McNeill		x	
Cllr J Moody		x	
Cllr D Rouane	X		
Cllr A Sandiford		x	
Cllr P Siggers		x	
Cllr A Thompson		x	
Cllr M Walsh		x	
Cllr C Wilson		x	

The motion fell. The Mayor stated that the agenda item was to note the casual vacancy for the Ladygrove ward.

44. To receive such communications as the Leader of the Council may wish to bring before Council and to consider the recommendation of the Leader on how such communications should be dealt with.

Cllr M Khan was contacted by the Didcot Garden Town officers to request a letter of support in their bid for funding on three projects. The projects are: 1. Leisure needs review; 2. Viability study into key sites that have not come forward. 3. A Health Centre delivery model. The grant would be up to £170,000. The Leader will let the Council know if the funding is approved. Cllr C Wilson wanted to know how much money had been spent on consultancy fees for these projects.

45. To consider motions in the order in which they have been notified:

The following was proposed by Cllr J Durman and seconded by Cllr A Thompson:

“Didcot Town Council requests that South Oxfordshire District Council completes a Community Governance Review and that is then introduced for the 2023 Parish Elections.”

The remainder of the motion made statements about the current electoral ward structure and the numbers of Councillors in different wards. The Councillors discussed these statements and many felt that they could not give this full support. It was however agreed that Didcot is a growing town and the larger population will require a consideration of the numbers of Councillors to serve in each ward.

Cllr S Hewerdine proposed an amendment to limit the motion to the first two lines of the original motion – as above. This was seconded by Cllr P Davies. Cllr J Durman and Cllr A Thompson agreed to this amendment.

Cllr D Rouane was in favour of the amendment but had concerns over the different size of the wards. He also wanted to know if proportional representation would happen at a Community Governance Review.

Cllr C Wilson said that Didcot should be represented as one town under one authority. The Mayor said that this would not be part of the Community Governance Review.

Cllr P Davies acknowledged that Ladygrove Ward is large – but this is to allow for the growing housing numbers. He felt that the ward may be better served with more than one ward but it was difficult to do that until the housing numbers and sites were further defined.

Cllr J Durman requested a recorded vote on the amended motion. Cllr A Thompson stated that he had seen significant growth in his ward and urged Councillors to support this motion.

Recorded vote

	For	Against	Abstention
Cllr J Durman	x		
Cllr P Davies	x		
Cllr A Dearlove	x		
Cllr P Giesberg	X		
Cllr E Hards	x		

Vacant seat			
Cllr V Haval	X		
Cllr S Hewerdine	x		
Cllr A Hudson	-		
Cllr M Khan	x		
Cllr A Macdonald	x		
Cllr D Macdonald	x		
Cllr M Mallows	x		
Cllr M McNeill	x		
Cllr J Moody	x		
Cllr D Rouane	X		
Cllr A Sandiford	x		
Cllr P Siggers	x		
Cllr A Thompson	x		
Cllr M Walsh			x
Cllr C Wilson	x		

There was one abstention.

46. Didcot Garden Town Project and the report of the Council's representative on the Didcot Garden Town Management Board

Cllr M Khan hoped that everyone had seen the attachments for the meeting on 13th July 2020. The meeting saw a new parish representative appointed – Cllr Rita Atkinson from Sutton Courtenay Parish Council – who would represent the views of the five Parish Councils that sit mainly within the Didcot Garden Town Area. The first meeting of the Parish Council Sounding Boards was due to take place on 22nd September 2020. The next Garden Town Advisory Board meeting will be on 23rd October 2020. Cllr M Khan will up-date the Council after this meeting and invited all Councillors to email with any questions they wish him to bring up at the Board meeting.

47. Questions to the Leader concerning the business of the Council in accordance with Standing Order 58

Q: Given the numbers of staff leaving the Town Council, does the Leader agree that the well-being of staff should be the concern of all Councillors and that we should look to understand the reasons why they were leaving? (Cllr S Hewerdine)

A: The well-being and welfare of the DTC staff is paramount. There are regular meetings to give staff the chance to raise issues of concern; appraisals and informal meetings to keep everyone informed. The reasons for leaving is often a personal one and not for discussion at a public meeting.

Q: Given the disruption that has been caused by Covid and the fact that SODC has not yet advertised the vacancy but DTC has chosen to do so, and that there appears to be confusion on whether the member has attended or not – it looks as if DTC has chosen to hold a costly election? (Cllr P Davies)

A: It was down to the Member – who was an experienced Councillor – and fully aware of the six month rule. The legislation is binary: The Member did not attend a single Council or Committee meeting during the last six months - therefore the loss of a seat is automatic. This has been checked by SODC and OALC. It is up to the individual Member to come forward and request a dispensation before the end of the six month period. The Member chose not to do so.

Cllr P Davies requested to see the advice.

Q: Does the Leader not agree that if a Member makes prior arrangements to sit by the telephone through a meeting that this constitutes attendance? (Cllr S Hewerdine)

A: The Leader said that giving a phone number does not constitute attendance at a meeting. It is not practical to call a Councillor during a meeting. The Member had also attended all County Council meetings.

Q: Does the Leader agree that the Member is still a County Councillor and should be referred to as such? Also that the proper action by the Officers of the Council would have been to warn the Member of the six month rule? Plus the arrangement to use the telephone was acknowledged and understood by the Officer? (Cllr S Hewerdine)

A: The Leader reiterated that no meetings were attended.

Q: Does the Leader agree that the County Council has provided the Member with the technology to attend meetings but this does not apply to the Town Council who has failed to be so inclusive? (Cllr P Davies)

The Mayor confirmed that if any Member has trouble attending a meeting there is an option to dial in using a landline telephone. The Member does not have to use a computer.

A: The Member had multiple opportunities to attend using either a computer or his landline telephone.

Q: Have we made any progress with accepting payment by cheque – in particular for allotments? (Cllr A Thompson)

A: The Town Clerk confirmed that the DTC offices were open and allotment holders were now coming into the Civic Hall to pay their rents.

Q: Does the Leader realise that a Zoom host can call out during a meeting? (Cllr S Hewerdine)

A: The Leader reiterated that it was not practical for the host to dial out during a meeting.

Q: Also does the Leader agree that the Disability Discrimination Act requires equal access to be provided to all Councillors in order for them to do perform their role? Also that someone with poor eye-sight who is blind should benefit from the host dialling out? (Cllr S Hewerdine)

A: We will do whatever we can to give access to all Councillors – however that particular Member never highlighted any special needs.

48. Exclusion of the press and public

RESOLVED: pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

49. To note and approve the new pay scales from the National Association of Local Councils.

It was AGREED to note and approve the new national pay scales. Cllr P Davies queried the number of employees. The Town Clerk confirmed that we had eighteen members of staff before the resignations. There was one abstention.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

Signed:

(Mayor)

Date: