

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Lichfield City Council held in Guildhall, Lichfield on Tuesday 27 September 2022 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Councillors J Checkland (Mayor), J Anketell, H Ashton, C Ball, G Boyle, J Eagland, J Greaves, R Harrison, I Jackson, P Jones, A Lax, J Marks, T Matthews, C Rapley, P Ray, D Robertson, C Spruce, M Trent, M Warfield, and R Yardley.

APOLOGIES: Councillors D Baker, D Dundas, M Field, C Greatorex, P McDermott, A Smith

A MINUTE'S SILENCE WAS HELD IN MEMORY OF HER LATE MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

47 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor detailed the events and functions that he had attended recently, including the charity Beer and Skittles night, Proms in the Park, the bittersweet celebrations of Ukrainian Independence Day held at Speakers Corner and the Proclamation of King Charles III held at Lichfield Cathedral.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

The Mayor declared an interest in agenda item 14 (CIL Allocation – Lichfield Hockey Club) [Minute 58] and left the room during discussion and voting thereon.

49 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED: *That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 14 July 2022 (Nos 33-46) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.*

50 MATTERS ARISING

None

51 PLANNING COMMITTEE (DELEGATED AUTHORITY)

RESOLVED: *That comments submitted to Lichfield District Council for the period 14 July to 7 September 2022 and made in the name of LCC via delegated authority, be received.*

52 NOTICE OF MOTION

Members considered the following motion proposed by Cllr D Robertson and seconded by Cllr M Warfield:

'That this Council recognises the cost-of-living crisis facing families across the UK this winter, the exceptional increases in the cost of energy for consumers, and the very real prospect that residents in the City will be forced to choose between heating and eating during the colder months ahead. This Council further recognises its duty to serve the people of Lichfield and commits to supporting efforts to ensure that all residents in Lichfield are able to access safe, warm and accessible spaces during the winter of 22/23.

This Council therefore agrees to delegate authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the City Council's Grants Committee and Group leaders, to approve grants to organisations seeking to provide such warm spaces. Any grant requested must be made

through a duly completed LCC Grants application form, be compliant with LCC's adopted Grants Policy, and be to a maximum individual value of £2,500.

Further authority is granted to the aforementioned role holders to exceed this limit only in the case where a community organisation is seeking a grant to provide additional staffing resources to support a coordinated effort to offer warm spaces alongside one or more partner organisations or authorities.

Approval of any grant shall be by majority vote. Total grants awarded under the authority granted by this motion are to be paid from – and not exceed - the Council's unspent Grant Aid budget from financial year 22/23 (£2,961) and the Council's Grant Aid Reserve Budget (£11,570).'

Several members spoke in favour of the motion, with M Trent emphasising the need for the availability of the funds to be appropriately publicised, C Spruce emphasising the need for those involved in the awarding of such funds to ensure the aims of this funding would be achieved, and A Lax urging coordination with the efforts of others, notably LDC. On being put to the vote the motion was declared passed. Cllr Robertson reassured members that the motion was very specific in awarding funding direct to organisations providing the warm spaces, rather than to third parties for redistribution. On being put to the vote the motion was declared passed.

RESOLVED: That authority be delegated to utilise LCC Grant reserves to support 'warm spaces' project as detailed in the motion to Council.

53 SHERIFF'S RIDE WORKING PARTY

Members considered the Minutes of the SRWP meeting held on 8 September 2022. Members noted in particular the recommendation that the small-scale Ride as took place in 2021 and was scheduled for 2022 become the basis for the Ride in the future, with a focus on additionality to that event in the City Centre.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes and recommendations of the SRWP meeting held on 8 September 2022 be adopted

54 2022/23 REPAIRS AND RENEWALS PROGRAMME - UPDATE

Members considered the agenda report which provided an update on the current year's Repair and Renewals programme, notably the increased costs of work to the Birthplace Museum following the identification of previously unreported structural issues and the costs associated with their rectification.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, and the additional costs associated with the external repair and redecoration of the Johnson Birthplace Museum be approved.

55 FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT – 1 APRIL to 31 JULY 2022

Members considered the report which detailed financial progress during the first four months of the financial year. Cllr P Ray highlighted the increased energy costs and asked whether the council was actively reviewing its utility contracts and any other mitigation measures to ensure best value. Cllr C Spruce noted that following two years of COVID and now the pressures as reported in the financial update, the Council needed to prepare a neutral budget for 2023/24. Cllr D Robertson stated that the budget set in January of this year was balanced, but unforeseen elements had arisen, notably the increase in energy costs and the likely outcome of national pay award negotiations. Cllr Robertson emphasised that the revised Reserves Policy reflected the City

Council's strong reserve levels, and that the 23/24 budget would need to be informed by developments in policy in regard to energy costs – notably the current February 2023 expiry of Government support in commercial utility costs. Cllr Robertson urged members to discuss this situation with other Councillors and parliamentary representatives to seek a clear view of proposals beyond February 2023.

The Town Clerk confirmed that, with the information currently available, it would not be possible to set a balanced budget for 2023/24 without a significant increase in the precept or cuts to services, and that the use of reserves was therefore likely.

RESOLVED: The report be noted

56 AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22

Members noted the Audit of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2022 was completed on 23 August 2022. Though there were no concerns highlighted by the external auditor, one item for minor improvement was noted in regard to the values given to assets such as war memorials; the auditor's suggestion being that these assets should be valued at £1 in accordance with guidance in the 2022 Practitioner's Guide. An updated asset register will be provided to the next meeting of Audit Committee for consideration. Cllr C Spruce commended the work of officers in achieving the clear report from the External Auditor.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

57 OFFICERS' REPORT

Councillor J Marks commended the work of officers in keeping members informed of developments following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and the Town Crier in giving the proclamation of the new King at the Cathedral. Cllr H Ashton commended Councillor Greatorex for leading the proclamation ceremony, and all officers involved in the organisation of the event. Cllr J Greaves advised that during her visits to landowners on the day of the Sheriff's Ride, she had been asked to convey the landowner view that the Ride should be reinstated in full. Cllr Greaves also noted the photograph of former Sheriffs Dr Neville Brown and Dr Daryl Brown, the first Father and Son to hold the title; Cllr Greaves being the first daughter of a former Sheriff to also to hold the role. Cllr M Trent commended the 'Summer Fun at Sam's House' family event which he attended at the Birthplace Museum, noting that it is an excellent initiative.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

THE MAYOR LEFT THE ROOM AT THIS POINT, THE DEPUTY MAYOR TOOK THE CHAIR

58 REQUEST FOR CIL ALLOCATION – LICHFIELD HOCKEY CLUB

Members considered the request for a CIL allocation to facilitate the construction of a tarmac pathway. Cllr M Warfield proposed that a sum of £12,200 be allocated. Cllr D Robertson stated that this was an excellent use of CIL but had some concern that awarding the full amount of the quotation received meant that the club would not be asked to contribute at all. Cllr Robertson then proposed that the City Council make a CIL contribution of 90% of the scheme cost, with Cllr Ball seconding the proposal.

Cllr A Lax spoke against the amendment, citing the letter of support from England Hockey and the benefits that the pathway would bring. Cllr J Marks also spoke against the amendment, stating that the original proposal was to fund the lower specification of the two quotations received, allowing the Club to upgrade with their own funds if they wished. Cllr P Ray stated that

he understood Cllr Robertson's point but was concerned that not funding the whole amount could be seen as a hurdle to a worthy project and a disincentive to other groups who may wish to come forward with equally worthy proposals. Cllr C Spruce also stated that he understood Cllr Robertson's point but on balance felt the whole amount should be awarded. Cllr Ball emphasised that he also felt this idea was a worthy use of CIL but highlighted that when CIL has been awarded in the past, it has often been as a contribution only, with an expectation that other funding would also be used.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost. The original motion was then voted upon and it was:

RESOLVED: That a CIL allocation of £12,200 be awarded to Lichfield Hockey Club to facilitate the construction of the pathway as requested in their submission.

THE MAYOR RETURNED AND TOOK THE CHAIR

59 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

RESOLVED: That payment of accounts be approved and confirmed for the periods:

- **1 May 2022 to 31 May 2022 in the sum of £130,844.26 General Account, and £641.77 Imprest Account.**
- **1 June 2022 to 30 June 2022 in the sum of £92,640.04 General Account and £318.29 Imprest Account.**
- **1 July to 31 July 2022 in the sum of £76,827.14 General Account and £406.86 Imprest Account.**

60 EXCUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, by reason of the confidential nature of the business next to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting.

61 DARWIN HALL

Members considered the Town Clerk's update regarding remedial work being programmed, planned, and undertaken at Darwin Hall.

RESOLVED:

- a) **That the report be noted**
- b) **The Town Clerk to continue to communicate with the Leader of the Council primarily, and Group Leaders regarding developments, notably timescales, costs and nature of any work recommended by professional advisers, implications for hall closure, LCC budgets etc**
- c) **Council to once again acknowledge the possibility that retrospective permission for the instruction of potentially costly remedial work may need to be sought as a result of the limited time available to instruct such work in 2022 due to the nature of Zinc; such work not to be instructed without consultation as set out at (b) above and receipt of appropriate professional advice**
- d) **Delegated authority be given to the Tenders Committee to appoint a chosen contractor to carry out the necessary roof repairs at Darwin Hall that emerge from the recommendations of the City Council's professional advisers.**

62 BAD DEBT WRITE OFF

Members considered the agenda report. Cllr C Spruce stated that the chances of debt recovery were minimal, and the debt should be formally written off. Cllr C Ball noted that the current policy allows the Town Clerk to write off debts of less than £100 in certain circumstances and in consultation with the Leader of the Council. Cllr Ball suggested that the £100 limit was rather low and that it could perhaps be revised upwards to £500. The Town Clerk confirmed that the City Council's Audit Committee could review this at its next meeting.

RESOLVED: That invoice number 21409 in the sum of £464.70 be written off as irrecoverable

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS THE MAYOR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7.18PM

MAYOR