

COUNCIL

14th July 2020

Present: **The Mayor, Councillor Hodges, in the Chair**

Councillors Agar, Allcott, Altaf, A. Amos, B. Amos, Barnes, Bayliss, Berry, Biggs, Bisset, Cawthorne, Collins, Cronin, Denham, Ditta, Geraghty, Gregson, Griffiths, Hassan, Mrs L. Hodgson, S. Hodgson, Johnson, Lamb, Laurenson, Mackay, Mitchell, Riaz, Roberts, Squires, Stafford, Stalker, Stanley, Stephen and Udall

Prior to the Council meeting, which was held remotely, all Members of the Council and other persons present observed a minute's silence to commemorate Jane Tibbutt, wife of former Councillor Dr David Tibbutt and Past Mayoress, who had passed away following a stroke; former Mayor of Passchendaale, Dirk Cardoen, who attended the unveiling of the memorial in Gheluvelt Park in 2010, who died last year suddenly after a stroke; and Stan Chetwood, a member of the Guildhall Facilities Team who has also worked with the Electoral Services team, who had recently passed away after a short illness.

The Mayor's Chaplain, the Reverend Sarah Northall, offered prayers before commencement of the formal business of the Council.

14 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillors Altaf, Ditta, Hassan, Riaz and Stephen - item 26 - Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee, 9th June 2020 - Electrical Safety Enforcement Charges In The Private Rented Sector) - as landlords of rental properties in Worcester.

Councillor Gregson - item 26 - Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee, 9th June 2020 - Electrical Safety Enforcement Charges In The Private Rented Sector) - partner is the owner of a rental property in Worcester.

15 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 19th May 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

16 Mayor's Communications

Welcome Judge Burbidge and Judge Jukes

The Mayor welcomed both Judge Burbidge and Judge Jukes to the meeting and provided a summary of Judge Jukes' career. She invited the Council to agree to bring forward on the agenda Item 7a - Notice of Motion - Appointment of Honorary Recorder for the City of Worcester, to be dealt with as the next item of business. This was agreed.

Civic Events

The Mayor thanked everyone who had attended the Armed Forces Day raising the flag event on 22nd June and the Remembering Srebrenica memorial event on Friday, 10th July.

17 Notice of Motion - Appointment of Honorary Recorder

The Council considered the following Notices of Motion, which had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8:

That this Council, in pursuance of the statutory powers derived from the Courts Act 1971 and the Local Government Act 1972, do hereby resolve that His Honour Judge James Burbidge QC is hereby appointed Honorary Recorder of the City of Worcester.

The proposer, Councillor Bayliss, spoke in support of the Motion. He explained the background to the position of Honorary Recorder and thanked Judge Jukes for his service during his tenure. The seconder, Councillor Gregson also spoke in support.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That this Council, in pursuance of the statutory powers derived from the Courts Act 1971 and the Local Government Act 1972, do hereby resolve that His Honour Judge James Burbidge QC is hereby appointed Honorary Recorder of the City of Worcester.

18 Public Participation

Further to the decision regarding the Appointment of Honorary Recorder, both Judge Jukes and Judge Burbidge addressed the Council. Judge Jukes thanked the Mayor and all Members for their support and expressed his best wishes to Judge Burbidge as his successor. Judge Burbidge thanked the Council for appointing him to the role and expressed his pleasure in accepting the position.

Annabel Heath spoke in support of Agenda item 7 - Notice of Motion - Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism.

19 Questions

Question From:	Councillor Chris Mitchell
Question To:	Councillor Marc Bayliss – Leader of the Council
Question:	As a local businessman, I, like many other businesses have felt the significant of COVID 19 on my business. The government have made great efforts to provide support to business in the form of CBILS and Bounce Back Loans. Can you provide me and the local business community, with reassurance that, we as a City Council are, and will do as much as possible to support local businesses in sustaining their operations and also encourage and support new local businesses start-ups to the best of our ability.

Answer:	<p>Can I thank Councillor Mitchell for his question. We are indeed as a City Council doing a huge amount to try and support the business community in Worcester in what must be the most troubling times that the whole business community has faced for many, many decades.</p> <p>This year the Council is providing just under £22m in business rates relief to help local businesses deal with the effects of lockdown. To date, we have provided grants for over 1,400 small businesses and those in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors, totalling £919.2 m. We will continue to provide these grants, actively engaging with businesses who we expect to apply but have not yet done so.</p> <p>Further discretionary funding of just under £900,000 has been provided, for which we have received 210 applications. To date, we have paid grants to 46 of those applications, to small and micro businesses, to small and sole traders, totalling £230,000. Information about the above grants, the low interest business interruption loan scheme, and the eat out to help out scheme and many other forms of support are provided on our website, and are publicised through local bulletins by the Economic Development Team, direct contact with business owners and work with partners such as the BID and the Chamber of Commerce. In addition, we continue to make grants available of £1,000 each to help business start-ups and £3,000 to help businesses grow. There is £50,000 available for these schemes and we currently have 9 applications pending.</p> <p>A recovery plan for the economy is being put in place, including the establishment of a Trading Liaison Group, formed by Regulatory Services, the district councils, County Highways and the Safer Neighbourhoods Team, to operate a one Worcestershire perspective to the issues faced by traders recovering from Covid-19. We are also delivering a range of promotional activity to support the re-opening of our High Streets and a paid for Support Worcester campaign through the local Worcester News.</p>
Supplementary Question:	<p>Thank you very much for your comprehensive response. What I would ask is – what more can we do? Which is probably an unfair question to place on you at this very moment. However, I think it would be beneficial to all Members of the Council if we could receive some form of update or plan of what more we as a Council can to support local businesses, and what our intentions are.</p>
Answer:	<p>I would just reassure my friend that the Council leadership – the bi-partisan leadership of the Council – is very keen to do everything we can to help Worcester get back on its feet and I intend to ask the Managing Director what else he believes, and the Officer team believe, we can do to support the business community at this difficult time. So, I'm happy to give the reassurance that the leadership of</p>

	the Council will continue to look at ways in which we can support the business community.
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20 **Notices of Motion**

The Council considered the following Notices of Motion, which had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8:

1. Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

Worcester City Council will not tolerate anti-Semitic behaviour and therefore adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism, including all its examples, and include its application in the Members' Code of Conduct and in any governance relating to Council staff and officers.

The proposer, Councillor Griffiths and the seconder, Councillor Bayliss, both spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Griffiths explained that the Notice of Motion had originally including the following words:

"Due to the rising levels of anti-Semitism in our society, Worcester City Council is urged to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism, including all its examples, and include its application in the Members' Code of Conduct and in any governance relating to Council staff and officers.

The definition of anti-Semitism to be adopted by Worcester City is as follows:

- Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.
- Manifestations of anti-Semitism might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collective. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic. Anti-Semitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for "why things go wrong." It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.
- It is not anti-Semitic to criticise the Government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest anti-Semitic intent.

It is important to note that this policy follows the Macpherson principle: that a racist incident is one perceived to be racist by the victim. Therefore, the perceptions of Jewish people, both as a collective and individually, should be the starting point for any application of this policy. Anti-Semitism still has to be proven by the criteria provided by this policy, but any accusations should be taken seriously and properly handled and investigated.”

Other Members spoke in support of the Motion.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Council will not tolerate anti-Semitic behaviour and therefore adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of anti-Semitism, including all its examples, and include its application in the Members’ Code of Conduct and in any governance relating to Council staff and officers.

2. Reducing the Number of Empty Properties

Full Council notes:

1. There are currently (as of 27/01/20) 327 houses in Worcester that are termed long-term empty – empty & substantially unfurnished for at least six months.
2. There are 86 properties that have been empty for more than two years and these properties currently are liable to a premium of 100% additional council tax.
3. There are 15 properties that have been empty for more than five years and 13 properties that have been empty for more than ten years.

Full Council believes that:

1. An empty home is a wasted resource, both for the owner who could otherwise make financial gains by letting or selling the property, and for those who are in need of housing.
2. Returning empty properties into use helps increase housing supply and regenerate rundown areas. It is also important to consider the blight that empty properties sometimes cause to local areas in attracting petty crime and devaluing neighbouring property.

The Council will:

1. Publicise the opportunities that empty properties provide and encourage more local residents to report potentially empty properties to the Council.
2. Proactively work with and advise property owners with houses that have been empty for more than one year to bring their property back into use.
3. From April 2021 increase the council tax payable on empty properties of more than five years from 100% to 200% premium.

4. From April 2021 increase the council tax payable on empty properties of more than 10 years to 300% premium.
5. Prior to implementation the specific details of how these additional empty premium charges will be applied will be referred back to the Communities Committee to ensure that any unintended consequences can be minimised.

The proposer, Councillor Stephen, spoke in support of the Motion, which was seconded by Councillor Laurenson. Other Members spoke in support of the Motion.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was unanimously agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to:

- 1. publicise the opportunities that empty properties provide and encourage more local residents to report potentially empty properties to the Council;**
- 2. proactively work with and advise property owners with houses that have been empty for more than one year to bring their property back into use;**
- 3. from April 2021, increase the council tax payable on empty properties of more than five years from 100% to 200% premium;**
- 4. from April 2021, increase the council tax payable on empty properties of more than 10 years to 300% premium; and**
- 5. prior to implementation, refer back to the Communities Committee the specific details of how these additional empty premium charges will be applied, to ensure that any unintended consequences can be minimised.**

3. Ethnic and Racial Inequality

This Council values the cultural diversity of our city and commits to addressing ethnic and racial inequality in Worcester. We call on officers

- to review the collection of data by the Council on race and ethnicity
- implement training to tackle racism
- develop and implement targets for the employment of ethnic minorities
- ensure equality law is applied in relation to all policy areas and decisions

in line with the general recommendations in the Runnymede Trust 'State of the Nation' report 2020.

The proposer Councillor Denham and the seconder, Councillor Gregson, both spoke in support of the Motion.

In accordance with the rules set out in the Constitution, Councillor Mitchell proposed the following amendment to the Motion:

- Delete the third bullet point and replace with “work towards ensuring the City Council’s workforce is representative of the community it serves.”
- Delete the words “general recommendations in the Runnymede Trust 'State of the Nation' report 2020” and replace with “in line with the Equality Act 2010.”

The Monitoring Officer advised that the proposed amendment was acceptable and did not negate the Motion.

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Griffiths.

Members then entered into a debate on the Motion, as amended. After seeking advice from the Monitoring Officer on the proposed amendment, the proposer, Councillor Denham, stated that she was willing to accept the amendment. The seconder, Councillor Gregson, was also in agreement.

On being put to the vote, the amended Motion was unanimously agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That this Council values the cultural diversity of our city and commits to addressing ethnic and racial inequality in Worcester and agrees to call on officers to:

- **review the collection of data by the Council on race and ethnicity**
- **implement training to tackle racism**
- **work towards ensuring the City Council’s workforce is representative of the community it serves**
- **ensure equality law is applied in relation to all policy areas and decisions**

in line with the Equality Act 2010.

21 Report from the Relevant Committee on Matters which are Referred to Council for Decision

The Council considered the following reports from the Relevant Committee on matters which are referred to Council for decision.

22 Referral Report from Standards Committee, 13th November 2019 - Code of Conduct

The Council considered a report from the Chairman of the Standards Committee.

The report explained that the Worcestershire local authority Monitoring Officers considered that the current Code of Conduct was fit for purpose, but would benefit from a few relatively small amendments flowing from some of the Nolan Committee’s best practice recommendations. A revised pan-Worcestershire Code of Conduct for Members had been drafted and was appended to the report.

It was proposed by Councillor Lamb and seconded by Councillor Roberts and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council adopts the draft Code of Conduct attached to this report and delegates authority to the Council's Monitoring Officer to make any minor changes necessary to the Constitution to give effect to this recommendation.

23 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee, 4th February 2020 - Capital and Investment Strategies 2020/21 - 2022/23

The Council considered a report from the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee on the Capital Strategy for 2019/20 – 2021/22 and Investment Strategy for 2019/20 – 2021/22, and revised Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit for external debt. The Committee had agreed to recommend that the Council adopt the Strategy and revise the limit on the Development Fund and Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt, in accordance with the proposals set out in the report.

It was proposed by Councillor Stephen and seconded by Councillor Bayliss and on being put to the vote it was unanimously agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agree to:

- i. adopt the Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy for 2020/21 – 2022/23 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report;**
- ii. revise the limit on the Development Fund in accordance with the proposals set out in the report; and**
- iii. revise the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt in accordance with the proposals set out in the report.**

24 Referral Report from Environment Committee, 3rd March 2020 - Procurement and Introduction of In Cab Technology for Waste Collection Vehicles

The Council considered a report from the Chairman of the Environment Committee on the procurement and introduction of in cab technology for waste collection vehicles. The Committee had agreed to recommend that the Council agrees to a supplementary estimate to the capital programme of £26,087 to facilitate the installation of 'Jobtrak' to complement the existing Dennis Connect System. Any amendment to the Capital Programme required approval by Full Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Squires and seconded by Councillor Stafford and on being put to the vote it was unanimously agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agree to amend the Capital Programme in the sum of £26,087 to facilitate the installation of 'Jobtrak' to complement the existing Dennis Connect System.

25 Referral Report from Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, 12th March 2020 - Cumulative Impact Policy Review - Licensing Act 2003

The Council considered a report from the Chairman of the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee on the draft Cumulative Impact Assessment and the revised Cumulative Impact Policy, within the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy. The Committee had endorsed the proposed Cumulative Impact Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, and agreed to recommend the revised Statement of Licensing Policy to full Council for approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Udall and seconded by Councillor Griffiths and on being put to the vote it was unanimously agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council approve the revised statement of Licensing Policy.

26 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee, 9th June 2020 - Electrical Safety Enforcement Charges In The Private Rented Sector

The Council considered a report from the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee on the implementation of the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020. The Committee had noted the report and agreed to recommend the related financial penalties to full Council for approval and inclusion within the Worcester City Council Fees and Charges Schedule for 2020/2021. In accordance with the Constitution, changes to the Policy and Budgetary Framework are reserved to full Council to determine.

The Monitoring Officer advised that, whilst a number of Members had declared an interest in this matter, the nature of their interest did not constitute a pecuniary interest as the item related to a general policy matter. Therefore those Members were entitled to speak and vote.

It was proposed by Councillor Stephen and seconded by Councillor Bayliss and on being put to the vote it was unanimously agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council approve the financial penalties under the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020, as set out in the report, for inclusion within the Worcester City Council Fees and Charges Schedule for 2020/2021.

27 Report from the Leader of the Council on any matters which he is of the opinion require urgent consideration by The Council

None.

28 Items Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act.

29 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee, 9th June 2020 - Introduction of 'Pay For Extra Weight' System for Non-Recyclable Trade Waste

The Council considered a report from the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee on introducing a system of paying for extra weight, in line with the 'polluter pays' principle, to establish best practice in waste management and encourage increased recycling by commercial waste customers. The Committee recommended that the Council agrees to the proposed Fees and Charges for recycled waste for 2020/21.

The Council approved the proposed Fees and Charges, which were detailed in Appendix B to the report. These were commercially sensitive and therefore not for publication.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 9.10p.m.

Chairman at the meeting on
30th September 2020