

COUNCIL

29th March 2022

Present: The Mayor, Councillor Stephen Hodgson, in the Chair

Councillors Agar, Allcott, Altaf, A. Amos, B. Amos, Barnes, Bayliss, Cleary, Collins, Cronin, Denham, Ditta, Geraghty, Gregson, Griffiths, Hodges, Mrs L. Hodgson, S. Hodgson, Johnson, Lamb, Laurenson, Lawrance, Lewing, Mackay, Mitchell, Norfolk, Riaz, Stafford, Stanley, Stephen and Udall

Apologies: Councillors Bisset, Hassan and Roberts

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

89 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Bisset, Hassan and Roberts.

90 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillors Altaf, Ditta, Gregson, Riaz, Stephen and Stanley - Minute 95 (Notice of Motion – Increase in the Cost of Living) – As Landlords of properties in Worcester.

Councillor Udall - - Minute 95 (Notice of Motion – Worcester City Council Stands with Ukraine) – Due to business links.

91 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Council meetings held on 22nd February 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

92 Mayor's Communications

Mayor's Banquet

The Mayor reminded the Council that his Banquet takes place on Friday, 29th April 2022 and encouraged Members to support this special event. Tickets available from his PA.

Queen's Green Canopy

The Mayor informed the Council that on Tuesday 5th April 2022 he would be planting a tree at Waitrose, London Road in support of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative, he would be joined by children from Nunnery Wood High School for the event.

Jeff Carpenter

The Council were informed that a memorial service to celebrate the life of former Mayor of Worcester Jeff Carpenter will take place at the Cathedral on 9th May. All Members have been sent an invitation.

Retiring Councillors

The Mayor paid tribute to those Councillors who are retiring in May and were therefore attending their last meeting of the Council, namely Bill Amos, Tom Collins, Mike Johnson, Louise Griffiths and Jo Hodges.

The Mayor also thanked Jim Carver for his time and commitment serving as a Councillor for the Nunnery Ward who resigned last month.

Councillors Bayliss and Gregson also paid their own tributes.

Refreshments

The Mayor invited everyone present to a buffet supper in the Lower Hall following the conclusion of the Council meeting.

93 Public Participation

Karen Field spoke to the Council in respect of item 95 (Notice of Motion – Sunflowers – A sign of Welcome and Hope to Ukrainian Refugees). In summary, she spoke in support of the Motion and encouraged Members of the Council to take sunflower seed packets for planting.

94 Questions

The Council considered the following question submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.

Question No. 1	
Question From:	Councillor Allcott
Question To:	Councillor Marc Bayliss, Leader of the Council
Question	With covid cases on the rise in Worcestershire with the county rate 10 per cent higher than the country average, will this Council work with Worcestershire County Council, to facilitate availability of free lateral flow tests, for Worcester residents?
Answer:	I've got some information which I hope Council will find helpful. Over 2 billion lateral flow tests have been provided across the UK since 2020. As immunity levels have increased through the national vaccination programme, testing and isolation will play a less important role in preventing serious disease. The Spring round of booster vaccines has commenced, the 4 th opportunity for a vaccination, and it is now very clear that this is the most effective form of protection against the virus. The Council will be at the heart of that effort, continuing with pop-up vaccination centres

	<p>across the City to make it easier for people to get their job.</p> <p>Worcestershire throughout the Pandemic recognised nationally as an area that has got on with rolling out vaccinations swiftly with generally very good levels of uptake. Those initially able to take up the Spring booster will be those aged 75 years and older, residents in care homes, other older people, and those aged 12 years and over with a weakened immune. This will extend to all those over 50 by this Autumn.</p> <p>From the 1st April there will continue to be free testing for the over-75s, care home residents and hospital patients, and those over 12 with weakened immune systems, recognising these groups as being at risk of becoming particularly poorly if contracting COVID-19.</p> <p>Final guidance on provision of lateral flow tests will be published very soon, and this will clarify the exact detail.</p>
Supplementary Question:	<p>Gov.uk details that between the 22nd and the 28th March, there have been 9,417 tests in Worcester. This shows an increase of 1.8% compared to the previous 7 days, and between the 23rd and the 29th March, 1,007 people have confirmed a positive test, which shows an increase of 15.1% compared to the previous 7 days, which is high. I note that Portsmouth City Council are funding free lateral flow tests through the Covid Outbreak Management Fund, and they estimate they will be able to supply 5 lateral flow tests per household per month between March to June. Can we not do something similar for our Worcester residents?</p>
Answer:	<p>I'm very happy to put this on the agenda of the next Worcestershire Leaders' Board, and to seek the guidance of the Director of Public Health at the County Council, who is the lead specialist in this area, and see what she or he recommends at that point. So, happy to take it forward, but I can't give a guarantee at this point, but happy to raise the issue with a lead professional.</p>

95 **Notice of Motion**

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

Increase in the Cost of Living

Council is concerned about the growing inequalities being caused by the recent dramatic increase in the cost of living.

These put the people of Worcester at greater risk of being unable to afford the basics that we all take for granted- heating our homes, paying for our housing, feeding our families and getting to work.

Council therefore, mandates the Managing Director to write to the local Member of Parliament, highlighting our concerns and seeking his support to help tackle this crisis through a cap on private sector housing rents and to cut VAT on domestic fuel.

The proposer, Councillor Lamb and the seconder, Councillor Agar, both spoke in support of the Motion.

In accordance with the rules set out in the Constitution, Councillor Stephen proposed an amendment to the Motion, as follows:

Delete the words in paragraph 3 "*and to cut VAT on domestic fuel*".

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Laurenson.

Members then entered into a debate on the amendment to the Motion where support and opposition was expressed across the Chamber, following which the amendment was put to the vote. On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

In accordance with the rules set out in the Constitution, Councillor Bayliss proposed an amendment to the Motion, as amended, as follows:

Add the following words at the end of paragraph 1: "*although it welcomes the Governments investment support through the £150 Council Tax rebate, increasing National Insurance thresholds and the £144 million discretionary support to Local Authorities*". Delete the following words after the word crisis in paragraph 3: "*through a cap on private sector housing rents and to cut VAT on domestic fuel*" and replace with the words "*through the full range of policy levers at the Governments disposal*".

The proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Mitchell.

The proposer of the original Motion, Councillor Lamb, stated that he did not accept these amendments.

Members entered into a debate on the amendment of the Motion, following which the amendment was put to the vote.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

Members then entered into a debate on the Motion, as amended, following which the Motion was put to the vote. The Motion, as amended, was agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Council request the Managing Director to write to the local Member of Parliament, highlighting our concerns and seeking his support to help tackle this crisis through a cap on private sector housing rents.

Sunflowers – A Sign of Welcome and Hope to Ukrainian Refugee

Worcester City Council stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, extends a hand of friendship to all Ukrainians living in Worcester and offers a warm welcome

to any Ukrainian refugees arriving in our city. As a small but visible sign of welcome and hope, Council requests that sunflowers, the national flower of Ukraine, be planted in the city's parks and wild flower meadows and that members of the public be encouraged by the city council to plant sunflowers in their gardens.

The proposer, Councillor Gregson and the seconder, Councillor Stanley, both spoke in support of the Motion. Other Members spoke in support of the Motion, following which the Motion was put to the vote. The Motion was agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Council request that sunflowers, the national flower of Ukraine, be planted in the city's parks and wild flower meadows and that members of the public be encouraged by the City Council to plant sunflowers in their gardens.

Worcester City Council Stands with Ukraine

This Council joins all residents across the City of Worcester in opposing Vladimir Putin's barbaric war on Ukraine. This Council notes that Worcester has a proud history of providing sanctuary to those forced to flee their homeland. This Council recognises that we must play our part in supporting Ukrainian people and communities affected by this terrible conflict.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Reach out to the Ukrainian Community in Worcester and offer the help and assistance they require during this heart-breaking period.
2. Support, promote and work in partnership with local charitable, community and religious organisations that are working to provide resources and assistance for those affected and displaced by the conflict in Ukraine, including the Homes for Ukraine scheme.
3. This Council also recognises it has a role to play to ensure Russian political and financial interests are not promoted in any of its activities and investments.

This Council therefore further resolves to:

1. To review immediately any contractual commitments the Council has with Russian suppliers and take steps to cease these at the earliest opportunity.
2. Immediately request a report from the Worcestershire Pension Fund listing any investments currently held in Russian companies. Where any investments exist, Council calls on the Worcestershire Pension Fund to make immediate arrangements, to divest any shares in Russian companies.
3. Mandate the Managing Director to Write to The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department to give Worcester City Council's support to stricter sanctions on the Russian regime, in particular to extend sanctions against Russian oligarchs with ties to Putin's regime, to fully block their access to financial operations in the UK.

This Council also recognises the importance of global security and NATO allies. This council expresses its support of NATO allies and the continuation of supply to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, of defensive lethal military weapons, to defend their country and its people.

The proposer, Councillor Allcott and the seconder, Councillor Agar, both spoke in support of the Motion. Other Members spoke in support of the Motion, following which the Motion was put to the vote. The Motion was agreed and it was

RESOLVED: That the Council agree to:

- 1. review immediately any contractual commitments the Council has with Russian suppliers and take steps to cease these at the earliest opportunity;**
- 2. immediately request a report from the Worcestershire Pension Fund listing any investments currently held in Russian companies. Where any investments exist, Council calls on the Worcestershire Pension Fund to make immediate arrangements, to divest any shares in Russian companies; and**
- 3. mandate the Managing Director to write to The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department to give Worcester City Council's support to stricter sanctions on the Russian regime, in particular to extend sanctions against Russian oligarchs with ties to Putin's regime, to fully block their access to financial operations in the UK.**

This Council also recognises the importance of global security and NATO allies. This council expresses its support of NATO allies and the continuation of supply to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, of defensive lethal military weapons, to defend their country and its people.

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

The Council received reports on matters which by law or in accordance with the Constitution are referred to Council for decision.

97 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee 22nd March 2022 - Capital and Investment Strategies 2022/23 - 2024/25

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee at its meeting on 22nd March 2022 had considered a report on the Capital Strategy for 2022/23-2024/25 and the Investment Strategy for 2022/23-2024/25.

The Committee had agreed that the Council adopt the Capital Strategy, and to consider and approve the Investment Strategy.

The Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy are required under statutory guidance and form part of the Policy and Budgetary Framework. In accordance

with the Constitution, changes to the Policy and Budgetary Framework are reserved to full Council to determine.

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

RESOLVED: That the Council approve the Capital Strategy for 2022/23-2024/25 and the Investment Strategy for 2022/23-2024/25 for adoption.

98 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee 22nd March 2022 - Appointment of a Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee at its meeting on 22nd March 2022 had considered a proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Annual Action Plan.

The Strategy sets out arrangements for Member oversight and sponsorship of this work programme, including a proposal for a new Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This Champion would act as a sponsor of the improvement actions set out in the Strategy and raise the profile of this work, particularly with other councillors.

The Committee had agreed to recommend to Council the appointment of a Member Champion for Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

In accordance with the Constitution, a proposal for a new Member Champion role must be agreed by Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Bayliss and seconded by Councillor Gregson that Councillor Norfolk be appointed to this new Member Champion role and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council approve the appointment of Councillor Robyn Norfolk to the Member Champion role for Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

99 Referral Report from Audit and Governance Committee 23rd March 2022 - Audit and Governance Committee Annual report 2020/21

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee on the Committee's Annual Report for the 2020/21 municipal year.

The Annual Report shows how the Audit and Governance Committee had successfully achieved its objectives over the last year and has thereby made a positive contribution to the Council's overall governance and control environment.

It was proposed by Councillor Alan Amos and seconded by Councillor Barnes and upon being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council receives the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2020/21.

100 Report of the Heritage Champion

The Council received a report from the Heritage Champion, Councillor Mrs Lucy Hodgson, setting out the achievements and highlights over the last 12 months. Following her presentation, there was an opportunity for Members to ask questions.

101 Report of the Children and Young People's Champion

The Council received a report from the Children and Young People's Champion, Councillor Matt Lamb, setting out the achievements and highlights over the last 12 months. Following his presentation, there was an opportunity for Members to ask questions.

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

None.

103 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act.

104 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee 22nd March 2022 - Fees and Charges - Trade Waste (Exempt)

The Council considered the fees and charges for Trade Waste Collections for 2022/23. These were not for publication as they contained commercially sensitive information.

It was proposed by Councillor Bayliss and seconded by Councillor Gregson and upon being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council approve the Fees and Charges for Trade Waste Collections 2022/23.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 9.20p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
17th May 2022