

COUNCIL

11th July 2023

Present: **The Mayor, Councillor Louis Stephen, in the Chair**

Councillors Agar, Ali, Allcott, Altaf, Amos, Cleary, Cockeram, Cookson, Cooper, Cross, Denham, Desayrah, Geraghty, Gregson, Hodgson, Jagger, Lamb, Lawrance, Lewing, Murray, Norfolk, Pingree, Riaz, Roberts, Smith, Stanley and Udall

The Mayor's Orator, Rhianna Levi, addressed the Council before commencement of the formal business of the Council.

27 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Bisset, Ditta, Laurenson, Piotrowski, Round and Sadiq.

28 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillors Lawrance and Lewing – Minute 41 (Referral Report from Communities Committee 7th June 2023 - Provision of a New Artificial Grass Pitch at Perdiswell) – As members of Perdiswell Gym

Councillor Hodgson – Minute 35 (Warndon Parish Council / St Peter The Great County Parish Council: Review of Election Arrangements) – As a member of Warndon Parish Council

Councillor Ali – Minute 42 (Referral Report from Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, 19th June 2023 - Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Age Policy Review) – As a licensed hackney carriage driver.

29 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Annual and Extraordinary meetings of the Council held on 16th May 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

30 Mayor's Communications

Civic Service

The Mayor thanked everyone who attended the Civic Service on 25th June.

Armed Forces Day and Windrush Commemoration

The Mayor stated that he had been pleased to represent the Council at Armed Forces Day and the well-attended Windrush 75 years commemoration.

Remembering Srebrenica Memorial Event

The Mayor highlighted this event, which he had attended earlier in the day.

Mayor's Charity

The Mayor provided the Council with some information on his charity for the year, Age UK, and the reasons why he had chosen it.

Charity Cycle Ride

The Mayor informed the Council that he is planning a family cycle ride for charity, date to be determined.

SHIFT Scheme

The Mayor encouraged Members to use a bicycle for Council business. He explained that the Council will make a contribution via the SHIFT scheme to the Mayor's charity for every kilometre cycled.

Inaugural Banquet

The Mayor explained that, due to the current economic position the Council finds itself in, and the general cost of living crisis which has affected many local residents, it would be highly inappropriate for the Council to pay for a banquet. He would instead use some of the money to make a donation to the Mayor's charity and also to pay for a meal at St Paul's Hostel. This will take place on the first Monday in December and he invited Members to help serve food on the night. He intended to use any money left over and the remaining budget for the annual banquet to cover the cost of any reasonable requests for a Guildhall room booking made by Worcester-based charities and not-for-profit organisations. He invited Members to let him know of any organisation which would benefit from this.

Civility in Public Life

The Mayor highlighted the recent training organised both at County Hall and online, which he considered very useful. He was pleased that Members of this Council generally work together in a constructive way. There was no place for personal attacks and he hoped all Group Leaders would support him in this respect.

Refreshments

The Mayor invited everyone present to join him for refreshments in the Mayor's Parlour at the end of the meeting.

31 Public Participation

Elaine Watt spoke regarding the Pride flag currently flying at Cathedral Square. In summary, she expressed the view that, whilst inclusion and diversity should be celebrated, this is a divisive flag which represents gender ideology and untruths. The Council has a duty to protect the well-being of young people and she asked that the flag be removed and residents should have their say around what the flag represents and how it affects our society.

The Mayor acknowledged her representations and stated that a written response would be provided.

32 Questions

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

Question No. 1	
Question From:	Councillor Amos
Question To:	Councillor Denham, Joint Leader of the Council
Question:	The only road through St. John's Cemetery is riddled with deep pot-holes, causing serious danger to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, and has been in this state for a number of years and is getting steadily worse. With no indication of any imminent repairs to take place, will she explain this neglect and give me a firm date for when all the remedial works along its length will be done to bring the road up to a safe standard?
Answer:	I understand you're inquiring about a facility in another Ward in the city. I think there probably is not the neglect that you think. The Ward Councillors are fully up to speed with plans, and actually what is happening within the Cemetery. So, this year's asset maintenance plan includes provision for the repair of a collapsed drain, so that needed to be done first before the tarmacking and the resurfacing of the road could take place. The drainage and re-surfacing works are scheduled to commence in mid-August this year.
Supplementary Question:	Can I thank Councillor Denham for her answer, which I think proves that miracles do happen. St. John's Cemetery has been in a state of disrepair for several years. I put this question down and within days apparently we've got a huge investment programme, so I'm very happy, very grateful, but clearly the message is I should ask more questions to get things done.
Answer:	All Councillors have the ability to ask questions and those of us who are well used to asking questions in a number of places in order to bring forward action can perhaps give you advice. But these were actions in train prior to your question, and in fact there's a Friends of St. John's Cemetery being set up. Whether you'd care to join that Friends Group, it's there.

Question No. 2	
Question From:	Councillor Amos
Question To:	Councillor Bisset, Joint Leader of the Council
Question:	<p>The Council recently introduced a new payment method in a number of car parks across the City leaving the only method of payment via a complicated digital/electronic technology, thereby giving no choice for a cash and/or card option. This will seriously disadvantage and discriminate against a large number of people, particularly the elderly, who do not use and/or are uncomfortable with such technology. Will she therefore ensure that:</p> <p>a) a cash/card option is available at all Council car parks across the City so that people will always be given a choice of how</p>

	<p>they pay;</p> <p>b) that the Council will put the needs of its residents and customers before the profit of a few companies;</p> <p>c) that the Council will actively encourage elderly people to get out and about for their physical and mental health by removing such barriers; and</p> <p>d) that the Council will end the breach of its own policy on diversity and equality in so doing?</p>
<p>Answer from Councillor Denham:</p>	<p>Unfortunately, Councillor Bisset is not here to answer as she's poorly, so I don't know exactly what the Green Party view is on this, but as Joint Leader I'm happy to give you my views and my answer.</p> <p>This was the distribution of the car park machines and how they function was a decision taken by Policy and Resources Committee in March this year. It's only recently been implemented, and unfortunately I think there's been some misinformation – some of it I hesitate to say possibly spread by the press or other people. It's really important that everyone is fully aware that it's only 5 of the Council's 14 car parks which are no longer accepting cash. So, it's only 5 that are app only. The remaining 9 continue to operate with either cash, card or an app basis, and, you know, it is about customer service and being mindful that there are many customers in the city that actually don't carry cash, and for whom a card and an app is their preferred option.</p> <p>So, we have just over 1,900 car parking spaces which continue to benefit from cash, card and app payments, compared to only 400 spaces that are app only.</p> <p>Ability to use a car park machine is not a protected characteristic within the equalities legislation. Many older people are in fact very good with IT. There is absolutely no way in which the Council is breaching its duty under diversity and equality.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question:</p>	<p>I'm grateful to Councillor Denham for answering that in Councillor Bisset's absence, but I'm disappointed naturally with the answer, because clearly the answer to each of the first 4 points is no, there will not be a choice for many people at most car parks in the future. I would remind Councillor Denham that 5 out of 14 is more than a third, and if I could just ask her this: the brain dead morons who currently run the railways are now closing all the ticket offices, where 20% of passengers choose to buy their tickets. Do we want this Council – a public authority, a public body - to operate like them, take no notice of the 20% of people who want to pay by cash or card? The elderly who don't know how to use this technology – whether they should or not they don't know how to use it and don't want to use it. Why on earth can't people just have a choice how they pay to park in this city? I think it's very</p>

	disappointing, Mr Mayor, that we are now going down this road of not giving people a choice and discriminating against elderly people who won't be able to use this technology because they don't understand it.
Answer:	I'm not sure there is a question in there. I'm not qualified to talk about any decisions with regard to the railways. The definition of 5 out of 14 – that is less than most. Most car parks, the vast majority of car park spaces, do offer a choice of options as to how to pay, and the smaller car parks which don't have the cash option, actually all of them have a car park close by and there's information as to how to get to the nearest car park where people can pay by cash or card. Choice operates, as I said, in both directions, and people want the choice of being able to pay by card as well as by cash.

Question No. 3	
Question From:	Councillor Udall
Question To:	Councillor Riaz, Chair of Communities Committee
Question:	Will the Chair of the Communities Committee give his support to those seeking rented housing within the city who are pet owners? Most private rented, HMOs, emergency accommodation and many RSLs have "no pet" clauses in tenancies. Worcester people with pets often struggle to find private rented accommodation which will allow them to keep their pets; which causes total heartbreak when tenants are forced to give up their pet in order to become adequately housed. Will the Committee agree to look at this matter?
Answer:	Your Committee can discuss these matters of local interest. In this instance Officers advised that the Committee would have no influence over any national legislation. There are not currently any restrictions on landlords advertising properties as "no pets allowed." The model tenancy agreement issued by government, which is not mandatory for landlords to use, removed reference to a blanket ban on pets in 2021. Also the Renters Reform Bill which is currently going through Parliament proposes an inclusion in the 1988 Housing Act as a right to request permission to have a pet, and that it is an implied term of every assured shorthold tenancy agreement that a tenant may keep a pet if they ask for and are granted the landlord's consent. It further outlines that consent should not be unreasonably refused, or that the landlord may if granting consent apply a condition for tenants to have insurance to cover the risk of damage caused by the pets. Also the Bill does not currently contain any reference to the prohibition of "no pets allowed" during the advertising of properties.
Supplementary Question:	I've recently been speaking to a homeless woman in Worcester who has a child and a small dog and is trying to find full-time employment as a nurse but is unable to find any accommodation because of her dog. None of our emergency

	housing providers will accept a dog. Pets for tenants must come with responsibility so any tenant with a pet must be held accountable for their behaviour and any damage caused by their pet, and they must ensure dogs are microchipped and well trained. Will he investigate why none of our emergency housing providers will accept a tenant with a dog and what action can we take to encourage them to change their policy?
Answer:	I will indeed investigate and write necessarily to all the RSLs within the city to demand the answer to those questions. As we've outlined before there is a very limited option of things we can do. I know nationally as a Labour Party we are seeking that Renters Charter, which includes a protection for pets and the reform of the Bill is currently looming, but I absolutely agree over the COVID period there was a deepening affection with pet owners and their pets. In most circumstances they are now inseparable, to the point where you've referenced that it does cause psychological harm if a pet isn't allowed to stay in a property with them, so I will fully investigate, thank you.

Question No. 4	
Question From:	Councillor Hodgson
Question To:	Councillor Stanley, Chair of Policy and Resources Committee
Question:	A motion was passed at the Council meeting on 28th March 2023 that called upon the Managing Director to write to the County Council to request a strategic review into adequacy of the current provision and suitability of secure rest facilities and overnight parking for professional drivers within the county, working with partners to improve the provision of such facilities in Worcester. During the debate it was stressed that the County Council as the local Highways Authority have no responsibility for providing such facilities, but council chose to ignore this important piece of information and passed the motion nevertheless. In the light of the letter received to the Managing Director dated 23rd May confirming that indeed this is case and that Midlands Connect (The sub regional Transport Body) has been conducting research into this, which will be shared by National Highways, what steps is the City Council considering towards providing such facilities in the city of Worcester?
Answer:	A very brief reply really, and I'm delighted to say the Council has no plans at the current time to consider developing such facilities, and whilst it has no statutory responsibility to provide such facilities Officers and I, and I believe many other people, look forward to seeing the research undertaken by Midlands Connect.
Supplementary Question:	I expect the City Council has a whole list of current projects including that of the Towns Fund, and obviously there will be a

	serious question about capacity in our Officer team to actually achieve this, and does he agree with me we need to wait and see what Midlands Connect deliver in terms of this important facility, but something that is not strictly a priority or responsibility for the City Council?
Answer:	Happy to embrace brevity again, I agree.

Question No. 5	
Question From:	Councillor Hodgson
Question To:	Councillor Denham, Joint Leader of the Council
Question:	Under the governance arrangements of Worcester City Council, it is agreed that where a single political grouping does not have a majority of members that the leadership of the city council is shared by two co-leaders (or joint leaders) from the two largest groups. In the 2022-23 municipal year this was the Conservatives and Labour. Since May 2023 it is Labour and the Greens. Whilst understanding that this arrangement is not the preferred option of the Labour group, why is the leader of the Labour Group prepared to share the leadership with the leader of the Green group, but not the Conservatives?
Answer:	<p>Thank you for your question. Let me explain how this works. In May last year at the extraordinary meeting of Council, Conservative and Green Councillors voted to amend the Constitution so that in a position of no overall control of the Council, two Joint Leaders will be elected, one from each of the two largest parties. Last year the 15 Conservative Councillors then voted for Councillor Bayliss to be Leader. I declined to be Joint Leader as the values and philosophy of the Labour Party are fundamentally different to those of the Conservative Party.</p> <p>This year - in fact we have the minutes before us - the Conservative and Green Councillors again voted together for Joint Leaders from the two largest parties. You're right, it was not my preferred option. I'm honoured to be leading the largest party on the Council this year and pleased that all parties I think voted for me to be Leader. The Green Party are now the second largest group and their members voted for Councillor Bissett to be Joint Leader. The Labour Group did not vote for this but we accept the outcome of the democratic process.</p>
Supplementary Question:	Thank you very much for that explanation. What I would say is the Leader of the Green Group told the Council meeting in early 2021 that drugs should be readily available in shops. Do you believe that she is a more responsible Joint Leader than an experienced, moderate and pragmatic Conservative Group Leader? At the Council meeting in early 2021 she said she wanted hard drugs readily available in shops. She said that at a meeting of the full Council which was over Zoom. So are you saying she's more suitable to be co-leader of the Council than

	for example Marc Bayliss, whose is an experienced, moderate, pragmatic Conservative Leader?
Answer:	I'm not sure you actually listened to what I said. The Conservative Group voted for the constitutional arrangements last year and for the constitutional arrangements this year. I did not vote to have a Green Leader beside me, and I chose not to be a Joint Leader with a Conservative last year.

Question No. 6	
Question From:	Councillor Lamb
Question To:	Councillors Denham and Bisset, Joint Leaders of the Council
Question:	Residents living in Sheltered Housing schemes throughout the City, have been contacting councillors about the dramatic rise in service charges. Most of these have risen in excess of 100%, making living at sheltered housing unaffordable, especially as service charges are not covered by housing benefit. This is a significant increase on the cost of living for pensioners, who often have a very limited income. Huge increases in the bills demanded by their landlords for energy, services and rent are causing stress, anxiety and poverty. Whilst rent rises are controlled, energy and service charges are not and have risen significantly beyond inflation. Does the Leader of the Council agree with me, that this inaction by government has caused significant distress to residents during what is already a cost-of-living crisis and can the Leader of the Council confirm what action could be taken to help these residents?
Answer from Councillor Denham:	<p>Thank you very much for your question, which highlights actually quite a widespread concern. Many of us have been contacted by residents from sheltered housing, and it's taken some investigation. So many Worcester people are affected. The explanation is bit technical, so bear with me.</p> <p>Rent policy is controlled by central government and they set out the rent formula for social and affordable rents, and the policy on rent increases means that social landlords or registered providers are only allowed to increase rents by the retail price index plus 1%. Due to the dramatic increase in inflation, rent really should have gone up a great deal more, and service charges sit completely outside the rent calculation, so service charges are not restricted by increasing, and the government made no allowance for increased heating costs in properties with shared heating schemes such as sheltered housing. So whilst other citizens have had an allowance to mitigate the costs of big energy bills over the winter, residents in social housing have not, so some of our vulnerable tenants have been faced with huge bills.</p>

	<p>Belatedly, the government have now introduced the Energy Bill Discount Scheme, which runs from April this year to March next year. However, in order to access that funding, the social landlords themselves have to apply to the scheme on behalf of their customers, who in the meantime have to pay the extra heating charge within their service charge. The applications for that will not be decided by government until October, and in the meantime customers keep paying the higher bill, so government has really been not at all helpful.</p> <p>The practical answer as to what can be done is that individuals should apply to their landlord in the first instance. Many social landlords have schemes to help people and to support them in difficult times - obviously they vary between providers. And if people are in dire straits this City Council, we still retain our discretionary welfare assistance scheme and applications to that will be considered if appropriate.</p> <p>The other key thing I should say is to actually write to your MP and complain about this process and the unfairness of this process and the difficulty in carrying it through.</p>
Supplementary Question:	<p>I recently met with residents of the St. John's sheltered accommodation in the high rise and low rise flats together with Councillors Norfolk and Udall. We were also joined by representatives from Platform Housing who to their credit took the time to explain the increases in charges. However the anger and fear from residents was palpable. It is clear that many residents in sheltered housing in St. John's were deeply concerned as to whether they could continue to afford to fund their basic needs. Does the Leader of the Council agree that urgently addressing rising energy costs and seeking alternative green ways of heating our homes should be a key priority of the future Labour government - and I say the future rather than a future Labour government - and this Council should work with them to address poor insulation and leaky housing stock in Worcester?</p>
Answer:	<p>Absolutely, thank you for your follow up. Unfortunately the green energy revolution has stalled since 2010 and many of the previous schemes for home insulation and home improvement are a pale shadow of those that were available under the last Labour government. We need a national government that could make Britain a clean energy superpower and that would keep energy bills low for good by insulating 19 million homes, and we need to deliver reform in order to give people secure, affordable and decent housing.</p>

Question No. 7	
Question From:	Councillor Norfolk
Question To:	Councillor Riaz, Chair of Communities Committee
Question:	<p>The government support for energy bills did not include homes on communal heating networks. Assistance with energy bills for people living in sheltered accommodation was only recently announced to the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) via the Energy Bills Discount Scheme. This scheme runs from April 2023 to March 2024 and landlords have to apply for support through the scheme. The decisions on individual schemes are not expected from government until October 2023, so in the meantime there is still no financial support to these vulnerable Worcester residents.</p> <p>Does he share my concern about the impact to our RSLs and their tenants, who are struggling now and cannot wait until the winter for any rebate. The government proposals, decisions and outcomes are too late and fall outside the rent and service charges planning cycle, making it difficult for RSLs to plan and putting undue financial pressure upon their tenants?</p>
Answer:	<p>I appreciate some of this may be repeated from my colleague, but it's important that we highlight some of this information that has been provided. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme - the EBRS - ended on the 31st March '23 and was originally intended as a bridge to allow business to adapt to the changing energy prices. The discount was available to everyone on a non-domestic contract, including housing associations who were on existing fixed price contracts but having to move to a different arrangement due to contract end.</p> <p>On the 1st April '23 the scheme has been replaced with the Energy Bills Discount Scheme, and through this the government were aiming to provide heat network customers with a higher rate of relief that will ensure they do not face the disproportionate higher bills when compared to customers in equivalent households who are supported by the energy price guarantee.</p> <p>Consumers on the heat network who purchased heating and hot water for their own consumptions are the ultimate beneficiaries of the benefit of this scheme, and the supplier should pass the benefit onto them. Ordinarily the consumers do not need to do anything to receive this benefit and many RPs provide their own financial support for tenants.</p> <p>Similar to the discretionary welfare assistance scheme operated by the Council, it is hope that RP tenants can access this and wider support at times need. The Council is also working with RPs around the green homes grant agenda, which aims to reduce energy costs for those living in properties with poor energy ratings, and the government website provides a comprehensive list of support options for those residents.</p>

Supplementary Question:	Will he agree to ask the Communities Committee to consider writing to both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the city's MP, urging the government to make decisions about financial support for energy costs much earlier, to bring forward the announcements on individual schemes from October, and to make an early announcement about next year's funding, to enable RSLs to pass on the benefits to tenants earlier and more efficiently and without causing undue stress to already vulnerable members of our community?
Answer:	<p>It feels like the Energy Rebate Scheme is very much an afterthought and it feels very, very bureaucratic. The rebate goes to the provider, which is then passed on to the landlord, which is then passed onto the tenant. What tenants need in this time of uncertainty is certainty in terms of being able to budget, in terms of being able to realise what they can set back for food and their daily cost of living items. Relief for tenants is relying on the landlord and the provider being in sync with each other.</p> <p>My main question talks about decisions being made about schemes during October, but tenants may in reality start receiving relief as late as December, so whilst landlords are free to pass on energy cost reductions sooner rather than later, and Platform as one of the RSLs were passing on those reductions in energy prices directly to tenants outside of the normal bill calculation cycle, the real relief will be some nine months later and in current circumstances that we're facing that is simply far, far too late and maybe beyond salvation for many vulnerable tenants at this time. So I completely wholeheartedly agree with him. I think it's fair to say that we are allowed to investigate it at Communities Committee, and we will do so.</p>

Question No. 8	
Question From:	Councillor Cleary
Question To:	Councillor Denham, Joint Leader of the Council
Question:	In April 2022, councillors voted unanimously (despite Labour opposing it until the last minute) to set aside a £100k capital sum for developments at Rodborough Drive Green space, in Warndon. Conversations were had with charity and private bodies for match funding. The project is twofold: A primary age play area and additional residents parking by creating access to an existing but inaccessible hardstanding. Tree planting, a nature trail, benches and a footpath and lighting review were also a part. After 18m of heel dragging and a change in council leadership, officers informed me they had decided not to proceed with plan? What is the point of elected councillors?
Answer:	I'm afraid another explanation about how decision-making

	<p>actually operates in this Council. These projects have not had funding approved. As per the budget paper considered by Policy and Resources committee on 8th February 2022, any capital allocations are dependent upon detailed business case reports being presented to policy committees. No decision has been made, Officers cannot make a decision without Councillors making a decision, so no decision has been made not to proceed with this project. Any such decision can only be taken by the relevant policy committee, which is in fact Place and Economic Development Committee.</p> <p>The play area element of this proposal being recommended is actually part of the Worcester Play Plan and the Worcester Play Strategy, which is coming to PED Committee on the 24th of July. I understand the Member is actually Vice-Chair of that Committee, but maybe was unable to attend the Committee agenda planning session. The point of elected Councillors is to represent their residents at meetings.</p>
Supplementary Question:	<p>This project is outside the Play Strategy, it was a capital sum. In response to the comment and I'm happy to send the e-mail I was sent by Officers informing me that this is not going ahead if that's what the Labour Leader of Council wants to see. So my supplementary question is - the rumour in this Council and also in my Ward of Warndon is that the change in Council leadership had an effect in the Officers drawing back on this, so my question as a supplementary is can the Labour Leader of the Council explained when this is going to come back to Councillors to consider it further?</p>
Answer:	<p>I have had absolutely no discussion with Officers of any kind since the Annual Council meeting on this project.</p>

33 Notice of Motion

The Mayor informed the Council that no Notices of Motion had been received.

34 Appointment of Members to Committees

The Council considered a report on changes proposed by Group Leaders to Committee membership for 2023/24.

Firstly, the Green Group Leader proposed to remove Councillor Piotrowski from Policy and Resources Committee and appoint Councillor Lewing; and to remove Councillor Lewing from Place and Economic Development Committee and appoint Councillor Piotrowski.

Secondly, the Political Group Leaders had agreed that the councillor representation on the Council's consultative trade union and safety committee should be the four Political Group Leaders, or their Deputy Group Leaders in cases of unavailability. They wished to amend the terms of reference of the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee accordingly.

It was proposed by Councillor Denham and seconded by Councillor Allcott that the terms of reference of Joint Consultative and Safety Committee be amended to reflect this.

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees:

- 1. to remove Councillor Piotrowski from Policy and Resources Committee and appoint Councillor Lewing; and to remove Councillor Lewing from Place and Economic Development Committee and appoint Councillor Piotrowski; and**
- 2. to authorise the Monitoring Officer to update the terms of reference of Joint Consultative and Safety Committee to reflect that member appointments to this body shall be the four Political Group Leaders, or their Deputy Group Leaders in cases of unavailability.**

**35 Warndon Parish Council / St Peter The Great County Parish Council:
Review of Election Arrangements**

The Council considered a report on a request from both Warndon Parish Council and St. Peter the Great County Parish Council to the Council to conduct a review, including carrying out a public consultation process, of its election arrangements for those Councils.

The Monitoring Officer presented the report and explained that in February 2022, the Council resolved to change from elections by thirds to whole council elections every 4 years as from 2024. As a result of this decision, Warndon Parish Council and St Peter the Great Parish Council, who also hold whole council elections every 4 years, have a different 4-year election cycle.

Both parish councils had expressed their view to the Deputy Returning Officer for Worcester that with limited budgets, self-funding whole parish elections would not be sustainable. Both parish councils had published a formal notice stating that the parish council is minded to request that Worcester City Council conducts a review, including carrying out a public consultation process, of its election arrangements.

It was recommended that the consultation process is carried out between July and September 2023. On the conclusion of the consultation, and by the end of the year, a further report would be brought to Council for consideration and approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Murray and seconded by Councillor Norfolk and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to:

- 1. undertake a public consultation on the options set out in this report between July and September 2023 on Parish Council election arrangements in relation to their 4-year election cycle;**
- 2. delegate to the Corporate Director – Planning and Governance responsibility for implementing the consultation; and**

- 3. note that on the conclusion of the consultation a further report will be made to Council for consideration and approval of the appropriate option.**

36 Amendments To The Constitution: Part 15, Group Leaders Protocol

The Council considered a report on proposed amendments to the Group Leaders Protocol (Part 15 of the Constitution), which was subject to annual review. The Monitoring Officer presented the report and explained that, subsequent to the Annual Council meeting, the Joint Leaders have suggested a set of minor amendments to the Protocol so that the document reads clearly and consistently throughout and accurately reflects the operating arrangements which are in place. The draft amendments were set out in the report. They did not represent any change to adopted policy or governance arrangements.

It was proposed by Councillor Denham and seconded by Councillor Allcott and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to the amendments to the Group Leaders Protocol set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

37 Report of Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Council received a report from the Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Councillor Norfolk, who summarised progress and achievements over the last 12 months. Following her presentation, there was an opportunity for Members to ask questions.

38 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.

39 Referral Report from Environment Committee, 14th March 2023 - Meco Memorial Nature Park

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Environment Committee on additional works which had been identified for the creation of a "Park of Peace" in memory of those killed in a bombing raid on the Meco Works during World War 2.

At its meeting on 14th March 2023, the Committee had agreed a proposal for the provision of additional facilities including a kickabout area, a boardwalk, steps, and link paths across the wetland to create a north-south route for pedestrians walking around the park. Additional capital funding of £30,000 was required for the delivery of additional facilities.

In the ensuing discussion, Councillor Lamb made reference to the Wild About Worcester Way and expressed the hope that the Environment Committee would consider whether this can be extended to include the Memorial Park and other parts of St. John's.

It was proposed by Councillor Lewing and seconded by Councillor Cookson and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees an amendment to the capital programme of £30,000 for the delivery of additional works at the site, as outlined within the attached report.

40 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee, 23rd May 2023 - Proposed Changing Places Toilet at The Cornmarket

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee on the provision of a new Changing Places Toilet at the Cornmarket.

At the meeting on 23rd May 2023, the Committee had considered a report on a proposal to convert vacant space at the Cornmarket Public Conveniences into a Changing Places Toilet. Confirmation of a £60k Government grant was received in March 2022, including a contribution to servicing and maintenance in the initial years as well as conversion and fit out costs.

Building costs have risen significantly since estimates were provided for the original grant application and with the inclusion of the remedial work, the Government grant was insufficient to cover the cost of all items. An additional £20k was therefore required from the Council's own funds, in order to be able to award the contract for works and successfully complete the project.

The Committee had agreed to recommend the Council to include this project in the Council's Capital Programme and to fund the additional costs by borrowing.

It was proposed by Councillor Stanley and seconded by Councillor Denham and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees:

- 1. the inclusion of the provision of a new Changing Places Toilet at the Cornmarket in the Council's Capital Programme; and**
- 2. to adjust the Capital Programme to include £60k of grant funding for the project and £20k supported by borrowing.**

41 Referral Report from Communities Committee 7th June 2023 - Provision of a New Artificial Grass Pitch at Perdiswell

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Communities Committee on the provision of a new Artificial Grass Pitch on land at Perdiswell.

At the meeting on 7th June 2023, the Committee had considered a report on a proposal to construct a new 3G Artificial Grass Pitch, to be located to the side of the building in the area of land between the Football Foundation changing accommodation (attached to Perdiswell Leisure Centre) and the six existing grass football pitches.

The Committee approved the business case for the proposal and agreed to the release of the 'in principle' capital allocation of £200k previously approved at Council on 5th July 2022, which represents the Council's financial contribution to the AGP project. It was noted that the Committee had agreed the inclusion of a 10% biodiversity net gain in delivering this project.

It was proposed by Councillor Riaz and seconded by Councillor Ali and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council approves the use of land at Perdiswell for the provision of a new Artificial Grass Pitch, as set out within the attached report.

42 Referral Report from Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, 19th June 2023 - Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicle Age Policy Review

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee on a proposal to amend the Council's hackney carriage and private hire vehicle age policies

At the meeting on 19th June 2023, the Committee considered the results of a consultation exercise and the comments put forward by the respondents, and agreed to recommend the Council to amend the current policy, as follows:

- Proposal 1 - Introduce a new licensing policy for fully electric vehicles only, where there are no lower or upper age limit restrictions on vehicles which can be licensed with the Council as either a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle. All other conditions and policy implications will still apply.
- Proposal 2 - Amend the current hackney carriage vehicle age policy, by increasing the lower age limit restriction from 3 years to 5 years.

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

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to:

- 1. approve an amendment to the existing hackney carriage and private hire vehicle policy, to include that 'No lower or upper age limit restrictions will apply in respect of 'all fully electric' new and replacement hackney carriage and private hire vehicles presented to the Council for licensing'; and**
- 2. approve an amendment to the existing hackney carriage vehicle age policy, to state 'The current lower vehicle age limit applicable to all new, replacement and temporary hackney carriage vehicles is 5 years from the date of first registration.'**

43 Referral Report from Planning Committee, 22nd June 2023 - Planning Committee Annual Report 2022/23

The Council considered the Planning Committee Annual Report 2022/23. The Chair of Planning Committee presented the report and highlighted the main points of

the report, which showed how the Committee had successfully achieved its objectives over the last year and the main areas of focus and overall work programme for the Committee. The report also addressed the improvements in performance of the Planning service as a whole over this year and highlighted learning points for further consideration.

It was proposed by Councillor Lewing and seconded by Councillor Agar and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council receives the Planning Committee Annual Report 2022/23.

44 Referral Report from Standards Committee, 27th June 2023 - Standards Committee Annual Report 2022/23

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Standards Committee on the Annual Report of the Committee, which provided a summary of the work undertaken by the Committee in the 2022/23 municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Lawrance and seconded by Councillor Desayrah and on being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council receives the Standards Committee Annual Report 2022/23.

45 Report from the Joint Leaders of the Council on Any Matters Which They Are of the Opinion Require Urgent Consideration by the Council

None.

46 Any Exempt Issues

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 8.55p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
26th September 2023