

COUNCIL

28th November 2023

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

Councillors Agar, Ali, Allcott, Altaf, Amos, Bisset, Cockeram, Collier, Cookson, Cooper, Cross, Denham, Desayrah, Ditta, Geraghty, Gregson, Hodgson, Jagger, Lamb, Laurenson, Lawrance, Lewing, Murray, Norfolk, Pingree, Piotrowski, Sadiq, Smith and Stanley

Apologies: Councillors Cleary, Riaz, Round, Udall and Willmore

The Council stood and observed a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Margaret Wills, who had died recently.

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

66 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Cleary, Riaz, Round, Udall and Willmore.

67 Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor Lewing – Referral Report from Income Management Sub-Committee, 15th November 2023 - Freedom Leisure Proposed Fees and Charges for 2023/24 (Minute 75) - as a member of Perdiswell Leisure Centre and Question no. 4 (Minute 71) - son is a former employee of the Duckworth Trust

Councillor Hodgson - Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee 21st November 2023 - St Peter the Great County Parish Council/ Warndon Parish Council: Review of Electoral Arrangements (Minute 74) - as a member of Warndon Parish Council

Councillor Lawrance – Referral Report from Income Management Sub-Committee, 15th November 2023 - Freedom Leisure Proposed Fees and Charges for 2023/24 (Minute 75) - as a member of Perdiswell Leisure Centre.

68 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to the spelling of the word "Robin" in minute 52 being amended to "Robyn."

69 Mayor's Communications**Former Councillor Margaret Wills**

The Mayor paid tribute to former Councillor Margaret Wills, who represented the St. Barnabas Ward from 1981 to 2000. She had passed away peacefully on 11 November 2023, aged 86 years, after a long illness. Councillor Gregson and Councillor Cookson also paid tribute.

Welcome to Councillor Katie Collier

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Katie Collier to her first meeting of the Council following her election at the recent Warndon Parish South Ward By-election.

Armed Forces Events

The Mayor commented on a number of armed forces events which he had attended recently, including an Armed Forces mini-conference at the Guildhall organised by Councillor Agar, the Gheluvelt commemoration, Poppies to Paddington, the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal launch and Armistice and Remembrance Day commemorations.

Other Recent Events

Other notable events which the Mayor had attended included the Civic Society Lecture as a fundraiser for Age UK, the blue plaque unveiling for aviator Sheila Scott, the very well-attended Black History Month celebration in the Guildhall, the Apprentice Awards and the Small Business Festival. He had also presented awards to teaching assistants. Last Saturday he attended the launch of the White Ribbon Campaign and switched on of the Christmas lights.

Coming Up

The Mayor highlighted the opening of the Victorian Fayre this coming Thursday at 4pm; the Christmas meal at St Pauls on Thursday, 7th December where Councillors from each of the political groups will be serving food; and the Mayor's charity carol concert at the Guildhall on 13 December. He hoped to see councillors there and asked everyone to help in promoting the event on social media.

This Evening's Meeting

The Mayor noted that the last Council meeting had lasted 3 and a half hours. He acknowledged that Group Leaders had subsequently discussed ideas to make the meeting more streamlined whilst ensuring a balance between Members being able to get their points across and ensuring this is done on a respectful and timely way.

Refreshments

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

70 Public Participation

Melissa Poulton asked what the Council is doing to support people from LGBTIQ+ communities. The Mayor advised that a written response will be provided.

Jade Smith spoke about what is happening in Gaza and the importance of an immediate ceasefire and a peaceful resolution.

Sohail Farraz made points about the ongoing events in Gaza and he asked Councillors to express their support for the people of Palestine.

Paul Walters, Chairman, St Peter's Parish Council spoke regarding the election cycle realignment of the Parish Council, and how the proposal to hold an election in 2024 (Option 2) will have a detrimental impact upon the Parish precept. He explained the reasons why the Parish Council supports Option 1.

71 Questions

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

Question No. 1	
Question From:	Councillor Alan Amos
Question to:	Councillor Marjory Bisset, Joint Leader
Question:	How will irresponsibly slashing the gull control budget by 50% from £70,000 to £35,000 address the gull epidemic that now engulfs the entire City; and what is the point of and how she can justify wasting £5,000 on a gull survey when this Council has spent £70,000 this year only to leave the city with the highest-ever number of resident gulls but now thinks that half that budget can achieve what £70,000 has clearly failed to do?
Answer:	<p>This looks like a very clear statement, but I don't think it really reflects the facts, and the facts are these: that the current core budget for tackling gulls is £35.5k, there was an increase of £30k, approved by Environment Committee in 2019/2020, so since then it's been £35.5k, and therefore, the core gull control budget that is factored into the Council's medium term financial plan has not been reduced by 50%, it remains the same.</p> <p>Over the past few years, single year increases have been approved from use of reserves. Given the financial challenge this Council faces, having to make savings of £2.3m over the next 3 years, Environment Committee have approved a lesser single year increase of £4.7k above the core budget of £35.5k for 2024/25, having received a report that confirmed the proposals will maintain the impetus of past activity, focussing on the locations where most impact can be made.</p> <p>The additional £4.7k will be used for a gull survey, to enable</p>

	us to continue to monitor and assess the impact of our work on gull numbers, to inform future investment decisions on this area of work. In addition, having an up-to-date survey will be critical in supporting further successful applications to Natural England for licences to control gulls.
Supplementary Question:	I thank Councillor Bisset for that answer, I think, but isn't it the case that this Council has never taken seriously the enormous disruption, disturbance, nuisance and health danger posed by these vicious flying rats? Normal, proper budgetary procedure would be to first establish the facts - for example how many gulls are now infesting the city - and only then decide afterwards what the budgetary provision should be, rather than as has happened on this occasion, slash the budget and then say "Oh, by the way, how many more gulls are there now?"
Answer:	I must reiterate that we haven't slashed the budget, all we've done is not spend the same amount this year as we did the year before. It is very difficult to control the gulls, I think the Council makes a good job of trying to control the gulls. That's it.

Question 2	
Question From:	Councillor Alan Amos
Question to:	Councillor Marjory Bisset, Joint Leader
Question:	Acknowledging that the mobile CCTV parking enforcement camera has been a great success in showing commitment to dealing with the scourge of dangerous and selfish parking outside schools and in reassuring the public that this matter is being treated seriously, that as the enforcement authority for this scheme set up and funded by County Council Highways, will she proactively inform County Highways that this Council strongly supports the continuation of this pilot which originated in my Division of Bedwardine by ensuring that the City enforcement team is fully resourced and enthusiastic about it, and that the pilot be extended to other problem parking locations in the City and throughout the County?
Answer:	So, the City Council acts as enforcement agency on behalf of Worcestershire County Council as Highways Authority. The original decision to trial a Mobile Enforcement Vehicle was taken by Worcestershire County Council and it is for them, and not for us, to decide on its future, including whether it operates elsewhere across the County.

	<p>The vehicle which is in use each day has had a positive impact within the city, as it has enabled Civil Enforcement Officers to have greater coverage of the whole city and be more agile where complaints of illegal parking are received. Its operation is not solely focussed on school parking in the Bedwardine Ward, and it is already being focussed on other problem parking locations across the city.</p> <p>I am informed that our Parking and Enforcement Manager is working positively with his County Highways colleagues to facilitate the continuation of the Mobile Enforcement Vehicle within Worcester. We have been informed by County that funding to continue with use of the vehicle within Worcester is in place until April 2024.</p>
Supplementary Question:	<p>Is she aware that my local residents around Pitmaston Primary School are every day plagued by inconsiderate and selfish parents, some getting there an hour early with engines running, just to get a parking space next to the school entrance? Therefore, will she ensure that City parking enforcement take a much more robust approach to this problem at this location and certainly by positively supporting innovative enforcement measures such as this mobile CCTV camera van?</p>
Answer:	<p>I wasn't specifically aware of the problems outside Pitmaston School, but I am aware of the same problem outside many of the schools in this city, and one of the reasons for this problem is that a market has been established in schools so that people are encouraged to send their children to whatever school they like, and this was introduced by the Conservative government. In my opinion if children went to their nearest school there would be far less need for people to drive across the city in cars to deliver their children to a particular school. I think it's a big problem, and I'm certainly in favour of this particular operation. I'd just urge Councillors to keep in touch with the enforcement officers and make specific requests when the problem is bad, and if each school gets some attention, then hopefully at least the problem won't get worse.</p>

Question 3	
Question from:	Councillor Alan Amos
Question to:	Councillor Lynn Denham, Joint Leader
Question:	<p>When is the scheme for the Council to house some 100 illegal immigrants is due to start; and where is the surplus housing stock in the city to accommodate them?</p>

Answer:	I'm not aware of any illegal immigrants in Worcester. If Councillor Amos is aware then illegal activities and detection of them is the responsibility of the Police, so I'd suggest he should make appropriate reports if he's aware of a problem.
Supplementary Question:	Does Councillor Denham think housing illegal immigrants should be given priority over 3,500 people on Worcester City's housing waiting list and if the Council can find accommodation for illegal immigrants, why cannot the Council find it for housing local Worcester people?
Answer:	<p>Again, the terminology "illegal immigrants" is not one that I recognise. If you are referring to asylum seekers then those are the responsibility of the Home Office and that has been contracted out to Serco.</p> <p>In November last year Communities Committee instructed Officers to write to both those bodies to confirm this Council's preference to adopt a regional dispersal model for asylum seeker accommodation. Officers are in dialogue with Serco with respect to their interest in properties in the city. To date that's solely been in the private rented sector with the vast majority of properties that they have indicated interest in not being pursued.</p> <p>It's perhaps worth noting that when an asylum seeker receives a positive decision to remain, they can seek accommodation across any housing tenure within any area of the UK. It does not fall solely to this Council to accommodate them under our statutory housing duties, and I would also refer the Councillor to the Housing Strategy which in fact we adopted at our last full Council meeting two months ago and is referenced in the minutes we have today.</p>

Question 4	
Question From:	Councillor Sue Smith
Question To:	Councillor Karen Lewing, Chair of Environment Committee
Question:	Chapter Meadows is a key part of the City's Green Flag Riverside Park. With the apparent winding down of the Duckworth Trust, there are concerns that the Meadows' future ownership and maintenance may be in doubt. What is the City Council doing to ensure that this special area retains its historic place in Worcester's green space and biodiversity?
Answer:	I understand that with the changes at Duckworth Trust there are many services that Duckworth Trust have been serving for our city over the years that people are worried about,

	<p>and this is just one of them. So, I'd like to just kind of clarify what we know at the moment if that's okay.</p> <p>For people who don't know Chapter Meadows, it's an area across from the Cathedral and it's been managed through grazing and cutting of hay since Roman times, acting as floodplain and providing a home for wildlife as well as being a green space for recreation. It is a really valuable and much-loved asset in the heart of the city.</p> <p>The Duckworth Worcestershire Trust is ending its operational activity and so Officers have been in discussion with the Trustees regarding the future ownership and management of the site. We understand that the Duckworth Trust are talking to one or more organisations about transfer of ownership whilst safeguarding the site through continuing with the current management practices.</p> <p>The Duckworth Trust supports numerous volunteers and has done a huge amount of good work to promote sustainability and environmental issues over the last 25 years, and we would like to thank everyone involved in delivering the vision of the late Cecil Duckworth.</p> <p>Once we know more and once we get more information about what's happening at the Duckworth Trust, I will ask officers to bring a report to the Environment Committee.</p>
Supplementary Question:	What powers does the Council have to ensure Green Flag standards of maintenance into the future please?
Answer:	<p>There are no live discussions about the Council taking over the Duckworth Trust, looking after Chapter Meadows. There are other organisations who are in discussions. Apparently, the maintenance cost every year is about £20,000 and we don't have any detailed costing about that. There are also other pieces of land – there is a piece of land at Cotswold Way known as Apex Ponds - and Duckworth Trust are again in discussions with third parties. So, we're obviously interested in those.</p> <p>One of the key things that people should be aware of is that Trust is winding up its maintenance operations with no paid employees we think from the 31st December, so this is a key thing that we need to make sure is in place. I know Officers will continue to have dialogue with Duckworth Trust to make sure that these places are maintained correctly, thank you.</p>

Question 5	
Question from:	Councillor Hannah Cooper
Question to:	Councillors Denham & Bisset, Joint Leaders
Question:	Have the Joint Leaders had feedback from the Cabinet Member for Highways at Worcestershire County Council regarding the Worcester City Centre Transport Plan?
Answer from Councillor Bisset:	<p>We have received no formal response from the County Council regarding the Worcester City Centre Transport Strategy. The Managing Director has met with the responsible Director and has been told that the Strategy will not be presented to Cabinet for consideration but reference to the Strategy should be included in the City Council's response the forthcoming County Council Local Transport Plan 5 stakeholder consultation.</p> <p>In response to this information, the Managing Director wrote to the County Council on the 6th November 2023 seeking details of the LTP5 timetable, from development of the draft document, commencement of the stakeholder consultation, through to final Cabinet sign-off of the final plan. At the time of writing this note (23rd November 2023) the Managing Director has had no reply, but he will continue to persevere and push for information.</p>

Question 6	
Question from:	Councillor Tom Piotrowski
Question to:	Councillors Denham & Bisset, Joint Leaders
Question:	Are you satisfied with the outcome and recommendations of the Scala Theatre lessons learnt report?
Answer from Councillor Bisset:	<p>In addition to providing background information and an update on the latest position, the report provided a detailed chronology of key decisions and documents covering 50 individual decisions and actions spanning the period March 2020 to August 2023; a detailed financial chronology setting out all financial decisions between July 2021 and June 2023; management responses including references to evidence to 18 key lines of enquiry based on the National Audit Office's Framework for Programme Review.</p> <p>As a result of the above, the identification of 10 key issues, the corresponding opportunities for improvement and 13 formal recommendations, the Policy and Resources Committee discussed the contents of the report and unanimously agreed to the 13 recommendations, and in</p>

	<p>addition requested that the Managing Director writes to DLUHC setting out issues regarding the management of grant-funded capital programmes identified in the report; and agreed to amendments to the Council's approved objectives for the project as set out in the report.</p> <p>I'd also like to add that I was involved in the review and it was very thorough, and that in my opinion we embarked on this project, the project was made harder by the fact that there was a fixed timetable and not a long timetable to come up with project, to cost it and to get things moving, and those restrictions did affect the outcome, but we had to do our best within them.</p>
Supplementary Question:	<p>I'm very grateful to Councillor Bisset for providing this answer and for referring to the review of key lines of enquiry. I spent a considerable amount of time reading through the document, which to be perfectly honest reads like a catalogue of failures, so my supplementary question is this: given the findings of the report who should be held accountable to give the Council and the public confidence that the mistakes that were made are not going to be made again?</p>
Answer:	<p>My view is that accountability is not easily ascribed to any one person and is maybe not a helpful approach to what happened. The running of the Council is a team effort. As we so often remind ourselves, Officers advise, Councillors decide. The Officers gave their advice in good faith, having worked diligently in preparation and the review into what has happened was thorough and searching and people recognise where mistakes were made. The outcomes should serve us well in future projects.</p>

Question 7	
Question from:	Councillor Pat Agar
Question to:	Councillor Neil Laurenson, Vice-Chair of Communities Committee
Question:	<p>Tower Hamlets Council recently withdrew the young women's football team time slot at their practice ground and gave it to the men. Is the council aware of any such discrimination in Worcester?</p>
Answer:	<p>The Council is not aware of any such examples of discrimination in Worcester. As part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy we remain vigilant to exclusions, whether intentional or not. Worcestershire County Football Association have a Women and Girls Football Development</p>

	<p>Officer based at their Claines Lane HQ.</p> <p>It is believed, I'm told, that the scenario at Tower Hamlets was created by local facilities being extensively oversubscribed. I think that means football is very popular in London.</p> <p>The South Worcestershire Playing Pitch Strategy 2022 identified a shortfall of 3 Artificial Grass Pitches in Worcester. The Local Football Facilities Plan identified Perdiswell Leisure Centre and a second Artificial Grass Pitch at the University of Worcester as priority projects. The new pitch at the University opened this summer, with a further pitch planned to open at Perdiswell in the autumn of next year, subject to the approval of a Football Foundation funding bid supported by £200,000 of funding from Worcester City Council.</p> <p>The location of the third pitch will be determined in conjunction with the Football Foundation once the Artificial Grass Pitch at Perdiswell has been in operation for 12-18 months, so that local supply and demand can be re-assessed.</p> <p>Women's and girls' football is one of the Football Foundation's four priority groups and a balanced programme of use is required to be evidenced as part of the funding application process. During that application process for the new AGP at Perdiswell Leisure Centre, in depth consultation has taken place to determine the needs of local women and girls' teams from both a training and match play perspective. I hope that answers your question, but I'm happy to take a supplementary.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question:</p>	<p>That gives me some consolation, I mean we're all aware of the Lionesses' huge success internationally and it has encouraged a lot of young women and girls to play football - a lot more of them anyway - and I'm aware very much of our own equalities commitments and our recent new Strategy. But, will the Council ask our Communities Committee to look into equalities policies and practices at Council-owned sports facilities and other Council-owned venues to ensure that equalities are fully observed?</p>
<p>Answer:</p>	<p>The short answer is yes. I have no notes for this answer. As someone who's been on a journey over the last two years - completely unrelated football - the Equality Act 2010 has become my bedtime reading and I will ensure that it's brought up with Officers who help the Communities Committee to do their work, thank you.</p>

72 **Notice of Motion**

The Council considered Notices of Motion submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8.

Ash Die Back

Ash Die Back is a non-native invasive fungus that presents a major threat to trees across the UK. At its current rate, the disease is predicted to kill over 80% of Ash across the UK. The economic costs are predicted to run into the billions, and it will take decades for the Ash population to recover, if recovery is possible.

Trees can survive Ash Die Back, but year on year infections will eventually kill it. The rate of loss of Ash across the UK currently outweighs the rate of woodland creation and tree planting.

This Council notes that:

- In 2015 Worcester City Council was made aware of Ash Die Back within the city.
- Now a significant number of the trees across Tolladine, New Plantation and Warndon Woods are under threat from Ash Die Back.
- Without effective management some or all of the woods may need to have access restricted for safety reasons.
- Forestry Commission and Forest Research Agency estimates that around 5,000 Ash trees on Worcester city council land are likely to be affected by the disease.

This Council believes that:

- Public access to all woodland including Tolladine, New Plantation and Warndon Woods is vital for the health, wellbeing and enjoyment of residents and visitors and must, therefore, be maintained.
- These are important ecological sites which need to be carefully and sensitively managed.

This Council therefore resolves to ask the Environment Committee to consider adopting a range of measures to manage Ash Die Back including:

- Rapidly adopt and begin to implement an action plan using the Woodland Trust's template;
- Identify potential sources of funding to manage Ash Die Back across all Council owned sites, including Tolladine, New Plantation and Warndon Woods and to support a programme of replanting in accordance with good woodland management;
- Maximise the value of felled wood and reinvest the money from the sale of that wood to offset the cost of management;
- Raise public awareness of the need for woodland management throughout Worcester for the benefit of public health;
- Explore the feasibility of an Adopt a Tree scheme for residents to directly support the replanting of affected woodland;
- Work with nature organisations and landowners in the city and across our boundaries to ensure that best practice and knowledge on Ash Die Back

management is applied and promoted across all of our treasured green spaces.

The proposer, Councillor Murray spoke in support of the Motion, which was seconded by Councillor Jagger.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Lewing:

Delete all words after "This Council believes that:" and replace with:

- Public access to all woodland including Tolladine, New Plantation and Warndon Woods is vital for the health, wellbeing and enjoyment of residents and visitors and must, therefore, be maintained.
- These are important ecological sites which need to be carefully and sensitively managed.

This Council therefore resolves to ask the Environment Committee to continue its work on Ash Dieback for the city ensuring the necessary funding and resources are in place.

Councillor Lewing spoke in support of the amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Cookson.

Other Members spoke on the amendment, where a range of views were expressed across the Chamber. On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

Councillor Cookson then proposed a further amendment, as follows:

Add the following words: "And further asks the Managing Director to formally write to DEFRA to request appropriate financial support for all affected Councils."

The further amendment was seconded by Councillor Lewing. On being put to the vote, the further amendment was carried.

The Council then proceeded to vote on the Motion, as amended. It was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agree to:

- 1. request the Environment Committee to continue its work on Ash Dieback for the city ensuring the necessary funding and resources are in place; and**
- 2. ask the Managing Director to formally write to DEFRA to request appropriate financial support for all affected Councils.**

Ceasefire in Gaza

Council:

(i) deeply regrets and condemns the tragic loss of civilian life in both the Hamas terrorist attacks on 7th October and the ensuing Israeli bombardment of Gaza;

(ii) condemns Islamophobia, antisemitism, and all other forms of racism that are being propagated by those looking to divide our communities and who are seeking to dismantle any hope for a peaceful settlement.

Council notes:-

(i) that East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and Gaza are illegally occupied by Israel; and that Gaza has been subject to 16 years of blockade;

(ii) that the Israeli government has been withholding essential resources from Gaza and what UN Experts have described as “destroying or damaging homes, hospitals, markets and UN Reliefs and Works Agency (UNRWA)” and that Amnesty International has “documented unlawful Israeli attacks, including indiscriminate attacks, which caused mass civilian casualties and must be investigated as war crimes”;

(iii) that under Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, genocide is defined as certain acts “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group” and that, under Article I, the UK has confirmed that genocide is a crime under international law, which it undertakes to prevent and to punish;

(iv) the UK, at the UN Security Council on 18th October 2023, refused to vote for “humanitarian pauses” to deliver lifesaving aid to millions in Gaza; and

(v) Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, B’tselem, and the South African government recognise that the state of Israel is enacting a system of apartheid;

(vi) that these horrific events have had a huge effect on many Worcester residents, in particular those with relatives and friends in the region.

Council therefore resolves to:-

(i) call upon the UK Government to (i) call for an immediate ceasefire and to vote for this at the UN; (ii) cease all arms sales to Israel and end military aid for Israel; and (iii) call on Israel to resume negotiations with the Palestinians;

(ii) request that the Chief Executive submits this motion to the UK Government; and

(iii) request that the Communities Committee consider whether the Council should actively support the work of Worcester Palestine Friendship.

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

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Denham:

This Council:

- (i) regrets and condemns the tragic loss of civilian life in both the Hamas terrorist attacks on 7th October and the ensuing Israeli bombardment of Gaza;
- (ii) condemns Islamophobia, antisemitism, and all other forms of racism that are being propagated by those looking to divide our communities and who are seeking to dismantle any hope for a peaceful settlement;
- (iii) believes that no state is above international law or convention.

Council notes that:

- (i) we welcome the news of an agreement to release the first hostages and to have a substantial humanitarian pause in hostilities between Israel and Hamas.
- (ii) we call on all remaining hostages to be released and all sides to uphold this agreement.
- (iii) we join calls for a substantial humanitarian pause alongside our international partners.
- (iv) Hamas should release all the hostages immediately. But we of course support the possibility of extending the pause, to allow the release of further hostages and extended humanitarian relief.
- (v) we must now ensure this pause is used to tackle the urgent and unacceptable humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.
- (vi) these horrific events have had a huge effect on many Worcester residents, particularly those with relatives and friends in the region.

Council therefore resolves to:

- (i) call upon the UK Government to to:
 - a. use its international influence to ensure that there must be immediate access to aid, food, water, fuel and medicine to ensure hospitals function and lives are saved. Aid and fuel need to enter at the necessary volumes to meet civilians needs and be distributed widely and safely across the whole of Gaza.
 - b. put pressure on all parties that they must also use the space this pause creates to take more steps on a path towards a lasting ceasefire rather than an escalation of violence.
 - c. work to help start a process that ensures Israelis feel safe and secure from terror and that innocent Palestinians, who have endured far too much death and destruction, can return home and rebuild their lives free from bombardment and Hamas control.
 - d. use its role as a leading member of the UN to ensure that all allegations regarding contraventions of international law and/or convention should be investigated by the international community.
 - e. actively support a two-state solution in the Middle East. In recent years the international community has treated the two-state solution as a slogan rather than a serious strategy. That must now change. There can be no peace without the reaffirming and recognition of Israel's right to exist alongside a sovereign, independent Palestinian state.
- (ii) request that the Managing Director submits this motion to the UK Government; and
- (iii) request that Communities Committee consider how the council can support the region through remembrance and practical assistance.

Councillor Allcott raised a point of order, stating that the amendment negated the original Motion. The Monitoring Officer advised that it did not.

Councillor Denham spoke in support of the amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Lamb, who also spoke in support. Other Members spoke on the amendment, where a range of views were expressed across the Chamber. On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

The Council then proceeded to vote on the original Motion, as submitted. It was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agree to:

- 1. call upon the UK Government to call for an immediate ceasefire and to vote for this at the UN; cease all arms sales to Israel and end military aid for Israel; and call on Israel to resume negotiations with the Palestinians;**
- 2. request that the Managing Director submits this motion to the UK Government; and**
- 3. request that the Communities Committee consider whether the Council should actively support the work of Worcester Palestine Friendship.**

73 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.

74 Referral Report from Policy and Resources Committee 21st November 2023 - St Peter the Great County Parish Council/ Warndon Parish Council: Review of Electoral Arrangements

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

At the meeting on 21st November 2023, the Committee considered a report on the outcome of a public consultation on options for the ordinary year of election for both St Peter the Great Parish Council and Warndon Parish Council. The consultation invited respondents to select a preferred option from the following list:

Option 1: Extend term of office following May 2023 elections by 1 year resulting in the next Parish elections taking place in May 2028 with City Council elections.

Option 2: Reduce term of office following May 2023 elections to 1 year resulting in the next Parish elections taking place in May 2024 with City Council elections.

Option 3: Make no changes, resulting in the next Parish elections taking place in 2027 on their own and every four years after.

Option 4: Hold an election in 2027 and then have another election in 2028 and thenceforward every four years (in line with the Worcester City Council cycle)

Option 5: Hold an election in 2027 and then not have another election until 2032 and thenceforward every four years (in line with the Worcester City Council cycle).

The responses were as follows:

51.8% (14 respondents) favoured option 1
 33.3% (9 respondents) favoured option 2
 3.7% (1 respondent) favoured option 3
 0 % (0 respondents) favoured option 4
 11.1% (3 respondents) favoured option 5

Council officers contacted the Parish Councils to obtain their views on the preferred option. St Peters Parish Council has confirmed their preference was Option 1. Warndon Parish Council confirmed their preference was Option 2.

The Committee had expressed unanimous support for Option 2.

The Council proceeded to debate the options. It was proposed by Councillor Stanley and seconded by Councillor Denham and upon being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. pursuant to section 53 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Council resolves to change the ordinary year of election for St Peter the Great County Parish Council and Warndon Parish Council so that it falls on the ordinary day of election in 2024 and every four years thereafter; and**
- 2. the Council delegates authority to the Corporate Director - Planning and Governance to make and publicise the requisite legal order and take any other necessary steps to implement the Council's resolution.**

75 Referral Report from Income Management Sub-Committee, 15th November 2023 - Freedom Leisure Proposed Fees and Charges for 2023/24

The Council considered a referral report from the Chair of Income Management Sub-Committee.

At the meeting on 15th November 2023, the /Sub-Committee considered the proposed Fees and Charges submitted by Freedom Leisure for the period 1st

January to 31st December 2024 inclusive. The Sub-Committee agreed to recommend to Council the approval of the Fees and Charges as submitted by Freedom Leisure.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Cooper and seconded by Councillor Cross that the proposed increase in School Swimming fees for primary schools should be deferred and implemented with effect from 1st April 2024. Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

It was proposed by Councillor Stanley and seconded by Councillor Norfolk and upon being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council approve the Fees and Charges submitted by Freedom Leisure for 2024 (covering the period 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024 inclusive).

76 Review of Political Balance on Committees and Sub-Committees 2023/24

The Council considered a report on the allocation of seats between Political Groups as a consequence of the by-election for the Warndon Parish South which was held on 19th October 2023. The Monitoring Officer presented the report and explained that the Council's political balance was now as follows:

Political Group	Number of councillors elected	% allocation share of seats
Labour	13	37.1
Green	11	31.4
Conservative	7	20.0
Liberal Democrats	4	11.4

The allocation of seats to give effect to this new political balance had been discussed with Group Leaders. The proposals set out in Appendix 1 to the report reflected those discussions and complied with the relevant legal principles.

It was proposed by Councillor Bisset and seconded by Councillor Denham and upon being put to the vote it was agreed and

RESOLVED: That the Council agree the allocation of seats between Political Groups, as set out in Appendix 1, to take effect from the date of the Council meeting.

77 Appointment of Members to Committees

The Council considered a report on changes proposed by Group Leaders to membership of committees as a consequence of the changes to political balance agreed under the previous item, and to changes to the appointments of Chairs and Vice-Chairs in accordance with the principles in the Group Leaders' Protocol.

It was noted that vacancies had arisen on Communities Committee and Health and Wellbeing Committee, due to the non-attendance of Councillor Ditta at meetings of those Committees for a period of six calendar months. These seats were now allocated to the Green Group in accordance with the political balance changes.

There were vacancies on Policy and Resources Committee and Environment Committee which were not filled at the last Council meeting. The seats on each of these Committees were allocated to the Conservative Group in accordance with the principles of political balance.

The Conservative Group Leader proposed the following:

- Policy and Resources Committee – Appoint Councillor Altaf
- Environment Committee – Appoint Councillor Hodgson
- Place and Economic Development Committee – Remove Councillor Stanley

The Green Group Leader proposed the following:

- Communities Committee – Appoint Councillor Collier
- Health and Wellbeing Committee – Appoint Councillor Collier
- Place and Economic Development – Appoint Councillor Collier
- Income Management Sub-Committee – Councillor Round to replace Councillor Piotrowski; appoint Councillor Round as Chair in place of Councillor Stanley
- Place and Economic Development Committee – Appoint Councillor Cooper as Vice-Chair in place of Councillor Cleary.

RESOLVED: That the Council agree the changes to Committee appointments as set out above.

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

None.

79 Any Exempt Issues

None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. – 10.22p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
20th February 2024

80 Appendix 1

POLITICAL BALANCE CALCULATIONS NOVEMBER 2023

Con	Lab	Green	Lib-Dem	Total
7	13	11	4	35

Percentage share (rule D): should be as close to zero as possible; negative means too many members on cttee

	TOTAL	CON	LAB	GREEN	LIB-DEM		CON	LAB	GREEN	LIB-DEM	Total
P&R	13	3	5	4	1	13	-3.1	-1.3	0.7	3.7	0.0
P&GP	7	1	3	2	1	7	5.7	-5.7	2.9	-2.9	0.0
Income Mgt	5	1	2	1	1	5	0.0	-2.9	11.4	-8.6	0.0
Communities	11	2	4	4	1	11	1.8	0.8	-4.9	2.3	0.0
Environment	11	2	4	4	1	11	1.8	0.8	-4.9	2.3	0.0
Health & Wellbeing	11	2	4	4	1	11	1.8	0.8	-4.9	2.3	0.0
Place & Eco Dev	11	2	4	4	1	11	1.8	0.8	-4.9	2.3	0.0
Planning	11	3	4	3	1	11	-7.3	0.8	4.2	2.3	0.0
Licencing	11	2	4	3	2	11	1.8	0.8	4.2	-6.8	0.0
Audit & Governance	7	2	2	2	1	7	-8.6	8.6	2.9	-2.9	0.0
Standards	7	1	3	2	1	7	5.7	-5.7	2.9	-2.9	0.0
	105	21	39	33	12						

ACTUAL %

20.0 37.1 31.4 11.4

TARGET % (rule C)

20.0 37.1 31.4 11.4 20.0 37.1 31.4 11.4

DIFFERENCE (as close to zero as possible)

0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0

No. of Chairs	CON	LAB	GREEN	LIB-DEM	
11	2.2	4.1	3.5	1.3	
11	2	4	4	1	Rounded