

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY

ON TUESDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 2021 AT 7.00 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Councillor Val Bryant (Chair) Ian Albert, Amy Allen, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Judi Billing, Simon Bloxham, Ruth Brown, Adam Compton, Juan Cowell, George Davies, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, Morgan Derbyshire, Sarah Dingley, Gary Grindal, Simon Harwood, Terry Hone, Mike Hughson, Tony Hunter, Steve Jarvis, David Levett, Ian Mantle, Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Ian Moody, Gerald Morris, Michael Muir, Sam North, Mike Rice, Claire Strong, Mandi Tandi, Richard Thake and Michael Weeks*

In Attendance: *Anthony Roche (Managing Director), Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager), William Edwards (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Louis Mutter (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer).*

Also Present: *There were approximately 2 members of the public present.*

65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2:00

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Bishop, Jean Green, Kay Tart, Keith Hoskins, Sean Prendergast, David Barnard, Faye Frost, Carol Stanier, Adem Ruggiero-Cakir, Paul Clark, Terry Tyler and Lisa Nash.

66 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio Recording – 2:51

- (1) It was with great sadness that the Chair announced that former Councillor Bill Davidson had passed away earlier this month. Councillor Davidson was a long standing member of the Royston Committee, an executive Member from 2003-2006 and left the Council last year.

A minutes silence was held in his memory.

Councillor Claire Strong paid tribute to former Councillor Bill Davidson and thanked him for all the support he had given to the Council. She said that as a councillor he spoke infrequently but with impact and that his broad Scottish accent will be fondly remembered.

Councillor Tony Hunter paid tribute to former Councillor Bill Davidson and noted that it was with great shock and sadness that he had learnt of his passing. Former Councillor Bill Davidson decided last May not to stand for re-election and moved away to a retirement village in Leamington Spa with his family, where he had missed his garage

and shed where he had spent a great deal of time. Councillor Hunter advised that he and a number of other members would be attending his funeral on 6 January in Leamington Spa and would pass on the Council's sympathy to his family and wife Lindsey.

- (2) Members were reminded that this Council had declared a Climate Emergency. This was a serious decision and meant that, as this was an emergency, all of us, officers and Members had that in mind as we carried out our various roles and tasks for the benefit of our District.
- (3) Members were reminded of the rules in respect to debate and speaking times;
- (4) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.

67 RESOLUTION TO EXTEND THE 6 MONTH RULE – SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Audio Recording – 8:30

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report entitled 'Resolution to Extend the 6 Month Rule – Section 85 Local Government Act 1972' and highlighted the following:

- Councillor John Bishop had been unable to attend meetings due to ill health and the last meeting he attended was Planning Control Committee on 15 July 2021.
- The 6 month period would expire on 15th January 2022; unless an extension was approved the scheduled Council meeting on 28 January would be too late to consider the extension.
- The Council was requested to approve the extension.
- If the extension was not approved and Councillor Bishop did not attend a meeting, the subsequent vacancy would be held open until the ordinary election of Councillors in May 2022.
- The report acknowledges that should Councillor John Bishop wish to stand for re-election and was elected but continued to remain unwell the extension would continue until 15 July 2022; the extension relates to the individual not the seat.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Sam North
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg
- Councillor Judi Billing
- Councillor Richard Thake

Councillor Claire Strong proposed, Councillor Sam North seconded and on the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That Council approves an extension of the six-month rule for Councillor John Bishop, on ill-health grounds, for an additional six-month period, until 15 July 2022, subject to re-election in May 2022.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that *'if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a*

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member of the authority'. Despite attempts for this to be changed (the Local Government Association previously lobbied for this to be dealt with potentially under the Coronavirus Bill 2020), this remains the current situation.

- (2) To enable Cllr Bishop to continue to serve as a District Councillor.

The meeting closed at 7.21 pm

Chair