

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD TUESDAY 20 JUNE 2017
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, PETERBOROUGH**

THE MAYOR – COUNCILLOR JOHN FOX

Present:

Councillors Aitken, Ali, Allen, Ash, Ayres, Barkham, Bisby, Bond, Brown, Bull, Casey, Cereste, Coles, Davidson, Ellis, Elsey, Ferris, Fitzgerald, Fower, Judy Fox, John Fox, Fuller, Harper, Hiller, Holdich, Hussain, Amjad Iqbal, Azher Iqbal, Jamil, Johnson, Khan, King, Lamb, Lane, Lillis, Mahabadi, Martin, Murphy, Nadeem, Nawaz, Okonkowski, Over, Peach, Rush, Saltmarsh, Sandford, Serluca, Shaheed, Smith, Stokes, Walsh, and Whitby

16. Apologies for Absence

A minute's silence was held in remembrance of the late Yvonne Lowndes, past Peterborough City Councillor and Mayor, as well as those affected by attacks in Manchester, at London Bridge, and Finsbury Park, and the fire at Grenfell Tower.

There were apologies for absence from Councillor Shearman, Seaton, Dowson, Sharp, Sylvester, and Clark.

17. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

The Mayor advised that this extraordinary meeting of Full Council had been called at short notice in order to ensure that the Council moved to a suitable political balance arrangement.

18. Report of the Returning Officer

It was **RESOLVED** (unanimous) that Council noted the results of the Local East Ward By-Election held on Thursday 8 June 2017.

19. Allocation of Seats to Political Groups Following East Ward By-Election

Council received a report which sought for Members to consider the impact of the East Ward By-Election result on the political balance of the Council.

Councillor Holdich introduced the report and moved the recommendations. Councillor Holdich advised that a consensus had been reached by all political Groups, and that this was set out in the supplementary information pack.

Councillor Fitzgerald seconded the motion.

A vote was taken (unanimous) and it was **RESOLVED** that Council:

- a) Noted that there were 102 seats on committees, as agreed at Annual Council on 22 May 2017;
- b) Agreed the allocation of seats on those committees as set out on page 1 of the supplementary information pack; and
- c) Confirmed the allocation of seats on those committees not subject to political balance arrangements as set out in Appendix 2 at page 11 of the Council Agenda book.

20. Appointments to Committees

Council received a report which sought identification and approval of appointments to Committees, and appointments of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of non-executive Committees.

Councillor Holdich introduced the report and moved the recommendations. Councillor Holdich advised that the Council had a number of cross party work groups and that the Conservative Group would continue to work with Groups in political disagreement. Councillor Holdich advised that the proposals to retain the existing Chairmanships was put forward in order to maintain momentum, and strong and effective leadership.

Councillor Fitzgerald seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Murphy moved an amendment to the recommendations which sought for authority to be delegated to Committees to appoint their own Chairs. Councillor Murphy advised that minority administrations needed to work closely with other Groups of the Council, and the sharing of Committee Chairs was a reasonable method. It was suggested that agreement to the amendment would begin a new era of co-operation.

Councillor Sandford seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak.

Members debated the amendment and in summary the points raised included:

- It was suggested that the Conservative Group leading the scrutiny process into their own Group was not fair.
- Comment was made that the current process worked well and that the existing Chairs were effective. If there was nothing wrong with the process as it was, why should it be changed?
- The role of Chair required experience.
- It was noted that an opposition Chair would have no additional sway than the existing Chairs.
- Comment was made that the Chair of a committee should be the best person for the role, and not based on what Group they are in. As such, it would be best practice to allow committees to choose their own Chair.
- It was considered that the opposition Scrutiny Chairs that had been in position in 2014/2015 worked well. Opposition Chairs would ensure that the Chairmanships reflected the balance of the Council.
- It was suggested that opposition Chairmanship would ensure proper more effective Scrutiny.
- A change in the approach to Chairmanships would, it was considered, reflect the position of the nation as a whole.
- Comment was made that, although part of the Group forming the executive, Conservative Chairs took their role as scrutineers very seriously.
- It was highlighted that should Members have concerns about a particular Chair, they were able to report this concern to the Leader of the Council, who could make further investigations.

Councillor Sandford exercised his right to speak and advised that the proposals were

about principles, not personality. It was considered that as the Conservative Group did not have overall control of the Council, decision making arrangements should be amended to reflect this. It was noted that Parliamentary Chairs were appointed by a secret ballot. Further attention was drawn to the idea that the allocation of special responsibility allowances should be spread throughout the Council, not just to one political Group.

As moved of the original recommendation, Councillor Holdich reiterated that the original proposal to retain the existing Chairs was to maintain momentum. It was noted that chairing a committee required skill and experience, the likes of which the existing Chairs had.

A vote was taken (20 voted in favour, 30 voted against, and 0 abstained from voting) and the amendment was **DEFEATED**.

Members debated the original recommendations and in summary the points raised included:

- The Legal Officer provided advice to Members, stating that all Members in receipt of a basic allowance, and those in receipt of a special responsibility allowance, were entitled to vote.
- It was suggested that effective scrutiny could not take place with Chairman from the administration Group.
- It was noted that the number of Conservative Members that did not receive a special responsibility allowance was low.
- It was suggested that decisions should be reached by persuasion and not through power.

Councillor Fitzgerald exercised his right to speak and noted that special responsibility allowance could be foregone by opposition Group Leaders. It was advised that no whip was in place for the Conservative Group, but a consensus of opinion.

As mover of the recommendations, Councillor Holdich summed up and advised that this was the right way forward. A form of power sharing could be considered, however, only if agreement could be reached.

A vote was taken (30 voted in favour, 19 voted against, and 2 abstained from voting) and it was **RESOLVED** that Council:

- a) Agreed the appointments to those Committees where the allocation of the seats had been determined under Agenda Item 4, as shown on page 3 of the supplementary information pack;
- b) Agreed the Chair and Vice-Chair of each of the Council's Committees remained unchanged from that agreed at Annual Council, as shown on page 3 of the supplementary information pack;
- c) Confirmed the non-elected membership of committees, as described at paragraphs 4.1 to 4.7 of the report to Council on page 14 of the Council Agenda book;
- d) Authorised the Monitoring Officer as Proper Officer, in respect of any remaining appointments to be made, to carry out the wishes of the Leaders of the Political Groups in allocating members to committees, and appoints those Members with effect from the date at which the Proper Officer is advised of the names of such Members.

The Mayor
7.00pm – 7:52pm

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