

FULL COUNCIL

10 FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Councillors Sinden (Chair), Bacon (Vice-Chair), Batsford, Battley, S Beaney, Berelson, Bishop, Charman, Chowney, Cox, Davies, Evans, Fitzgerald, Forward, Levane, O'Callaghan, Roberts, Rogers, Sabetian, Scott, Turner, Webb, Lee, Patmore, K Beaney, Beaver, Edwards, Foster, Marlow-Eastwood and Rankin.

153. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Barnett and Louise.

154. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Full Council meetings held on 16th and 21st December 2020 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings.

155. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Committee	Minute	Interest
Forward	Cabinet – 4 th January 2021	303	Prejudicial – Owns a property in the area
Beaver	Cabinet – 4 th January 2021	298	Personal – Works at Bexhill Road retail site

156. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND LEADER

Councillor Forward, the Leader of the Council, acknowledged that the loss of life in Hastings due to Covid-19 had sadly exceeded 200 and reiterated that the thoughts of everyone at Hastings Borough Council are with those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic. This has been a very difficult time for everyone in the town and it is important to remain understanding and kind towards one another.

Councillor Forward proposed a motion, seconded by Councillor Sinden, as follows:

RESOLVED that in order for the Managing Director to update the Full Council, under Rule 16(14) of council procedure the council proceed as if in committee.

The Managing Director provided a brief update on the Covid-19 pandemic in Hastings. The national lockdown is having an impact and rates of new infection in Hastings, although still high, are reducing in line with the England average. However, the number of people ill in hospital is still too high, though numbers are reducing.

The Managing Director said that during the second wave the infection rate in Hastings soared and it is believed that this is related to the transmissibility of the Kent variant.

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The Director of Public Health remains convinced that underlying issues of deprivation have played a role in the impact of the pandemic on Hastings.

The national vaccination programme has been rolled out at great speed and the Council is working closely with NHS colleagues to get information and communications out to residents. Colleagues who have been working on the pandemic response are exhausted, with issues of fatigue, stress and poor mental health being felt all across the public, voluntary and community sectors. However, the Managing Director assured Councillors that colleagues and partners are still absolutely committed to supporting residents and businesses and will continue to do their very best in these extraordinary times.

The meeting returned to Full Council mode.

157. QUESTIONS (IF ANY) FROM:

156a) Members of the public under Rule 11

No public questions were received.

156b) Councillors under Rule 12

Questioner	Subject	Reply given by
Councillor Lee	<p><u>East Sussex County Council Labour Party</u> – It is reported the Labour Party is planning to join forces with the Liberal Democrats on East Sussex County Council, can you confirm if you will be forming a coalition with the Liberal Democrats locally?</p> <p>Councillor Forward replied that the question should be directed to Councillor Webb, Co-Leader of the Labour Group on East Sussex County Council.</p>	Councillor Forward
Councillor K Beaney	<p><u>Old Bathing Pool Site</u> – Can you provide an update on progress at the old Bathing Pool site?</p> <p>Councillor Chowney confirmed that the funder of the project has changed and the Council is awaiting further legal advice. It is hoped that the heads of terms will be signed soon.</p>	Councillor Chowney
Councillor Sabetian	<p><u>Town Deal</u> - Can you provide an update on the Town Deal?</p>	Councillor Fitzgerald

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	<p>Councillor Fitzgerald replied that the town investment plan had been submitted as part of the Town Deal and that he had had a very constructive meeting with the leaders of the Conservative group on the subject. There is excitement at the prospect of the Town Deal and its potential for positive change in the town.</p>	
<p>Councillor Turner</p>	<p><u>Vaccinations</u> – Can you update us on the progress of the vaccination programme?</p> <p>Councillor Forward replied that Hastings Borough Council is working closely with partners to ensure that residents are aware of how they get vaccinated. The Council’s newsletter and website have been used to share the latest information. Councillor Forward thanked Dr Fox and his team of GP’s who are operating the vaccination centre. There has been very positive feedback about their operation. The latest figures for the Hastings Centre vaccination programme show that just over 19,000 residents have received their first dose.</p>	<p>Councillor Forward</p>
<p>Councillor Roberts</p>	<p><u>Covid-19 Business Support</u> – Can you outline the support the Council has provided to local businesses to help them with the economic consequences of the pandemic?</p> <p>Councillor Chowney confirmed that there have been around 14 different statutory grant schemes to administer since the start of the pandemic, distributing over £27 million to local businesses. The Council has also developed some limited discretionary schemes which have distributed just over £1 million. Councillor Chowney thanked all the officers who have been working on administering the grant schemes.</p>	<p>Councillor Chowney</p>
<p>Councillor Rankin</p>	<p><u>Council Agenda</u> – Do you think we should reorder the Council agenda so that reports of committees are considered before motions?</p> <p>Councillor Forward suggested this be referred to the Working Arrangements</p>	<p>Councillor Forward</p>

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	Group.	
Councillor Levane	<p><u>Affordable Housing</u> – Can you update on what the Council is doing to increase the availability of genuinely affordable housing?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford replied that there are 1434 people on the Council housing waiting list, which includes over 1,000 local children living in unsuitable accommodation. The Council has limited opportunities to build houses but intends to take them. There are several projects on the horizon, including the Lower Tier site which will deliver 192 new homes. The Council will push hard for those homes to be affordable and available at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates.</p>	Councillor Batsford
Councillor Bishop	<p><u>Active Hastings</u> - What have Active Hastings been doing to support the community during the pandemic?</p> <p>Councillor Evans confirmed that Active Hastings have a number of classes available which people can sign up for via the Active Hastings Facebook page. Booking regular classes enables you to keep a structure and routine during these difficult times. Councillor Evans reminded the Council that physical and mental health are inextricably linked and remaining active is key for physical and mental wellbeing.</p>	Councillor Evans

The meeting adjourned at 6:41pm to address an IT issue and resumed at 6:42pm.

158. MOTION (RULE 14)

Councillor Davies proposed a motion, as set out in the agenda, which was seconded by Councillor Turner.

RESOLVED (by 19 for, with 8 abstentions) that the Council do accept the motion as set out below:

This Council continues to express its gratitude for the extraordinary effort undertaken by many in our Borough during the pandemic crisis that in turn has created a force for good. We are all proud of the response of our Council, our medical professionals, key

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workers, our partners and the wider community effort across the Borough of Hastings and St. Leonards.

This Council believes that while the overwhelming majority of residents are playing their part in observing COVID regulations and a large number have taken on community volunteering roles, we are not 'all in this together'. When the pandemic is over the most vulnerable groups will still be vulnerable - economically, socially, academically and in their health and wellbeing outcomes. A resident living in one street will still be more likely to die 14 years earlier than a resident in the adjoining neighbourhood. We cannot accept this.

We are a council committed to narrowing the health gap. We are also a Council aware of the limits placed upon us. Therefore, whilst this Council welcomes the work already undertaken by ESCC Director of Public Health, before and during the pandemic, we remain acutely aware of the responsibility a phalanx of public bodies has for improving the health outcomes for our residents over the next decade.

We trust the result of this Motion will be to shine a spotlight beyond the well-rehearsed statistical recognition of health-inequality and onto the process by which these public bodies are forming and then acting upon a strategy to eradicate health-inequality from our Borough.

This motion is a challenge for all of us and especially those organisations whose very existence is predicated on improving the health and life-chances of our residents to act particular where there has been longstanding identified need.

The story of the primary care centre in the Ore Valley is a clear example of how desperate need does not lead to the prompt delivery of the required services, on time, to transform the health of our residents in Baird ward.

This motion calls on NHS England to deliver this primary care centre as a matter of necessity and as a clear signal of a new desire, the force for good extracted from the trauma of pandemic, to eradicate health inequality in our Borough by 2029.

This Council resolves to:

1. Lobby NHS England and the Secretary of State for Health to deliver on the primary health care centre for the Ore Valley;
2. Encourage formal and informal partnerships to contribute positively to reducing health inequality across the borough;
3. Promote the need for a unifying strategic plan to eradicate severe health inequality from our Borough by 2029;
4. Promote our Corporate Plan, our post-Covid recovery work and all other opportunities and agency as they become available to us as a means to this end;

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5. Request a twice-yearly report on the progress of measures, taken by organisations operating within the Borough, to reduce health-inequality using national, county and local profiles from the Director of Public Health
6. Instigate with partners specific locality measures with outcomes that raise the life chances of particular vulnerable groups or neighbourhoods;
7. Consider the impact on public health and inequality of our own decision-making, for example within the draft local plan;
8. Invite our MP to take up the mantle of reducing health inequality in the most deprived wards she represents.

159. MOTION (RULE 14)

Councillor Levane proposed a motion, as set out in the agenda, which was seconded by Councillor O'Callaghan.

Councillor Rankin proposed an amendment to the motion, seconded by Councillor Beaver, as follows:

Point 8 to read:

“Write to the Secretary of State for The Department of Work and Pensions and if necessary the PM and Chancellor requesting that the £20 uplift in Universal Credit be extended to Universal Credit Claimants for a further 6 months and then reviewed after that time.”

Councillor Levane did not accept the amendment. The Mayor proposed suspending rule 16.6b of council procedure, seconded by Councillor Rogers.

RESOLVED that council suspends Rule 16.6b of council procedure rules to permit Councillor Levane’s motion and Councillor Rankin’s amendment to be on the table and open for discussion at the same time.

Councillors debated the proposed amendment and substantive motion.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Rankin was rejected by 19 votes against, to 7 for.

RESOLVED (by 19 for, to 2 against, with 6 abstentions) that the Council do accept the motion as set out below:

No cuts to Universal Credit – let families keep the £20 increase

Aim: To maintain the income of low and middle income families.

This council notes:

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Next April the government plans to cut the benefit level for millions of claimants by ending the time limited increase to the basic rate of Universal Credit (and the tax credit equivalent) announced by the Chancellor on 20th March as part of his pandemic response package.

The £20 a week boost reflected the reality that the level of benefits were not adequate to protect the swiftly increasing number of households relying on them as the crisis hit. Exactly because that increase was a very significant and welcome move to bolster low- and middle-income families' living standards, its removal will be a huge loss.

Pressing ahead would see the level of unemployment support fall to its lowest real-terms level since 1990-91, and its lowest ever relative to average earnings. Indeed, the basic level of out-of-work support prior to the March boost was – at £73 a week (£3,800 a year) – less than half the absolute poverty line.

The increase in benefits has had a positive effect on the lives of thousands of local claimants who are better able to pay for life's essentials such as food, clothing and utilities.

The local economy has also benefited from the increase in benefit levels as claimants spend their money locally thereby supporting local businesses and jobs.

This council resolves to:

- Write to the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak and to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson demanding that the £20 increase to Universal Credit is made permanent and extended to claimants on legacy benefits.
- Work with other local government organisations to form a coalition to pressure the government to make the £20 increase to Universal Credit permanent.

160. MOTION (RULE 14)

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:52pm and the meeting resumed at 8:03pm

Councillor Rogers proposed a motion, as set out in the agenda, which was seconded by Councillor Bishop.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the Council do accept the motion as set out below:

Hastings Borough Council calls upon this government to extend the legislation allowing councils to hold 'virtual' meetings beyond the end of April 2021 to allow for all council meetings in the future to be conducted face to face (when Covid restrictions are lifted) with the public present, but also to continue to be accessed via a virtual platform whilst being livestreamed to the public.

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There are many councillors and officers who will welcome the return to face to face meetings but the role of local government is to reach out and engage with the whole community particularly those who for whatever reason are more isolated.

In Hastings councillors work hard to ensure that every resident feels that their views are heard and they feel they are a part of the democratic structure of the town. One of the ways that this can be achieved is to target the under represented groups and support them to become spokespeople for their communities and ultimately councillors.

One of the major barriers to many people feeling they are able to stand for election is their inability to be able to attend the required number of council meetings. There are many reasons for this from caring responsibilities, disability, work commitments, financial constraints and the establishing of hybrid meetings will allow members to join remotely and will give more people from our town a voice.

We ask that the Leader of the Council writes to the appropriate Minister to pass on our comments.

161. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

No changes to membership of committees were proposed.

162. APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY MONITORING OFFICER

Councillor Rogers proposed that Mary Kilner be appointed the Council's Monitoring Officer, seconded by Councillor Beaver.

The Mayor formally thanked the outgoing Monitoring Officer, Christine Barkshire-Jones, for her work and service to Hastings Borough Council.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That Mary Kilner is appointed statutory Monitoring Officer with immediate effect.

Reasons:

1. Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 places responsibility on the Monitoring Officer to oversee vires issues. In particular, reporting to the local authority if she or he thinks any proposal, decision or omission would give rise to (a) a contravention by the authority, by any committee, or sub-committee of the authority, by any person holding any office or employment under the authority or by any such joint committee of any enactment or rule of law or of any code of practice made or approved by or under any enactment; or (b) any such maladministration or injustice as is mentioned in Part III of the Local Government Act 1974 (Local Commissioners) to prepare a report to the authority with respect to that proposal, decision or omission.

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2. The previous Monitoring Officer now has a different role within the Council as a result of retiring from a substantive post. Mary Kilner is the newly appointed Chief Legal Officer.

163. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Mayor having called over the minutes set out in the agenda, the following minutes were reserved for discussion.

RESOLVED that under rule 13.3 the reports and minutes of committees set out in the agenda, including those items on which a council decision was required, be received, and agreed. Only those items which were reserved were discussed, as follows:

Meeting	Minute	Councillor
Cabinet, 4 th January 2021	298 (C) - Treasury Management – Mid-Year Report 2020/21	Rankin
Cabinet, 4 th January 2021	299 - Hastings Draft Local Plan – Regulation 18 Consultation	Beaver
Cabinet, 4 th January 2021	301 - Hastings Country Park Visitor Centre Part 1	Bishop
Cabinet, 4 th January 2021	301 (E) - Hastings Country Park Visitor Centre Part 2	Lee
Cabinet, 4 th January 2021	303 (E) - Cornwallis Street Car Park – Potential Development	Patmore
Cabinet, 8 th February 2021	307 (C) - Pay Policy Statement 2021/22	Lee
Cabinet, 8 th February 2021	308 - Churchfields Business Centre – Incubator Units	Cox

Minute 298 of Cabinet on 4th January 2021, Treasury Management – Mid-Year Report 2020/21, was a matter on which the Full Council was required to make a decision. The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Chowney, seconded by Councillor Rankin and agreed unanimously.

Minute 307 of Cabinet on 8th February 2021, Pay Policy Statement 2021/22, was a matter on which the Full Council was required to make a decision. The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Rogers, seconded by Councillor Davies and agreed unanimously.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting until 6pm, Tuesday, 23rd February 2021.

(The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 9.04pm)