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FULL COUNCIL

6 JANUARY 2022

Present: Councillors Bacon (Chair), Cox (Vice-Chair), Arthur, Barnett, Batsford, Battley, K Beaney, Beaver, Bishop, Carr, Chowney, Cooke, Cox, Edwards, Evans, Fernando, Forward, Foster, Hay, Hilton, Marlow-Eastwood, Patmore, Pragnell, Rankin, Rogers, Scott, Sinden, Turner, Webb and Williams.

The Mayor led a minute silence in remembrance of former Hastings Borough Councillor Michael Howard and Sir David Amess MP.

218. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Roberts, S Beaney, Roark and Foster.

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

RESOLVED (unanimously) that the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 13th October 2021 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings.

220. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor	Meeting	Minute	Interest
Forward	Cabinet - 1 st November 2021	375	Personal – Member of Town Deal Board
Hilton	Cabinet - 1 st November 2021	375	Personal – Part of the Garden Town Team
Rankin	Cabinet - 1 st November 2021	380	Personal – Operates a company in the private rented sector
Pragnell	Cabinet - 1 st November 2021	380	Personal – Employed by Department for Work and Pensions

221. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND LEADER

The Mayor invited the Managing Director to update the Council on Covid-19 cases in Hastings, and the use of emergency powers to formalise Full Council decisions.

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The Managing Director informed Councillors that as the meeting is taking place virtually the Full Council is unable to make any formal decisions. Therefore, following the debate the formal decisions which are necessary will be made using the emergency powers granted to the Managing Director by Full Council for these precise circumstances.

In terms of the Covid-19 situation in Hastings the Managing Director explained that the infection rate in Hastings is now at 1165 cases per 100,000, which is a similar level to twelve months ago when there was a national lockdown.

Colleagues in public health and environmental health have advised that these numbers are likely to be artificially low because of a reduction in testing over Christmas and New Year.

The significant challenge facing the Council now is the impact of staff being ill or isolating. This is also an acute problem for local partners. The local hospital is struggling with staff absences and has put in place restrictions on visitors.

Officers and local colleagues are working with NHS partners to increase the booster uptake in the town. There have been challenges with supplies of Lateral Flow Tests but these are expected to improve over the next week or so.

Business continuity plans have been reviewed and the Council is ready to re-deploy staff as necessary to support priority services, or to provide mutual aid to local partners. Resilience is stretched and working at this heightened level for almost two years is taking its toll. The Managing Director said she was incredibly proud of the work of officers and the dedication they have shown in going the extra step to assist the local community.

The Mayor extended his thanks to officers and local partners working as part of the pandemic response.

222. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Hilton as the new Leader of the Green Party Group and explained that the allocation of committee seats following the formation of the Green Party Group is still under discussion and will come forward at the next Full Council meeting.

Councillor Forward requested changes in membership to the Standards Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out below.

RESOLVED that the council notes the following arrangements for the membership of committees:

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1. Councillor Webb is appointed to the vacant seat on the Standards Committee.

2. Councillor Sinden replaces Councillor S Beaney on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Update please note: It has subsequently become apparent that under Article 9 of the Council's Constitution the appointment of Councillor Webb to the Standards Committee could not proceed as no more than one member of Cabinet may sit on the Standards Committee. The vacant seat will be appointed at the next Full Council meeting.

223. SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS (IF ANY) FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER RULE 11

A written supplementary question was received and a written response was provided and published on the Council website.

224. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Only those items which were reserved were discussed as follows:

Meeting	Minute	Councillor
Cabinet – 1 st November 2021	375 - Hastings Town Deal Programme Update	Rogers
Cabinet – 1 st November 2021	377 - Agreeing the way forward for the future of the Grounds Maintenance Service	Battley
Cabinet – 1 st November 2021	378 - Solar for Business	Sinden
Cabinet – 1 st November 2021	380 - 500 Affordable Homes Programme	Cox
Cabinet – 1 st November 2021	381 - Commission of Housing Stock Condition Survey and Report	Turner
Cabinet (Emergency Decision) – 11 th November 2021	383 - Household Support Fund	Arthur
Audit Committee – 18 th November 2021	131 - External Auditor Appointment	Cooke
Cabinet – 19 th November 2021	386 - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2025/26	Patmore

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Minute 131 of Audit Committee on 18th November 2021, External Auditor Appointment, was a matter requiring Full Council approval. The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Rankin, seconded by Councillor Cooke, and agreed unanimously.

Councillors debated minutes 375, 377, 378, 380, 381 and 383 of Cabinet on 1st November 2021; minute 383 of Cabinet on 11th November 2021; and minute 386 of Cabinet on 19th November 2021. These matters did not require Full Council approval.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Council accepts Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

Reasons:

An external auditor for the audit of the accounts for 2023/24 must be appointed before the end of 2022. The council needs to let Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) know if it wants to opt into the sector-wide procurement conducted by PSAA by 11 March 2022. The decision of Full Council is required.

In his closing remarks the Mayor expressed his hope that in 2022 Hastings will return to normality and see an end to the pandemic. The Mayor called on everyone in the Borough to get vaccinated and boosted and thanked those who have protected themselves and others so far.

The Mayor passed on his condolences to all who lost loved ones to Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic and thanked Council officers and key workers for their dedication.

(The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.12pm)

Minute Annex

Managing Director Decision Notice



In accordance with Rule 26.22 of the Constitution the Managing Director, in consultation with the Mayor, (and having carried out a prior risk assessment) made the decision to hold the Full Council meeting on 6th January 2022 virtually.

The following decision was made in accordance with emergency powers granted to the Managing Director to implement the decisions made at that Full Council meeting in consultation with those Councillors who were present.

The reasons for the decisions are set out in the Full Council minutes for that date.

Report: External Auditor Appointment

Report Author: Peter Grace, Assistant Director, Financial Services and Revenues (Chief Finance Officer)

Decision Type: Full Council

Decision:

1. Council accepts Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors for five financial years from 1 April 2023

The Councillors present voted unanimously in favour to approve the recommendations in the Report.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Martnell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.



Jane Hartnell
Managing Director
Hastings Borough Council