

Public Document Pack

FULL COUNCIL

22 JULY 2021

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

In his opening remarks the Mayor acknowledge the flooding experienced in Schwerte, a twin town of Hastings, and said that all of Hastings sends its thoughts and prayers to the residents of Schwerte.

197. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors S Beaney, Edwards and Scott.
Apologies for lateness received from Councillor Forward.

198. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Minute</u>	<u>Interest</u>
Pragnell	201 – Motion	Prejudicial – Employed by the Department for Work and Pensions in a role related to Universal Credit
Foster	202 – Motion	Personal - Leases an electric car and is a member of the Conservative Environment Network
Chowney	202 – Motion	Personal – Owns an electric car

199. QUESTIONS (IF ANY) FROM:

199a) Members of the public under Rule 11

No public questions were received.

199b) Councillors under Rule 12

Councillor Hilton submitted a written question to the Leader of the Council, a written response was received and shared with Councillors prior to the meeting.

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In a supplementary question Councillor Hilton thanked officers for the detailed response to the original question, but asked that the council commit to some carbon reduction targets so that progress towards carbon neutrality could be tracked.

Councillor Barnett, Deputy Leader of the Council, responded. Councillor Barnett noted that at the next meeting of cabinet in September there will be an update on the climate change plan which will include some targets. If they are not the targets which Councillor Hilton thinks should be in the plan, Councillor Barnett said he would be happy to discuss the issue further.

The Mayor took oral questions from Councillors to the Leader and cabinet portfolio holders as follows:

Questioner	Subject	Reply given by
Councillor Patmore	<p><u>Public questions</u> – I have received complaints from a number of concerned residents who wanted to submit a written question but were refused. To put the proposed questions succinctly, given the council's formal adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism, will the Deputy Leader condemn any form of anti-Semitism on the streets of Hastings and reaffirm to councillors and residents that it is council policy that every residents feels safe, protected and comfortable.</p> <p>Council Barnett said he would refer the matter to the Chief Legal Officer and respond once he knows why the questions were refused.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor Sinden	<p><u>Transformation</u> - Can you update us on the transformation programme?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers replied that the council should be praising the Transformation team for their work. We are now feeling the benefits of using Smart Sheets and dashboards to track performance across the council. Officers recently presented their work to 15 other local authorities who were very impressed with our ways of working. There is also the possibility do develop a commercial opportunity in the future.</p>	Councillor Rogers
Councillor Rankin	<p><u>School Attendance</u> - Many of our schools in Hastings have below national average rates of attendance and higher than average rates of long-term absence. Our schools persistently</p>	Councillor Barnett

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	<p>fail to ensure above average grades in key subjects and have some of the highest rates for permanent and fixed term exclusions in the country. Does the Deputy Leader agree that these levels of education are one of the single biggest drivers of deprivation in our Borough and we should do everything in our powers to changes this?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett said he shared Councillor Rankin's views on education provision in Hastings. Councillor Barnett said these issues have been coming for many years because of the privatisation of the education system.</p>	
Councillor Arthur	<p><u>Covid-19 Restrictions</u> - Many people are feeling anxious about restrictions being lifted. What can we do to support and protect residents including those who are vulnerable and from Black and Asian communities who have been disproportionately affected?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett replied that we are beginning to see the local health authorities working together alongside partners to address some these issues. There have been a series of meetings between Hastings Borough Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, the Primary Care Trust, and voluntary sector representatives to put in place a series of community-based pop-up vaccine centres.</p>	Councillor Barnett
Councillor K Beaney	<p><u>Bathing Pool Site</u> - Can you provide an update on the bathing pool site?</p> <p>Councillor Chowney responded that the council had received and signed the development agreement. The developer is still to sign but this is a formality.</p>	Councillor Chowney
Councillor Carr	<p><u>Traffic</u> - Can you update us on the traffic situation in Wellington Place and Wellington Square?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers replied that the bike rack in Wellington Square would be installed next week and at the same time posts will go up with no-parking signage. It will soon be illegal to park on the grass or anywhere off road in Wellington Square. Once the signage is in place the enforcement team will begin issuing tickets. In relation to the Town Centre it has</p>	Councillor Rogers

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	<p>been agreed that the bollards will be switched on again and the pass code will be changed on a regular basis and only given to businesses who have a need to enter the pedestrianised area.</p>	
<p>Councillor Cooke</p>	<p><u>Hastings Housing Company</u> – When the company was setup I believe it was a requirement that a councillor be on the board, yet we currently have no councillor on the board. Can you update us?</p> <p>Councillor Batsford said the company is not currently operating as the main need in the town is to find temporary accommodation and the quickest means of doing this is for the council to purchase property directly.</p>	<p>Councillor Batsford</p>
<p>Councillor Roark</p>	<p><u>Active Hastings</u> - Can you give an update on what Active Hastings provision will be available to children over this summer?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett praised the Active Hastings team and shared feedback from users of the service.</p>	<p>Councillor Barnett</p>
<p>Councillor Beaver</p>	<p><u>Bulverhythe Lower Tier</u> - The Environment Agency in their submission in February stated that the Lower Tier site sits within Flood Zone 3B. However, the lead member for housing in an online article stated, 'this site is not a flood plain'. Whom does the Leader of the Council believe?</p> <p>Councillor Forward replied that money has been received from Homes England to develop flood mitigation. A planning application has been submitted and when this comes to the planning committee all relevant information will be in the officer's report.</p>	<p>Councillor Forward</p>
<p>Councillor Roberts</p>	<p><u>Hastings Museum</u> - As lock down ends can you update us on what is happening at the museum?</p> <p>Councillor Barnett said the museum is open again and operating safely with a well-designed one-way system. The museum has secured national funding and national attention with a series of new projects which have connected the museum to national and international audiences over lockdown.</p>	<p>Councillor Barnett</p>

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Councillor Pragnell	<p><u>Council Debate</u> – Since I was last at the council I notice the opportunity for debate has been cut by 25% and without consultation we have had 10-minute breaks at the last meeting cutting into debating time. Did cabinet decide this?</p> <p>Councillor Rogers replied that this was not decided by cabinet. A working group meets weekly to discuss how to manage covid safe meetings. It is recommended that you not look at your screen for too long so it was decided to include regular 5-minute screen breaks during the meeting. Changes to the debating times were approved by Full Council some years ago.</p>	Councillor Rogers
Councillor Cox	<p><u>Disabled Beach Access</u> - Can you give an update on disabled access to the beach?</p> <p>Councillor Webb replied that repair work to the groynes, funded by the Environment Agency, had gone very well. The contractor has now been instructed to construct the new disabled beach access.</p>	Councillor Webb
Councillor Hilton	<p><u>Queensway Business Park</u> – You will be aware of the current planning application from Sea Change for a business park at North Queensway which threatens Marline Valley Nature Reserve. There has been no scrutiny of Sea Change. As is allowed by paragraph 29.8 of the Constitution will you call on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to conduct a long overdue inquiry into Sea Change?</p> <p>Councillor Evans replied that she would need to seek advice on what she can call on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to do. However, Councillor Evans said she would like to see a consultation paper on the impact of the potential development on the surrounding area before commenting.</p>	Councillor Evans

200. MOTION (RULE 14)

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

Councillors debated the motion.

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

A pledge for Hastings:

Hastings Borough Council pledges its commitment to be a Town that is welcoming to all, to confirm our pride in having a programme of welcome to refugees and asylum seekers. Our commitment was, for example, part of the preamble to the Equalities motion passed by the Council in October 2020, which included confirmation of our support to the Lift The Ban Campaign to allow asylum seekers to work.

We are pleased to continue to work with the Refugee Buddy Project which works with local residents of Hastings who welcome people seeking refuge, the Lift The Ban Campaign and the Hastings City of Sanctuary. We are proud of the work that has been done so far and know that this will need to continue against an increasingly hostile environment.

We have been asked by the Hastings Buddy Project, with whom we work very closely, to restate our commitment, not least in the worrying development at Napier Barracks in Kent and the possibility that similar “facilities” are being considered for our town. We are committed to doing all we can to make sure that this Borough continues to be a welcoming place for everyone who has come here to live, study, work, seek sanctuary and join family, whether they have lived here for decades or have just arrived.

This Council backs this pledge:

1. Dignity and Respect for All

Long-term residents as well as asylum seekers, refugees and migrants should be treated with dignity and respect. The debate on immigration should be conducted with care for the dignity of people who are vulnerable, who do not have a voice in the public domain and who have to suffer the consequences of inaccurate and inflammatory language.

2. Protection not Destitution

Despite the challenges our town, and indeed our country, face, the UK is still one of the richest places in the world. It cannot be right that vulnerable people are forced into destitution and left without basic protections. Everybody should be treated justly and fairly.

3. Welcome and Integration

Integration requires everybody to play their part in making Hastings a place of welcome and supporting people to participate in the local community. The Council and local civil society can together ensure that good processes are in place and integration services are properly provided.

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Everybody in Hastings is invited to join the effort to translate these principles into effective action. Together, in our organisations and communities, our faith institutions and schools, we can make Hastings welcoming to all.

201. MOTION (RULE 14)

Councillor Pragnell left the chamber for the duration of the item due to a prejudicial interest.

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

Councillors debated the motion.

RESOLVED (by 17 votes in favour, to 10 against) that the Council do accept the motion as set out below:

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a regular, non-means tested sum paid by the state to cover the basic cost of living. It's paid to all citizens individually, regardless of employment status, wealth or income.

Due to the Covid crisis, which has plunged more and more people into poverty, and shown up the ever-widening gap between rich and poor in the UK, the concept has been more widely debated in recent months than ever before. It would replace the labyrinth of means tested benefits of which £10 billion remains unclaimed each year. Motions supporting UBI pilots have now been passed by 13 local authorities, including Liverpool, Sheffield, Brighton and Lewes – the majority with cross-party support.

UBI is the fairest, most effective way to mitigate the effects of coronavirus on people's incomes and to start to repair the terrible damage done to society during the pandemic.

A network of UBI Labs has been set up which work with local authorities across the UK to develop UBI proposals to address problems such as poverty, inequality, discrimination and environmental damage – all issues that have a profound effect on the people of Hastings. We need to join them and show our support.

Universal Credit is a punitive system based on bullying people to spend 35 hours a week looking for jobs that don't exist, and the five week wait (which is supposed to emulate waiting for your first pay cheque) guarantees that individuals are already in debt before they get their first payment, which is insufficient to live on. It is a recipe for disaster, despair and the destruction of people's lives. Being part of the movement to introduce UBI is surely one way we can show our support for the people of Hastings and our commitment to improving their quality of life with guaranteed income security.

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In short:

- the current benefit system is failing citizens, with Universal Credit causing hardship to many communities in Hastings
- we need to test UBI, as it has the potential to address key challenges such as inequality, poverty, precarious employment, and loss of community through:
 - i) Giving employers a more flexible workforce whilst giving employees greater freedom to change their job and reject bad work;
 - ii) Valuing unpaid work, such as caring for family members and voluntary work;
 - iii) Removing the negative impacts of benefit sanctions and conditionality;
 - iv) Giving people more equal resources within the family, workplace and society;
 - v) Enabling greater opportunities for people to work in community and cultural activities or to train or re-skill in areas that will be needed to transition to a low- carbon economy.
- the success of a UBI pilot should not be measured only by its impact on the take up of paid work, but also the impact upon communities and what the people within them do with their lives, how they feel, and how they relate to others and the environment around them;
- given its history of innovation, creativity, resilience and community spirit, Hastings is ideally placed to pilot a UBI

This council therefore resolves to:

1. work with the UBI Lab Network to explore ways to promote and expand the concept of UBI with particular reference to Hastings, and campaign for UBI trials to be held in this country in the near future.
2. send a copy of this Motion to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Chancellor, the leader of the party in government, their counterparts in all opposition political parties in Parliament, and to our local MP.

202. MOTION (RULE 14)

Councillor Pragnell returned to the chamber.

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

Councillors debated the motion.

RESOLVED (by 11 votes in favour, to 17 against) that the Council do not accept the motion as set out below:

That the council introduce reduced season ticket and parking permit rates for electric vehicles.

(The Mayor declared the meeting closed at 7.48pm)

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