

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD ON 19 JULY 2023 AT 6.00 pm**

Attendance:

The Mayor (Pepper) (in the Chair)

Councillors Ms Ballard, Beavis, Bradley, Burgess, Casey, Chegwyn, Mrs Cully, Earle, Herridge, Mrs Huggins, Hylands, Jessop, Johnston, Miss Kelly, Mrs Morgan, Philpott, Raffaelli, Scard, Westerby, Durrant, Marshall, Maynard, Bradley and Cox

Also in attendance: Honorary Alderman Hook and Dickson.

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FROM MEMBERS FOR THEIR INABILITY TO ATTEND THE MEETING

Apologies for non attendance were received from Councillors Gledhill, Hammond and Hutchison.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cully declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 as her husband held a non GBC allotment.

Councillor Westerby declared a non pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 as she had an allotment, and also declared that she was a member of Solent WASPI

Councillor Kelly declared her partner had an allotment.

Councillor Johnston advised he had an allotment.

Councillor Burgess advised that he had used his devolved County Council budget to support events in Stoke Road.

Councillor Huggins declared a non pecuniary interest in the Multi Academy Trust.

MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor advised that he had the opportunity to meet many of residents and young people of the Borough.

TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 10 MAY 2023 AND 15 JUNE 2023

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 10 May 2023 and 15 June 2023 be signed as a true and correct record.

TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There was one Deputation.

Margaret Williams, of Solent WASPI was invited to address the Council. She advised that she was grateful for the opportunity to address the Board and was grateful to Councillors Durrant and Cully for raising the motion.

The Council was advised that the issue affected more than 6000 women in Gosport and that the demand was for justice and fair treatment.

In 2015 change were made to increase the state pension age and despite initial dismissal, had now been deemed to be maladministration by the Department for Work and Pension. It had been deemed that there had been poor communication to those affected by the changes.

It had taken 6 years to get a resolution and in that time 248000 WASPI women had died, losing any entitlement to compensation for the errors of the DWP. One WASPI woman dies every 13 minute waiting for justice.

The situation had created hardship, anguish and had meant people had to carry on with physically and mentally demanding jobs.

One lady had been widowed in her 50s and had to work in a carehome to make ends meet, people had downsized, had their mental health impacted, and all of this had been even greater adversely impacted by the cost of living.

People's plans for retirement had been changed, women could not afford bus tickets to attend WASPI events, women had had to apply for Universal Credit and found the process of applying for jobs that there was not chance of being appointed to due to age and physical capability, humiliating.

There was an impact on the local community, valuable skills, volunteer time and as well as care capabilities for older and younger relatives being impacted.

The decision had created poverty, ill health and whilst there was no objection to addressing the pension gap but the journey to reach it had been mishandled and devastating.

WASPI sought to achieve compensation for the list years of state pension which had led to them being poorly equipped financially and had remapped their lives.

It was requested that Gosport Borough Council support the ongoing lobbying for a resolution.

A public question was received from Mrs Pat Williams.

Why have you decided to just make drivers pay for parking only using an app, with no other payment alternative. This positively discriminates against mostly elderly folk and those without smart phones and not tech savvy?

Councillor Westerby advised that 3G had been switched off by the telephone company to make way for 4G and 5G, this had happened in other locations to Gosport.

9 of the 37 Machines would retain the capability to pay by card or cash, 2 in the Town Long Stay car park, 3 at Stoke Bay, 2 in Lee-on-the-Solent and one each in Alver Valley East and West.

Enforcement Officers were required to work in pairs to collect cash from the machines, and there was a charge for banking cash, the machines also required charging every few days, all of this meant that the current set up was not providing value for money.

Payment could be made by calling or texting and parking remained free for the first hours, or first two hours for disabled parking.

QUESTIONS (IF ANY) PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER NO. 3.3

A question in the name of Councillor Jessop to the Leader of Council

Could the Leader please explain what is going on with all three waste collections, which have been massively disrupted since the new rounds have been introduced and what the leader is doing to resolve the problems?

Answer: Yes

Supplementary: How are you going to communicate this with residents, there has been nothing updated on the website since 28th June 2023 and Councillors were being asked what was happening.

The Council was advised that nationally there was a shortage of HGV drivers. There had been a shortage of drivers as payment rates for alternative roles had been higher, as a result there had been four short, with 11 of the 12 recently recruited moving on. This had been presented with the additional challenge of new rounds and hard to reach areas such as alleyways.

Negotiations were on going in relation to a pay deal, but expectations were unrealistically high.

Officers had been working extremely hard to reach a resolution and should be commended for doing so.

Work was ongoing to improve the robustness of the contract for pay increases, and external support had been involved in helping to clear the backlog.

The Council was advised that the public would be communicated to that the issues regarding waste collection had been resolved, despite it being a national issue.

NOTICE OF MOTION

It was reported that Councillor Cully had given notice of the following Motion in accordance with Standing Order 3.2, as included within the agenda.

WASPI Motion.

The support of the Chamber for this motion was welcomed, as was the support of the County Council, The Council was advised that women were being forced to work beyond their physical capabilities. Care responsibilities were not able to be met, elderly relatives and grandchildren could not be cared for which added to the demand for carers and childcare places.

The process for to address the findings of maladministration had been delayed which continued to impact those affected.

Members were advised of the process of amendment to the pension age, the way it was poorly notified, and the subsequent action that had taken place had been slow. The Parliamentary and Health Services Ombudsman was due to release their final findings to allow appropriate compensation to be made.

Members recognised the importance of justice and the difficulties this had presented millions of women.

It was proposed and agreed that the Leader of the Council writes to the local Member of Parliament and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to outline the effects of the injustice to 1950s women on the community in Gosport and to seek their support for an immediate compensation package.

RESOLVED: the Leader of the Council writes to the local Member of Parliament and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to outline the effects of the injustice to 1950s women on the community in Gosport and to seek their support for an immediate compensation package.

It was reported that Councillor Chegwyn had given notice of the following Motion in accordance with Standing Order 3.2, as included within the agenda.

Foxlease Girl Guiding Centre Closure

Members recognised the importance of such sites for young people and provided experiences not available in Gosport.

Members recognised the importance of the organisations that utilised the sites in the way their developed leadership and confidence.

It was recognised that costs for such sites were increasing and that support should be given to them where possible.

RESOLVED:

This Council resolves to support the campaign to keep Foxlease open by writing to the

Trustees of Girlguiding UK and to Guiding President HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh urging the Trustees to reconsider their decision and to keep Activity Centres including Foxlease open.'

It was reported that Councillor Chegwyn had given notice of the following Motion in accordance with Standing Order 3.2, as included within the agenda.

Animal Welfare Charter.

Members recognised that protecting the welfare of animals on Council land was important and that there was already some ruling in place.

It was hoped that a working group could be set up to explore this further and to present an updated charter to the Council to show the Council's commitment to protecting animals.

RESOLVED: 'This Council recalls that it approved an Animal Welfare Charter around 35 years ago to help protect animals from cruelty on council-owned land. 35 years on, this Council believes it would be appropriate to review and update its Animal Welfare Charter. Council therefore resolves to appoint a Working Group to draft a new Animal Welfare Charter and report back to full Council, this Working Group to consist of six members, 3 Liberal Democrats, 2 Conservatives and 1 Labour.

TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING PART II MINUTES OF THE BOARDS OF THE COUNCIL

The Minutes of the Part II meetings of the Board were considered.

Community Board – 29 June 2023

The Council was advised that the funding for the project had been secured.

The Council recognised that this was positive but expressed a desire for the much needed projects in the rest of the Borough to go ahead.

Policy and Organisation Board – 5 July 2023.

Manor Way Allotments

Members welcomed that the allotments were coming to fruition and that and welcomed the inclusion of plots that were raised for those with disabilities but it was hoped that plots could be included or adapted for other disabilities.

Members advised that at the Board they had requested costings for the provision of raised plots, this was estimated to be £40,000. Officers had been requested to consider other options of this being delivered as the quote seemed excessive.

Members welcomed the impact the plots would have on the waiting list, and recognised the plots would be ready in Spring 2023.

Members requested that investigations be made into bringing all overgrown and unused plots into use.

Bastion No. 1

The Council was advised that a successful event had been held on site, and that there were more planned. The Friends of Group would need to secure more funding but the grant was a promising start.

High Street Events.

Members welcomed that there were free, fun activities in the Borough for residents to enjoy.

RESOLVED: That the Part II Minutes of the

Community Board – 29th June 2023

Policy and Organisation Board – 25 April 2023

Policy and Organisation Board – 5 July 2023

Be received.

ANY OTHER ITEMS

The Council was required to appoint a Member to the outside body, Daedalus Heritage Action Group.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Beavis be nominated to the Daedalus Heritage Action Group.

The Council was advised that this was the last meeting at which the Chief Executive, David Williams would be in post. Members took the opportunity to thank and pay tribute to his work, and the legacy he would leave behind.

The Meeting concluded at 7.24pm

The Mayor.