

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD ON 17 JULY 2024 AT 6.00 pm**

Attendance:

The Mayor (Councillor Earle) (in the Chair)

Councillors Namdeo, Hayes, Ricketts, Ms Ballard, Bradley, Brown, Burgess, Casey, Chegwyn, Mrs Cully, Earle, Hammond, Herridge, Mrs Huggins, Hutchison, Hylands, Jessop, Johnston, Miss Kelly, Philpott, Raffaelli, Scard, Westerby, Maynard and Bradley

Also in attendance: Honorary Alderman Beavis

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

Apologies for non attendance were received from Councillors Cox, Durrant and Finn and Honorary Alderman Dickson and Hook.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Huggins advised that she was a member of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority and had a personal interest and would remain in the room and take part in the discussion and voting.

MAYORS COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor invited the newly elected Councillor Brown to introduce himself and reminded Members of the behavioural expectations within the Chamber.

TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON 29 MAY 2024

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 29 May 2024 be signed as a true and correct record.

DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no deputations.

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

Two Members questions were received. One in the name of Councillor Huggins to the Chairman of the Community and Environment Board.

Can the Environmental and Community Board Chair confirm when an update on the recent Alverstoke floods and a review of the situation including any section 19 investigation outcome or future consideration to mitigation measures be brought to the committee? and as confirmed at the last committee meeting, when the GBC website might be updated to inform residents of this?

Answer:

The Environment Agency do not have the funds to undertake the scheme and perhaps the new Government will support it, unlike the previous Government.

Gosport Borough Council Officers submitted the evidence to the Flood & Water Management Team at Hampshire County Council on 19 April 2024, as HCC are the Lead Local Flood Authority. The Flood & Water Management Team are still collecting evidence from organisations with regard to the Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 investigation, and at this time, no information has been shared with Council Officers or Elected Members on the progress or content of the investigation at this time. Perhaps as a County Councillor, Councillor Huggins could ask her colleagues to update.

The County Council publish the Section 19 reports on their website, and once the report is in the public domain, the GBC website will be updated with a link to the final report for Gosport residents.

Supplementary Question.

This is a wider question around flood prevention and mitigation, can the Chairman advise why there has been no update or publication of the climate change strategy since 2022. Was there nothing to report? Does the administration believe that it is not important or can the Chairman provide and update.

Answer: We all support the tackling of climate change, but the climate change officer's contract had come to an end.

We will look at the policy and if people have individual questions they are welcome to ask.

A question in the name of Councillor Hammond to the Leader of the Council.

Is the Leader aware of any change of Leadership among the three main parties of the Council?

Councillor Cully is doing an excellent job as the Leader of the Labour Group and I have heard a rumour that there is a change of Leadership in the Conservative Party and that Councillor Philpott has taken over from Councillor Burgess as the Leader of the opposition where he will remain for many years to come. Thanks to Graham Burgess for his time as Leader, after inheriting a poisoned chalice, whilst I did not always agree with him he worked hard and being the opposition Leader with no power but he served his residents well.

As there was no report on finalising the changes, and the names have to go to Council what were the proposals of the Conservative Group.

Councillor Philpott advised that this would be done at the point at which the item was discussed.

There was no supplementary question.

NOTICE OF MOTION - STANDING ORDER 3.2

The following motion was submitted to the Council, proposed by Councillor Hylands and seconded initially by Councillor Finn .Councillor Finn was unable to attend but Councillor Philpott agreed to second the motion in his absence.

Following the recent severe fire in Hill Park Road which is believed to have been caused by a lithium battery exploding, this Council resolves to support moves to promote the safe use, storage and disposal of lithium batteries.

This Council further supports the Parliamentary Bill being introduced by Lord Foster of Bath with cross-party support which calls on the Government to introduce measures into law to ensure greater safety in the use and disposal of lithium batteries.

Members reflected on the incident in Hill Park Road and a national warning video that advised such fires were often only a loud bang and then a substantial fire. As well as Hill Park Road there had been a significant fire at TJ Waste.

Members welcomed the safe use and safe storage of batteries and that there was cross party agreement for the motion.

The Council were advised that fire leaders were looking at this as well, as there was a large scale issue and that lithium batteries included vapes, powerbanks, car batteries, and were causing domestic incidents and large fires, as well as fires in refuse lorries from incorrect disposal.

Members felt that more work could be done to support educating around fire safety and lithium batteries and that as much information as possible should be put into the public domain. Members felt publication of safety devices such as charging bags should also be made.

RESOLVED:

That following the recent severe fire in Hill Park Road which is believed to have been caused by a lithium battery exploding, this Council resolves to support moves to promote the safe use, storage and disposal of lithium batteries.

The Council further supports the Parliamentary Bill being introduced by Lord Foster of Bath with cross-party support which calls on the Government to introduce measures into law to ensure greater safety in the use and disposal of lithium batteries.

PART II MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED: That the Council accept the Part II Minutes for the following Boards of the Council

Housing Board: 12 June 2024

Members welcome the positive statistics and acknowledged that work was underway to improve those at the lower end of the scale.

Members thanked officers for delivering quality service to customers and stressed the need for succession planning.

Work had been undertaken to develop the policy and it was commendable and notable that performance was better than neighbouring Boroughs.

Community and Environment Board: 19 June 2024

Members recognised the significant effort undertaken by staff, and support services such as GAFIRS, the Rotary Club and the church following the Alverstoke flooding and hoped that residents would get answers soon.

Members were assured that information would be placed on the website.

Policy and Organisation Board: 3 July 2024

Members welcomed the new housing complaints policy and it was advised that training had begun for staff and contractors and welcomed that complaint levels were low.

REPORT ON THE BOROUGH COUNCIL BY-ELECTION IN THE GRANGE AND ALVER VALLEY WARD HELD ON THURSDAY, 04 JULY 2024

Consideration was given to the report of the Returning Officer detailing the result of the recent by election in Grange and Alver Valley ward following the death of Councillor Maggie Morgan.

Members congratulated Councillor Brown on his election.

Members expressed concern that only 40% of the electorate had turned out to vote and that this was significantly increased as the poll was held on the same day as the Parliamentary General Election.

It was felt that it was the responsibility of all Councillors to engage people in the democratic process and in particular support those that didn't understand, to understand voting, the Council and the political process.

The report was noted.

PROPORTIONALITY REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer advise the Council of the balance of the seats on the Council following the Grange and Alver Valley by-election and the position with regard to Political Groups and to undertake a review in accordance with the "Proportionality Rules" of the balance of seats on the Boards and Committees of the Council.

A Member advised that they felt the recommendation was discriminating, and agreed with a previous statement from the Liberal Democrats that proportional representation should be used.

It was advised that the Liberal Democrats had lost a seat in the Local Elections but had not lost a seat on the Boards.

An amendment to the recommendation was made as follows:

That the Council approve the following allocation on Boards and Committees

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	TOTAL
Policy and Organisation	3	1	6	10
Community and Environment	3	1	6	10
Housing	4	1	5	10
Regulatory	4	1	5	10
TOTAL	14 (35%)	4 (10%)	22(55%)	40

This proposed allocation gives effect to the principles set out in Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It gives effect, so far as is reasonably practicable, to the four principles set out in Section 15 (5) of the Act.

This was proposed by Councillor Philpott and seconded by Councillor Raffaelli.

The Council was advised that effort should be made to apply all the principles and that this amendment did so by allowing all elected Members a seat on the Boards. The numerical position was amended to allow this to happen. The current report did not do this.

The purpose of the act was to ensure that the leading group held the majority on the Boards and the casting vote of the Chairman allowed for this and did so without discriminating against any elected Members. It was important that all of the elected Members were given the opportunity to represent the Wards they were elected to and this amendment would allow for that.

The recommendation was not inline with the principles and the amendment actually reduced the Conservative percentage representation, but allowed for each elected Member to sit on a Board.

Members recognised Councillor Brown's election and reiterated that overall the Liberal Democrat Group had lost a seat. The campaign had been fair and good. It was noted that former Mayor and Councillor Martin Pepper had joined the Labour Party and felt that he would not approve of the proposals presented. It was reiterated that the Council were an alternative arrangements Council, comprising Boards and Committees and that the proposals were not democratic.

A Member advised that the proposal was not in keeping with a democratic process as it limited participation, meaning a Member would only be able to participate in Full Council.

The Boards had smaller numbers to push through decisions and that the principles had been compromised.

A Member advised that the proposal did comply with the principles and that the proposed amendment was not legal. That the proposals in place were no different to the representation at the Conservative run County Council. Previously proportionality at Gosport Borough Council had been manipulated to push opposition Councillors on to Scrutiny boards.

A Member requested a point of order under Standing Order 4.11.11 that the County Council was not an alternative arrangements Council and that comparisons between the two should not be made.

A Member advised that bigger Boards would allow for more Councillors to participate, worked well and would allow the Labour Party a seat on each Board.

A Member advised separately that smaller Boards were more efficient, got work done and allowed business to move forward.

A Member requested that the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer confirm whether or not the proposed amendment was not legal.

The Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer advised that the amendment was not against the law but that it did not comply with it as a casting vote could not be deemed to be awarding a majority.

It was requested under Standing Order 4.12.4 that a named vote be undertaken on the amendment.

FOR the amendment: Councillors Burgess, Casey, Hayes, Huggins, Jessop, Namdeo, Philpott, Raffaelli, Ricketts, Scard. (10)

AGAINST the amendment: Councillors Ballard, K Bradley, M Bradley, Brown, Chegwyn, Cully, Hammond, Herridge, Hutchison, Hylands, Johnston, Kelly, Maynard, Westerby, The Mayor (15)

The motion was LOST.

A Member advised that they were delighted to have an extra seat as a result of the by election and that they accepted that the Borough Solicitor's recommendations were correct and satisfied the principles.

A Member reminded the Council that there had been a voice for Grange and Alver Valley prior to the by election and that it was important that everyone was represented.

It was requested under Standing Order 4.12.4 that a named vote be undertaken.

FOR: Councillors Ballard, K Bradley, M Bradley, Brown, Chegwyn, Cully, Hammond, Herridge, Hutchison, Hylands, Johnston, Kelly, Maynard, Westerby, The Mayor (15)

AGAINST: Councillors Burgess, Casey, Hayes, Huggins, Jessop, Namdeo, Philpott, Raffaelli, Ricketts, Scard. (10)

It was requested that accepting that the proposed proportionality had only just been agreed the Conservative Group be permitted to submit their amendments at a later date but that the Council be notified in writing. This would allow time for reflection and discussion and was agreed by the Council.

ANT OTHER ITEMS

There were none.

The Meeting concluded at 7.07 pm

The Mayor.