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## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 6.00 pm

Attendance:

The Mayor (Hutchison ) (in the Chair)

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

Also in attendance: Honorary Freeman Edgar and O'Neill, Honorary Alderman Carter, Dickson and Kimber.

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

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Gledhill and Huggins.

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### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Cully declared a non- pecuniary interest in the Capital Programme as her husband owned an allotment.

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### TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 20 JULY 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022 be signed as true and correct records.

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### TO CONSIDER ANY MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor advised that he wished to place on record his thanks to the team that had delivered the events that had occurred following the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

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### DEPUTATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO. 3.4 AND TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER NO.3.5

There were two deputations.

Mr More – Chairman of the Allotment Stakeholders Consultative Group and Chairman of the Gosport Allotments and Gardeners Association.

Council has sought to provide new allotment plots at the Manor Way site in Lee on Solent for a number of years.

The new allotments and a memorial garden were due to commence works this financial year.

The withdrawal of funding you are being asked to approve is the total for both the new allotment site and memorial garden at Manor Way.

I would ask to you to consider restoring enough funding to get the allotment site commissioned with the basics to get people working on a plot as soon as possible.

New plots take a lot of hard work.

This could be as simple as installing the access road, parking area and internal track to allow plot holders to deliver manure and sheds to their new plots.

Mother Nature does not wait for meetings or budget cycles. Plants and weeds will grow with the seasons. We too need to work with the seasons and this is digging season.

The benefits of allotment activity to individual health and especially mental health are widely recognised. There are over 400 people waiting for an allotment in Gosport and Lee On Solent. Manor Way will take 55 people of the list.

Additionally, in this cost of living crisis any help people can get to grow their own vegetables on an allotment is a positive step in reducing food costs. I am sure the Council will be respected for supporting its residents in this.

Finally, before HMQ passed away I had asked for this new site be named Platinum Jubilee Allotments to mark her long reign. I think this is still a fitting tribute but to do so means the site will need to start this year.

Mr Chapman – Chairman – DDay Fellowship

He advised that he was disappointed that the memorial at Stokes Bay had been cancelled when it was more important than ever to keep the stories alive. He advised that thousands of people had left from Stokes Bay and that as the remaining DDay Veterans were no longer with us it was important a memorial was created.

The soldiers that left from Stokes Bay were brave, and should be remembered as they were in other embarkation points around the coast.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that the fellowship had been established for 15 years and that they had been hoping for a memorial since the group had started.

There were four public questions.

#### Question 1

Mr Patrick Davies to Councillor Chegwyn - This Public Question draws on election campaign literature pamphlets where the LibDems itemised what it saw as the previous administration's failures. What is the Council (Council Leader) going to do differently to the previous administration and will it (the Council) make clear to the electorate what its agenda is for the current term.

Answer: We are going to do many things differently, we will be open, honest, efficient and transparent. We will keep promises and stay within budget, and listen to the public.

#### Question 2

Lesley Meenaghan to Councillor Chegwyn - The strategy to reduce violence against women & girls includes environmental changes. Good lighting is a contributing factor to help women & girls feel safe within their community. My question is what is the rationale behind the decision to withdraw the planned improved lighting in our parks and green spaces? This appears to be in conflict with the national drive to ensure good lighting to ensure communities feel safe.

Answer: The planned lighting improvements had not been withdrawn, there had been a budget for them for some time but the previous administration had not delivered them. There was still £200,000 in the budget. The County Council had withdrawn street lighting from 1am until 4am to the detriment of people's safety.

#### Question 3

Rob Thompson to Councillor Chegwyn - Many Gosport families cannot afford membership to a leisure centre. For many the parks and outdoor spaces are a valuable commodity where they can enjoy being active & healthy. Improved lighting in our parks & green spaces will ensure residents are able to enjoy these spaces for exercise & recreation throughout the dark winter months. Why would the council not fund this improved lighting as a priority to support the local community to be active in their community? This decision appears to be in conflict with the drive to ensure families lead healthy active lives.

Answer: The previous administration had years to implement their proposed changes but did not do so, they failed to deliver lighting to paths in Leesland and failed to deliver on other projects over the 12 years despite money being in the budget to do so.

#### Question 4

From Malcolm Chapman To Councillor Chegwyn - A Memorial is needed to give recognition to all those who departed these shores in the name of Freedom, some who paid the ultimate price.

The Proposed project has completed the Design and Planning Stages with associated costs and was awaiting Procurement.

It is shameful of this administration to cancel a long awaited and much-needed Memorial.

Question:

Why has the current administration removed the D-Day Memorial project from Capital Budget, given the progression status of the proposed project?

The memorial is not cancelled, it is long overdue. There are existing memorials at Hardway and the Canadian memorial. The previous administration failed to provide the memorial for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. After 78 years the disappointment was shared. There were veterans associations that supported such memorials and it is hoped something could be in place before all of the veterans were lost.

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

Members Questions

Councillor K Bradley to Councillor Chegwyn - 'What review has been undertaken of the Council's funding for Christmas decorations across the Borough and will Lee still receive a Council-funded Christmas Tree?

There will be a future review of all of the Christmas decorations, particularly after last year's tree had to be replaced as the quality was poor. The tree in Lee would be provided this year but it was acknowledged that other areas such as Alverstoke, Hardway and Bridgemary did not have their own trees. A review would be undertaken in the new year to look at ways to get businesses involved with the festivities.

Councillor Raffaelli to Councillor Chegwyn (Question and answer listed)

The Liberal Democrat administration has claimed that they have saved council taxpayers over £32,000 in Councillor Allowances when, in fact, the allowance increases that they voted through at the Council Meeting on 22 July 2022, which were over and above that recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel, has actually reduced the savings to Gosport residents which had already been delivered by the previous Conservative administration as presented to Council Meeting held on 2 February 2022 as part of the 2022/23 Budget. In order to set the public record straight, could Councillor Chegwyn please provide the following information:

"The total, annualised cost of Councillor Allowances, excluding travel expenses, at the following points in time:

1. 4 May 2022 (the day before the Local Elections – reflecting the costs prior to the implementation of the reduction in Cllrs from 34 to 28).
2. 6 May 2022 (the day after the Local Elections – reflecting the costs with 28 Cllrs as approved by the previous Conservative administration).
3. 20 May 2022 (the day after the Liberal Democrat administration carried a vote to reduce the number of Boards, reflecting the savings that could have resulted from implementing those Board reductions in themselves).

4. 20 July 2022

- a. The costs had the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations been approved as proposed by the Panel.
- b. The costs following the approval of the amendment submitted by Cllrs Chegwyn and Hylands as approved by the Liberal Democrat administration.

Answer: Councillor Raffaelli already has these figures.

Supplementary question:

The figures saw a reduction in £40000 following the election which was indicated in the budget for the previous year, this reduced by £15000 with the reduction in Board numbers. Implementing the proposals of the panel would have resulted in an increase of £14000, but the administration voted to add another £10000 to the allowances and claimed that they had saved £32000.

Will the Leader apologise for the misleading statement that money has been saved?

Answer: The allowances are a £32000 less than was spent the previous year under the previous administration.

Cllr Beavis to the Leader of the Council Cllr Chegwyn

Why in the Capital Programme has funding been withdrawn from the Manor Way Allotments and Rest Garden at a time when there is a huge waiting list for allotments in Gosport and the health and well-being of the community are central to our responsibilities as Councillors?

Answer: Nothing has been withdrawn, as advised to the depute. Some headings on the budget have been renamed and some have been removed. This is another failure to deliver by the previous administration and it is incorrect to blame the delays on Covid.

Supplementary Question:

Will the Leader of the Council write to the 418 people on the waiting list to advise why the funding for allotments has been withdrawn.

Answer: We would happily write to them advising them of the failings of the previous administration.

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

The PART II Minutes of the following Boards were presented and accepted by the Council.

Extraordinary Housing Board – 25 August 2022

Community and Environment Board – 21 September 2022

## **CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Treasurer detailing the revised Capital Programme 2022/23 - 2024/25.

Concern was expressed at the removal of funds for the renovation of the splash park at Stokes Bay. The site had been surveyed to establish the refurbishment that needed to take place and it was previously deemed that this would be the best option for the site.

The splash park had broken down this year and had not reopened and concern was expressed that if it broke down again it would not reopen at all.

The Council was advised that the splash park had broken down 72 times, 46 of which had been repaired by the same company and that it was time for a specialist to undertake repairs.

Analysis of costs had been undertaken and it would be cheaper to continue to repair the facility than to refurbish it. The Splash Park would be open in 2023 and the Council was determined to keep it open as a very popular, successful, affordable activity.

A Member expressed concern that £1.65 million was being spent on a cinema when other, larger chains, were in financial difficulty. Concern was expressed that this amount was a significant proportion of Council Tax payers' money, not just this year but for the next 3 years.

There was no business plan for the proposal to establish its financial viability and was a vanity project that Councillors were being asked to approve without the correct due diligence.

Members expressed concern that the meetings were being held in confidential session, at odds to the transparent and open claims of the administration and that it was not clear that the proposals would result in a loss to all of those that used sports facilities within the Borough, team sports, ice skaters, walkers, those wishing to use outdoor gyms would all be impacted.

Concern was also expressed that the spend to save initiative at Grange Farm was being removed.

A Members advised that there were cuts to play parks, sports pitches, allotments and lighting provision.

The Council was advised that significant meetings had taken place to ensure that the proposals were sound and were not based on guesswork. There were different pots of funding available such as CIL and developers contributions and that people were delighted to see the proposals come forward. It was not a vanity project but one that would deliver for Gosport residents and was a decision that was hoping to progress the Borough.

Members reiterated that there was concern over the lack of a business plan. The concept of an entertainment venue was to be commended, however, this was a significant risk that gambled with tax payer's money. Money the Council cannot afford to lose.

Members were advised that projects that had been worked hard on, that had undergone significant consultations with stakeholders were now being dismissed.

A Member advised that the administration had a can do attitude to getting things done within the Borough. There had been a good response to the proposals online, the proposal offered more to the Borough than APNR and Speed ramps in a car park. The public wanted a cinema and the arts and this had not been delivered, despite previous schemes promising them.

Concern was reiterated that there was no business plan and no market research on running such a venue. It was advised that attendance numbers would need to be significant for such a facility to break even, with individual number of visits required exceeding the number of residents in the Borough and reiterated that the removal of funds from other projects that would help health and wellbeing.

Members expressed concern at the loss of the proposed allotments in Lee on the Solent as the project had been worked on significantly and the potential to remove a significant number of people on the waiting lists and provide a community garden.

In addition it was noted that the instillation of the solar panels at Grange Farm would also be removed, reducing the efficiency of the country park and that the proposed project for the Criterion felt high risk in the current market and as a result was uncomfortable with the proposal without a viability statement.

A Member advised there had been opportunities to make improvements over the past 12 years and none had come forward. Toilets had been removed and improvements to facilities had not been undertaken.

Members thanked the Borough Treasurer for their significant work on the revised capital programme.

Members advised that the theatre was the last remaining theatre of its type and that the venue would be a multipurpose venue. It was acknowledged that there may need to be an element of private investment, but it was felt that the facility was too important to lose. There would be financial prudence to ensure the work could be undertaken and heritage grants would be researched.

The Council was advised that the subsequent paper to the Policy and Organisation Board was exempt as it contained commercially sensitive information.

In line with Standing Order 4.12.1 it was requested that the vote be recorded.

For the recommendation: Councillor Ballard, Mervin Bradley, Kirsten Bradley, Chegwyn, Cox, Cully, Durrant, Earle, Hammond, Herridge, Hylands, Johnston, Kelly, Marshall, Maynard, Pepper, Westerby, The Mayor

Against the recommendation Councillor Beavis, Burgess, Casey, Jessop, Morgan, Philpott, Raffaelli and Scard.

RESOLVED: That the recommendation be carried.



**ANY OTHER ITEMS**

There were none.

The Meeting concluded at 7.45 pm

The Mayor.