

24 May 2007

FOREST OF DEAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Forest of Dean District Council held at the Council Offices, Coleford on Thursday, 24 May 2007 at 7pm.

Present

Conservative Group

Councillors Sue Adams, Carole Allaway Martin, Peter Amos, Georgina Bensted, Grace Bensted, James Bevan, Dennis Dormer, David Easton, Maria Edey, Diana Edwards, Frankie Evans, Alastair Fraser, Terry Glastonbury, Nikki Goodlad, Terry Hale, Jane Horne, Jon Kay, Gabriella Kirkpatrick, Dr Richard Long, Patrick Molyneux, Alan Preest, Martin Quaile, Denis Riley, Brian Robinson, Venk Sheno, Marilyn Smart OBE, Marion Winship and Roger Yeates

Labour Group

Councillors Clive Brain, Max Coborn, Paul Hiett, Bruce Hogan, Di Martin, Graham Morgan, Lynn Sterry and David Thomson

Independent Group

Councillors Philip Burford, David East, Andrew Gardiner, George Read MBE, Des Saunders, Norman Stephens and Arthur Thomas

Liberal Democrat Group

Councillors Roy Birch and Heather Dalziel

Officers

Tim Perrin, Chief Executive

David Matthams, Deputy Chief Executive

David Durnell, Head of Organisational Development

Laurence Harding, Head of Legal and Democratic

Tonya Meers, Principal Solicitor

Peter Williams, Head of Planning

Tony Wisdom, Press and Public Relations Officer

Simon Harper, Julie Jones and Joanne Moore, Democratic Services

1. CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Mairilyn Smart OBE was nominated for the office of Chairman of the Council.

RESOLVED that Councillor Mairilyn Smart OBE be appointed to the office of Chairman of the Council for the 2007-08 civic year.

Councillor Mrs Smart stated that it was a privilege and an honour to be appointed chairman and she thanked fellow members for their support. She said that she had undertaken a number of roles in public life but the position of Chairman of the Council was without doubt the most important.

She believed that the May 2007 district election marked an historic change for the council and she looked forward to the prospect of cabinet style governance later in the year. She said that it was her ambition to make the district the best in Gloucestershire. She thanked former chairman, Councillor Frank Beard, and his vice-chairman, Councillor Graham Morgan who, she believed, had been fine ambassadors for the district.

2. VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Dr Richard Long was nominated for the office of Vice-chairman of the Council.

RESOLVED that Councillor Dr Richard Long be appointed to the office of Vice-chairman of the Council for the 2007-08 civic year.

Councillor Dr Long stated that it was an honour and a privilege to be appointed vice-chairman and he looked forward to working with all the members and officers in the interests of the district.

3. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Marion Winship was nominated for the office of Leader of the Council.

The leader will represent the council on the following bodies:

Forest of Dean Partnership

Gloucestershire Accountable Bodies Group

Gloucestershire Joint Improvement Board

LGA Gloucestershire

LGA South West

LGA General Assembly

South West Regional Assembly

The leader together with the deputy leader will be the elected member representatives on the CPA Improvement Board.

RESOLVED that Councillor Marion Winship be appointed to the office of Leader of the Council for the 2007-08 civic year.

4. DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Martin Quaile was nominated for the office of Deputy Leader of the Council.

The deputy leader will when required deputise for the leader on the bodies listed in minute 3.

RESOLVED that Councillor Martin Quaile be appointed to the office of Deputy Leader of the Council for the 2007-08 civic year.

5. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Keith Aburrow, Derek Biddle and Catherine Joyce.

6. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2007 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

7. URGENT BUSINESS

The chairman declined to accept an item of urgent business relating to Colliers Court, Cinderford. She indicated that she would be making an announcement regarding Colliers Court under item 9, chairman's announcements.

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Heather Dalziel declared a personal interest in item 12.2, appointments to community organisations, partnerships and local authority bodies, as she was a governor of the Royal Forest of Dean College.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

9.1. Past chairman's badge

The chairman presented a commemorative badge to Frank Beard, the retiring Chairman of the Council, in recognition of his service to the council.

9.2. New members

Following the district election on 3 May, the chairman welcomed new members and congratulated returning members on their re-election. She said that although the role of the elected member was hard work and challenging, it could be very rewarding. She hoped that new members would make every effort to attend training sessions.

9.3. Colliers Court

The chairman stated that she was aware of the current concerns regarding the possible closure of Colliers Court, Cinderford. She noted that the previous council had expressed support for retaining Colliers Court. She said that the Chief Executive would be writing in a similar vein to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP). This was the panel tasked by the Secretary of State for Health to review the proposal to centralise Gloucestershire's older people's mental health inpatient services.

The council had received a letter from the IRP encouraging responses from the local community on the proposals and this letter would be placed on the council website.

The chairman indicated that the Leader of the Council would be presenting a motion regarding Colliers Court at the next council meeting and she hoped that this would be supported by all the political groups.

10. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions had been received.

11. MEMBER QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Hogan

Could the Leader of the Council explain the controlling group's election pledge to cut the council's budget year on year by 3 per cent? Does this merely relate to the Gershon requirement to make 3 per cent cashable efficiency savings which is a government requirement on all councils, or does it relate to a real cut in budgets of 3 per cent and, if the latter, will inflation be allowed for?

Response from the Leader of the Council

The Conservative pledge is quite clear, we aim to cut the running costs of the council by at least 3 per cent, that is the total amount spent on bureaucracy and administration, not the total budget as Councillor Hogan suggests.

I don't think many people will find it surprising that Labour appear unable to differentiate between spending on red tape and spending on the services that matter to the people of the Forest of Dean District. We were overwhelmingly elected by the people of this district, who are sick of high running costs and wasteful use of taxpayers' money, and that is what we will be addressing.

12. MEMBER APPOINTMENTS

12.1. Appointments to committees

Consideration was given to report LD.54. Information providing details of the committee seat nominations by the political groups was circulated at the meeting.

***RESOLVED** to approve the appointments to committees, panels and working groups detailed at [appendix A](#) for the 2007-08 civic year.*

12.2. Appointments to community organisations, partnerships and local authority bodies

Consideration was given to report LD.55 relating to appointments to community organisations, partnerships and local authority bodies.

Answering a question, the Chief Executive confirmed that members who were previously appointed to thematic groups of the Forest of Dean Partnership could continue to attend meetings until the new appointments were determined.

RESOLVED

- a) To approve the appointments to community organisations, partnerships and local authority bodies detailed at [appendix B](#) for the four year term of the council.*
- b) To review the list of appointments and request a report for the council meeting on 19 July.*

13. SIZE OF COMMITTEES

Consideration was given to report LD.56 regarding proposals to reduce the size of the Executive Committee, the scrutiny committees and the Development Control Committee.

Members noted that any proposal to change the constitution needed to be referred to a future meeting of the council before it could be agreed.

Councillor Mrs Winship proposed and Councillor Mrs Horne seconded the recommendation in report LD.56 and requested that it be referred to the council meeting on 19 July.

RESOLVED that the following recommendation be referred to the council meeting on 19 July:

- a) *To amend procedure rule A3 (part IV) as identified in paragraph 2.2 of report LD.56 to reduce the number of members on the Executive Committee from 15 to 9, the scrutiny committees from 15 to 9 and the Development Control Committee from 21 to 15.*
- b) *To authorise the Monitoring Officer to make textual corrections to the constitution to reflect this change.*

14. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

14.1. Haylings Farm, Elton Lane, Elton (DF.12539/D)

Alterations and conversion of existing buildings to create a live/work unit with ancillary works. Alterations to vehicular access. Treatment plant drainage.

The following recommendation was made by the Development Control Committee on 3 April:

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO THE COUNCIL that permission be granted subject to a legal agreement and appropriate conditions.

In presenting report DC.113, the Head of Planning suggested that should members be minded to grant planning permission then he should be given delegated authority to approve the application to allow all the legal matters to be resolved.

Councillor Glastonbury proposed and Councillor Mrs Kirkpatrick seconded the following motion:

To authorise the Head of Planning to grant permission subject to a legal agreement and appropriate conditions.

Answering a question, the Head of Legal and Democratic advised that all members could vote as a training session had already been run on development control procedures.

Some members were opposed to the application as it was against council policy and could set a dangerous precedent. Particular concern was expressed regarding potential road safety issues arising from the development.

Other members supported the application and they believed that the council policy regarding live/work units was in need of review. They felt that farmers should be encouraged to diversify, particularly when they were looking to set up 'organic' enterprises.

A motion for a recorded vote was supported.

RESOLVED to authorise the Head of Planning to grant permission subject to a legal agreement and appropriate conditions.

The voting was as follows:

For (16) – Councillors Sue Adams, Peter Amos, James Bevan, David Easton, Alastair Fraser, Terry Glastonbury, Terry Hale, Jane Horne, Gabriella Kirkpatrick, Patrick Molyneux, George Read MBE, Des Saunders, Mairilyn Smart OBE, Norman Stephens, Arthur Thomas and Marion Winship

Against (9) – Councillors Roy Birch, Clive Brain, Heather Dalziel, Paul Hiett, Bruce Hogan, Di Martin, Venk Sheno, Lynn Sterry and David Thomson

Abstained (20) – Councillors Carole Allaway Martin, Georgina Bensted, Grace Bensted, Philip Burford, Max Coburn, Dennis Dormer, David East, Maria Edey, Diana Edwards, Frankie Evans, Andrew Gardiner, Nikki Goodlad, Jon Kay, Dr Richard Long, Graham Morgan, Alan Preest, Martin Quaille, Denis Riley, Brian Robinson and Roger Yeates

14.2. Sites' inspection panel

The Head of Planning advised members of the Development Control Committee that a sites' inspection panel would be held on Wednesday, 6 June.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm

Minutes prepared by Democratic Services

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