



Councillor Frank James (Mayor)

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

K M Aspin	B McKeown
J A Barron	A R McNaughton
F E Beatty	D M McNaughton
E L Carter	A Nixon
R P Cooke	L Nixon
A G Cooper	G P K Pardesi
B M Cross	J M Pert
M G Dodson	M Phillips
A P Edgeller	J S Powell
I D Fordham	J P Read
A T A Godfrey	A F Reid
A D Hobbs	J T Rose
J Hood	D P Rouxel
R A James	A J Sandiford
P W Jones	S N Spencer
R Kenney	J Thorley
P A Leason	M J Winnington
A M Loughran	

Officers in attendance:-

T Clegg	-	Chief Executive
I Curran	-	Head of Law and Governance
W Conaghan	-	Press and Communications Manager
J Allen	-	Democratic Services Officer

**C57 Minutes**

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 18 March 2025 were agreed as a true and correct record.

**C58 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P C Edgeller, E G R Jones, J Nixon and A N Pearce.

## **C59      Declarations of Interest**

Councillor M J Winnington and Councillor M G Dodson declared personal interests in Notice of Motion 7b, and stated that they would speak on the matter but would not vote.

Councillor M Phillips declared a personal interest in Notice of Motion 7b, but would still vote on the matter.

## **C60      Announcements**

The Mayor thanked those who had supported the Charity Lunch at Stafford College and the Race Night held at the Stafford Polish Club. Both events were successful and well supported.

The Mayor notified Members that the final fund raising event of the Mayoral Year would be the Black and White Charity Night on Friday 9 May at Stafford Rangers Social Club. Members were informed that tickets could still be purchased from the Mayor's Office.

## **C61      Notice(s) of Motion**

- (a) A Motion of Motion pursuant to Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules had been proposed by Councillors D P Rouxel and E L Carter as follows:-

### Net Zero 2035

In 2019, Stafford Borough Council declared a climate emergency and agreed a target date of 2040 to achieve net zero carbon emissions.

Good progress has been made towards achieving this goal. However, it is clear that global warming is increasing at a faster pace than anticipated with weather-related disasters occurring with greater frequency.

The Council's new climate strategy and Action plan set out the structure and mechanisms needed to take forward our approach to carbon reduction.

Given the growing threat posed by global warming we are determined to be more ambitious in reducing our carbon footprint and therefore agree to adopt a target of 2035 for achieving net zero carbon emissions.

RESOLVED:- that the motion had a financial impact and would be referred to Cabinet for consideration

- (b) A Motion of Motion pursuant to Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules had been proposed by Councillors M J Winnington and K M Aspin as follows:-

Supporting our Farmers

We, the undersigned, call on the Government and the Members of Parliament covering the Stafford Borough area to protect the interests of all of Stafford Borough's Farmers, and ultimately consumers, by calling on the government to:-

- Reverse the damaging changes to inheritance tax relief on agricultural property (the Family Farm Tax) introduced in Labour's Autumn Budget
- Reverse using agricultural land for solar panels rather than farming, to maintain food security for our country and locate solar in other more appropriate locations
- Restart the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) with immediate effect, as the flagship green farming scheme

And to more generally support and protect the farming industry from attack and the erosion of the industry itself.

We ask that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the three local MPs, to outline the Council's dismay at the decision to change inheritance tax, turn farm land over to solar panels and close the Sustainable Farming Incentive and ask that they reverse these decisions with immediate effect and bring in greater support for rural areas and in particular the farming community in Stafford Borough, who need support not attack.

Councillor A T A Godfrey circulated an amendment to the motion:

Council determines to write to the Members of Parliament covering the Stafford Borough area to draw their attention to the concerns felt by the local farming community in respect of the changes to inheritance tax relief on agricultural property introduced in the Autumn Budget and the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). The Council expresses its support for the farming community and its contribution to the Borough. It urges Government to give full support to measures designed to assist farmers to work sustainably and in a way that supports nature recovery.

Councillor R Kenney seconded the amended motion.

Following a debate, Members voted on the amendment to the motion which was declared to be carried.

Councillor D P Rouxel raised a further amendment to the motion:

The farmers of Stafford Borough perform a vital service for us all in growing crops and raising animals for our food and clothing. Yet in recent years governments have not appreciated this and the new government has further eroded confidence among farmers and the suppliers and contractors that support them.

We are a rural council and we have a large number of farming families who contribute to the economy of Stafford Borough, and farming can be a key driver for nature recovery and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Council resolves; that the Group Leaders of the Council write to the Members of Parliament covering the Stafford Borough area, the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to draw their attention to the concerns felt by the local farming community in respect of the changes to inheritance tax relief on agricultural property introduced in the Autumn Budget and the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and call upon the government to:

- Reconsider the thresholds for Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief to ensure that ordinary family farms are not penalised.
- Take action to plug the income gap left by the BPS cuts and the delayed rollout of the Agricultural Transition Plan schemes, and
- Restart the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) with immediate effect, as the flagship green farming scheme

The Council expresses its support for the farming community and its contribution to the Borough. It urges Government to give full support to measures designed to assist farmers to work sustainably and in a way that supports nature recovery.

The second amendment was seconded by Councillor J M Pert.

Councillor E L Carter proposed that the wording be changed to "The Leader of the Council writes to". This was seconded by Councillor J M Pert.

Members voted on the second amendment which was duly lost.

Returning to the original amendment, a vote took place and the amendment was carried.

RESOLVED:- that the Leader writes to the Members of Parliament covering the Stafford Borough area to draw their attention to the concerns felt by the local farming community in respect of the changes to inheritance tax relief on agricultural property introduced in the Autumn Budget and the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI). The Council expresses its support for the farming community and its contribution to the Borough. It urges Government to give full support to measures designed to assist farmers to work sustainably and in a way that supports nature recovery.

- (c) A Motion pursuant to Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules had been proposed by Councillors F Beatty and J M Pert as follows:-

Supporting our communities against the democratic deficit in the Planning and Infrastructure legislation

Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner MP, has recently published a Planning and Infrastructure Bill designed to liberalise planning rules. Some adverse spin-offs for the borough of the government's centralising ambitions to build 3.5 million homes include:-

- Denying our local communities their voice over decisions which have a profound impact on their lives.
- Stifling the powers of elected members to determine applications at planning committee meetings, severely restricting the role of elected members; and consequent removal of democratic accountability.

This will additionally remove the right of our communities to be heard in committee when decisions are made.

- Removal of councillors' ability to discuss, debate or vote on key developments in their localities, because of the proposed national scheme of delegation [Clause 46].
- Re-introduction of mandatory housing targets.
- More than doubling of housing delivery numbers in the Borough to 826 per annum.
- Loss of settlement boundaries around our Key Village Settlements, which manage development.
- Supposed justification for the failure of Stafford Borough to produce any new Local Plan in the past twenty-four months, despite inheriting a Plan at Regulation 18 stage.

- Lack of guarantees that new homes will be built to high quality standards to support rather than undermine people's health, wellbeing and life chances, nor to meet the needs of climate change, perpetuating the failings of the current large developer led poor-quality housing.

We believe that this legislation will cause a mass of unrestrained speculative development especially in the rural areas of our Borough, denying the authorities and neighbourhoods the care and attention to allow settlements to grow in a balanced and planned way, and critically without the appropriate infrastructure to meet these needs.

We ask that the Leader of the Council writes to the Deputy Prime Minister to request that the democratic role of local councillors is upheld, mandatory housing targets are made non-binding objectives based on actual determined local need rather than a notional moving of housing numbers from the Southeast and London and out of the cities to the rural areas; and that the voice of our communities in Stafford Borough is not marginalised over decisions which have a profound impact on their lives.

Councillor R Kenney proposed an amendment as follows:

We ask that the Leader writes to the Deputy Prime Minister on behalf of Council asking her to consider replacing mandatory housing targets with numbers based on determined local need, and that through development of a Local Plan, and the input of locally elected members, the residents of Stafford Borough enjoy a greater influence over important decisions that will have a profound impact on their lives.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor A F Reid.

Following a debate, a vote for the amendment to the motion took place with an equal number of votes for and against. The Mayor had the casting vote and the amendment was declared to be carried. The amended motion therefore took the place of the original motion and became the new substantive motion.

The new substantive motion was opened for further debate but no further amendments were moved. A vote was then taken on the new substantive motion and was lost.

The Head of Law and Governance advised that the normal procedure would be to move onto the next business if a substantive motion was lost.

Councillor R P Cooke moved "to proceed to the next business" which was seconded by Councillor A F Reid. Members voted to move to the next business on the agenda.

RESOLVED:- to proceed to the next business

## **C62 Corporate Plan 2025-26 - 2027-28**

Considered the report of the Head of Transformation and Assurance which had previously been discussed at Cabinet on 6 March 2025 (Minute CAB65).

Councillor A T A Godfrey introduced the report and noted the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2, with an additional recommendation to facilitate its implementation, before concluding his comments by moving that said recommendations be approved.

The proposal to approve the recommendations was seconded by Councillor A F Reid.

The matter was then debated and put to the vote and subsequently declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that:-

- (a) the Corporate Plan for 2025-26 to 2027-28 be approved
- (b) outline Priority Delivery Plans for 2025-26 - 2027-2028 be approved.

## **C63 Review of the Constitution**

Considered the report of the Head of law and Governance which had been recommended by the Resources Scrutiny Committee on 5 March 2025 (Minute RSC22).

Councillor R P Cooke introduced the report and noted the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2, with an additional recommendation to facilitate its implementation, before concluding his comments by moving that said recommendations be approved.

The proposal to approve the recommendations was seconded by Councillor J T Rose.

The matter was then debated and put to the vote and subsequently declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that the amendments to the Constitution be approved for implementation in the new Municipal Year

MAYOR