

BOROUGH OF BARROW-IN-FURNESS

A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL of this Borough was held at the Town Hall, Barrow-in-Furness at 5.30 pm. on Tuesday, 6th December, 2022.

PRESENT:- Councillor Preston (Mayor in the Chair) and Councillors Assouad, Biggins, Brook, Burns, Callister, Cassidy, D. Edwards, Gawne, Husband, McClure, McEwan, McLeavy, Maddox, Mooney, Morgan, Nott, Ronson, Seward, Shirley, C. Thomson, Wall and Zaccarini.

Officers Present:- Susan Roberts (Director of Resources), Debbie Storr (Head of Legal and Governance & Monitoring Officer), Jon Huck (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Sandra Kemsley (Democratic Services Officer) and Katie Pepper (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer).

54 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been submitted from Councillors Burley, H. Edwards, Hall, Hamilton, Johnston, Pemberton, Roberts, Robson, M. A. Thomson, Tyson and Worthington.

55 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or Dispensations

56 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 18th October, 2022 were taken as read and confirmed.

57 Announcements

There were no announcements from the Chair, Leader or Head of Paid Service.

58 Public Participation

No questions, representations, deputations or petitions had been received in respect of the meeting.

59 Redesignation of Interim Head of Paid Service and Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

The Head of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer reported that following the Chief Executive taking up her role as Chief Executive for Westmorland and Furness Council, consideration was needed to the appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer for the period from 31st December 2022 to 31st March 2023, to update the Interim Head of Paid Service designation and to update attestation of Common Seal.

Section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the Council to appoint an Officer of the Council to be the Returning Officer in local elections. Whilst no local elections were expected between now and the end of March 2023, there was always the possibility of a snap General Election, and the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) was also the Acting Returning Officer for UK Parliamentary Elections. Preparatory work would also be undertaken for elections to the new Barrow Parish Council.

Roles of the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer were typically combined and performed by a single person and were personal responsibilities, independent and separate from their duties as an employee of the Council.

Council had been requested to redesignate David Parr from Interim Head of Paid Service to Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service and to confirm him as signatory to the Council's Common Seal.

Councillor Shirley asked for clarification with regards to working days, and whether they would be remote working or in the Town Hall.

The Director of Resources replied that 3 days replaces the current 2 days and it was dependent upon need whether it was remote or in person (flexible).

Councillor D. Edwards questioned whether the current Chief Executive's contract was being terminated, was she still being paid by the Borough Council and would there be severance pay?

The Director of Resources replied that the Borough Council would pay the outgoing Chief Executive's salary up until 30th December and then Westmorland and Furness from 31st December. There would be no severance pay as once one employment stops the other starts.

Councillor Burns wished for it to be placed on record that the Council thanks Sam for all her hard work as Chief Executive for the Council. The Council had moved on since Sam had started as Chief Executive and she wished her Good Luck in her new post with Westmorland and Furness Council.

It was moved by Councillor Brook and seconded by Councillor Cassidy and it was,

RESOLVED:-

1. To appoint David Parr as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer with effect from 31st December 2022 in accordance with section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983;
2. To confirm that from 31st December 2022 the Interim Head of Paid Service be redesignated as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service;
3. To note that the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service has authority to attest the Council's Common Seal; and
4. To note that the Monitoring Officer would update the Proper Officer appointments and constitution to reflect those changes.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

60 Planning

It was moved by Councillor C. Thomson, and

RESOLVED:- That the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 25th October and 15th November, 2022 be received.

61 Licensing Regulatory

It was moved by Councillor Callister, and

RESOLVED:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Regulatory Committee held on 3rd November, 2022 be received.

62 Executive

It was moved by Councillor Brook, and

RESOLVED:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9th November, 2022 be received.

Councillor Shirley asked the following question re: Pages 213 - 214, Minute No. 72 – UKSPF Year 1 Progress

“Following a walk around in Dalton with the local member for Walney (Councillor Callister), Town Councillor Taylor and Dalton Town Clerk - Can the Chair advise if the Council has engaged with local suppliers and can he provide an update as to the progress of this work?”

Councillor Brook advised Councillor Shirley that he would provide a written update.

63 Audit and Governance

It was moved by Councillor Burns, and

RESOLVED:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 20th October, 2022 be received.

64 Overview and Scrutiny

RESOLVED:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd November, 2022 be received.

65 Questions to the Leader of the Council

No questions had been submitted to the Leader of the Council under notice as required by Standing Order 10.2 and 10.4.

No questions had been asked at the meeting.

66 Notice of Motion Under Rule 11

The following motion had been moved by Councillor Callister and seconded by Councillor McEwan, signed and submitted to the Council with Notice under Rule 11:-

This Council is deeply aware of the pressure facing residents and businesses across Barrow-in-Furness due to the cost of living crisis. Households, schools, health services and businesses are faced with successive and unaffordable price rises in fuel and energy and removal of additional benefit support, with the resultant increases in costs and prices across the board. The Council notes the energy policy announced on 8th September, and further notes that the ‘typical home’ will

still be paying more than twice as much this winter for energy compared to last winter. In rural areas the Council notes the increases in fuel costs further impact the costs incurred by residents, farmers and all businesses in travelling to shops, health centres, markets and customers. The Council notes the impact of all these additional costs combined with real terms pay cuts and the steady removal of support for families under pressure.

The Council urges central government further to support our residents, businesses and services:-

1. To take immediate action to freeze the price cap at April's rate, stop further increases in the price of fuel, including solid fuel, LPG and fuel oil as well as electricity and gas prices, and to tax energy firm's profits;
2. To immediately reduce VAT, including VAT on energy bills;
3. To bring back the supplement to Universal Credit; and
4. To implement immediate financial help/relief for small businesses to prevent imminent closures and job losses.

The Council calls for a local Cost of Living Emergency Summit building on the work of, for example, the Cumbria Poverty Working Group, with stakeholders, including Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Local Trade Unions, Town and Parish Councils and Chambers of Commerce and local MPs to explore how more local help can be provided for those struggling with the cost of living.

Councillor Callister requested the Chair of the Executive Committee to make sure this motion is moved forward to the Leader of the Council with a timescale for implementation (suggested 6 weeks).

Councillor Burns stated that families are not coping; the use of people using Foodbanks has soared. Residents are feeling the effects of health and housing inequality. The Government needs to step in and freeze utility bills; bring back the supplement on Universal Credit and support the campaign for free school meals for all children.

Councillor McLeavy supported the motion. The fuel rise is far more than twice as much compared to last winter. The Government needs to be stepping in.

Councillor Brook replied that the Council will write to the Minister and bring together local partners.

Councillor McEwan stated that nobody was against the motion. It's the 21st Century nobody should here asking for such a motion to be brought forward. People should not be having to leave their homes to visit Warm Spots. 1,000's of village halls are being closed due to the rise in costs. We need to take into account rural areas.

Councillor Callister stated that he agreed with all Councillors comments.

RESOLVED:- It was unanimously agreed to support the motion.

The meeting closed at 5.56 pm.