

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council** held at the **New Council Chamber - Town Hall, Reigate** on **Thursday, 28 July 2022 at 7.30 pm.**

Present: Councillors R. Absalom (Deputy Mayor), T. Schofield (Deputy Leader), T. Archer, R. H. Ashford, H. Avery, J. Baker, R. Biggs, M. S. Blacker, J. Booton, G. Buttironi, P. Chandler, V. Chester, Z. Cooper, J. C. S. Essex, P. Harp, R. Harper, N. D. Harrison, G. Hinton, J. Hudson, E. Humphreys, A. King, S. A. Kulka, V. H. Lewanski, S. McKenna, N. C. Moses, C. M. Neame, S. Parnall, A. Proudfoot, R. Ritter, K. Sachdeva, S. Sinden, C. Stevens, M. Tary, R. S. Turner and S. T. Walsh

Attended remotely: Councillors M. Elbourne and C. Thompson

12 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 26 May 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

13 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adamson, Mrs Bramhall, Bray, Brunt, James King, Michalowski and Torra.

14 Declarations of interest

The Head of Paid Service made a declaration of interest in Agenda Item 8 (Recommendations for decision).

15 Urgent business

There was no urgent business to be taken by the meeting.

16 Public questions

A question was asked by Mr Christopher Whinney about electric vehicle charging points. A response was given by Councillor Lewanski, the Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Resources, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2.14.

Note: For more information on the response to Council questions, please see the following page on the Council's website:



<https://reigate-banstead.moderngov.co.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13260>

17 Petition: Condemn Crispin Blunt MP for saying people didn't follow Covid lockdown rules

The lead petitioner, Mr Laurie Calverley, introduced the petition making the following points:

- The petition had received 419 online signatories in addition to 88 in-person.
- It was a response to comments made by Crispin Blunt MP on BBC Radio4 and BBC Question Time that in most homes and businesses many have not stuck to lockdown rules.
- This was in stark contrast to available evidence with as few as 3% of the population not complying at the outset of the pandemic which only rose to 12% prior to lockdown restrictions being lifted.
- The comments made by Crispin Blunt MP had caused anger. The petitioner had lost his father in June 2020 having not been able to see him for several months. Many vulnerable people had died alone. Thankfully it had been possible to hold a funeral for his father but only with a handful of people in attendance. It was appreciated that this was not a unique scenario. This was shared not to gain sympathy but to demonstrate the level of compliance.
- The petitioner had been involved in the Borough's mutual aid initiative which had provided support to residents throughout the pandemic. He was aware of the extent of support provided by the Council.
- It was thought that Public Health messaging would be undermined by the comments made by Crispin Blunt MP potentially undermining future compliance.
- The petition sought to provide an opportunity to thank residents for their compliance with lockdown restriction, to show that the comments made were not representative as well as highlighting that they were potentially damaging in the face of rising Covid numbers.

Councillor Schofield, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance & Governance, provided the Portfolio Holder's response to the petition. It was thought that Crispin Blunt MP should have chosen his words more carefully and expressed regret in the statement provided to the Council and published as part of the Agenda for the meeting. Reigate and Banstead Borough Council had already publicly declared its thanks and respect to residents for all they had done during the pandemic. It was being recommended that the Head of Paid Service release a full press statement describing the contribution of residents through the pandemic. Additionally, that the Council write and publish a letter to Crispin Blunt MP condemning his remarks.

The petition was then debated. Councillor Stevens stated:

- Crispin Blunt MP had made other inappropriate public comments (for example, in defence of Imran Ahmad Khan).
- It would have been advisable for Crispin Blunt MP to have looked at his constituency to have gained a more informed view about compliance with lockdown regulations.

Councillor Chandler added:

- The response from Council staff during the pandemic had been exemplary. This included those who took on frontline roles to check on vulnerable residents.

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- Those who had followed lockdown restrictions were extremely cross at the pattern of behaviour in Downing Street and at the suggestion most people may not have kept absolutely to the rules.
- Residents of the Borough deserved better in their public representation and national leadership.

Councillor Essex contributed:

- The petition had been brought at a time of lies and cover-ups in Westminster. Trust needed to be rebuilt which required having the humility to say when you were wrong, express regret and apologise.

Councillor Schofield responded to the debate by noting the unanimity of feeling generated by the petition. A motion in response to the petition was proposed by Councillor Schofield and seconded by Councillor Biggs.

RESOLVED that the response to the petition should be for:

- The Head of Paid Service to release a full press statement describing the contribution of residents of the Borough throughout the difficult days of the pandemic; and
- The Council to publish a letter to Mr Crispin Blunt MP condemning his remarks.

18 Questions by Members

Fifteen questions with notice were received from Members of the Council. Following the publication of the addendum to the agenda, the question from Councillor Buttironi was withdrawn. Two questions were additional, and Councillor Torra was not present to ask her question. Oral responses were therefore received at the meeting to the first 11 questions with written responses provided to questions 12 to 14 in accordance with Procedure Rule 2.15.8.

	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1.	Councillor Walsh	Councillor Schofield, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance & Governance	Council reserves
2.	Councillor Essex	Councillor Schofield, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance & Governance	Charities paying business rates
3.	Councillor McKenna	Councillor Lewanski, The Executive Member for Corporate Policy & Resources	Support for fuel bill costs
4.	Councillor Ritter	Councillor Sachdeva, on behalf of Councillor Mrs Bramhall, the Executive Member for	Children's play areas

		Neighbourhood Services	
5.	Councillor Sinden	Councillor Humphreys, on behalf of Councillor Mrs Bramhall, the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Allotments
6.	Councillor Booton	Councillor Schofield, on behalf of Councillor Mrs Bramhall, the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Recycling
7.	Councillor Chandler	Councillor Biggs, the Executive Member for Planning Policy & Place Delivery	Green Belt protection
8.	Councillor Chester	Councillor Biggs, the Executive Member for Planning Policy & Place Delivery	Gatwick consultation
9.	Councillor Proudfoot	Councillor Archer, the Executive Member for Investment & Companies	Commercial venture funding
10.	Councillor Baker	Councillor Sachdeva, the Executive Member for Leisure & Culture	Swimming at Horley Leisure Centre
11.	Councillor Stevens	Councillor Neame, the Executive Member for Housing & Support	Safeguarding
12.	Councillor Sinden	Councillor Ashford, the Executive Member for Community Partnerships	Cost of Living Officer
13.	Councillor Baker	Councillor Sachdeva, the Executive Member for Leisure & Culture	Christmas lights working group
14.	Councillor Torra	Councillor Biggs, the Executive Member for Planning Policy & Place Delivery	Demolition of affordable homes

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The Head of Paid Service left the meeting having already declared her interest in the item.

At the invitation of the Mayor, Councillor Lewanski, in his capacity as the Chair of the Employment Committee, introduced the recommendations arising from the meeting held on 19 July 2022 as reflected in the minute provided in the Agenda pack.

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Employment Committee from its meeting on 19 July 2022 (Minute 11/to adopt the changes to the Head of Paid Service terms and conditions), be adopted.

RESOLVED that the recommendation of the Employment Committee from its meeting on 19 July 2022 (Minutes 11/that Pat Main be appointed to the Section 151 statutory role on a permanent basis), be adopted.

20 Statements

A statement was made by Councillor Neame, the Executive Member for Housing & Support, regarding affordable housing.

Concern was expressed about misinformation being distributed which was undermining the work of the Council. Housing targets for both private and affordable housing had been exceeded. This achievement had been supported by the Council's £8m investment and a £1.6m Homes England grant into 32 affordable rental homes in Redhill. Additionally, the Council had built 25 properties in the north of the Borough which would provide a mix of market sales, help to buy and shared ownership properties.

Work was continuing with four self-contained bungalows which would be completed shortly, partnership working with the YMCA to deliver a multiple occupancy home in Horley and an agreement to provide a large fund to assist Raven Housing to build net zero-carbon social housing.

A proposal for a further £4m of funding would be brought to the Executive in September 2022 which it was intended would be used to ensure homeless families and singles could be housed within the Borough to retain their local networks.

21 Leader's announcements

Apologies had been received from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brunt with Councillor Schofield, the Deputy Leader of the Council, deputising. Councillor Schofield had no announcements.

22 Mayor's announcements

The Mayor noted the many events he had attended since taking up his role in May 2022. The enjoyment from meeting many residents and being shown how they *Be The Difference* were specifically noted. Encouragement was given to the Members of Council to get involved in Mayoral events, especially those held in their Wards.

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Special thanks were given to all those who had contributed to the success of the events held to celebrate Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. Green Spaces, Environmental Health, Street Cleansing and Roads were specifically mentioned along with The Harlequin, the Communications Team and the Mayor's Office.

All the entrants to the Volunteer Awards were congratulated with the difficulty of choosing a shortlist highlighted. The awards ceremony was to be held on Tuesday 27 September 2022 at the Harlequin Theatre.

It was noted that one of the Mayor's chosen charities, the *Include Choir* had been recognised for its work with a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

Several forthcoming events were noted:

- 9 – 18 September 2022: Heritage Open Day (including Reigate Town Hall opening to the public on Saturday 10 September 2022).
- Sunday 18 September: Run Reigate. The Mayor asked to be contacted by anyone interested in participating and raising funds for his charities (*Include Choir* and East Surrey Hospital's charity, *SASH*).
- Sunday 17 December 2022: the Mayor's Christmas Carol Concert at Holy Trinity Church, Redhill.
- Saturday 28 January 2023: a traditional Burns Night supper.
- Saturday 13 May 2023: the *Dress to Impress* Mayoral Ball.

The meeting finished at 9.06 pm