

STROUD TOWN COUNCIL  
**Minutes of the meeting of COUNCIL**  
**15<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 7.30pm**  
**Congregational Church Hall, Bedford Street, Stroud**

**Present**

Cllrs Shyam Ananthan, Geoffrey Andrews, Sally Brooks, Tony Davey, David Drew, Mick Fealty, Susan Fenton, Jeremy Green, Liz Hillary, Chris Minett, Simon Jacobson, Adrian Oldman, Val Saunders, Louisa Stinton and Lucas Schoemaker.

**In attendance**

Helen Bojaniwska (CEO), Kate Montgomery (Deputy CEO), Kate Buckingham (Communications and Engagement officer), Kathy O'Leary (Chief Executive, Stroud District Council), Stroud District Councillors Natalie Rothwell-Warn and Cath Moor; and one member of the public

**Absent**

Cllr Karl Dürr-Sorensen

**1. To receive apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Craig Horrocks and Dee Nolson (both personal)

**2. To receive declarations of interest or requests for dispensations**

No interests were declared. There were no requests for dispensations.

**3. Minutes of the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

The minutes of the Council meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 were **approved** by the members present and signed by the Mayor.

**4. Mayor's remarks**

The Mayor reported on his recent attendance at the following meetings: Stroud Safe; Stroud District Council – Vitality Fund; welcoming new Neighbourhood Police Inspector and PC; Stroud District Community Safety Partnership; the opening of the Secret Garden at the Stroud Hotel; Stroud Sea Cadets; the Book Festival launch and finally Stroud Show which had been very well attended.

He had also met with the Young Marketeers alongside the Deputy Mayor, and congratulated them on their enthusiasm and the skills that they had learnt through growing and selling their own vegetables.

The Mayor reported that he had been using his Mayor of Stroud Facebook page to promote Council activities. It was noted that the blog is also shared on the Council website.

Following up on an enquiry made 12 months ago, the Mayor had now received confirmation from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office that vacancies in the CCTV monitoring team were now being filled.

**5. Questions from members of the public**

Kardien Gerbrands made a representation about Stroud Goodwill. The Mayor agreed to meet with him to discuss further.

## **6. Chief Executive of Stroud District Council**

Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive of Stroud District Council, was welcomed to the meeting and gave a presentation on topics that had been suggested by councillors relating to: the District Council's vision for Stroud town regeneration; partnership working; car parking and anti-social behaviour.

Ms O'Leary confirmed that the economy, recovery and regeneration are priorities for the District Council and reported that following the recent election their strategic plans were being reviewed and updated. She felt that the work done on the Levelling Up Fund bid was now bearing fruit and noted that nationally 70% of applications had been unsuccessful. The partnership work on the submission had focussed minds on regeneration and led to improved relationships with other organisations, particularly from the rail industry. Positive outcomes included: refurbishment of the bridge at the station, funding for step free access across the platforms, the purchase of the Goods Shed and developments at Cheapside.

With regard to partnership working Ms O'Leary felt that the District Council had become more outwardly focused since her appointment as Chief Executive, she felt that the Council was now a good, listening partner and celebrated the establishment of the Vitality Fund which would be available to towns across the District. She recognised that Stroud Town Council had not always been satisfied with the District Council's support for the town, but recent partnership meetings were felt to be a positive development.

With regard to funding Ms O'Leary felt that the District Council had done relatively well in recent government settlements and other sources of funding, for example Homes England, but was looking forward to hearing what the new government's approach would be, especially with regard to capping.

ASB was reported to be a priority of the Stroud District Community Safety Partnership and improvements were being made, for example through funding for SOLACE.

Ms O'Leary recognised that Stroud residents feel hard done by because it is the only town where parking is not free. She reflected on the fact that in 2018 the District Council had proposed introducing charges across the main towns in the area and noted that there are ongoing discussions about managing demand in other areas, but dropping charges would mean cuts in other services.

In conclusion Ms O'Leary felt that the town and district were entering a new era in which the councils would need to work closely together. Questions were raised as follows.

Cllr Davey asked about the reduction in numbers of Neighbourhood/Community Wardens. Ms O'Leary felt that number had been the same for some years and noted that the Council were now investing in many staffing areas that had previously been axed, for example regeneration and tourism. The Community Safety team were working on solutions for supporting residents experiencing ASB on estates where council and private homes are mixed.

There had been issues with some parishes refusing to contribute to the cost of the warden services, but ultimately this was a discretionary service. The CEO (Town Clerk) reported that the Town Council had not been invoiced for their contribution for several years. A request was made for the wardens' photos and contact details to be restored to the District

Council website. Ms O'Leary acknowledged that the recent website development had created some problems.

Cllr Drew raised a concern about the standard of grass cutting at Stratford Park.

Cllr Fealty raised some issues about the delivery of council housing and noted that hard choices needed to be made, for example whether to build new homes, and retrofitting.

Cllr Oldman raised a concern about projects discussed at the Regeneration Working Group not being delivered.

The Mayor thanked Ms O'Leary for attending and welcomed her decision to stay to hear about the council's relocation plans later in the meeting.

**Actions:** Kathy O'Leary to report back on questions relating to invoicing for warden contributions, wardens' photos on the District Council website; grass cutting at Stratford Park and delivery of projects discussed at the Regeneration Working Group.

#### **7. To receive reports from County and District Councillors (for information only)**

District Councillor Schoemaker reported that the Council are working on an emergency accommodation strategy. He celebrated the Council's investments in play areas and a £2.7m investment programme at Stratford Park. A question was raised about charges for pavement licenses.

**Action:** CEO to investigate charges for pavement licenses and report back.

District Councillor Ananthan reported that the induction training for new councillors had been very good. She advised that she had been appointed to roles relating to Armed Forces, and Equality and Diversity.

District Councillor Moore circulated a written report and advised that she had been appointed as the Council's Home-Start representative. She asked whether the Uplands Community Hub could be accommodated at the Town Council's new premises. The CEO confirmed that this would be considered but no decision could yet be made.

District Councillor Rothwell-Warn noted that all of the district councillors representing Stroud wards have been appointed to the same committees, so their reports would probably overlap.

County Councillor David Drew reported that a meeting would be held with local residents about a proposal to convert Southfield House into a home for children in care and care leavers. It was noted that local residents are concerned about the size of the facility. He was worried about the closure of the Uplands Play Group and the shortage of groups for local children.

#### **8. CEO's Report**

The CEO's report was noted.

#### **9. To approve a contract for the sale of Thanet House**

It was **resolved** to approve a contract for the sale of Thanet House and the CEO was given delegated authority to approve any minor adjustments to the price if essential.

**Action:** CEO to progress sale

**10. To approve a contract for the purchase of Locking Hill surgery**

The CEO reported that a reduction in the purchase price previously reported had been agreed in recognition of the cost of remedying a structural defect. It has not been possible to obtain a copy of an Environment Agency report on the culvert so engineers had been booked to do a survey later in the week.

Subject to confirmation that the culvert is in an acceptable condition it was **resolved** to approve a contract for the purchase of Locking Hill surgery for £525,000.

**Action:** CEO to progress purchase

**11. To receive a progress report on plans for relocation to and refurbishment of Locking Hill Surgery, and interim office provision**

A progress report was noted.

The following items were reordered.

**12. To receive a presentation on design work for Locking Hill surgery**

Architect Tom Sykes from Extended Studio gave a presentation on design work for the new council offices and depot. Three options had been drafted, but a flexible approach was felt to best meet the Council and community needs. The designs include on the upper floor: a flexible space for the council chamber and a light, open-plan workspace; and on the lower floor: a workspace for the Green Spaces team; a shower and community spaces.

Sustainability and accessibility (both in terms of mobility and being welcoming to all) had been prime considerations in the design, which would help to change the perception of the building as a doctors' surgery. There would be potential to rebuild the approach the building, include a new entrance and creating a new stepped access if funds allow.

The next steps would include working on a phased plan to allow staff to relocate while works are progressed.

**13. To approve a contract for design work**

It was noted that Financial Regulations normally require 3 quotations for contracts greater than £8,000, but there an exception for emergency situations is detailed in paragraph 11.1.

In view of the urgency of progressing the refurbishment of the Locking Hill building, using specialist services it was **resolved** to award a contract for a "Curated Workspace" at 8.5% of construction costs with an estimated total cost of £23,375 to Extended Studio. It was noted that community engagement elements can be managed in house.

**14. To receive a report on refurbishment projects at Lansdown Hall**

A progress report on internal works and window repairs was noted.

It was **agreed** to authorise a contract for the supply of four additional windows, installation of six windows, scaffolding and a pavement license at a total cost of £8,930.

**15. To approve a new policy on violence and challenging behaviour**

A new policy on violence and challenging behaviour was **approved**.

**16. To receive a verbal update on staff recruitment**

The CEO reported that the Programme Manager post had been filled, subject to contract. Interviews for the Community Development Support Officer and Business Administration Apprentice roles had been arranged. The Fundraiser post was still being advertised.

**17. To receive the Minutes of the Town Meeting and Awards Evening held on Wednesday 22nd May 2024 at Cotswold Playhouse**

The minutes were noted.

**18. Committee reports**

The following reports, previously circulated, were received.

Consultations & Highways Committee	20 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 and 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Environment Committee	21 <sup>st</sup> May 2024
Finance and Policy Committee	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2024
Lansdown Hall WG	10 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Community Committee	10 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Regeneration Working Group	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2024

**19. Exclusion of press and public**

It was **resolved** in view of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed to exclude the press and public for the rest of the meeting.

**20. Update on legal matter**

The CEO reported on successful court action taken to secure a right of access to repair a water pipe on neighbouring property.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm.

Chair.....

Date.....