**Mansfield District Council**

**Council Minutes**

**Date: Thursday 7 January 2021 Time: 6:00 PM Place: Virtual Meeting**

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| **Present:** | **Executive Mayor Andy Abrahams, Councillor Lee Anderson, Councillor Sinead Anderson, Councillor Barry Answer, Councillor Debra Barlow, Councillor Mick Barton, Councillor Ben Birchall, Councillor Stephen Bodle, Councillor Marion Bradshaw, Councillor Andrew Burgin, Councillor Terry Clay, Councillor John Coxhead, Councillor Bill Drewett, Councillor Mark Fretwell, Councillor Stephen N. Garner, Councillor Teresa Hanstock, Councillor Vaughan Hopewell, Councillor Brian Lohan, Councillor Ann Norman, Councillor Stuart Richardson, Councillor Dave Saunders, Councillor Philip Shields, Councillor John Smart, Councillor David M Smith, Councillor June Stendall, Councillor Roger Sutcliffe, Councillor Sue Swinscoe, Councillor Andrew Tristram, Councillor Sidney Walker, Councillor Stuart Wallace, Councillor Sonya Ward, Councillor Andy Wetton, Councillor Craig Whitby, Councillor Martin Wright** |
| **In Attendance:** | **H. Barsby, S. Hall and M. Pemberton** |

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|  | **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** |
|  | Councillors Fisher, Redfern and Sissons |
| **21/01** | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** |
|  | There were no declarations of interest |
| **21/02** | **EXTRACT MINUTE FROM THE POLLING PLACES REVIEW COMMITTEE - ELECTORAL REVIEW** |
|  | It was proposed by Councillor Swinscoe and seconded by Councillor Burgin that the recommendation from the Polling Places Review Committee, that the Council’s submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission on council size comprise of 36 single member wards be approved.  In proposing the motion, Councillor Swinscoe reminded Members that the Local Government Boundary Commission had informed the Council last year that it would undertake an electoral review of the Council, which had been triggered due to electoral imbalances which had arisen in more than 30% of the Council’s wards.  Council was advised that a working group of the Polling Places Committee had met on a number of occasions in November and December 2020 and considered a variety of information which related to the Council’s Executive, Scrutiny and Statutory decision making arrangements, which was used to assist the members to make recommendations to the Committee on the future council size and ward arrangements.  An initial survey on the electoral review was completed by 28 members and all the respondents were supportive of the retention of single member wards. In addition, 71% felt that 36 wards should be retained. The reasons for the retention of single member wards and 36 councillors are contained in the report circulated to members.  Four options on council size were considered by the working group all of which took into account the availability and demands on non-executive councillors, to undertake the Council’s overview and scrutiny and statutory committee functions once the Elected Mayor had appointed their Cabinet.  Members also considered whether the current structure of the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees was appropriate and whether there was any scope to amend it. Members agreed that any changes in the structure would impact on the ability of non-elected members to hold the Executive to account and could place additional burdens on the development of the Policy Framework and budget, all of which would be detrimental to the Council.  The important role of elected members representing their communities and residents was acknowledged and that the demands of this role would vary between wards and how members undertook this role. Members agreed that the deprivation level of a ward would have a significant impact on the amount of constituency issues raised with the ward councillor and that these councillors would have a larger and more diverse caseload than those representing more affluent wards.  A second survey of members found that 65% of respondents considered their ward to be deprived and that in these wards, the elected member was the first point of contact to assist with issues as opposed to seeking support from other sources.  Members also felt that the on-going Covid 19 pandemic had significantly impacted on how Councillors undertook their community leadership role and that the significant effects on employment and deprivation in the district would be felt for a number of years. While technology and digital meetings had been used during this time, to ensure that all members were able to continue with their community responsibilities, it was noted that not all residents were comfortable with technology and that personal contact was preferred by some electors, which impacted members.  The electoral forecast for the district anticipated a growth in electors to up 2027 of approximately the equivalent of two wards. Members agreed that any reduction in the number of Councillors from the current 36, would adversely affect the ability of members in the future to represent the ward effectively, when this was combined with the forecasted increase in the electorate and that this would be have the greatest impact deprived areas of the district.  As an amendment it was proposed by Councillor Wright and seconded by the Elected Mayor -  That the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission on council size be comprised of no less than 36 single member wards and that the Commission are asked to fully consider the future expected growth over the next 10-12 years when making their recommendation on Council size.  In proposing the amendment Councillor Wright sought to strengthen the original motion, by asking the Boundary Commission to take into account the forecast population growth beyond the date required by the review, but to that anticipated up to 2033 as set out in the Local Plan. Anything less than 36 members would be unacceptable and would impact on decision taking and the ability of elected members to effectively represent their wards and constituents.  Several members spoke in favour of the amendment in that there was a need to look and plan further ahead that the five years sought by the review due to the forecast development beyond this date.  On the amendment being put to the vote, the Chair announced that the amendment had been carried unanimously.  On the substantive motion being put to the vote, the Chair announce that it had been carried unanimously.  RESOLVED - That the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission on council size be comprised of no less than 36 single member wards and that the Commission are asked to fully consider the future expected growth over the next 10-12 years when making their recommendation on Council size. |
| **21/03** | **MOTIONS** |
|  | It was proposed by Councillor Burgin and seconded by Councillor Barlow that the Executive Mayor writes to Keith Williams, Chairman of Royal Mail on behalf of the Council to ask that:  1. the decision to close the Warsop Sorting Office is reviewed to seriously consider the significant impacts this closure would have; and  2. that any decision to close Post Offices or Sorting Offices within the Mansfield area are carefully considered to assess the impact on our residents and that proper consultation with the Council and the communities affected is undertaken.  In proposing the motion, Councillor Burgin stated that Warsop Parish Council had been advised by the Postmaster at Warsop Post Office, that Royal Mail proposed to close the Sorting Office in Warsop and relocating the service to either the Mansfield Woodhouse or Mansfield Sorting Office from March 2021. The decision had been made without any consultation with the people of Warsop, the Parish Council or this Council. Such a decision would have a significant negative impact on residents who were not at home when a parcel was delivered or correspondence had to be signed for. This would require making arrangements to collect undelivered item from another sorting office further away from their residence.  The closure of any sorting offices would impact not only on the lives of the residents in that area but would also negatively affect any adjoining Post Office, causing fewer people to use the facility and therefore affect its financial viability. For many people their local Post Office was a valuable community asset and gave access to their financial resources.  The decision to close the sorting office, would impact on Warsop was contrary to a national campaign to shop locally and would negatively affect the Town Centre’s footfall and other businesses in the town.  The decision had been made in isolation without considering any of the points raised above or indeed the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic. The mutation of the virus clearly showed that despite the rollout of the vaccination programme, this public health crisis is going to continue for some time.  Several members spoke in favour of the motion and spoke how the proposed closure would impact on those without their own transport and who relied on public transport. Members were concerned that the business case had not been shared with this Council or others and that any closure of the sorting office would have a negative impact on Warsop Town Centre.  On the motion being put to the vote, the Chair announced that the motion had been carried unanimously.  RESOLVED - That the Executive Mayor writes to Keith Williams, Chairman of Royal Mail on behalf of the Council to ask that:  1. the decision to close the Warsop Sorting Office is reviewed to seriously consider the significant impacts this closure would have; and  2. that any decision to close Post Offices or Sorting Offices within the Mansfield area are carefully considered to assess the impact on our residents and that proper consultation with the Council and the communities affected is undertaken. |

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