

BOROUGH OF RUSHMOOR

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Farnborough on Wednesday, 5th February, 2025 at 7.00 pm.

The Worshipful The Mayor (Cllr Mara Makunura (Chairman))
The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart (Vice-Chairman))

Cllr Abe Allen	Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr C.W. Card	Cllr Leola Card
Cllr Sue Carter	Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr P.J. Cullum	Cllr Thomas Day
Cllr Keith Dibble	Cllr Peace Essien Igodifo
Cllr A.H. Gani	Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr Lisa Greenway	Cllr Christine Guinness
Cllr Julie Hall	Cllr Steve Harden
Cllr Rhian Jones	Cllr Halleh Koohestani
Cllr G.B. Lyon	Cllr Nadia Martin
Cllr T.W. Mitchell	Cllr Bill O'Donovan
Cllr M.J. Roberts	Cllr Dhan Sarki
Cllr Sarah Spall	Cllr P.G. Taylor
Cllr M.J. Tennant	Cllr S. Trussler
Cllr Ivan Whitmee	Cllr Becky Williams
Cllr Gareth Williams	

Honorary Alderman Diane Bedford
Honorary Alderman Tony Gardiner
Honorary Alderman John Marsh

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr A. Adeola, Cllr Jules Crossley, Cllr S.J. Masterson, Cllr Sophie Porter, Cllr M.D. Smith and Cllr Jacqui Vosper.

Before the meeting was opened, the Mayor's Chaplain, Coleen Kusi-Agyapong, led the meeting in prayers.

36. **NOTICE OF MOTION - DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

The Council were asked to consider a Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr G.B. Lyon under Standing Order 9 (1) on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, as set out below:

"The Government is proposing the most extensive change to local government structures for over 50 years.

This is being done with minimal public engagement, debate or opportunity for local residents to have their say and on a rushed timescale.

The abolition of Borough Councils like Rushmoor will significantly impact how public services are delivered across Aldershot and Farnborough and how they are democratically held to account by residents and elected members.

We believe that the people must be consulted on such changes and call on the Council to:

- Publicly set out its current position on the proposals in the English Devolution White Paper including its understanding of the likely impact on residents.
- Detail any past or planned discussions with neighbouring Districts and Hampshire County Council on future governance arrangements.
- Facilitate community engagement to inform residents about the proposals and hear their views.
- Write to the Government calling for an extension to allow for more democratic engagement including a local referendum on the proposals.”

In PROPOSING the Motion, Cllr Lyon stated the need for local engagement and transparency on Devolution and the proposed changes to local government structures. He emphasised that the voice of residents in Rushmoor needed to be heard and that communities should have their say due to the size and scale of the changes being proposed. In SECONDING the Motion, Cllr Trussler expressed the view that the White Paper had been rushed through without allowing sufficient time for open debate with the public.

It was MOVED by Cllr C.W. Card and SECONDED by Cllr T.W. Mitchell – That the Motion be amended to add an additional sentence at the end of the Motion that:

- Elections should only be postponed in exceptional circumstances.

In discussing the amendment, it was noted that some Members believed that postponing local elections should not be allowed and that while current structures were still in place, elections should continue as planned. In response it was advised that the arrangements to postpone the County Council Elections in May 2025 were typical under the circumstances and that similar action had been taken when local authority reorganisation had taken place in other areas and historically in the past.

The Amended Motion was put to the meeting. In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs C.W. Card, Leola Card, Sue Carter, P.J. Cullum, A.H. Gani, Steve Harden, Peace Essien-Igodifo, G.B. Lyon, T.W. Mitchell, Bill O'Donovan, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant and S. Trussler (13) AGAINST: Cllrs A.H. Crawford, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Halleh Koohestani, Nadia Martin, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Ivan Whitmee, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (16) ABSTAIN: Cllrs Abe Allen, Gaynor Austin, The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart), The Mayor (Cllr Mara Makunura) (4) and the Amended Motion was **DECLARED LOST**.

In discussing the original Motion, it was advised that a detailed business case was yet to be drawn up with the plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), but the Leader had been and would continue to attend meetings with other district leaders. Consultation with the public had been identified as an action that needed to be undertaken in a timely manner and the Council were committed to ensure that this happened. It was acknowledged that Devolution and LGR brought change and a level of uncertainty, but the benefits it would bring through direct power and funding, would enhance services provided to local residents.

In summing up, Cllr Lyon stressed the point of ensuring that the people were heard and allowed to have their say through a referendum and proper engagement.

The Motion was put to the meeting. In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs C.W. Card, Leola Card, Sue Carter, P.J. Cullum, A.H. Gani, Steve Harden, Peace Essien-Igodifo, G.B. Lyon, T.W. Mitchell, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant and S. Trussler (12) AGAINST: Cllrs Abe Allen, Gaynor Austin, A.H. Crawford, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Halleh Koohestani, Nadia Martin, Bill O'Donovan, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Ivan Whitmee, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (19) ABSTAIN: The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart), The Mayor (Cllr Mara Makunura) (2) and the Motion was **DECLARED LOST**.

37. **APPOINTMENTS 2024/25**

In accordance with arrangements to secure political balance, the Council confirmed the following appointments to recent vacancies on committees for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED that:

- i) Cllr Paul Taylor be appointed to the Development Management Committee in place of Cllr Julie Hall;
- ii) Cllr Gareth Lyon be appointed as Standing Deputy for the Conservative Group to the Development Management Committee in place of Cllr Paul Taylor; and
- iii) Cllr Abe Allen be appointed as Standing Deputy for the Labour Group on the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee in place of Cllr Julie Hall.

38. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That, taking into account the public interest test, the public, including Honorary Aldermen and officers from the Executive Leadership Team be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the under mentioned item to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against the items:

Minute No.	Schedule 12A Para. No.	Category
39	1	Information relating to an individual

39. LEADER'S REPORT ON FUTURE DIRECTION

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Gareth Williams, proposed and introduced the Exempt Report, which had been circulated under separate cover to Elected Members, and which set out proposals for the future direction of the Council to secure financial sustainability. The Report was seconded by Cllr Keith Dibble.

The Council was advised that following several independent governance and financial reviews in 2024, the requirement to reduce costs had been highlighted as an immediate pressure. One of the actions agreed by Members was for the Chief Executive to undertake a review of the management structure. An initial option to achieve savings had not been acceptable to Members and a second option was now proposed, as set out in the Exempt Report.

At the beginning of the debate, the Council agreed that Standing Order 13 (5) be suspended to allow for speaking more than once, to enable supplementary questions to be asked on the report - providing Members clarity, full understanding and assurance on the proposals.

During discussion, Members sought clarification on the costs of redundancy and alternative options that had been considered. It was noted that the arrangements reflected the statutory position, and that councils were required to have three statutory roles within their organisation: a Head of Paid Service, a Section 151 Officer and a Monitoring Officer. The use of capital receipts for efficiency or savings had been previously agreed by Council in the Budget Report in February 2024. It was also noted that the recommendations, as set out, were the first steps to a broader restructuring and wider savings programme to secure financial sustainability for the Council.

The Report recommendations, as set out below, were put to the meeting. There voted FOR: 22 AGAINST: 0 ABSTAIN 11 and the Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the redundancy of the Chief Executive based on the financial costs set out, to be funded from capital receipts, be APPROVED; and
- ii) the process to appoint an interim Head of Paid Service and the requirement for this individual to bring forward further options for restructuring, budget savings and plans to deliver the Council's priorities be NOTED.

The meeting closed at 10.01 pm.
