

NOTICES OF MOTION

Executive Summary

The deadline for the submission of Motions to the Council meeting on 8 April 2021 by Councillors was midday on Thursday, 1 April 2021. Notice of one motion – from Councillor Forster – was received before the publication of the Council agenda and appears on the agenda sheet. Further motions were received following the publication of the agenda but before the deadline.

This report sets the details of each motion received for the forthcoming Council meeting.

Recommendations

The Council is requested to receive the Notices of Motion set out in this report.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.

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| Background Papers: | None. |
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1.0 Councillor W Forster

“This Council notes that more people than normal have enjoyed spending time in Woking’s parks since the first national lockdown was ordered due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Council acknowledges that one of the Borough’s open spaces, Brookwood Cemetery, has been granted a Green Flag Award, whereas in neighbouring Guildford Borough, ten of their parks have Green Flag Awards. The Council notes that our parks could be better managed for the residents who use them, the environment and future of our Borough.

Accordingly, this Council resolves to ask Officers to investigate how to improve the Borough’s parks and open spaces so more would be eligible for a Green Flag Award and enable local people to enjoy their leisure time in better public spaces.”

2.0 Councillor M I Raja

“The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a massive increase in deaths across the country, with 20% more deaths registered from March 2020 to the end of the year than would be expected under pre-pandemic conditions.

Since Woking Borough Council has taken over Brookwood cemetery, the effective costs for burials have gone up, putting further strain on families who’ve lost loved ones in these difficult times. We are not offering local residents discounts on burial charges, a scheme that is common in many local authorities.

Due to the high death toll from COVID and the consideration that many families have lost multiple family members, this council will

- i) Reconsider the burial charges it has introduced to the cemetery
- ii) Introduce a system offering a discount to local taxpayers, as is common among many parishes.”

3.0 Councillor M I Raja

“In the past year, members of the Planning Committee have worked diligently, and under great pressure, in upholding Woking planning policy and responding to residents’ views and concerns.

Similarly, over the past few years, the task group members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have produced important work in leading the effort to review council practices in the face of strong opposition and denial; and eventually had their concerns vindicated by the report from the external investigation.

Given the exemplary work of both the Planning and O&S Committee in the past year, this council commends and thanks them for their commitment to democracy and their service to the residents of Woking and calls for providing the right support to these committees as and when needed.”

4.0 Councillor T Aziz

“While we fully believe in development, improvement and raising Woking’s profile it seems odd and contrary to democratic principles that we do not consult public on major plans.

It strikes most odd that the council consulted on building 2180 homes, as in the DPD, but did not consult on 5000+ homes in the town center and simply wishes to adopt the HIF scheme.

This motion calls for:

- 1) The HIF scheme housing to be put to public consultation with full honest disclosures.
- 2) The council cease to make any further promises on HIF to any bodies until such consultation is complete.
- 3) The council re assess the scheme’s housing targets under new market conditions, (especially post COVID) public opinion and if needed is open to renegotiations with central government.

5.0 Councillor T Aziz

“In recent times, Woking Borough Council’s Planning Department has recommended a number of mega-development planning applications despite having major failures against Woking policy.

While many of the recommendations given were subsequently voted down by the Planning Committee, it should not fall to them to uphold council policy. Decisions such as the football club, Goldsworth Road plans and numerous others which contravene planning policy have resulted in public calling into question the impartiality and independence of the department. It is also not clear what advice was given to developers and if they were given to believe that they had realistic chances of success despite major breaches. Clarity is needed on how these decisions were made by planning department and the extent of contact of those heading the department with developers.

Thus, this council calls for a review of the operation of the planning department of Woking Borough Council, including the steps taken by planning officers to come to decisions where plans which contravened Woking Planning Policy were recommended, advice given to developers and an independent investigation into correspondence and links between LPA and developers.”

6.0 Councillor T Aziz

“Over the past few years, New Vision Homes has repeatedly shown itself to be unable to deal with housing issues in the properties they manage.

We all know of the NVH tenant who tragically took her own life in 2016 after battling mental and physical health issues exacerbated by the regular flooding of her home over 13 years,

In recently The Housing Ombudsman judgement criticizes severe Maladministration in case case where an elderly resident is left without heating or hot water for 3 years and council failed to take any appropriate action to resolve the situation and council has been fined £6000.

Thus, in light of some of the unacceptable failures in maintaining council properties, this motion calls for a thorough investigation into the causes of the failures, conducted by the chair of the O&S committee and a select cross-party panel appointed by the chair of O&S. This investigation will:

- I. Analyze the root causes of the failures.
- II. Hear from officers and portfolio holders, and
- III. Recommend steps going forward to ensure such events do not occur again.”

7.0 Councillor M Ali

The report on Independent Directors of Subsidiaries (EXE21-010), discussed at the meeting of the Executive on 14 January 2021, stipulates that “Applicants will not qualify for the role of Independent Directors if they are politically active, either Party Political or in an active Protest Group or are conflicted by the nature of their employment or other activity.”

Under a free and functioning democracy, the term “Protest Group” is an egregious definition for residents of Woking who may not agree with the actions and decisions of Woking Borough Council. We should not discriminate against those who take an active interest in local matters merely because they are openly critical of the council.

Similarly, the questionnaire for applying for the council’s Residents’ Panel includes a “Satisfaction Survey” in which the resident has to present their view of the council, including if they agree with statements such as “I trust” WBC, or “ I support WBC to take the appropriate actions today that will benefit my area in the future”. Residents who disagree with these statements may be discouraged from applying as they may think that it will negatively impact their application, and thus contribute to a less diverse Residents Panel. Furthermore, whether or not the resident agrees with these statements should have no bearing on their suitability for the panel. Thus, the council

- I. Resolves that the view of any resident regarding planning policies or other council matters should not be used against them as criteria in determining their eligibility to positions within the council, including but not limited to directorships, resident panels and other bodies.
- II. Moves to delete the term ‘protest groups’ from the criteria and does not use it within WBC to define any residents
- III. Will remove the requirement of filling out a “Satisfaction Survey” in an application to the Residents’ Panel

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