

BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

At the extraordinary meeting of the Boston Borough Council held remotely via Zoom, on Monday, 10th August, 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Anton Dani), in the Chair
Councillors Tracey Abbott, Tom Ashton, Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Alan Bell, Peter Bedford, David Brown, George Cornah, Anne Dorrian, Viven Edge, Deborah Evans, Paul Goodale, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Jonathan Noble, Frank Pickett, Brian Rush, Chelcei Trafford, Judith Skinner, Paul Skinner, Yvonne Stevens, Peter Watson, Judith Welbourn, Nigel Welton, Colin Woodcock and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Joint Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive (Place) & Monitoring Officer, Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy), Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer, Democratic Services Manager, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services Officer, Principal IT Officer and IT Projects and Development Officer

90 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Cooper and Martin Howard.

91 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

92 MOTION ON NOTICE

In accordance with Procedure Rule 14, a Motion on Notice had been submitted.

It was proposed by Councillor Peter Bedford and seconded by Councillor Brian Rush that;

This Council calls for a vote of no confidence in the current Leader and elects Councillor Stephen Woodliffe as Leader of the Council until May 2023.

In responding to the nomination Councillor Woodliffe thanked the proposer and seconder and stated that the performance of the current leadership required addressing and higher standards observed, and he would be pleased to form a new administration.

The Council had not been aware of the plans for the Strategic Alliance until May 2020, when negotiations had apparently been on-going for eighteen months previously. This went against the Nolan principles of accountability and transparency, and was a betrayal by the administration.

The Strategic Alliance process had left staff feeling marginalised and isolated, particularly those who were working from home without daily contact with colleagues, and caused concern about their future employment.

Members referred to the appointment of four Leaders in the past year, and commented that the situation could not continue. It was important that all Members supported whoever was appointed as Leader and that person remained as Leader for the rest of the Council term, for the good of Boston.

Going forward it would be important that any negotiations relating to local government reorganisation or devolution were shared with all Members and they were involved in the decision making process. It was essential that all Members were fully aware of such matters and their entitlement to information observed in full.

It was mentioned that the Cabinet system was not conducive to cross party working, as not all Members were involved in the decision making process. Consideration should be given to returning to a committee system.

In responding to debate, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Skinner, stated that having been elected in February and dealing with the covid-19 pandemic since March had not been easy and difficult decisions had been required to be made.

Some mistakes had been made with the Strategic Alliance process, but officer guidance had been followed and there had been no officer support in July. Briefing meetings had been offered to opposition groups, but not all had attended.

Members of the administration offered their support to Councillor Skinner as Leader and commended him on his hard work, and the help he had given to them, citing he had the best interest of Boston at heart and offered to work with all parties. Reference was made to e-mails circulated criticising the actions of the Leader, which in some Members opinion bordered on bullying and hate crime.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Nigel Welton, confirmed that discussions were already being held regarding the Strategic Alliance when Councillor Skinner was appointed as Leader, and the project had been delegated to himself to progress. Councillor Welton accepted full responsibility for the timescales and negotiation process, understood mistakes had been made, but lessons had been learnt.

In summing up, Councillor Peter Bedford stated that the Council had to join with other authorities to fight devolution in Lincolnshire, but not the way it had been done with the Strategic Alliance. This was a failure in leadership. All Members were working for the good of the Borough and its residents, Councillor Woodliffe would make an honest Leader, and bring the Council together.

On being put to the vote the Motion was lost by 13 votes for and 14 votes against.

(The meeting ended at 7.10 pm)