

Eden District Council Meeting 24th September 2020.

Chairman's Announcements

Voreda House was purchased in August. This will be the new premises for the council. Car parks will remain free until the end of the year. The council has distributed £23 million in funding to local businesses.

Questions from the Public

A member of the public phoned to say that Virginia Taylor, Leader, had not declared an interest in July 2019 during the debate on climate change. He said she was a director of PACT (Penrith Action for Community Transition). Dr Taylor replied that she had resigned as a director on becoming a councillor. She did not have the precise date of the resignation. She did not believe that PACT is a political body.

Questions by Members

Councillor Mike Eyles asked whether council officers would look into reviving the Penrith market. Councillor Mary Robinson replied that there had not been enough interest from stall holders before but there may be renewed interest. Free car parking would encourage shoppers. The council could encourage these markets throughout Eden. Ian Chambers asked how much will it cost to convert Voreda House to being carbon neutral? Dr Taylor did not know this from the top of her head and would get back to him with an answer.

Petition

A petition has been received which has more than 500 signatures and thus qualifies for council debate. The wording of the petition is : "Stop approving planning applications from Omega Proteins who are polluting the air with disgusting, nasty, sickening, obnoxious, smells. #penrithpong. "

Mr Thompson, who put forward the petition spoke by phone to the council. About 1150 people had signed the petition. He talked about carcasses from all over the UK and Ireland being transported to the factory in open topped lorries without refrigeration. 86 local residents had phoned the Environment Agency recently complaining about the smell. Tourists arriving in Penrith are met by the Penrith Pong.

Councillors discussed the petition and commiserated with local residents especially in the Castle area of Penrith who had put up with the smell for years. It was pointed out that the council is limited by the planning rules in what it can do.

Motion on Notice.

Conservative Leader, Debra Wicks, put forward a motion of no confidence in the Leader, Dr Virginia Taylor. Recently the Chief Executive, Rose Rouse has resigned. Councillor Wicks said that Dr Taylor had not followed due process by engaging members and failed to demonstrate that she has the qualities to be an effective leader. Also another objection was Dr Taylor's contact with the Conservative Leader of Carlisle Council to share the services of their chief executive as an interim measure. This had been discussed with the leaders of all political groups and apparently there were no objections.

The majority of councillors spoke to this motion, including Lissie Sharp and myself. Members of all the groups which make up the Alliance strongly supported Dr Taylor. The vote at the end of a very long debate was 16 for and 20 against.

Homelessness Champion

Green Party member and Mayor of Penrith was appointed unopposed to this role.

Temporary Pavement Licences

As part of adaption to Covid, the council is trying to encourage customers of pubs and restaurants to be able to use the pavements outside their premises. The new policy recommends that the fee will be waived, the processing will be speeded up and the licence will last for a year.

The next full council meeting will be on the 26th of November.