

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Special Meeting of the Moray Council

Wednesday, 14 September 2022

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

PRESENT

Councillor James Allan, Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor Neil Cameron, Councillor Tracy Colyer, Councillor Theresa Coull, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Amber Dunbar, Councillor Jérémie Fernandes, Councillor Donald Gatt, Councillor David Gordon, Councillor Juli Harris, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Scott Lawrence, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Paul McBain, Councillor Neil McLennan, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Bridget Mustard, Councillor Kathleen Robertson, Councillor Sonya Warren, Councillor Ben Williams

APOLOGIES

Councillor Derek Ross, Councillor Draeyk Van Der Horn

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the meeting were the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer.

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Kathleen Robertson as Council Leader.

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3. Two Minute Silence

The Council Leader asked those in attendance in the Chamber and online to join her in a 2 minute silence to pause and reflect.

4. Motion of Condolence - Her Majesty The Queen

In terms of Standing Order 34a, there was submitted a Notice of Motion By Councillor Robertson, seconded by Councillors Leadbitter, Morrison, Divers, McLennan and Allan in following terms was unanimously agreed:

That the Council expresses its deepest regret and grief at the death of Her Majesty The Queen; conveys its sincere condolences to His Majesty The King and other members of the Royal Family in their bereavement; affirms the great affection and esteem in which Her Majesty was held, and expresses gratitude for her life of exceptional public service and her long and close association with Moray and the people of Moray, and asks the Civic Leader to write to His Majesty King Charles III with the Council's condolences.

Councillor Williams joined the meeting at this juncture.

5. Tribute from Scottish Conservative and Unionist Group Leader - Councillor Kathleen Robertson

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has been the paragon of public service ever since her commitment to the British People at the age of 21. She has been unwavering in her dedication to the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. Her life has been an example to all of us in this chamber who have committed to public service by serving the People of Moray with Duty, Integrity, Selflessness, Objectivity, Accountability and Stewardship, Openness, Honesty, Leadership and Respect.

She has been a steadfast influence in all of our lives and has guided us through so many challenging times. She has supported and led our nation through conflicts and crises, natural disasters and a pandemic.

Her Majesty has had close links to Moray and visited officially on four occasions 1957, 1961, 1964 and most recently 2014. In 1957 she became the first reigning Monarch to set foot in Lossiemouth and visited again in 1957 disembarking from the Royal Barge.

In 1961 she arrived on the Royal Yacht Britannia at Macduff Harbour and then conducted a whistle-stop tour taking in Cullen, Portknockie, Findochty, Buckie, Fochabers, Elgin, Kinloss and Forres. It was during this trip that she planted the trees outside our Council Offices here in Elgin and commented on the natural beauty of Grant Park, Forres which now hosts the Unicorn carving placed on her Platinum Jubilee.

Another visit in July 1967 came on Prince Charles' very last day as a pupil at Gordonstoun, where he had boarded for the previous five years. The Queen officially opened the school's new sports centre.

The following morning, accompanied by her son, the Queen attended a Sunday service at St Giles Church in Elgin. How fitting that one of the Moray Condolence books is sited here and that the Thanksgiving Service will be held there on the 23rd September.

Most recently Her Majesty The Queen visited Moray accompanied by His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh arriving in Elgin on the Royal train in 2014 and visited RAF Lossiemouth and Kinloss Barracks on the occasion of their 67th Wedding Anniversary.

Of course, I'm sure she visited Moray on many more occasions as her children and some grandchildren were educated at Gordonstoun as was her beloved husband, the late Duke of Edinburgh.

The sense of loss of this remarkable monarch has probably not sunk in for many. She is represented in so many facets of our life from her image on our coins, notes and stamps to the Royal Warrant on some of our every day provisions like jams, marmalades, biscuits and breakfast cereals. Of particular note is the Queen's warrant awarded to Moray firm Walkers Shortbread.

This loss of course we experience as our Queen but we shouldn't forget that she was a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to our Royal Family. Many of us have lost loved ones and know grief. We however have time to come to terms with it privately. We must recognise the burden of grief on our Royal Family and having to play this out so publicly takes enormous strength.

King Charles III acceded the monarchy in Scotland. We know how much Scotland means to the King and his Queen Consort who have residences at Birkhall, Castle of Mey, and Dumfries House. We thank him for his service to Scotland and the passing of the Scottish Titles he held, to his son Prince William, Prince of Wales.

On behalf of the Moray Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party we offer our condolences to the King and his entire family.

God Save The King!

6. Tribute from Scottish National Party Group Co-Leader - Councillor Graham Leadbitter

As we have seen from the public response to the sad news of the death of Queen Elizabeth, it is very obvious that the loss of such an enduring Head of State has struck a chord with people the length and breadth of Scotland, the UK and much further beyond.

Here in Moray the loss will be keenly felt.

It would be hard to put a firm figure on the number of people in our region who have had direct experience of meeting with the late Queen Elizabeth but between her public visits to Moray, her personal connections in the area, the military links, the very strong connection with Gordonstoun where both her late husband, Prince Philip, and her eldest son, now King Charles, both studied, it is likely to number in the thousands.

People from Moray of many walks of life have attended summer garden parties in Balmoral; Moray police officers over the years have spent time on Deeside Royal Protection duties and I know from friends who have carried out that role that it wasn't unusual for them to meet Queen Elizabeth on their patrols and exchange a few pleasantries, where she was friendly and appreciative of their work.

Many others have had their professional and charitable work recognised with numerous civic and military honours. Numerous businesses and charities have also been honoured.

In essence, through a life of public service, Queen Elizabeth touched the lives of people in Moray and in every other region and countries around the world in different ways, but all of them memorable and that affection that has developed over her 7 decades as Head of State, the sorrow of her loss and the celebration of her life has and continues to be demonstrated by people in many different ways.

She will be sorely missed by people in Moray but that is incomparable with loss to those closest to her and our thoughts are very much with her family and close friends at this time.

7. Tribute from Scottish Labour Group Leader - Councillor John Divers

Thank you, Council Leader. I am sure that we in the Labour Group fully associate ourselves with everything that has been said so far. In reflecting upon the legacy of Her late Majesty the Queen I would like to focus on two aspects of her life that are so significant to us here in Moray.

Much has been written in recent days about Her late Majesty's affection for the North East of Scotland. Like many members of this Council, including myself, and thousands of other Moray residents, the late Queen was not born of the North of Scotland. Instead, like so many of us, she came to this area as a visitor, me myself came to this area through the armed forces, and in many ways made it her true home. The way in which our neighbours in Aberdeenshire took Her late Majesty into their hearts as one of their own will reflect the experience of many of us who chose to make the North East of Scotland our own homes, and that bond of friendship reflects both the warmth of the late Queen as well as the affection of the people of the North East.

Much has been said about the late Queen's dedication to the armed services, which is, of course, a central part of our community here in Moray. My own, sole encounter with Her late Majesty came during my time in the Royal Navy, serving aboard the HMS Eagle in 1969. I was a member of the Queen's Colour Guard.

My No. 1 dress uniform had never been so pristine: my shoes were never so polished: my blue collar never quite so pressed. But when Her late Majesty looked you up and down the sense of terror felt by every young sailor immediately melted away upon sight of that infectious smile we have heard so much about. It is easy to see why Her late Majesty was so beloved by our forces communities.

As we mourn the passing of the late Queen we also acknowledge the accession of a new King. His Majesty has been serving the country for 70 years as Duke of Rothesay and Prince of Wales. Some of us in this chamber are old enough to remember when many of the causes championed by His Majesty were seen as being somewhat eccentric. Fringe issues, like biodiversity, sustainable food supplies, and climate change.

His Majesty acknowledged in his address to the nation that he cannot champion these causes the way that he once did. He doesn't need to, as they are now at the top of the political agenda, and we in the Labour Group would like to acknowledge the role that His Majesty has played in bringing these issues to the fore.

Council Leader, to conclude, I propose that the best way that we can honour the legacy of the late Queen is to all embrace the spirit of service which she embodied. May she rest in peace, and God save the King.

8. Tribute from Councillor Neil McLennan - Independent

It is difficult to sum up a tribute to Her Majesty the Queen in the short space we have here. I did wonder whether to say anything at all- there are many sharing their thoughts.

However, it would be wrong not to say a few words as a mark of respect to a very, very much so respected woman. The Gettysburg Address achieved much in its 270 odd words. Her Majesty the Queen is deserving of many more words and many tributes this week and beyond. All the short speeches, notes on card and social media comments add to the high regard she was and is held in.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Great was a woman in the most senior leadership role in the world. In the modern world leadership is often criticised, condemned and critiqued. However, she led with one word- class. Her grace, her wisdom and her decorum are an example to us all.

I remember an old Headteacher friend of mine saying once “always make staffing appointments on class”. She did not mean class as in that element of British society which still exists, but she meant class by decorum and respect- timeless qualities for a’ folk.

Her Majesty was, of course, was of course not elected. However, she was chosen by her people by her consistent actions over a long period of time- this is shown by the showing support for her this week. Her Majesty the Queen never put a foot wrong in the modern world of media optics and a post-truth world. Every word was well thought out and well placed, Royal Communications under her lead were direct and with decorum, she spoke honestly in an emerging world of false narratives, and her actions were not negatively scrutinised by the watching lens of the world’s media. She led with class and decorum.

It seems she treated all she met with gratitude, respect and genuine interest. She was keen to know about matters, global to local, including being aware of their complexities and challenges. She steadied her institution during a time of challenge and question. All good Captains can do that in rough seas whilst also not being complacent in gentle waters.

She was class and composure in every way, even when under pressure. We will perhaps never see her like again. What she leaves for us is an example. An example of leadership, but also an example of humanity. Whether it be having tea and sandwiches with Paddington Bear, greeting Presidents and the public to Buckingham Palace or planting a tree in front of this very building- she is remembered fondly and with respect.

A personal note of thanks to her and the late Duke of Edinburgh. Following late leadership discussions of foreign diplomats, military leaders and civil service and public leaders, hospitality at Windsor Castle’s St George’s House continued late into the evening. A welcome additional hospitality after a long day and this small thing ensured that full, frank Chatham House discussions continued into the night. It is the small things that count as well as the grand gestures and well publicised events.

It has been a remarkable week. A remarkable week following a remarkable 70 years of service and duty.

Our condolences to King Charles III and the Royal family.

Your Majesty the Queen, thank you for the example you set, the service you have given and the duty which you took up not as a trite word but a commitment and a set of actions that will always be remembered for what you have done. Rest in Peace M’am. Rest in Peace Elizabeth the Great.

9. Tribute from Councillor James Allan - Non-Aligned Conservative

As Captain of 4th Lossiemouth Company, President of Brigade in Moray and President for North Scottish Area, I would like to pay tribute to her Majesty the Queen.

For the duration of her reign, the Boys' Brigade was proud to have Queen Elizabeth II as its Patron.

Following in the footsteps of her father (King George VI) and grandfather (King George V) the Queen took a keen interest in the work and service to the nation undertaken by members of the Brigade.

In 1952 it was announced that the new Queen had "graciously consented to become Patron of The Boys' Brigade". In doing so, Queen Elizabeth II became the fourth reigning monarch to become Patron. Her Majesty also consented to the renaming of the highest award in the Brigade from the "King's Badge" to the "Queen's Badge". Throughout her reign, thousands of Seniors worked hard to earn this award, with a small handful having the privilege of being presented with it by the Queen in person. In Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II we have had a Patron who has been dedicated to a life of service, a lady of strong faith, someone who has worked tirelessly for our country and the commonwealth and who is the perfect role model for children and young people within The Boys' Brigade. May she now rest in peace and rise in glory.

On behalf of The Boys' Brigade we extend our condolences to King Charles III and the extended Royal Family, we pray that they be comforted at this difficult time. God's Blessings to all.

God Save the King!

10. Invite the Civic Leader to Respond - Councillor John Cowe

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was more than a monarch - she defined an era.

In a world of constant changes, she was the constant presence and a source of comfort and pride to generations, for generations.

She was a Monarch to whom we could feel a personal and immediate connection, whether in person, watching her Christmas addresses to the nation or partaking in her Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

As a young Princess, she dedicated her life, whether it be long or short to the service of the British people and those of the Commonwealth.

With the support of her beloved Duke of Edinburgh she let with dignity, grace and an unwavering commitment to duty.

She endured the dangers of a world war with the British people and rallied them through a world pandemic to look to better days ahead.

Queen Elizabeth was a stateswoman of unparalleled dignity in an every changing world and the sorrow we feel now reminds us of her words "Grief is the price we pay for love."

Her Majesty was no stranger to Moray, her husband went to school just down the road as did all her family. They have an affection for Moray just as they have for the mountains of Deeside. She and her family spent her happiest days here amongst the heather and it is fitting that she died in the place she loved so dearly.

We send out deepest sympathy to the royal family who are not just mourning their Queen, but a dearly loved mother, grandmother and great grandmother.

Her legacy will reign in British history and we shall miss her endearing smile and steady hand.

I pledge to write to King Charles III on behalf of the people of Moray to convey the sincere condolences of us all to him and all the family and wish them comfort in the days and months ahead with their memories of a life well spent.

Well done thy good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of the Lord.

God Save the King!