

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL
7 MAY 2008 AT 6.30 P.M.

PRESENT: MR. K.W.P. LYNCH - MAYOR
MR. J.G. BANNISTER - DEPUTY MAYOR

Mrs. M. Aldridge, Mr. P.R. Batty, Mr. D.C. Bill, Mr. J.C. Bown, Mr. S.L. Bray, Mrs. R. Camamile, Mr. M.B. Cartwright, Mr. D.S. Cope, Mr. W.J. Crooks, Mrs. S. Francks, Mr. D.M. Gould, Mrs. A. Hall, Mr. P.A.S. Hall, Mr. D.W. Inman, Mr. C.G. Joyce, Mr. M.R. Lay, Mr. R. Mayne, Dr. J.R. Moore, Mr. K. Morrell, Mr. L.J.P. O'Shea, Mrs. J. Richards, Mr. A.J. Smith, Mr. B.E. Sutton, Mr. R. Ward, Ms. B.M. Witherford and Mr. D.O. Wright.

Officers in attendance: Mr. S.J. Atkinson, Mr. B. Cullen, Miss L. Horton, Mr. S. Jones, Mr. S. Kohli, Mrs. P.I. Pitt and Mr. T.M. Prowse.

603 PRAYER

The Reverend Dr. Robert Stephen offered prayer.

604 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr. P.S. Bessant, Mr. J.D. Cort, Mr. C. Ladkin, Ms. W.A. Moore, and Mr. K. Nichols.

At this junction the Mayor welcomed Ms. Witherford, the newly-elected Member for Castle Ward, to her first Council meeting.

605 MINUTES (C71)

It was moved by Mr. Sutton, seconded by Mr. Lay and

RESOLVED - the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

606 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr. Mayne declared a personal and prejudicial interest in report number C73.

607 QUESTIONS

The following questions and replies were received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.1:-

(a) Question raised by Mr. R. Ward and addressed to Mr. D.C. Bill

In the Hinckley Times on January 17th 2008 Cllr Bill is quoted as saying of the sale of the green space at Brodick Road, "It's a situation we

didn't want to have to face but the contract was signed before we took office".

Will the Leader disclose to the Council the date the land was actually sold?

Response from Mr. D.C. Bill

The land has not yet been formally sold. However, Morris Homes have the legal option to purchase, which they can exercise at any point within the next six months. We could do nothing to remove that option without considerable cost to the Council.

(b) Question raised by Mr. R. Ward and addressed to Mr. D.C. Bill

In the Hinckley Times on January 17th 2008 Cllr Bill is quoted as saying of the sale of the green space at Brodick Road, "I would have done anything to have found some way of stopping this but it wasn't to be".

Will the Leader disclose to the Council whether or not under the terms of the contract between the Authority and Morris Homes it was possible for his administration to stop this land sale?

Response from Mr. D.C. Bill

I refer to my previous answer. It was not possible to stop the sale.

Following a supplementary question from Mr. Ward Mr. Bill indicated that wherever possible he was supportive of measures to protect open countryside. So far as the Brodick Road development was concerned the contract had been signed on 29 March 2007 and Mr. Bill reiterated that it had not been possible to stop the sale.

(c) Question raised by Mrs. J. Richards and addressed to Mr. D.C. Bill

Will the Leader of the Council outline all the recent renovations undertaken within the Authority's Argents Mead headquarters and disclose the costs associated with this work?

Response from Mr. D.C. Bill

Set out below are the contents of a letter sent to Mrs. Richards last week:-

'The refurbishment of the rotunda, the public area in front of the cash office and the staff entrance area has been completed as part of the Customer First project

This project began as part of Central Governments Implementing Electronic Government initiative in 2004. Every authority was required by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to make arrangements for 24/7 access to services. We were required, where possible, to transform our processes to ensure 80% of all enquiries received in the back office could be handled by our Customer Service Team in a

Contact Centre. To support us in transforming our services and implementing new technologies relating to Customer Relationship Management systems we received £200K from the ODPM.

The cost of the refurbishment of the staff entrance area and relocation of the Contact Centre from Florence House to Argents Mead was £35,000. The purpose of moving the team to Argents Mead was to enable the team to rotate more easily between the Meet and Greet area, the interview pods and the telephone contact centre, thus improving the service provided.

It is anticipated that Customer Services will be the last service area to relocate from Argents Mead to ensure continuity of public service and to minimise any disruption to our customers of any planned relocation.

All Contact Centre equipment, furniture, customer seating, tables and dividers will be moved to any new Customer Service facility.

As part of our Customer Service Strategy we will be continuing to develop our services with the aim of increasing accessibility for our customers'.

In response to a supplementary question from Mrs. Richards Mr. Bill indicated that, whilst sharing the view that unnecessary expense should not be spent on renovating the Argents Mead building, as the current focal point of the Authority it was necessary to maintain services there. Mr. Bill emphasised that the recent renovation had been funded solely from central government and not by Borough ratepayers.

(d) Question raised by Mr. B.E. Sutton and addressed to Mr. P.A.S. Hall

In an article in the Leicester Mercury on 15 April 2008 which reported on Councillor Janice Richards' (Conservative, Earl Shilton) resignation from the Planning Committee due to concerns about the direction of the Borough's planning policies, a statement is quoted as saying "Legally the Council cannot expect a developer to address problems that already exist in a given area". Would the Chairman of the Planning Committee agree that, irrespective of what is expected from a developer, this Council has a duty to local residents it is here to serve to ensure that "problems that already exist in a given area" are addressed and are certainly not made worse as a result of any planning consent granted by this authority?"

Response from Mr. P.A.S. Hall

I would like to thank Councillor Sutton for his question. He is aware, as is any Member of the Planning committee, that each planning application has to be considered on its own merits and that any new development cannot be expected to address and rectify existing issues. However, the new development should not exacerbate the situation and must provide the necessary facilities and infrastructure to accommodate the development.

I do agree with Councillor Sutton that the Council should deal with any pre existing issues, where it has a duty to do so.

Following a supplementary question from Mr. Sutton Mr. Hall undertook to request planning officers to examine the feasibility of underground car parking.

(e) Question raised by Mrs. J. Richards and addressed to Mr. P.A.S. Hall

“Would the Chairman of the Planning Committee agree with me that residents and Councillors were somewhat misinformed by the linking of the installation of the new cash machine facility in Wood Street, Earl Shilton, which was subsequently granted permission under delegated powers, with the property at number 38 Wood Street, when in fact, the cash machine facility is actually on the edge of the pavement?”

Response from Mr. P.A.S. Hall

I would like to thank Councillor Mrs Richards for her question.

I do not agree that residents or Councillors have been misled. The address of 38 Wood Street, Earl Shilton was given as the nearest address to the proposed position of the cash machine. As it is on the edge of the footpath, it does not have a postal address itself and has to be assigned one so that residents are given an indication where it would be located. This is intended to encourage any interested persons to view the plans and make comments.

I can also advise Councillor Mrs Richards that the Highways Authority, Highways Agency and Police were consulted on this particular application. None of them raised any objections to the location.

In response to a supplementary question from Mrs. Richards Mr. Hall reported on the intention to examine the circulation to Members of details of all planning applications.

608 POSITION STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader referred to two major proposals, namely the development of the bus station site and the location of a new leisure centre for the Borough. So far as the former was concerned today marked the beginning of the public consultation exercise on the 3 options submitted by developers. This consultation, it was emphasised, would be continued during the formal planning process once a detailed application was submitted by the ultimate preferred developer. Additionally, commenting on the new leisure centre, the Leader referred to the significant potential for that facility to form an integral part of the Council's new 'sporting hub' proposal.

609 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT 2004 – ADJUDICATION JOINT COMMITTEE (C72)

Members' approval having been sought to the entering into of a new Joint Committee Agreement for the adjudication of parking appeals set up

under the above legislation it was moved by Mrs. Francks, seconded by Mr. Wright and

RESOLVED – approval be given to the entering into of a new Joint Committee Agreement set up under the Traffic Management Act 2004 (and that the Constitution be amended accordingly).

Mr. Mayne, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item left the meeting at 7 p.m.

610 HINCKLEY LEISURE CENTRE – WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS (C73)

Circulated to Members at the meeting were details of the proposed facility mix for the new leisure centre, as endorsed by the cross-party Leisure Centre Working Group.

Following a number of meetings the working group had formulated a series of recommendations as to the strategic way forward for the future development of the leisure centre and these were now presented to Council for consideration.

Members were supportive of the proposed location of the new leisure centre and the sporting hub concept and the Executive member for Culture and Development paid tribute to the efforts of officers, particularly the Cultural Services Manager, in developing these proposals.

On the motion of Mr. Bray, seconded by Mr. Bill it was

RESOLVED unanimously – the recommendations of the Leisure Centre Working Group as detailed in section 4 of the report of the Deputy Chief Executive be approved and the immediate commencement of the commissioning process to develop the plans for the Sporting Hub and new leisure centre be noted.

Mr. Mayne returned to the meeting at 7.42 p.m.

611 CASTLE WARD BY-ELECTION

The number of votes cast in the by-election held on 24 April 2008 were noted with the Mayor indicating that the successful candidate, Bronwen Mair Witherford was a member of the Liberal Democrat Party.

(The meeting closed at 7.44 p.m.)