

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL
5 AUGUST 2008 AT 6.30 P.M.

PRESENT: MR. K. Nichols - DEPUTY MAYOR (in the Chair)

Mrs. M. Aldridge, Mr. P.R. Batty, Mr. P.S. Bessant, Mr. D.C. Bill, Mr. C.W. Boothby, 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. C. Ladkin, Mr. R. Mayne, 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.

Also in attendance: Mr. David Rushton, (Audit Commission), Janet Gower-Johnson, (Leicestershire County Council) and Youth Council Representatives.

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

125 **PRAYER**

The Reverend Canon B. Davis offered prayer.

126 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors J.G. Bannister, J.D. Cort, M.R. Lay, K.W.P. Lynch, Dr. J.R. Moore and W.A. Moore.

127 **MINUTES (C21)**

Following clarification from the Chief Executive that the executive responsibilities of Mr. Bray covered culture, leisure and regeneration, it was moved by Mr. Crooks, seconded by Mr. Mayne and

RESOLVED - the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Deputy Mayor.

128 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared at this stage.

At this juncture the Deputy Mayor welcomed Janet Gower-Johnson and members of the Youth Council to the meeting and then indicated his intention to change this evening's agenda order so that the following were debated first.

129 **MOTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13**

(a) It was moved by Mr. Bray, seconded by Mrs. Richards that

'This Council notes the increasing concern about the number of flats being built around the Borough, in particular in Hinckley town centre.

Too many of our attractive and historic buildings are being demolished to make way for flats. Often the Council's Planning Committee are powerless to stop these applications, causing great frustration and anger to members and the public alike. These developments are also adding to the increasing parking problems in residential streets within the town centre.

This Council therefore requests that the Director of Community and Planning Services continues to make the strongest representations to the Secretary of State to give Councils more powers to stop excessive and unnecessary planning applications for flats, and explores through our own Local Development Framework, the tightening up of our local policies to give Planning Committee further grounds to refuse applications when they are deemed unnecessary'.

Following a show of hands in which 26 Members present voted for the motion and 1 against it was agreed that the Director of Community and Planning Services make the strongest representations to the Secretary of State along the lines set out in the motion above.

(b) It was moved by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mrs. Hall that

'This Council makes a formal complaint to the Cabinet Lead Member for Highways on the County Council about the poor performance of the grass cutting service in Hinckley & Bosworth.

This Council welcomes the apology made by the County Cabinet member concerning the quality and performance of the County Council's contractor, but we would like to remind him that the problem remains unresolved with many verges still in an appalling condition.

This Council calls upon the County Council, through its Lead Member to complete a full review of the existing grass cutting contract, and if necessary amend it to ensure that the problem does not recur, especially at this time of year, and that the residents of Hinckley & Bosworth receive the level of service they deserve'.

Again, following a show of hands with 15 Members voting for and 10 voting against the motion it was agreed that representations be made to the County Council regarding those grass cutting operations within Hinckley and Bosworth which were the responsibility of the Highway Authority.

Mrs. Aldridge left the meeting at 7.03 pm.

(c) It was moved by Mr. Bill, seconded by Mrs. Francks that

This Council supports in principle the following motion approved by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council on 14 July 2008:-

"That this Council, in the interests of its residents, will continue, as set out in the Cabinet decision dated 25 June, 2008, to investigate and explore all the possible legal and legitimate powers available to it under legislation, to oppose the installation of the Soil Reclamation Plant given planning permission by the County Council's Regulatory Committee for the Judkins site in Nuneaton.

Further, this Council instructs the Leader and the Chief Executive to write (within 24 hours) to the Secretary of State (in his capacity as head of the Environment Agency) for the purpose of arranging an urgent meeting with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition, together with the Leader of Warwickshire County Council (should he wish) to discuss the safety and environmental impact of this Soil Reclamation Plant, as this is the first of its kind in the UK. Also, this Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Leader of the County Council and invite him to attend this meeting".

and that our Chief Executive be requested to secure from the Chief Executive of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council further details of the environmental impact of the proposed facility'.

And following a vote with 15 Members voting for the motion and 10 against it was agreed to support in principle the stance taken by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council relating to the installation of a soil reclamation plant on the Judkins site.

Mr. and Mrs. Hall left the meeting at 7.07 pm.

130 QUESTIONS

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

(a) Question raised by Mr. C. Ladkin and addressed to Mr. S.L. Bray

"Given the high priority for regeneration in Earl Shilton and Barwell, will Councillor Bray support the immediate appointment of a part-time (say 20 hours) Town Centre Manager for Earl Shilton Centre Redevelopment with later responsibility for Barwell as their plans for their town centre progress?"

Response from Mr. S.L. Bray

"I would like to thank Councillor Ladkin for his question. He is quite right when he says that the regeneration of Earl Shilton and Barwell town centres is a priority. This is evidenced through the two areas being designated as priority neighbourhoods by the Local Strategic Partnership and the establishment of the Neighbourhood Action Teams.

Furthermore, funding will be made available to these areas through the National Growth Point Initiative to support the sustainable urban extensions with a visioning exercise due to take place later this year. This process will be fully supported by existing staff resources. In addition, Scrutiny Commission approved the Terms of Reference for an Earl Shilton and Barwell Working Group at its meeting on 23 July 2008.

It is clear that many of the building blocks necessary to facilitate the regeneration of Earl Shilton and Barwell are being put in place and that the appointment of a Town Centre Manager may be necessary in the future.

Councillor Ladkin will be aware that there is currently no provision in the Council's budget for such a post. However, the Members Budget

Workshops, which are convened annually to consider future years' budgets and potential in-year changes, have now commenced for the year 2009/10. I am happy for Councillor Ladkin to present the case for the appointment of a Town Centre Manager for consideration, including his desire for such an appointment to be made during the current financial year. I suggest that he makes that case formally to the Director of Finance, having consulted relevant officers."

Although Mr. Ladkin declined to ask a supplementary question for clarification he advised that he was a member of the Earl Shilton Regeneration Committee.

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

"I am concerned that given the important matters Councillors are being asked to discuss and indeed vote on that questions from members to the executive and staff are not being answered with openness, clarity and knowledge and indeed in not a small number of cases completely ignored. This I put down not so much to deliberate evasion as the quaint system of storing questions and answering some of them later rather than answering the question as put at the time. May I ask the Leader to support the discontinuation of this unnecessarily confusing system so that members get immediate and clear answers?"

Also, given that none of the executive or staff are polymaths any question that cannot be answered in chamber, the answer be delivered preferably by e-mail, in 3 working days to the member concerned or to all Councillors, if so requested."

Response from Mr. D.C. Bill

"Can I thank Councillor Ladkin for his question. I concur with his assumption that there is no deliberate evasion in answering questions, but I do recognise also that, on occasion, an answer may attempt to address a group of questions, but may not address every aspect. It is the case also, as Councillor Ladkin suggests, that full answers can not be given to every question, without further research.

To improve the position, therefore, I suggest that:

1. for the next two meetings questions in debate be addressed individually;
2. any question which can not be answered immediately, in full or in part, be answered preferably by e-mail within three working days (or in a longer time, by agreement) to the Member concerned or to all Councillors, if so requested;
3. the position be reviewed at the end of that period.

In addition, I suggest that, in order to address any matters of urgency/public concern which may arise from time to time, those members with access to e-mail facilities be contacted by that medium, so that they have immediate information to hand to be able to respond to their constituents, as necessary."

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

"Can the Leader report on the progress of the Council's flexible working programme, inform members how many officers now work from home and advise of any savings resulting from this initiative?"

Response from Mr. D.C. Bill

"I would like to thank Councillor Ward for asking the question on this important and exciting project.

I can inform him that a lot of work has been taking place in the background over the last few months. An officers flexible working project board has been set up with representatives from HR, I.T., Finance, Estates and Asset Management, Health and Safety, Unison and a manager representing the business users. We have engaged a consultant with experience in implementing flexible working in the public and private sector to support and assist us in producing a flexible working policy, a guidance document and a flexible working business case. These documents have been passed to the cross-member Flexible Working Scrutiny Group for their input and comment and also to the Local Joint Panel, Unison and staff.

The Flexible Working Scrutiny Group have asked at their next meeting in September to meet with members of staff from this and other authorities who are already flexible workers to advise them of the benefits and potential pitfalls of flexible working.

With regard to the question of how many staff presently work from home, I would firstly remind Councillor Ward that flexible working is not just about home working but includes mobile working, remote working, mixed location working, compressed hours and so on. However, since the question is specific to home working I can inform Councillor Ward that there is only one member of staff who is currently employed as a home worker. This post holder has specialist knowledge and because of personal commitments would have been lost as a resource to this council if flexible working had not been offered. Three other staff who have been taking part in successful flexible working trials are being set up to operate from home during August. We also have over 100 members of staff currently using RSA tokens to access systems from home during the evening and weekends providing a valuable resource to the council mostly at no additional cost. I would further add that the use of home working in the Benefits team as interim measures enabled us to keep up to date with our work last year and saved the Council around 12K in agency costs compared to the same period the year before.

Finally, on the question of savings from this initiative there are a range of cashable and non-cashable revenue savings built into the draft business case. There are however, as with any major project such as this, significant up front capital costs. The draft business case has indicated that the initial capital costs of implementing flexible working would be recouped, at worst, within 3 years. The options presented in the business case are quite varied. This business case will, in time, be considered by Scrutiny but, in the meantime, if Councillor Ward requires further details then, I suggest, that he arranges to see the Director of Finance or the Head of Revenues and Benefits who is leading on this project."

Mr. Ward declined to ask a supplementary question but received an assurance from Mr Bill that Members would continue to be kept fully informed as to progress on home/flexible working.

(d) Question raised by Mr. R. Ward and addressed to Mr. S.L. Bray

"Does the Council envisage that the possible merger of the Co-op and Somerfield groups will have any impact upon the retail spend in Hinckley, particularly in the upper Castle Street area?"

Response from Mr. S.L. Bray

"I do not think that Councillor Ward would expect me, at this stage, to speculate on the impact that a merger of the Co-op and Somerfield groups may or may not have on the Town Centre.

However, if such a merger is confirmed, I can assure all Members that we will enter into an early dialogue to ensure, as far as we are able, that there is no detriment to the retail spend in the town. In particular, we will continue to take an interest in any proposals for the development of the existing Co-op store."

131 POSITION STATEMENT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

In his presentation the Leader highlighted the Council's achievements in gaining Investor in People status and in securing over £200,000 from Leicestershire Economic Partnership to support the regeneration of the Town Centre over the next three years. Also positive was that, for the first quarter of this year, 67% of indicators were on target to achieve the top quartile, as against a final position of 50% in 2007/08. The Leader referred also to on-going partnership working, particularly the major refurbishment work at Peggs Close, Earl Shilton - bringing about much-needed housing accommodation and community facilities and to the continuing need for community engagement in the planning process.

132 THE LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT AND BOROUGH COUNCILS' CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURES (C22) AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S STRATEGY (INCORPORATING A 'HEAR BY RIGHT' ACTION PLAN (C23))

Members were agreed that in order to allow the Chair of the Youth Council, Millie Benson, to speak, Council Procedure Rules governing debate be waived. Ms. Benson in her speech referred to the strong relationship which now existing between the Borough Council and the Youth Council and emphasised that the latter was fully supportive of the revised policy/strategy now presented. Ms. Benson paid tribute to Council officers and to her fellow members on the Youth Council Executive, following which Members reciprocated by thanking the Youth Council for its contribution in discussions involving children and young people.

Having commended the Youth Council, Youth Service and Officers for their joint efforts in the development of these documents, it was moved by Mr. Bray, seconded by Mr. Smith and

RESOLVED -

- (i) the updated Leicestershire District and Borough Council's Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy be approved and officers be granted delegated authority to update such Policy on an annual basis in subsequent years and;
- (ii) the Children and Young People's Strategy be adopted and the recommendations in the 'Hear by Right' action plan (including the change in title of the Member Youth Champion, (Mr. A.J. Smith) to the Children and Young Peoples' Champion) be supported.

133 HINCKLEY TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION SUPPORT (C24)

In informing the Council of the success of a funding bid to further the regeneration of the town centre, the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Regeneration paid tribute to the officers who had secured this funding but indicated that the exact details as to how the money would be spent could not currently be determined. Once plans were forthcoming and the exact nature of schemes known, regular updates would be conveyed to Members and reports scrutinised. It was emphasised that the LeicesterShire Economic Partnership (LSEP) which had approved grant aid of £215,500 to facilitate the development, could be relied upon to strictly monitor any schemes.

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

RESOLVED - this project be endorsed and approval be given to

- (i) the setting up of relevant partnership and consultation arrangements;
- (ii) a supplementary budget in 2008/09 of £58,000 (funded £43,779 from the LSEP and £14,221 funded from the Planning Delivery Reserve);
- (iii) the creation of base budgets for future years and the inclusion in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in the table in section 4 of the report of the Director of Community and Planning Services; and
- (iv) regular feedback to Members on activity and related spending.

134 INVESTORS IN PEOPLE STANDARD (C25)

In presenting this report the Executive Member for Corporate and Scrutiny Services congratulated the whole of the workforce for its part in helping the Council receive accreditation from Investors in People.

Mr. Bown left the meeting at 8.09 pm, returning at 8.12 pm, at which time Mr. Ladkin left the Chamber.

In supporting this initiative it was moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Crooks and

RESOLVED - this Council notes the significant success in achieving Investors in People award status and endorses the report from the Investors in People Regulator and the proposed areas for development arising from its recommendations for continuous improvement.

135 COPORATE EQUALITIES (C26)

The Chief Executive sought the endorsement of Council that it had achieved level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government on the evidence provided (and set out in this report). Additionally, Members were requested to agree the adoption of the revised Corporate Communication Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy. It was moved by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Bray and

RESOLVED - Council:-

- (i) endorses a formal statement that it has achieved level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government - "Setting Equality Objectives and Targets";
- (ii) adopts the revised Corporate Communication Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy, attached at Appendix A to the Report of the Chief Executive; and
- (iii) agrees that external verification of the position be sought before 31 March 2009.

136 SHARED ICT SERVICES WITH OADBY AND WIGSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL (C27)

The Council was informed of a proposal to share ICT services with Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and called upon to agree the entering into of such a joint arrangement.

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

RESOLVED -

Subject to satisfactory completion of pre-contract/due diligence negotiations and consultation with employees:-

- (i) the decision of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council to delegate their ICT function under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, acting as lead Council for the ICT shared service be endorsed;
- (ii) the delegation of the Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's ICT function, from a date to be determined by the Director of Finance, and that this be an executive function be accepted;
- (iii) once delegated to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, the Oadby and Wigston Borough Council service be provided by Steria Limited;
- (iv) the Chief Executive and Director of Finance at Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council make up the Officer Board for management of the shared ICT service; and
- (v) authority for agreement and implementation of the shared service arrangement be delegated to the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance.

137 ADDITIONAL PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Members having been reminded that the current Constitution provided for three Parish Council representatives on the Standards Committee, it was moved by Mr. Bill, seconded by Mr. Bray and

RESOLVED - upon receipt of a nomination from the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Parish and Town Councils, the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer be delegated the authority to agree the appointment of an additional Parish Council representative.

(the meeting closed at 8.20 pm)