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Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

Bill Cullen MBA (ISM), BA(Hons) MRTPI
Chief Executive

Date: 18 July 2023

To: All Members of Council

Dear Councillor,

Please see overleaf a supplementary agenda for the meeting of the **COUNCIL** on **TUESDAY, 18 JULY 2023** at **6.30 pm**.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Owen'.

Rebecca Owen
Democratic Services Manager

COUNCIL - 18 JULY 2023

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

6. QUESTIONS

To deal with questions under Council Procedure Rule number 14.

(a) **Question from Councillor Williams to the Executive member for Planning**

“The headline in the Times newspaper on 7 April “UK housing crisis: planning targets scrapped in win for nimbys” is typical of headlines seen over the last six months. Residents in Hinckley & Bosworth are understandably confused when they see yet more housing approved against the wishes of local councillors. Please confirm the factual position, for the borough, of the government’s position on housing targets and mechanisms they have in place to enforce them.”

Response from Councillor Crooks:

“The council is required to follow the government’s standard method for assessing local housing need. The standard method was introduced to the planning system on the back of the housing white paper published in 2017. The standard uses a formula to identify the minimum number of homes expected to be planned for, addressing both projected household growth and any historic under-supply. This is the starting point for determining the borough’s overall housing requirement figure. The current standard method figure for the borough is 472 dwellings per annum.

Local planning authorities such as the borough council are required to cooperate with each other and other bodies on policies addressing strategic and cross-boundary matters. This is called the Duty to Cooperate (DtC). Housing is such a strategic / cross-boundary matter. Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council is part of the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA) and therefore has a duty alongside the other local planning authorities in this HMA to help address any unmet housing need arising from other partners. Leicester City Council has declared an unmet need, meaning it can’t meet all of its housing requirements within its boundary.

In a consultation earlier this year on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the government indicated that they planned to replace the DtC with an alignment policy. This new alignment policy would be enacted through a full review of the NPPF which would be required once the emerging Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) gains Royal Assent. Full details as to how the alignment policy will function have not yet been provided. However, it has been made clear that local planning authorities must still plan for their full housing requirement, including unmet need from elsewhere, unless there are ‘exceptional circumstances’ why they are not able to do so such as green belt and areas of outstanding natural beauty. Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council is not likely to be able to demonstrate exceptional circumstances.

It is expected that an initial interim update to the NPPF will not be published before October this year and not before the LURB is enacted. It is also likely that the proposed alignment policy, how to deal with unmet need and changes to the

standard methodology will also be subject to further consultation and will need to be set out in a full review of the NPPF. Although no details have been publicly released at this stage, it is anticipated that this won't be until at least autumn 2024 and will include transition arrangements from the old system to the new. Therefore, the Duty to Cooperate will remain in force until the new plan making system is in place."

(b) Question from Councillor Williams to the Executive member for Planning

"There are roads in Burbage which have been built as clutter free, with no overhead services being delivered to homes, and have for the last fifty years been free from telephone wires and telegraph poles. Residents in these roads are particularly annoyed that telegraph poles are being installed in these roads, only weeks since the new fibre services have been installed in the pavements, with no advance warning to residents of this activity. Please provide the planning position which government has made to enable these services to be installed with no advance notice to residents."

Response from Councillor Crooks:

"The Council has noted that a number of wooden telegraph poles have been erected in the borough, notably in Burbage and Ratby, in recent weeks. The erection of telegraph poles does not require planning permission nor an application to be submitted, instead they are considered permitted development under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. The operator, in recent examples as Openreach, has a requirement only to notify the council 28 days in advance of any works.

Such notifications are not for the determination as to whether prior approval is required for siting and appearance or an application for planning permission and therefore there are no consultation or publication on such notifications.

The local planning authority has 28 days to reply to the code operator and the only reason to condition such notification applications is when there is an article 4 direction relating to the proposed site and would restrict an electronic communication operator permitted development right. However, NPPF paragraph 116 states that local planning authorities should not impose a ban on new electronic communication development in certain areas, impose blanket article 4 direction over a wide area or a wide range of electronic communication development."

(c) Question from Councillor Boothby to the Executive member for Planning

"Will the Executive member for Planning confirm the number of applications currently at or post their policy decision date, irrespective of whether they have an agreed extension with the applicant in place or not, please?"

Response from Councillor Crooks:

"There are currently (as of 10 July) 318 planning applications pending consideration (live). This is down from over 500 in July / August 2022. These include all applications and pre-applications from major development to discharges of planning conditions and pre-app requests. Of these, 179 are within

an eight week period from validation and a further four are major applications that are within a 13 week deadline from validation. Of the remaining 135, a number of these have extensions of time or planning performance agreements in place already and there is ongoing dialogue with the applicant and likely to be information outstanding, either from the applicant or a statutory consultee, that requires resolution prior to determination. Applications pending consideration are reported on a weekly basis to the development management team leaders and Head of Planning, with all development management officers (whether full time, part time or agency) all having regular one to one progress meetings with their manager to manage caseloads. At present, no planning officer has above 45 applications at any one time and performance for Q2 (April to June) this year was 88% of minor applications determined within the eight weeks or an agreed timeframe.”

(d) Question from Councillor Cook to the Executive member for Finance

“Can the administration advise when members and Council will have sight of the flooding and drainage report on the crematorium site please?”

Response from Councillor Lynch:

“Thank you Councillor Cook for your very timely question. Officers have been considering the findings from the site monitoring that has taken place and we are aiming to provide an update report to members at the next Scrutiny Commission meeting”.

(e) Question from Councillor C Allen to the Executive member for town centres

“Will the Executive member for town centres confirm that business owners and market stall holders in the centre of Hinckley will be fully informed and consulted on any proposals arising from the Heritage Action Zone group, prior to any decisions being made or work commenced?”

Response from Councillor Bray:

“I think Councillor Allen for her question.

I am pleased to say that progress on the various projects within the Hinckley High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) continues to be made. We will continue to consult with relevant stakeholders as proposals are finalised particularly on the public realm works at Church Walk. Whilst this project has already been the subject of extensive consultation, I can confirm that as we look to start implementing the works this autumn we will involve relevant stakeholders.”

(f) Question from Councillor Smith to the Leader of Council

“Can the Leader confirm what, if any, plans for refurbishment or development are being considered for the Jubilee Hall in Barwell please? Can he also confirm that Barwell Parish Council will be fully involved and informed of all and any proposals?”

Response from Councillor Lynch:

“I would like to thank Councillor Smith for the question. I can confirm there are no

current plans for the complete refurbishment or redevelopment of Jubilee Hall due to the age and nature of original construction. However, we have for several years been in dialogue with Barwell Parish Council about bringing forward a new community facility that could provide flexible accommodation within a modern designed, energy efficient structure. Whilst these discussions continue, we aim to maintain Jubilee Hall to an appropriate standard to ensure this valuable community facility remains open”.

8. **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S POSITION STATEMENT**

Welcome to this July meeting of Council and I hope all new members who were voted in following the May local elections are settling in well.

Tonight's agenda features items on the Hinckley High Street Heritage Action Zone scheme, our housing repairs service, an innovative pilot project on housing and respiratory illness which is a Leicestershire-wide project being led by HBBC, our financial outturn for 2022/23 and an overview of our corporate plan achievements from 2022/23.

I have set out some brief updates below:

Summer events

With the schools having broken up for summer, we can now start looking forward to an exciting few months of events across the borough.

For those at a loss for things to do, we have lots of family-friendly and FREE events planned over the next few weeks.

On the weekend of 22 and 23 July battling knights will be descending on Argents Mead for the Medieval family fun day. Organised by the High Street Heritage Action Zone and supported by the borough council, you can expect a gruesome barber surgeon, a children's re-enactment of the Battle of Bosworth, a jester and an archaeology talk. There will also be music, have-a-go dancing sessions and more.

Our ever-popular Snapdragon festival returns to Argents Mead on 2 to 4 August. The week's events will include a celebration for National Play Day on Wednesday, 2 August, a "Play, re-use and recycle" event on Thursday, 3 August and Snappy's spectacular tenth birthday celebrations on Friday, 4 August. Families can also enjoy a games garden, a giant sandpit (with thanks to sponsors Hinckley BID), wellbeing woods, a teddy bear's picnic and a craft tent (with thanks to the Hinckley United Reformed Church) for free on each day.

Finally, we can look forward to our mouth-watering annual Feast food festival which returns to Argents Mead on the weekend of 5 to 6 August. With free entry, our annual town centre food festival will feature around 50 street food vendors representing foods from all over the world. You can also expect live music, entertainment and a giant 120ft inflatable assault course (sponsored by Hinckley BID).

Full details of our events can be found in our "What's on this summer" brochure.

The brochure is full of exciting summer events and activities taking place across the borough as well as information and guidance for children, young people and families and can be found at www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/whatson.

We also have a host of events across our parishes, many of which feature in our Borough Bulletin and can be found on our website.

I would encourage everyone to come and join us this summer and celebrate all that our borough has to offer.

Support our businesses this summer

Whether you're shopping for your holidays, planning a staycation or throwing a barbecue in the garden, I'd like to encourage you to shop locally wherever you can this summer. We are fortunate in that our borough has some fantastic town and village centres, with many boasting independent businesses which are bucking national trends and thriving. We also have lower than average vacancies so we are encouraging people to come and support the amazing businesses we have this summer.

Our new Big Bin service

I am pleased to report that the Executive this Wednesday will be looking to sign off a proposal for a new 'big bin' collection service for our residents.

For those planning a clear-out later this year but don't have the space for a skip, they will be able to take advantage of our new service which we plan to rollout for the autumn. For just £60, residents can have the equivalent of five wheelie bins worth of rubbish – plus recycling – collected right from their driveway. This will initially be a pilot project for up to 12 months. We will also be offering discounts for those on benefits.

Further details will be published on our website and included in the next edition of the Borough Bulletin.

Find work at our jobs fairs

We continue to work proactively with partners to promote job and career opportunities for our residents. For any of our residents who are looking for work or might want a career change, I'd encourage them to come along to our regular job fairs which we hold at Hinckley's Atkins Building with our partners at the DWP. For more information, residents can sign up for the free weekly jobs email at www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/emailupdates.

Cost of living support

Linked to the work the council has been doing to support our residents during the cost of living crisis, officers have updated the cost of living pages on the website and the link may be helpful to you to share with residents who approach you with concerns. As you will see, it provides a comprehensive overview of assistance available from both the council and other agencies / voluntary sector organisations:

Keep fit at our revamped tennis courts

Over the past few weeks our TVs have been dominated by Wimbledon tennis. May I offer my congratulations to all who took part and particularly the finalists. On this note, I'm pleased to reveal that our Green Flag award-winning Hollycroft Park has recently had its tennis courts revamped in conjunction with the Lawn Tennis Association. Whether you're a budding tennis player or would simply like to get more active, you can now visit www.lta.org.uk/book to enjoy the new-look courts.

Planning performance

I'm pleased to report that our planning service is now out-performing government targets and I would like to express my personal thanks to Sharon Stacey, Chris Brown and the rest of the planning team for their incredible work in turning around the performance on planning applications.

Following several struggles in late 2020 until September 2022 resulting from the pandemic and a higher than usual rate of staff turnover at a time where there has been a national recruitment crisis in planning, planning performance has significantly increased over the past six to eight months as new staff have joined the existing planning team to improve the customer focus and response.

The council has been performing consistently above the government's performance thresholds for both minor and major applications since October 2022.

I can report that officers recently invited senior officials from DLUCH to meeting the planning team and also those agents and developers who regularly use our service. The DLUCH representative was able to hear first-hand the passion and commitment of our planning managers and staff to improve service to our customers as well as the positive feedback from agents and developers about their recent experiences with the planning service.

On Friday last week we submitted our most up to date performance figures to the government which will now be considered and will determine whether this council is 'formally designated' for its performance on minor applications. Based on the evidence of our performance since October last year, which exceeded 80% since January and reached 88% of applications determined between April and June this year against a government target of 70%, we do not expect to be 'designated'. This, of course, assumes any government decision is based on the evidence alone and for no other reason.

Stuart Bray
Leader of the Council

16. **MOTIONS RECEIVED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 17**

(c) **Urgent motion from Councillor M Mullaney, seconded by Councillor C Gibbens (Pages 1 - 2)**

“Save Hinckley rail ticket office

Council notes with concern recent reports that all 980 staffed ticket offices in England could be closed, following discussions between the Department for Transport and the Rail Delivery Group and changes to the government’s guidance relating to ticket office opening hours.

Council believes that ticket offices provide a vital service to residents in Hinckley. Having a clearly sign-posted place in the station for people with ticket enquiries provides certainty and confidence for customers who may struggle to otherwise locate station staff.

Not all residents are able to use station ticket machines, or have the means to book a ticket in advance. Complicated journeys involving connections are likely to require human assistance to ensure customers purchase the most appropriate and cheapest tickets, and do not incur penalties from mis-booked tickets.

Council is concerned that the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect elderly and disabled residents in the Hinckley area – as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills. Council also notes the possible implications for current station staff and the concerns that have been raised over possible staff redundancies.

Council therefore resolves to:

- (i) Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Government Railways Minister expressing Council’s opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the office at Hinckley;
- (ii) Instruct the Chief Executive to write to East Midlands Railways expressing the Council’s opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket office at Hinckley.”

Councillor R Allen, seconded by Councillor Cook, will propose the attached amendment to the motion.

“Save Hinckley rail ticket office

Council notes with concern recent reports that most staffed ticket offices in England could be closed, following discussions between the Department for Transport and the Rail Delivery Group and changes to the government’s guidance relating to ticket office opening hours.

Council believes that ticket offices provide a vital service to residents in Hinckley. Having a clearly sign-posted place in the station for people with ticket enquiries provides certainty and confidence for customers who may struggle to otherwise locate station staff.

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- (ii) Instruct the Chief Executive to write to East Midlands Railways expressing the Council’s opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket office at Hinckley.”

This motion further proposes:

- (i) This Council writes to East Midlands Railways as operator of Hinckley train station, requesting figures for passenger usage and tickets purchased at the ticket office for a period of not less than 12 months to 30 June 2023. This information to be used as a statistical base for future representations by this council;
- (ii) This Council uses all resources at its disposal to inform residents of the proposals and encourage them to submit their views and comments to the consultation by the deadline of 26 July 2023 at www.transportfocus.org.uk/train-station-ticket-office-consultation/
- (iii) This Council will assist any resident unable to make their submission online by themselves, by appointment.

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