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**Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council**

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

Date: 26 April 2022

To: All Members of Council

Dear Councillor,

Please see overleaf a supplementary agenda for the meeting of the **COUNCIL** on **TUESDAY, 26 APRIL 2022 at 6.30 pm.**

Yours sincerely

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

Rebecca Owen
Democratic Services Manager

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

6. Questions

To deal with questions under Council Procedure Rule number 14.

(a) Question from Councillor R Allen to the Executive member for Planning:

Following on from Cllr Boothby's question to Council on 25 January 2022, can the lead member provide me with an updated position on the following points as of 26 April 2022:

- i. Spend YTD on consultants and temporary staff cover
- ii. Provide an update on recruitment for all vacant positions within the planning and enforcement function
- iii. Confirm the number of planning applications received awaiting verification
- iv. Confirm the number of planning applications awaiting decision split between minor and major
- v. Spend YTD on planning appeals
- vi. Confirm the number of planning applications approaching, at or past their target decision date (ie at risk of appeal for non-determination).

Response from the Executive member for Planning:

Councillor Allen, thank you for your question. I know that updates have been provided to the Planning Committee and at the Leaders' meetings on this matter but I am happy to provide some statistics for you as requested. I am pleased to report the number of outstanding applications is reducing and would like to thank the team for all their hard work on achieving this.

- i. Spend YTD on consultants and temporary staff cover

To be reported through the normal budget reporting cycle

- ii. Provide an update on recruitment for all vacant positions within the planning and enforcement function

Of the nine professional planner roles in development management, three are occupied by permanent staff. Three more have been offered and have accepted and are awaiting paperwork to be completed. This leaves three vacant. Vacancies are being covered by interim staff and contracts.

Of the four professional planner role sin enforcement, one is occupied on a part time basis and two more are occupied full time by permanent staff. One role remains vacant and is being covered by an interim member.

Of the five professional planner roles in policy, three are occupied by permanent staff. One has been offered and accepted and is awaiting paperwork to be completed. This leaves one vacant. Vacancies are being covered by interim staff and contracts.

Of the six professional roles in major projects, five are occupied by permanent staff. One has just become vacant following retirement of the post holder.

Of the five support officer roles, there is one vacancy being covered by a member of staff from within the team and a temporary member of staff has been brought in to backfill.

- iii. Confirm the number of planning applications received awaiting verification

As of 1 April 2022 there were ten applications not including TPOs and pre-apps awaiting validation.

- iv. Confirm the number of planning applications awaiting decision split between minor and major

As of 1 April 2022 there were 52 outstanding major applications (not including those with a resolution to grant awaiting S106)

As of 1 April 2022 there were 115 outstanding minor applications (not including those with a resolution to grant awaiting S106)

As of 1 April 2022 there were 300 outstanding other applications (not including those with a resolution to grant awaiting S106).

- v. Spend YTD on planning appeals

To be reported through the normal budget reporting cycle.

- vi. Confirm the number of planning applications approaching, at or past their target decision date (ie at risk of appeal for non-determination)

As of 1 April 2022 there were 37 applications past their target date with no extension of time agreed.

- (b) Question from Councillor R Allen to the Executive member for finance:

Following on from Cllr O'Shea's question to Council on 25 January 2022 and repeated requests from myself, will the lead member for finance provide me with a detailed breakdown of the costs of the brown bin and blue lid bin recycling schemes separately, by cost item by year for the past five years.

Response from the Executive member for finance:

I would like to thank Councillor Allen for the question and following the previous request from Councillor O'Shea, I can advise that a report setting out the cost of the garden waste service has been produced and will be presented to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Commission. Any further queries outstanding or arising from that report can be addressed through that meeting.

The period to the year-end close is particularly demanding and the finance team has had to deal with covid grants coming to a closedown on 31 March and ensuring all funds that can be used were spent by 31 March 2022. It is also a time of preparing the more pressing matter of the budget for 2022/23 and related reports in a time of uncertainty, which obviously had to take precedence over more historically based reviews on past reported decisions.

(c) Question from Councillor R Allen to the Executive member for Finance:

As councillors we all have a responsibility to ensure the financial well-being of this council. To this end will the lead member for finance undertake to introduce a report to the scrutiny committee detailing for accounts in credit

- Account opening balances
- Monies in
- Monies out
- Closing balance

For accounts in deficit

- Account opening balances
- Monies in
- Monies out
- Interest charged
- Repayments made
- Closing balance

In time for the next schedule scrutiny committee and all future meetings to provide members with an at-a-glance summary of this council's financial position.

Response from the Executive member:

I would like to thank Councillor Allen for his question and interest in the finances of the council. As Councillor Allen will already be aware, there are a number of reports that are already presented and discussed at Finance & Performance Scrutiny in relation to the council's financial position. I would therefore propose that this matter is discussed at the next such meeting to enable all members of that committee to determine the level of reporting required that is proportionate and relevant for the purposes members require.

I have assumed that you refer to bank accounts, rather than general ledger accounts, as the latter would take considerable resources and not really add anything further to budget reports that are already reported in year. In terms of bank accounts, the council only operates three bank accounts, not including the Mayor's charity account. For these three accounts, one is used for payments, one is a more general account used mainly for receipts and the third is the elections account which is ring fenced. These accounts are not allowed to go overdrawn and we do not run an overdraft arrangement with our bank, to avoid charges for such an arrangement.

If members are interested in the cash flow of the council, this is already reported in the financial statements annually as a primary statement and any member can review these at any time. The financial statements are subject to external audit and our auditors have no concerns with our cash position or going concern projections to date. The cash flow in the financial statements clearly links our income and expenditure position to the cash held and has disclosure on cash flows from operating activities, investing activities and from financing activities. I have asked the finance team and they are happy to give further training to any members who wish to have a better understanding of this statement.

I would also like to point out that the question suggests rather a simplistic understanding of how a complex organisation such as a local authority operates,

as there are large amounts of cash collected on behalf of other bodies, such as council tax and business rates, and more recently there has been significant amounts of cash received from government that is merely passing through our accounts en route to businesses as part of the covid support scheme. Also, we have cash constantly being placed in short term investments that sits outside the bank account cash held while invested. It may be better to discuss at Finance & Performance Scrutiny what it is exactly that members are seeking assurance on, so as to better frame the request for information and to avoid any time being wasted in providing information that does not meet members' requirements.

8. Leader of the Council's Position Statement

Welcome to our first formal meeting of Council since the Easter break. Tonight's agenda covers three key items of formal business. The council's Housing Asset Management Strategy, which sets out our approach to the management of our current stock of council properties across the borough; a report on progressing urgent works to Bradgate Stables in Groby, an important Grade II listed building; and a report covering the off street parking places order to address technical changes arising from updated national regulations that come into force from 31 May 2022.

I have set out some other key items of note.

Ukraine

I am pleased to confirm the council has welcomed the first guests from Ukraine, who have been arriving on both the family visa and through the Homes for Ukrainian sponsorship schemes. The borough officers have provided advice and support to both sponsors and guests, ensuring everything is done to help them settle into their homes. Property inspections are close to being completed for those people who have offered accommodation to support guests.

The community response has been amazing, with donations to Feed the Hungry (a local charity) who are now directly supporting Ukrainian guests with essential goods and also support groups being established to connect people. I would like also to extend my thanks to local businesses who have also been helping, for example with Hinckley and Rugby Building Society helping to support people on family visas.

We have a number of HBBC staff volunteering and supporting Feed the Hungry. I recently visited their base in Hinckley with Sharon Stacey, Director of Community Services, to see at first hand the tremendous work the charity and its volunteers are doing to help the people of Ukraine.

MIRA investment

I am delighted to confirm that the legal agreements between HBBC, the LLEP and MIRA have finally all been agreed to enable significant investment into new, low carbon infrastructure to support research and development initiatives at MIRA Technology Park Enterprise Zone. A visit for all members is being lined up for early summer now that COVID restrictions have been lifted and we have lighter evenings.

Events

I am pleased to confirm that the council, working with its partners, will be offering a fabulous events offer throughout the spring and summer. Plans for Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, that will include a special Proms in the Park performance are well underway. Our Cultural Services and Communications teams will

keep you updated on the event details.

HBBC – a platinum awarded council

I am delighted to confirm that the council has been recognised nationally as one of a distinguished number of councils as a Platinum council for its support for the Big Jubilee Lunch, as part of the official celebrations for Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Burbage Common open day

A fun-packed day for the whole family is promised when Burbage Common holds its annual open day on Sunday, 8 May.

The area around the visitor centre at the Leicester Road entrance will be transformed with a marquee accommodating craft and charity stalls and local and national environmental charities.

The event, which is organised by the borough council, really does make the most of the natural environment with workshops, demonstrations, animals, a map display by Hinckley & District Museum, maypole dancing, crafts and other outdoor activities. There will also be food and refreshment stalls catering for all tastes.

Admission to the event, which runs from 10.30am to 4.30pm, is free, but there may be a small charge for some of the activities and workshops held.

Tourism boost

I would like to extend my congratulations to the team at Twycross Zoo for the opening of its newest attraction "Gruffalo Adventure Land". For those undertaking staycations we have a great array of major attractions on offer, including the Battlefield Centre and Triumph Motorcycle Museum and many magnificent heritage and tourism experiences.

I am pleased to report progress is being made in advancing plans for the new National Conservation Centre at Twycross Zoo. A new design team has been appointed and we are expecting a planning application for this £20m project to be submitted in the autumn.

Business grants

I am pleased to report that the council has ensured that nearly £33.4m of mandatory Covid grants have been provided on 5,673 grants to businesses in the borough. We have also ensured over £5.4m has been provided on 2,005 grants to local businesses.

Council tax rebate

Earlier this year, the government announced a one-off £150 council tax energy rebate for all households in England whose main home is in council tax bands A – D.

The council tax team is working to process the energy rebate to all eligible households as quickly as it can. Payments will be made automatically to all eligible households in one of two ways. There is no need to apply for the rebate or to hand over bank details to anyone:

- Anyone eligible for the rebate who pays council tax by direct debit will receive £150 credited directly into the bank account the direct debit payments are taken from in May 2022
- Eligible households who do not pay by direct debit will receive their payment

through the Post Office payout voucher scheme. The person named on the council tax account will receive a letter with a barcode that enables them to pick up their cash payment from a Post Office branch, with appropriate identification. Letters will be posted in May 2022.

Some important points to clarify:

- This scheme is not a reduction in council tax
- The payment will not show on the council tax bill
- We will NEVER ask for bank account or personal details over the phone.

For those households who need help with their energy bills but are not eligible for the energy rebate, the criteria for this scheme is being finalised and will be announced in due course.

Further information about eligibility for this payment and how the scheme will work is on a dedicated section of the council's website.

Local Plan

The council has received a large response (over 700 representations) to the consultation on the local plan and our planning team is currently reviewing all the responses submitted. I remain extremely concerned and disappointed over the county council's position on our local plan. They do not seem to have the capacity or the willingness to do the work to advise us of the highway infrastructure requirements associated with the development we are having to accommodate, as a result of the government "build, build, build" mantra! I hope this does not have implications on the submission to PINS for formal examination.

Neighbourhood plans

I am pleased to report that the Sheepy Neighbourhood Plan has been updated and is now made. Also, the Barlestone NDP has been signed off to move to referendum.

Rail freight consultation

Public consultation for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange closed on 8 April. Tritax Symmetry had extended the period of their consultation on their Rail Freight Interchange proposals for residents to have their say, recognising the importance of local comments to be made on this massive development on our doorstep.

The borough council publicised the consultation in the Borough Bulletin, the media and on social media in order to ensure the proposals were widely known and to give residents the chance to take part in the consultation.

The publicity also highlighted the council's concerns about the environmental impact the development will have on Burbage Common and the local area.

While this council will not be deciding any application, as a statutory consultee the council reviewed the plan and offered our own detailed responses to Tritax and the Planning Inspectorate, stating the borough council remains firmly committed to opposing these plans.

This significant proposed site, which will involve up to 850,000m² of buildings for logistics use is to the north-east of Hinckley – partially within the Hinckley and Bosworth borough with the majority situated within the Blaby district, would be based close to junction 2 of

the M69 to the north of Burbage Common. It is understood that up to 268 hectares (equivalent of 662 acres) of land would be used for the construction of a rail terminal for the loading and unloading of freight trains under the proposals.

Stuart Bray
Leader of the Council
26 April 2022

13. **Motions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17**

- (c) Motion from Councillor M Mullaney, seconded by Councillor Sheppard-Bools

This motion has been withdrawn.