

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

28 November 2023 AT 6.30 pm

PRESENT: CLLR SM GIBBENS - MAYOR
CLLR R WEBBER-JONES – DEPUTY MAYOR

Cllr CM Allen, Cllr RG Allen, Cllr MC Bools, Cllr SL Bray,
Cllr MB Cartwright, Cllr MA Cook, Cllr MJ Crooks, Cllr WJ Crooks,
Cllr REH Flemming, Cllr C Gibbens, Cllr DT Glenville,
Cllr CE Green, Cllr C Harris, Cllr L Hodgkins, Cllr E Hollick,
Cllr C Lambert, Cllr KWP Lynch, Cllr J Moore, Cllr A Pendlebury,
Cllr M Simmons, Cllr H Smith, Cllr P Stead-Davis,
Cllr MJ Surtees, Cllr BE Sutton, Cllr BR Walker, Cllr A Weightman
and Cllr P Williams

Officers in attendance: Ilyas Bham, Mollie Brooks-Crowley, Bill Cullen, Julie Kenny, Rebecca Owen, Ian Pinfold, Caroline Roffey and Sharon Stacey

183. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Boothby, Cope, L Mullaney, M Mullaney and O'Shea.

184. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

It was moved by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Bools and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 3 October be confirmed as a correct record.

185. **Declarations of interest**

Councillor Sutton declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 16b as chair of Dixie Educational Foundation.

186. **Mayor's Communications**

The Mayor presented two long service awards to members of staff who had each worked for the council for forty years. He then updated Council on recent events attended.

187. **Questions**

Question from Councillor Sutton to the Executive member for Planning:

“In relation to residential development in the borough, can the Executive member please confirm:

- (a) How many new homes the borough is expected to complete per year over the next five years, including any overspill agreed to be taken from Leicester City

- (b) Over the last five years, how many have been completed versus the target?
- (c) Several applications have been refused on the grounds that they are outside the settlement boundaries. Is there room to build what we have to, inside the present settlement boundaries?"

Response from Councillor Crooks:

"Thank you for your question. In response:

- (a) The council's trajectory shows delivery of 2,424 dwellings in the five year period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2027. This is proposed completions only and does not take account of any overspill from Leicester City, of which none has been agreed
- (b) From 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022 a total of 1,947 dwellings were completed. This is against a target at the time (changing through the five years) of 2,289 dwellings
- (c) In the past five years to 31 March 2022, completed dwellings (on major sites, greater than 10 dwellings only) were 941 on greenfield sites and 417 on brownfield / previously developed land. It is not considered that going forward, with an annual target of 472 dwellings plus 5% buffer, that there is sufficient brownfield / previously developed land to meet these housing targets.

By way of supplementary question, Councillor Sutton asked when and how the issue of lack of brownfield space would be addressed. In response, Councillor Crooks stated that it would require a change in national policy.

188. **Leader of the Council's Position Statement**

In his position statement, the leader referred to:

- The Christmas lights switch on
- Free parking in Hinckley for the Christmas period
- Hinckley BID securing its fourth five-year term
- Hollycroft Park being voted in the top ten parks in the country
- Launch of the new big bin service
- The high performance of the planning team
- The examination for the Hinckley national rail freight interchange
- The free tree scheme
- Rollout of a considerate parking campaign
- Remembrance Sunday events
- Ukrainian families' visit to Birmingham Conservatoire
- Christmas events.

During discussion on the position statement, the Leader committed to exploring alternatives to noisy fireworks for future council events. Officers were thanked for their hard work in providing events for residents.

189. Minutes of the Scrutiny Commission

The chair of the Scrutiny Commission presented the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October.

190. Peggs Close, Earl Shilton

Members were informed of the proposals for regeneration of the flats at Peggs Close, Earl Shilton. It was moved by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Weightman and unanimously

RESOLVED –

- (i) Option B, which included demolition of existing flats and further work to draw up a detailed scheme, be supported;
- (ii) The capital budget be increased by £1,181,073 to ensure maximum flexibility in determining the mix of property types / scheme design;
- (iii) The issuing of a demolition notice be approved;
- (iv) The associated one-off home loss and disturbance payments of £200,000 be approved.

191. Green Space Strategy & Delivery Plan 2023 to 2033

Consideration was given to the Green Space Strategy and delivery plan for 2023 to 2033. During discussion, a member asked whether any sites outside of Hinckley were included and Council was reminded that open space outside of Hinckley was generally managed by the relevant parish council, but that countryside sites under the council's management, such as Burbage Common, were included in this strategy. A member's concern about provision of pitches for organised sport was also acknowledged.

It was moved by Councillor Hodgkins, seconded by Councillor Bray and unanimously

RESOLVED –

- (i) The Green Space Strategy and delivery plan be adopted;
- (ii) The capital investment and budget requirements for schemes over the term of the plan be approved;
- (iii) Delivery of the strategy and plan be delegated to the Head of Street Scene Services and Executive member for Parks, Open Spaces and Neighbourhood Services.

192. **Polling district and polling place review 2023**

The final recommendations of the Polling District and Polling Place review were presented. It was moved by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Bools and unanimously

RESOLVED –

- (i) All descriptions of polling places be redesignated to better reflect the legal definition of a polling place as a specific location to which a voter can travel, such as a building or a road;
- (ii) The delegated authority of the Chief Executive to agree 'polling station changes' at short notice in consultation with group leaders and relevant ward member(s) (section 2, paragraph 3.2 of the Council's constitution), be amended to read 'polling place changes';
- (iii) The polling place for FAD (Earl Shilton ward) be designated as Belle Vue Road and Heath Land Academy, Earl Shilton, as a temporary measure with the intention of pursuing the use of Newlands Community Primary School;
- (iv) The boundaries of DAA and DAB (Hinckley Castle ward) be merged to simplify boundaries, with a new polling district DAA created with the polling place designated as Mount Road Baptist Church, Mount Road, Hinckley;
- (v) The boundary of EAB (Hinckley Clarendon ward) be extended westwards to better reflect the shape of the established neighbourhood;
- (vi) The boundary of EAC (Hinckley Clarendon ward) be split to make the Hollycroft Grange / Normandy Way development a separate new polling district, EAE, with the polling place for EAE temporarily designated as Hope Community Church, Deveron Way, Hinckley;
- (vii) The boundaries of polling districts ABA and ABC (Hinckley De Montfort ward) be redrawn to create a third, new polling district (ABD);
- (viii) The polling place for ABB (Hinckley De Montfort ward) be changed to Hinckley Methodist Church, Albert Road, Hinckley;
- (ix) The polling place for new polling district ABD (Hinckley De Montfort ward) be designated as Ashby Road Sports Club, Ashby Road, Hinckley;

- (x) The boundaries of ACA and ACB (Hinckley Trinity ward) be merged to create a new polling district ACA with the polling place designated as St Francis Community Centre, Tudor Road, Hinckley;
- (xi) The boundary of polling district ACC (Hinckley Trinity ward) be split to create two smaller polling districts, ACB and ACC with the polling place for ACB designated as Hope Community Church, Deveron Way, Hinckley and the new polling place for ACC designated as Gwendoline Community House, Gwendoline Avenue, Hinckley.

193. Increase in planning application fees

Council was informed of a statutory increase in planning fees to be implemented from 6 December. It was moved by Councillor Lynch, seconded by Councillor W Crooks and unanimously

RESOLVED – the imposed increases be noted and the amendment to the scale of fees and charges be approved.

194. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2027/28

Consideration was given to the medium term financial strategy for 2023/24 to 2027/28. In response to members' questions, it was hoped that there would be progress on the development of the crematorium to report in early 2024. It was moved by Councillor Lynch, seconded by Councillor Bray and

RESOLVED – The medium term financial strategy for 2023/24 to 2027/28 be approved.

195. Corporate plan 2024 to 2028

Members received the new corporate plan for 2024 to 2028. It was moved by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Bools and

RESOLVED – the new corporate plan for 2024 to 2028 be endorsed.

196. Appointments to charitable bodies

- (a) Alderman Newton's Educational Foundation, Barwell

It was moved by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Bools and

RESOLVED – Councillor Green be appointed to Alderman Newton's Educational Foundation, Barwell for a term of three years with effect from December 2023.

- (b) The Dixie Educational Foundation

It was moved by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Bools and

RESOLVED – Councillor Cartwright, Councillor Cook, Councillor W Crooks and Mrs J Glennon be appointed to the Dixie Educational Foundation for a term of three years with effect from December 2023.

197. Motions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17

- (a) Proposed by Councillor Cope, seconded by Councillor Cartwright

This motion was deferred to the following meeting at the request of the mover and seconder.

- (b) Proposed by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Bools

Notice had been given of the following motion:

“This Council notes:

A recent cross-party emergency summit hosted by Eastbourne Borough Council, alongside the District Councils Network and attended by 158 local authorities (half of all local authorities in England), discussed the national crisis relating to homelessness and temporary accommodation. Ordinary working families and single people are caught up in a housing crisis that is no fault of theirs. Local authorities across the country spent £1.7bn on temporary accommodation in the last financial year.

Homeless presentations to the borough council have risen by 93% from 2020/21 to 2022/23 and continue to rise. Our spend on temporary accommodation during this time has more than doubled. A combination of new responsibilities from the Homelessness Reduction Act, private sector rents being beyond the means of many people and the lack of affordable housing options for people to move into has created this crisis. The lack of secure housing has a wider socio-economic impact on health, mental wellbeing, childhood development, productivity and communities.

This Council supports the outcomes of the emergency cross party summit and urgently requests that the government:

1. Raises local housing allowance rates to a level that will cover at least 30% of local market rent and commit to annual uprating.
2. Provides urgent additional funding to local authorities for discretionary housing payments of £100m in 2023-24 and £200m in 2024-25.
3. Provides a £150m top-up to the homelessness prevention grant for 2024-25.
4. Reviews the cap for housing benefit subsidy rate for local authority homelessness placements.
5. Develops new policy to stimulate retention and supply in the privately rented sector.
6. Gives councils the long-term funding, flexibility and certainty needed to increase the supply of social housing.”

In proposing the motion, Councillor Bray seconded by Councillor Bools proposed an amendment to point 1 to read:

“1. Commit to an annual uplifting of the local housing allowance rates to ensure it continues to cover at least 30% of local market rent”.

The amendment was accepted without debate and became the substantive motion.

Councillor R Allen, seconded by Councillor Cook, proposed the following amended motion:

“This Council notes:

Local Authorities spent £1.7bn on temporary accommodation in the last financial year. Homeless presentations to the Borough have almost doubled over the last 3 years.

The net cost to the Borough has more than doubled.

Private sector rents are at their highest on record, with available housing supply at its lowest.

Lack of secure housing has a wider socio-economic impact on health, productivity and communities.

A recent cross-party emergency summit hosted by Eastbourne Borough Council, alongside the District Councils Network and attended by 158 local authorities (half of all local authorities in England), discussed the national crisis relating to homelessness and temporary accommodation.

Ordinary working families and single people are caught up in a housing crisis that is no fault of their own.

This Council welcomes the announcement in the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement that Local Housing Allowance rates will rise to a level that will cover at least 30% of local market rent, resulting in an additional £1.3bn in the 2024/25 Tax Year rising to £1.7bn in 2028/29.

This will give 1.6 million households an average of £800 of support next year.

This Council further welcomes the announcement in the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement that Benefits including Universal Credit will increase by 6.7%

This Council urgently requests that the Government:

- Provides urgent additional funding to local authorities for Discretionary Housing Payments of £100m in 2023-24 and £200m in 2024-25.
- Provides a £150m top-up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2024-25.
- Reviews the cap for housing benefit subsidy rate for local authority homelessness placements.

- Develops new policy to stimulate retention and supply in the privately rented sector.
- Gives councils the long-term funding, flexibility and certainty needed to increase the supply of social housing.
- Allows Councils the option to charge an additional levy on top of Council tax if local authorities are otherwise unable to meet the costs of providing temporary and emergency accommodation.
- Or alternatively, takes sufficient measures within the welfare and health systems to reduce the demand for Council homelessness prevention services.

And the Council commits to:

- Increasing focus on employment within the draft local plan and growth strategy.
- Taking measures to bring forward currently stalled developments including the Barwell and Earl Shilton Sustainable Urban Extensions
- The Council notes that the wider solution to the challenge of homelessness can only come through increasing employment levels and incomes relative to housing costs.
- The Council also notes with regret, that despite core spending power being at an 8- year high and having benefited from 1.8m in government grants since March 2022 to help tackle homelessness, the Council's borrowing level has risen significantly with subsequent rising debt servicing costs and inviting speculation as to Councils ongoing ability to provide its services.”

Councillors Bray and Bools, as mover and seconder of the original motion as amended, did not accept the amendment as they felt it constituted a re-write of the original motion contrary to paragraph 19.6 of the council procedure rules. Council therefore debated the merits of the amendment and, upon being put to the vote, the amendment was LOST and debate resumed on the substantive motion.

Upon voting on the substantive motion, the motion was CARRIED and it was

RESOLVED – This Council supports the outcomes of the emergency cross party summit and urgently requests that the government:

- (i) Commits to an annual uplifting of the local housing allowance rates to ensure it continues to cover at least 30% of local market rent;
- (ii) Provides urgent additional funding to local authorities for discretionary housing payments of £100m in 2023-24 and £200m in 2024-25;
- (iii) Provides a £150m top-up to the homelessness prevention grant for 2024-25;
- (iv) Reviews the cap for housing benefit subsidy rate for local authority homelessness placements;

- (v) Develops new policy to stimulate retention and supply in the privately rented sector;
- (vi) Gives councils the long-term funding, flexibility and certainty needed to increase the supply of social housing.

(c) Proposed by Councillor Pendlebury, seconded by Councillor C Gibbens

“This Council notes that while we welcome technological advances and development, there is an increasingly wide digital divide between those who have access to online services and those who don’t.

The Ofcom report of 2022 notes that 6% of households in the UK do not have access to online services. In Hinckley and Bosworth this would mean there are approximately 6,600 people who are unable to access digital services and these people are likely to be the most vulnerable in our communities, so those with disabilities, the young and the old and those on low incomes.

Therefore, this Council agrees to:

1. Appoint a Digital Divide Champion to take an active lead in this area.
2. Ensure all council services are available to all our residents and put in place action plans to resolve any deficits.
3. Work with council partners to maximise digital skills for local residents and address digital poverty.
4. Ensure that the implementation of future online services does not increase the digital divide and any future online developments take this into account.
5. Call upon Leicestershire County Council and the government to ensure that their own services, government offices, national corporations and banks that utilise online services do not negatively impact on those who are unable to access digital equipment in line with the Equalities Act 2010.”

During discussion, it was reported that officers had agreed to review the disposal policy for IT equipment with the intention of donating it to a charity to distribute to those in need of equipment.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was CARRIED and it was

RESOLVED –

- (i) A digital divide champion be appointed to take an active lead in this area;
- (ii) It be ensured that all council services are available to all residents and an action plan be put in place to resolve any deficits;
- (iii) The Council works with partners to maximise digital skills for local residents and to address digital poverty;

- (iv) It be ensured that the implementation of future online services does not increase the digital divide and any future online developments take this into account;
- (v) Leicestershire County Council and the government be called upon to ensure that their services, government offices, national corporations and banks that utilise online services do not negatively impact on those who are unable to access digital equipment in line with the Equalities Act 2010.

(d) Proposed by Councillor R Allen, seconded by Councillor Cartwright

“Once more we are looking forward to the festive season.

This motion proposes that this Council notes that the people of Ukraine are approaching their second Christmas at war and reaffirms its support for the Ukraine.

This motion further acknowledges the continuing work and support given to Ukrainian refugees by officers of this council and residents across the borough.

Lastly, this motion seeks to recognise and welcome the efforts and contributions made to our communities by Ukrainians who have made their new homes in the towns and rural communities throughout Hinckley & Bosworth.”

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was CARRIED and it was unanimously

RESOLVED –

- (i) The Council’s support for the Ukraine be reaffirmed;
- (ii) The continuing work and support given to Ukrainian refugees by officers of this council and residents across the borough be acknowledged;
- (iii) The efforts and contributions made to our communities by Ukrainians who have made their new homes in the towns and rural communities throughout Hinckley & Bosworth be recognised.

(The Meeting closed at 8.24 pm)

MAYOR