

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

20 DECEMBER 2011 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: MR R MAYNE - MAYOR
MR MB CARTWRIGHT – DEPUTY MAYOR

Mr RG Allen, Mr JG Bannister, Mr PR Batty, Mr Bessant, Mr DC Bill,
Mr CW Boothby, Mr SL Bray, Mrs R Camamile, Mr DS Cope,
Mr WJ Crooks, Mr DM Gould, Mr PAS Hall, Mrs WA Hall,
Mrs L Hodgkins, Mr MS Hulbert, Mr DW Inman, Mr C Ladkin,
Mr MR Lay, Mr KWP Lynch, Mr K Morrell, Mr MT Mullaney,
Mr K Nichols, Mr LJP O'Shea, Mrs J Richards, Mrs H Smith,
Mrs S Sprason, Mr BE Sutton, Miss DM Taylor, Mr R Ward and
Ms BM Witherford

Officers in attendance: Steve Atkinson, Michael Brymer, Bill Cullen, Rachel Dexter,
Louisa Horton, Sanjiv Kohli, David Potter, Jacqueline Puffett and Simon Wood

297 APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Mrs Chastney and Mr Moore.

298 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER

On the motion of Mr Bray, seconded by Mr Cope, it was

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

At this juncture, a Member drew attention to the minutes of the previous meeting (page 6 of the agenda pack), which stated that the explanation on how the five-year land supply was calculated would be re-circulated to Members, and raised concern that this had not been received. Members were assured that this would be sent as soon as possible. It was also suggested that the answer to supplementary questions should be minuted, and it was agreed to give consideration to this.

299 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Bray declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 14: Depot Relocation Options, as he owned a property near to the current depot site.

Mr Mullaney declared a personal interest in item 14: Depot Relocation Options.

300 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor announced the success of the recent visit of a delegation from Le Grand Quévilly and the Christmas lights switch-on event. He made reference to his recent visits to residential homes, and also expressed his concern regarding the closure of some of the neo-natal facilities at the George Eliot Hospital.

A Member informed the Council that ex-Councillor Mrs Claridge was ill, and asked that the Council wish her a speedy recovery.

301 QUESTIONS RECEIVED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.1

- a) Questions asked by Councillor DM Taylor and addressed to the Leader of Council

“Can the Leader remind the Council what the proposals were for the Argents Mead area in the Masterplan published by the previous administration in 2006?”

Response from Councillor SL Bray

“Thank you Cllr Taylor for your question.

I would refer you to an extract of the adopted Hinckley Town Centre Renaissance Masterplan published in May 2006. As you will see, extensive development was proposed. Two plans are attached.”

- b) Question asked by Councillor MS Hulbert and addressed to the Leader of Council

“A lot has been said in the Chamber and local press about the consultation that has taken place over the Barwell and Earl Shilton SUE’s. Could the Leader put on record all the consultation that has taken place for the benefit of all Members, some of which appear to have missed it!”

Response from Councillor SL Bray

“You will recall at last Council, I highlighted the extensive consultation that has been carried out on the SUE’s for Barwell and Earl Shilton. For the avoidance of doubt, I have listed below the details of the consultation exercises which demonstrate the ongoing and extensive nature of consultation carried out to date. You will also be aware the Developers are planning further consultation early in the New Year, as well as a presentation to Scrutiny Commission.

Public Consultation Stages – Earl Shilton and Barwell SUEs/AAP

Masterplan

- Pre-commencement consultation (July to September 2008)
 - (Lanarca working with Earl Shilton Town Council, Barwell Parish Council, Hinckley & Bosworth LSP and HBBC)
 - Information provided (Barwell Carnival and Earl Shilton Egyptian Day)
 - Website updates
 - Information boards
 - Letter and information pack to Citizens Panel
 - Members briefings
 - Workshops with strategic partners
 - Press release
 - Public exhibitions and Community workshop (Barwell Parish Council on Saturday 20 September 2008 and Earl Shilton Methodist Church on Saturday 27 September 2008)
- Masterplan Options Consultation (from July 2009 to March 2010)
 - Stakeholder Workshop – July 2009

- Leaflets distributed to all addresses in Earl Shilton and Barwell regarding the SUEs and consultation and associated events
 - Posters displayed in key locations in Earl Shilton and Barwell
 - Borough Bulletin article
 - Exhibition material and comments forms available on the HBBC website
 - Masterplan Options consultation in Barwell 4th and 5th December 2009
 - Masterplan Options consultation in Earl Shilton 11th and 12th December 2009
 - Stakeholder Design Workshop – 2nd and 3rd March 2010
- Masterplan Preferred Options Consultation (October 2010)
 - Borough Bulletin article
 - Posters in key locations
 - Local radio coverage
 - Email as and flyers to stakeholders
 - Public exhibitions in Barwell on 8th and 9th October 2010
 - Public exhibitions in Earl Shilton on 15th and 16th October 2010
- Earl Shilton and Barwell Area Action Plan – Preferred Options Consultation (January and February 2011)
 - 6 week statutory public consultation allowing the submission of representations (7th January 2011 until 18th February 2011)
 - Letters sent to all contacts on HBBC’s planning policy database
 - Letters to all residential and business addresses in Earl Shilton and Barwell providing an invitation to attend the consultation events, where the proposals can be viewed and the opportunity to submit comments as part of the formal AAP preparation process.
 - Press release to Hinckley Times and Leicester Mercury. Information provided to Parish and Town Council for inclusion in their newsletters
 - Public exhibitions in Barwell on 14th and 15th January 2011
 - Public exhibitions in Earl Shilton on 7th and 8th January 2011
 - Documents made available at main libraries in the Borough, the main council offices and on the HBBC website.”

In response to a supplementary question, the Leader assured Members that consultation had been undertaken and would continue to be carried out.

- c) Questions asked by Councillor MS Hulbert and addressed to the Leader of Council

“Can the Leader inform the Council how much Leicestershire County Council is planning to spend of its £5M Sustainable Transport Allocation, which it has bid to central government for, on Hinckley & Bosworth?”

Response from Councillor SL Bray

“Leicestershire County Council has advised that its bid for £5M Local Sustainable Transport Fund will be focussed on Loughborough and Coalville. Hinckley & Bosworth are unlikely to see any of this funding invested in the locality. The County will start to investigate the second tranche of potential area based schemes in the next financial year (2012/13) and I will wish to be making a strong pitch for this Borough to be included as a priority due to the transport issues we experience and to gain commitment for this resource to support our regeneration initiatives.”

In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Bray stated that the matter would continue to be a top priority.

- d) Question asked by Councillor DM Gould and addressed to the Deputy Leader of Council

“Could the Executive Member for the Local Strategic Partnership tell me what impact he thinks the electrification of the Midland Main Line near our Borough would have on our Businesses, and how such a scheme would interact with our projected growth in apprenticeships and employment opportunities?”

Response from Councillor DC Bill

“Thank you Cllr Gould for your question. As you will be aware, Network Rail propose to upgrade the Midland Mainline running between London and Sheffield via Leicester, Derby and Nottingham through its national electrification programme. As well as key benefits for passengers, in terms of faster and more frequent services, this also presents the opportunity for the rail operators to shift from diesel operated locomotives to more environmentally friendly electric trains which will produce up to 30% less CO2 emissions. This also offers an opportunity for many of our local businesses and those employed in the locality to have better access to an improved national network from Hinckley. I am pleased to confirm through the work of the Local Employment and Skills Partnership, that the number of apprenticeships in companies such as Caterpillar, MIRA and Triumph are increasing and any major improvement in the provision of public transport access in the vicinity of this Borough is to be welcomed.”

In response to a supplementary question, in which Councillor Gould asked why investment in the railway network was so important, Councillor Bill referred to the good connections to Nuneaton to all parts of the country and the importance of maintaining these links.

- e) Question asked by Councillor JS Moore and addressed to the Leader of Council

“Could the Leader outline the rationale behind the practice of allowing former employees who have either taken earlier retirement or enhanced payments in respect of voluntary redundancy, providing consultancy services to this council?”

Additional could the leader also inform council of the sum total payments to former employees in respect of the consultancy services they have subsequently provided to the authority.”

In the absence of Councillor Moore this question was not put.

- f) Question asked by Councillor PS Bessant and addressed to the Leader of Council

“Given the financial challenges that this, and all authorities are facing at this time, would the Leader please let this chamber know his Administration’s current spend on Press Releases, especially as I noted with some dismay recently receiving 10 press releases in the space of eight days.”

Response from Councillor SL Bray

“Can I thank Councillor Bessant for his question as it gives me an opportunity to highlight the amount of work which is required to ensure that the people of this Borough are kept informed of decisions and events and to ensure that they are consulted to make sure our services are accessible and responsive for all.

The costs associated with press releases are limited to a small proportion of salary costs, estimated at £4,300, made up of the time spent by two part time officers who also have responsibility for Media Relations, Graphic Design, Consultation (including the Citizens' Panel), the Council's website, the Borough Bulletin, internal communications and increasingly, social media.

Press releases are used proactively and usually in the alternative to paid for advertising space. It is a cost-effective way to ensure that every council service area provides the residents of the borough as well as the media, with accurate and up-to-date information about council services and facilities. In some cases this is necessary because of a statutory duty to inform, consult and involve local people in decision making across all public functions. In others it is to enable people to get the greatest benefit from the services available and to know what they are entitled to.

Further I am pleased to say that the Communications team now provides comms support to the Crimestoppers charity in this area and Creative Hinckley as part of our partnership working and that we are actively pursuing joint working arrangements with neighbouring councils.

Member input into press releases is desired and being included in circulation is requested by Members, I am however happy to ask officers to remove Councillor Bessant from the circulation list should he prefer it.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor Bessant asked if the Communications team tracked who the press releases were sent to and whether they were used. It was confirmed that this was tracked and also reported to the Strategic Leadership Board. It was agreed that detail on tracking distribution and use of press releases would be sent to all Members following the meeting.

302 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S POSITION STATEMENT

In his position statement, the Leader of Council paid tribute to the Cultural Services team who not only organised a successful event for the switching on of the Christmas lights, but also seamlessly moved the event to Church Walk with less than 24 hours notice, due to a suspected gas leak in the Market Place. He also thanked officers for their work on the Enterprise Zone.

He also made reference to the meeting with Greg Clark regarding the five-year land supply and the hope to achieve a more robust position from January 2012; the first Studio School planned by North Warwickshire and Hinckley College; progress regarding discussions with Royal Mail and the number of positive commitments secured; support for MIRA and improvements to the A5; the intention to make representations regarding the proposals for George Eliot Hospital; and the need to make difficult decisions regarding the budget, whilst retaining frontline service levels.

Councillor Bessant responded by expressing his support regarding George Eliot Hospital and offering congratulations for successful discussions with Royal Mail.

Councillor Lay, in addition to supporting the above points, thanked officers for the work put into the Compulsory Purchase Order for the Bus Station Site, and highlighted the potential for the expansion of MIRA to vastly improve the local economy.

303 MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

The minutes of the Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 27 October were received for information. In presenting these, the Chairman of the Commission reported that the particular issues discussed regarding the sale of vehicles on the highway (minute 223 refers) had not been resolved, and also outlined the discussions held and concern raised regarding doorstep lenders and high street stores offering credit at high rates of interest.

304 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

The Executive Member presented a report which informed Council of the recent accreditation as an “Achieving Authority” under the Equality Framework for Local Government and provided advice on the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equalities Act 2010 and the implications for individual councillors.

A Member expressed concern regarding accessibility of the new council offices and other buildings in the borough and asked if new regulations gave more power to the authority to require existing buildings to be accessible. He also asked about equal opportunities in recruitment within the authority. In response it was reported that the new council offices would be completely accessible and that all public buildings were compliant. With regard to recruitment, it was stated that under the ‘two tick’ scheme, all disabled applicants meeting the criteria were offered an interview.

Some Members expressed concern that, without fully understanding their responsibilities, they may be exposing themselves to challenges. A Member also felt that as councillors were volunteers and not employees, they could not be expected to maintain awareness of updates to equalities legislation. In response it was explained that under the Equalities Framework both officers *and* councillors were expected to take direct responsibility for equalities.

In response to another question it was stated that Member input into the Action Plan had been received via the Corporate Equalities Steering Group (CESG), and Members were assured that there would now be cross-party representation on the group. Members were also informed that the Action Plan had arisen from the recommendations of the peer assessment and that the CESG would look at the concerns expressed in detail.

The Leader expressed his view that the issues contained within the report were fundamental issues and should already be embedded in the authority and he expressed disappointment at the negative debate.

On the motion of Ms Witherford, seconded by Mr Bray, it was

RESOLVED –

- (i) The Council’s “Achieving Authority” status be acknowledged;
- (ii) The responsibilities introduced by the Equalities Act 2010 be noted;
- (iii) the action plan and proposal to seek “excellent” accreditation in 2014 be endorsed.

305 NEW HOMES BONUS CONSULTATION - OUTCOMES

Council was informed of the results of the consultation exercise in relation to the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and process for allocation of funds. Members welcomed the

recommendation to transfer 25% of the total annual allocation to relevant parish councils, and it was noted that HBBC was the only district in Leicestershire which was taking such a step at this point.

On the motion of Mr Lynch, seconded by Mr Crooks, it was

RESOLVED – the report be endorsed and the following recommendations be agreed:

- (i) only those parishes subject to new homes development will receive NHB;
- (ii) the mechanism for calculating NHB be the number of new council tax accounts initiated in the previous 12 months;
- (iii) 25% of the annual allocation to the Borough Council be transferred to the relevant parish councils;
- (iv) funds be allocated to the relevant parish council (with 'no strings');
- (v) funds be rolled over year on year if necessary;
- (vi) an annual report be presented by both the Borough Council and parish councils detailing how NHB has been spent;
- (vii) the allocation of 2010/11 NHB be undertaken as set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report.

306 GREEN WEDGE REVIEW

Members received a report which sought approval of the Green Wedge Review as an evidence-base document for use when preparing Local Development Framework (LDF) documents. Officers were thanked for their hard work. Attention was drawn to the proposed additional recommendations which had been circulated and it was agreed that these be included.

It was moved by Mr Bray, seconded by Mr Nichols and

RESOLVED –

- (i) the review be approved for use as an evidence base when preparing the LDF;
- (ii) a further topic paper be produced to investigate potential new green wedges;
- (iii) the Green Wedge Review document be amended at paragraphs 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 to insert paragraphs 4.28 and 4.38 respectively of the adopted Core Strategy which emphasises the protection function of the green wedge;
- (iv) the Green Wedge Review document be amended at paragraph 3.9.5 to delete the penultimate sentence and replace it with:

“If it is identified through the investigation of sites for the Site Allocations DPD that suitable and viable sustainable sites cannot be identified within the settlement boundary it may be necessary,

having exhausted the review of all brownfield sites, to consider as a last resort investigating alternative land outside the settlement boundary to meet this requirement”;

- (v) the Green Wedge Review be amended to clearly stipulate in section 4.5 (evaluation) that, for the purposes of evaluating the green wedge, any sub area does not need to meet all four of the evaluation criteria to be deemed worthy of protection.

307 MATTERS FROM WHICH THE PUBLIC MAY BE EXCLUDED

On the motion of Mr Lay, seconded by Mr Bannister, it was

RESOLVED – in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12A of that Act.

308 DEPOT RELOCATION OPTIONS

Having declared an interest in this item, Mr Bray left the meeting at 8.12pm.

A report was presented which sought approval for an option to relocate the operational headquarters from Middlefield Lane.

Some Members expressed concern regarding the proposals and the lack of information regarding impact on the capital programme and links between all current and proposed capital projects. A question was asked regarding vehicle movements, potential noise and access to the site, in response to which the Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Direction) agreed to circulate a briefing note to Members. Mr Lynch advised Members of the on-site trial which had already taken place and gave assurances about the timing of vehicle movements, which the briefing note would confirm.

Mr Bessant, along with six further Members, requested that voting be recorded on the recommendations contained in the report. The vote was taken as follows:

Mr Bannister, Mr Bill, Mr Cartwright, Mr Cope, Mr Crooks, Mr Gould, Mrs Hall, Mr Hall, Mrs Hodgkins, Mr Hulbert, Mr Inman, Mr Lay, Mr Lynch, Mr Mullaney, Mr Nichols, Miss Taylor and Ms Witherford voted FOR the recommendations (17);

Mr Allen, Mr Batty, Mr Bessant, Mr Boothby, Mrs Camamile, Mr Ladkin, Mr Morrell, Mr O’Shea, Mrs Richards, Mrs Smith, Mrs Sprason and Mr Ward voted AGAINST the recommendations (12);

Mr Sutton abstained from voting.

Therefore on the motion of Mr Lynch, seconded by Mr Nichols, it was

RESOLVED – the recommendations contained within the report be agreed.

(The Meeting closed at 8.52 pm)

MAYOR