

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

8 APRIL 2014 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: MRS L HODGKINS - MAYOR

Mr PR Batty, Mr Bessant, Mr DC Bill MBE, Mr CW Boothby,
Mr SL Bray, Mrs R Camamile, Mr MB Cartwright, Mrs T Chastney,
Mr DS Cope, Mr WJ Crooks, Mr DM Gould, Mr PAS Hall, Mrs WA Hall,
Mr MS Hulbert, Mr C Ladkin, Mr MR Lay, Mr KWP Lynch, Mr R Mayne,
Mr JS Moore, 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, Emma Horton, Simon D Jones, Sanjiv Kohli,
Lindsay Orton, Rebecca Owen and Nic Thomas

497 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Allen, Bannister and Inman.

498 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

499 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared at this stage.

500 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported on recent events that she had attended.

Councillor Cartwright paid tribute to Tony Pegg, a taxi driver who he had used as Mayor, who had died suddenly. It was agreed that a letter of condolence be sent to his wife on behalf of the Council.

501 PETITIONS

Councillor Richards submitted a petition for public toilets in Earl Shilton which had over 300 signatures and had not yet closed. It was confirmed that, when complete, the signatures would be verified under the Petitions Scheme and the appropriate action would be taken which, if all signatures were accepted, would result in a Council debate.

502 QUESTIONS

The following questions were asked and answers provided in accordance with Council procedure rule 11.1.

(a) Question from Councillor Morrell

“Could the executive member for leisure and recreation please explain why when it was stated in the public consultation in respect of the new leisure centre and in the report to elected members that there would be what was described as a competition swimming pool yet now after the consultation has closed the Council is describing this as a community pool?”

Can the executive member also please explain why when the Council still has the golden opportunity to ensure at the detailed design stage that Hinckley will have a first class leisure centre for the next 40 plus years that will include a competition swimming pool at least on a par with leisure centres in neighbouring districts that the Council is refusing to grab that opportunity with both hands when it is forecasting such a healthy income from the facility.”

Response from Councillor Cope

“Councillor Morrell. I’m sure Members will fully agree that the delivery of a magnificent new leisure centre, with all the facilities it will contain on Argents Mead, bringing in an income of approximately £0.5m per year for the next 20 years, is a great achievement. The leisure centre is indeed a community facility with a community pool. It will also host competitions; many more than the current leisure centre can host.

The Council has listened to the views of stakeholders and amendments are being made to improve the internal design and capacity. These will form part of the planning application submission for the scheme.

This state of the art facility will be the envy of our neighbouring Districts and enhances the offer currently provided by some neighbouring facilities.

Note Councillor Cope is Executive Lead for Culture & Leisure and not Leisure & Recreation.”

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Morrell asked for clarification of whether this meant the swimming club would be holding its competitions at the new leisure centre. In response, Councillor Cope confirmed that the majority would be held there.

(b) Question from Councillor Ladkin

“Could the executive member for leisure and recreation please confirm whether there is any substance to concerns that are being expressed by members of the public that the Council is proposing to reduce the floor area of the new leisure centre by some 5 metres along the elevation facing the hospital from the original plans published for consultation, in order to provide additional grassed areas on the site.

In view of the recent media publicity suggesting disquiet on a number of issues relating to the proposals for the new leisure centre and the apparent response from the Council and our partners suggesting that commercial outcomes were the overriding priority, can the executive member for leisure and recreation provide guarantees not only that there will be no reduction in the floor area of the new leisure centre or specification from the details provided as part of the public consultation and that the Council will try to accommodate important improvements for user groups where at all possible.”

Response from Councillor Cope

“There are no intentions to reduce the floor area of the proposed new leisure centre. On the contrary, the floor area will be increased by 2%* utilising the contours of the site to maximum effect, whilst the overall footprint will be reduced by 6.5% - thus providing more green space in Argents Mead and protecting boundary trees.

We have listened to user groups and internal changes to the design have been undertaken to address their concerns and suggestions, where appropriate.”

** The gross internal area has increased from 6,420sqm to 6,467 and the net usable area has increased from 5,658sqm to 5,770sqm (2% increase).*

As a supplementary question, Councillor Ladkin asked what the additional space would be used for. In response it was stated that the main use would be additional changing space.

(c) Question from Councillor Batty

“A. In view of the recent publicity relating to public meetings and objections to a number of the proposed Highways improvements for Hinckley particularly the emphasis on cycle lanes at the cost of of disability compliant bus stops along Coventry Road and the removal of many established trees to make way for cycle lanes, could the deputy leader of the Council please confirm the level of his involvement jointly with a leading local cyclist campaigner in working closely with County Council officers in driving the process along during the formative stages of the plan

B. Can the executive member for the Town Centre please confirm his understanding of what is actually proposed in respect of the improvements for traffic along Regent Street and does he agree that the lion's share of the available funding for Highways improvements in the Hinckley area to help boost the local economy should be spent on cycle lanes when there are so many traffic congestion issues around the town that need to be urgently addressed.”

Answer to part A from Councillor Bill

“The comments you make relate to Leicestershire County Council's LTP3 programme for Hinckley. The County Council is conducting consultation directly with residents and stakeholders affected by the plans. The ambition is to substantially improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists into and out of the town.

As part of this ambitious programme, the County Council is currently embarked on a £1.5m scheme of transport improvements across the western side of Hinckley. This follows similar schemes of improvements in Loughborough and Coalville and some of us have been pressing for this area to be included for some considerable time. The scheme, which encompasses a number of features including creating shared foot and cycle paths, introducing further traffic calming features, new parking controls, new weight restrictions etc. will eventually be rolled out across the whole for the urban area.

The western side of Hinckley has been designated Zone 1 by the County Council and 1800 letters were delivered to the households directly affected. There will be many more people indirectly affected and that is why, together with colleagues including Councillor David Cope and Councillor Michael Mullaney, I have been carrying out my own consultation and encouraging people to get engaged. It is essential in my view that as comprehensive a picture can be supplied to the

County Council before that body decides what action to take. We have already passed on many messages of concern about the loss of bus lay-bys and mature trees, concerns that we share.

The motivation behind this scheme is to improve access, reduce congestion and help provide a boost to the local economy. Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council has played a very positive role in this through its encouragement of new employment opportunities and the training of local people to take advantage of these opportunities, but it is essential that people can access what is on offer. This exercised has focussed residents' minds on other challenging issues such as excessive speeding, congestion outside schools and the impact of the daily flow of traffic in and out of the town, a flow which grinds to a halt on far too many occasions.

In this last regard, the news released this week of A5 improvements funded by the Regional Growth Fund and by Pinch-Point funding is very welcome news indeed. I would remind Members that the Pinch Point scheme is for the major improvements to the Longshoot and Dodwells junction. Councillor Bray, with the support of Officers, has worked tirelessly towards bringing this about, supporting the growth of MIRA, for example, and pressing the need for road improvements to complement what has been achieved so far. Councillor Bray continues to support the need for improved infrastructure through the Leicestershire LEP and I have ensured that the requirements for improvements to the A5 are to the fore in the programme of the Coventry and Warwickshire City Deal. We have all had to fight for what has been achieved.

It is to be hoped that the plans for the Highways Agency, the County Council and the various funding bodies will be coordinated as a successful outcome is vital to all of us. The Borough Council makes representation at every level but is not responsible for these schemes.

It is worth stressing once again that this is a County Council scheme and, of course, the County Council is Conservative controlled. The questioner probably has more influence with that body than any of us and I hope that he will use that influence well.

As a footnote, the cycling campaigner referred to is obviously Eric Neal who I have known for over 40 years and who is one of my oldest friends. We have had no discussions up till now on these plans but I will welcome his views just as I will welcome the views of everyone else affected."

Response to part B from Councillor Bray

"A scheme is being prepared by LCC for Regent Street to address concerns of local businesses. There will be full consultation on the plans later this year.

The decisions regarding investment and priorities for highway improvements in Hinckley are for the County Council. As part of its programme, the County are seeking to tackle congestion in the town centre. If there are representations to be made, they should be made to Leicestershire County Council for their consideration."

By way of a supplementary question to part A, Councillor Batty thanked Councillor Bill for his comprehensive response and asked if he and Councillor Mullaney had expressed concern at the signing off of the plans on 11 February. In response Councillor Bill said he hadn't seen the detailed plans at that point.

In response to part B, Councillor Batty asked for a more accurate date of when consultation may take place and the budget for the project. Councillor Bray responded that the relevant Director at the County Council had said it would take place in the latter half of the year and that the cost would be around £48,000.

(d) Question from Councillor Richards

“I am glad that the Council now appears to be making every effort to try and deal with the parking nightmare created by staff and visitors to the Hinckley Hub that has been imposed on residents in the area since the Council offices were moved to their present location. Is the executive member now prepared to concede that his administration badly underestimated the need for parking spaces at the Hinckley Hub and the impact this would have on residents and businesses in the area. Obviously, this has and continues to generate costs not budgeted for by the Council, can the executive member please confirm how much it has cost the Council so far for staff concessionary parking (and any potential lost car park revenue), shuttle buses etc. and what does the Council anticipate the final cost to be to fully address this problem to the satisfaction of local residents and businesses.

As a comparison, could the executive member please confirm the cost for concessionary staff parking at Argent's Mead compared to the costs at the Hinckley Hub.”

Response from Councillor Lynch

“No, of course the Administration did not underestimate the need for parking spaces at the Hinckley Hub. Planning consent for the building obtained by the developer required the provision of parking which has been met in full .The parking requirement for the Hub was determined by a parking study undertaken at the time and the transport assessment completed in November 2010 concluded that

“the development proposals will have no significant impact on the operation of the local highway network and that there are no reasons why this development should not be approved on highways or transportation grounds”.

The Administration does however recognise that there is a problem with staff, (mainly employed by Leicestershire County Council), parking on the neighbouring streets. We are addressing this by making more parking available but the issue of on street parking will not be fully resolved until the County Council introduce new Traffic Regulation Orders. Officers are pursuing this with the Transport department at Leicestershire County Council.

I do not understand where Cllr Richards gets the strange idea that parking for staff continues to generate costs not budgeted for by the Council. Staff concessionary parking provided previously at Argents Mead is now being provided at Willowbank Road. In both cases, the parking was/is provided for essential users only. Neither of these car parks operate a pay and display charging system and therefore there is no income foregone. However, I would point out to Cllr Richards that in 2012, 160 employees had permits to park at Argents Mead; currently 72 employees have permits to park in Willowbank car park. This means that there is less of an opportunity cost to the council now than prior to moving to the Hub

With regard to use of Brunel Road, this car park has never been fully utilised (many of our car parks are on 70% to 75% occupied) and therefore its use for staff parking has not resulted in a great loss of income as Cllr Richards may think. In fact, the gross income received on Brunel Road South car park for June 2013 to February 2014 is £11,617. For the same period the previous year, the gross income was £11,643. Income lost by offering staff free concessionary parking is therefore a reduction of only £26 for the year. In addition, I would point out that rather than lose money, the Council has in fact benefited from an additional £34,400 of income by issuing of car parking permits.

With regard to the cost of shuttle bus for 2013, this was £5,640. This cost was more than off set by the additional income from car parking permits. The bus was used by Leicestershire County Council, Job Centre Plus and Hinckley and Bosworth staff, particularly at lunchtimes and the month before Christmas, for accessing the town centre for shopping. This short term provision was important in managing the transition of the move from Argents Mead to the Hub.

I will remind Councillor Richards that her group supported the move to the Hub. Her leader at the time said it was a “no brainer” and it had the full support of the Conservative controlled County Council, which of course she is a member of the ruling group.”

As a supplementary question, Councillor Richards asked how officers knew that it was mostly County Council staff who were parking on-street, and also how putting Traffic Regulation Orders in place would help to address the problem. In response it was explained that officers could identify those cars with HBBC parking permits and those with County Council permits, and that putting TROs in place would prevent on-street parking during office hours.

(e) Question from Councillor Allen:

“A letter from the Council's Cultural Services Manager published in the Hinckley Times re-assured residents that there will be ample car parking spaces for the new leisure centre. Can the executive member please provide some guarantee that this is in fact correct bearing in mind the loss of the considerable number of parking spaces that were previously available on the former Council office site, the closure of a number of Council car parks in the Town Centre to facilitate the bus station redevelopment, Council staff, councillors and other visitors to the Hinckley Hub being re-directed to the new leisure centre (Mount Road) car park once Brunel Road car park is closed and the huge increase to visitor levels to the new leisure centre that will have to happen to generate the income promised by the operators. To achieve the required hugely increased number of visitors required by the business plan, it is inconceivable that the new leisure centre will not be busy during the daytime as claimed.

On the same subject, can the executive member please confirm how many coach parking spaces will be provided on the new leisure centre car park, as none appear to be allowed for and will there be ample turning space.”

In the absence of Councillor Allen, this question was not put.

(f) Question from Councillor. O'Shea:

“Can the executive member for planning please comment on the advice of his own administration's planning officers that very little if any weight can be placed on the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Study to justify the refusal of an application, particularly if that application is in respect of *in migration*

to the Borough" which is not addressed in this study, even if is only from 100 metres in a neighbouring Borough or District. Bearing in mind his own comments that the Council now has a 5 year supply of pitches as a result of this study and that the Council does not need to accept any more gypsy/traveller site applications at this time, can he reassure members whether or not his claim was correct and whether this study can be safely used as a reason for refusal that would on the balance of probability withstand an appeal."

Response from Councillor Bray:

"Firstly, Planning Officers (indeed ALL officers) are employed by the full Council – not, as you suggest, by 'the Administration'. Secondly, as you may now be aware, this matter was considered by the High Court yesterday as part of the Dalebrook Farm Judicial Review. The Council was successful in defending its decision to grant planning permission on that site. Only when a full written judgement has been received will it be possible to set out the position regarding the weight to be given to the gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Study as part of the planning decision-making process."

In response, Councillor O'Shea questioned the content of some reports.

(g) Question from Councillor. O'Shea:

Site Allocations and Development Plan Document pre-submission (Regulation 19) Consultation

Can the lead member please tell me why this consultation has been made so difficult for residents to understand?

Would the member agree that when resident's boundaries are moved without any consultation or visits from officers, that these changes should be clearly marked and highlighted on the relevant part of the document so that residents can identify these changes and comment? Why are the reasons for the changes not fully explained to help residents understand this complex document?

Response from Councillor Bray

The consultation document clearly sets out the proposals for Site Allocations within the Borough, supported by maps and plans showing areas affected. I can also confirm that the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD – Pre-submission consultation has been undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

As part of this consultation 13,500 letters have been sent out which is an unprecedented amount within Leicestershire for a consultation of this type. In addition to these letters,

- adverts were also placed in the Hinckley Times and the Leicester Mercury
- Copies of the documents were placed in every library across the borough and in the council offices here at the Hub
- And all the documentation has been available to view on line throughout the consultation period and;
- Officers have also been available to direct members of the public to relevant documents on the website and to answer any questions raised.

In fact the council has gone further than the regulations require by placing the details of the consultation within the borough bulletin which goes to every single household within the borough.

In terms of your comments regarding the settlement boundary amendments, the Council is required to review settlement boundaries, this requirement was set out within the adopted Core Strategy (2009). If you have specific properties/areas where this has been an issue, please let me know and I will ensure that officers deal with them quickly.

503 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S POSITION STATEMENT

In presenting his position statement, the Leader of the Council referred to recent awards won and the agreements for the bus station development being signed. In response to a question from the leader of the opposition, Councillor Bray stated that the names of the businesses who had agreed to let units in the development were commercially sensitive.

504 MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

The minutes of the Scrutiny Commission were received for information.

505 DEMENTIA FRIENDS PRESENTATION

Members received a short version of a presentation on the 'Dementia Friends' project which had been referred by the Scrutiny Commission. It was

RESOLVED –

- (i) the project be endorsed by the Council;
- (ii) a full presentation be provided on a date to be arranged, with all members, parish councils and community groups to be invited.

506 GREEN SPACE DELIVERY PLAN

This item had been deferred for further consultation with the Hinckley Area Committee following recommendations of the Scrutiny Commission.

507 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Members received a report which sought approval to consult on the updated Statement of Community Involvement which set out how the Borough Council would engage and consult during plan-making and for planning applications. During discussion on the report, concern was expressed that some parish councils had not been aware of a recent consultation and had been too late to submit their concerns, and they supported the updated Statement of Community Involvement which would provide a framework for consultation. On the motion of Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Cope, it was

RESOLVED – the updated Statement of Community Involvement be approved for public consultation.

508 REQUEST FOR VIREMENT - PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS

A report was presented to Council which sought approved for a virement from existing pension budgets to a 'corporate pension contribution' budget in order to reflect the change in payment arrangements to the Pension Fund for 2014/15. Discussion ensued regarding the position following the reduction in the pension contribution rate and ill

health contribution rate which would not result in savings due to the payment of a fixed sum.

Reference was also made to the Government's decision to remove councillors from the Local Government Pension Scheme and the concern that some MPs felt that councillors should not receive an allowance.

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

RESOLVED – a virement of £282,000 from existing pension budgets to a 'corporate pension contribution' budget for 2014/15 be approved.

509 MOTION RECEIVED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES 13.1 AND 13.2

Motion received from Councillor Hulbert and seconded by Councillor Mullaney

"That this Council pays tribute to the volunteers who run the Hinckley Foodbank, and other groups providing similar help.

We thank them for their commitment to ensuring people facing an emergency situation- be it the loss of a job or an unexpected delay in benefit payments-have somewhere to turn to for food.

We recognise that Foodbanks have been in existence under successive Governments but call on the Coalition to ensure that it has the right policies in place so the poorest and most vulnerable people in our society are given all possible help.

That there are opportunities for all of our people-whatever their backgrounds or circumstances-and that as many people as possible get to benefit from the economic recovery as it builds up.

That this Council will write to the people running the Hinckley Foodbank thanking them for their efforts and offering any support we can provide.

That we will write to the relevant Government Minister reiterating the importance of ensuring Government has the right policies in place to bring more people out of poverty and to ensure the fruits of any economic recovery are enjoyed by all of our people."

Members welcomed the motion and some stated that they had seen the work of the foodbanks in their ward. It was also recognised that without the volunteers the foodbanks would not exist, and also that the generosity of the community was clear in the number of donations received.

RESOLVED – the motion be supported unanimously.

(The Meeting closed at 7.43 pm)

MAYOR