



**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL
THURSDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2014**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillor R Hetherington - Mayor
Councillor F A Purdue-Horan – Deputy Mayor

Councillors R A Adair, Mrs S P Bailey, J R Bannister, D G Bell, Mrs D M Boote, S J Boote, N K Boughton-Smith, N A Brown, B Buschman, R L Butler, H A Chewings, J N Clarke, T Combellack, L B Cooper, J E Cottee, G Davidson, A M Dickinson, J E Fearon, J E Greenwood, R M Jones, K A Khan, N C Lawrence, E J Lungley, A MacInnes, Mrs M M Males, G R Mallender, S E Mallender, D J Mason, F J Mason, G S Moore, B A Nicholls, E A Plant, S J Robinson, Mrs J A Smith, P Smith, J A Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood, B Tansley, J E Thurman, H Tipton, D G Wheeler

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

5 Members of the public

OFFICERS PRESENT:

A Graham	Chief Executive
P Linfield	Service Manager – Finance and Commercial
K Marriott	Executive Manager - Transformation
D Mitchell	Executive Manager - Communities
V Nightingale	Senior Member Support Officer
P Steed	Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial
D Swaine	Executive Manager - Operations and Corporate Governance

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors L J Abbey, J A Cranswick, I I Korn, Mrs J M Marshall, D V Smith, T Vennett-Smith, J G A Wheeler

OPENING PRAYER

The Meeting was led in prayer by the Mayor's Chaplain

18. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 26 June 2014 were received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

20. **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor stated that he had attended thirty three engagements since the last Council meeting. He had been impressed by the hardwork of all the community groups and volunteers who ran these various events. He particularly noted how active people were raising money for good causes and bringing pleasure to other people in the community.

He thanked Councillor Bannister who was running the Robin Hood Marathon on Sunday 28 September in aid of the Mayor's Charity, The Friary. He reminded Members of several events that were being held before Christmas to raise funds for the Charity including a brass band ensemble, a dinner at the Pearl restaurant and an Evening with Charles Hanson from Antiques Roadshow.

21. **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader had no announcements.

22. **Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive had no announcements.

23. **Statement of Accounts 2013/14**

Councillor Robinson presented the report regarding the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2013/14, which had previously been considered by the Corporate Governance Group on 4 September 2014. He stated that these accounts demonstrated that the Council was focussed on its viable medium term strategy and on delivering quality front line services. These accounts also reflected the work and collaboration of officers, Councillors and partners. He expressed his appreciation of the work undertaken by the Finance team in these economically challenging times. He informed Members that it was anticipated that future documents would be more concise and readable, however it had to be noted that most of the content was prescribed by legislation.

Commenting further Councillor Jones thanked officers for their hard work and for producing a very thorough report. He noted that the Council was in a very strong financial position with £2.6 million in the General Fund, £10.2 million in Earmarked Reserves and receipts of £1 million from the New Homes Bonus. He felt that, due to this strong position, the Council could consider cost effective and efficient improvements to services. He stated that the proposal to reduce the two leisure centres in West Bridgford to one had been disappointing to residents. He hoped that the recommended changes to the number of indoor bowling lanes and the extension to the learner pool would be agreed and that the building would be high quality and sustainable for many years.

Councillor Jones noted that the Council received £100,000 per annum from the sale of former Council houses and felt that this money should be used to build affordable homes in partnership with housing associations. He also noted that the Council stood to gain significant capital receipts from the

Sharphill overage agreement, and therefore it was important that this agreement was sound. He also stated that the residents of West Bridgford would want to see this money used on improvements to the area's infrastructure including the preservation of the woodland and its wildlife.

Finally, Councillor Jones queried the reduction of the net value of the Council which he felt was largely due to the increased pension liabilities over the last few years. With reference to the report he queried if the liabilities for the redundancies and agreed departures would be ongoing and how much the additional pension cost was for any other staff that 'exited' the authority. He hoped that there would be no further losses of staff, in this manner, in the future.

Councillor Boughton-Smith supported the approval of the Statement of Accounts and the Management Representation Letter. He stated that the Council had received a favourable report from the auditors and felt that Members should acknowledge the excellent work undertaken by the finance team.

Councillor S Mallender supported Councillor Jones' statement regarding redundancies and the fact that money should be spent on improved services including leisure, affordable homes and Sharphill Wood.

Councillor Clarke stated that these were an extremely good set of accounts for the previous financial year. He assured Members that the New Homes Bonus funding would be used for the community, however he urged caution as the expenditure needed to be sustainable as future funding was not guaranteed. With regard to pensions he had been advised that there was no increase in the liability and that these had been reported to Council at the appropriate time. He too congratulated the staff on their prudent management of the finances on behalf of the Council Tax payers.

In conclusion Councillor Robinson stated that these were excellent accounts and reminded Members of the forthcoming budget workshops where all Members would have the opportunity to participate in prioritising the budgets for the future.

RESOLVED that Council approve:

- a) The Statement of Accounts for 2013/14 (**Appendix A**).
- b) The Management Representation Letter (**Appendix B**).

24. **Independent Review of Members' Allowances**

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Chief Executive regarding proposals for an independent review of the Members' Allowance Scheme. He welcomed the fact that it was an independent review as this ensured that it was open and transparent and would instil public confidence. He reminded Members that the last full review had taken place in 2007 and that since then there had been a change in the community leadership role of Councillors and next year the number of Councillors would reduce to 44. He pointed out that

any proposals made to the scheme would be presented to Council in the future.

Councillor Davidson supported the recommendation and agreed that the scheme needed to be considered again. He felt that the terms of reference were reasonable and that the Chief Executive should make the appointments in consultation with the Group Leaders. However, he reminded Members that pay rises were very small and therefore, in his view, there should not be a significant increase in the allowances.

Councillor MacInnes accepted the rationale behind the request to review Members' Allowances however he was of the opinion that it was not the correct time for Members to award themselves large increases. He reminded Members that residents had experienced reductions in their income due to wage constraints and increases in inflation. In fact, research had shown that local authority staff income in real terms was approximately 30% lower than in 2010. He felt that trust in politicians was low and that Rushcliffe needed to set an example. He proposed that the recommendation should be amended as follows:

It is RECOMMENDED that Council considers and endorses the proposals for an Independent Review of Members' allowances and:

- a) *endorses the terms of reference for the review as set out at **Appendix 1**;*
- b) *recognises and supports the requirements of the panel to take into account the present difficult economic conditions, the views and sensitivities of local residents and the continuing requirement for prudence in relation to public sector spending; and*
- c) *authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders to finalise the three appointments to the Independent Remuneration Panel and the arrangements for any allowances payable to panel members.*

Councillor Clarke stated that he felt that this was potentially pre-empting the review and it was important that the panel could consider, and take into account, all the relevant factors.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

Councillor G R Mallender supported the terms of reference. He agreed with the sentiments of the amendment especially during these economic times. However, the panel could recommend to reduce the allowance and therefore the panel's recommendations should not be pre-empted. It was important that everyone was able to stand for election and to be able to represent their community.

Councillor Hetherington reminded Members that Councillors were being asked to consider the process of the review and any appointments to the panel and not the recommendations or findings of the review.

RESOLVED that Council considers and endorses the proposals for an Independent Review of Members' Allowances and:

- a) endorses the terms of reference for the review as set out at **Appendix 1**; and
- b) authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders to finalise the three appointments to the Independent Remuneration Panel and the arrangements for any allowances payable to panel members.

25. **Polling District and Polling Places Review**

Councillor Clarke presented a report regarding the outcomes of a periodic review of polling districts and polling places which had been undertaken as a consequence of the review of the electoral arrangements by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. He drew Members' attention to a revised proposal for the Bingham East Ward following a meeting between the Chief Executive and the Head Teacher of the school that was used as a polling station. He stated that there would be an ongoing review of the situation.

Councillor Davidson stated that the majority of the proposals were non-controversial. However, he could not support the use of the Town Pavilion for the Bingham West Ward. He stated that electors found it difficult to access the building itself and the fact that there was limited public transport to the site. In proposing an amendment he stated that the Town Pavilion should be replaced by the Robert Miles School as the polling place for Bingham West. He felt that a combined station for both Bingham East and Bingham West would be advantageous as it was a more convenient place. He informed Members that there was a large number of people who voted by post and that only a small number of electors went to the polling station. In future years he suggested that officers considered the Methodist Centre and Church House as alternative sites for the Bingham wards.

Councillor S Boote supported Councillor Davidson's amendment to the schedule of polling places stating that the Council should choose convenient locations to encourage people to vote.

Councillor Mrs Stockwood stated that she could not support the amendment as this would increase the problems at the school. She also felt that the access routes to the school were difficult and not satisfactory. She informed Members that access to the Town Pavilion was being improved.

Councillor Clarke stated that the amendment to have both wards use the Robert Miles School was contrary to local feeling and would compound the issue. The Chief Executive had been requested to keep this polling station under review and it was felt that as part of this both wards should be considered.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

Councillor MacInnes thanked staff for their hard work in delivering the review and he recognised that this was a difficult process due to the lack of suitable premises. He believed that there was a need to consider alternatives to schools and community halls.

Councillor S Mallender agreed that it was not easy to find suitable accommodation. She outlined the access problems that occurred at the school in the Lady Bay Ward. She felt that it was important that all premises were compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Councillor S Boote referred to the proposal for Keyworth North Ward to continue to use the Crossdale Drive Primary School. He stated that the position of the school was remote and that the school had to be closed on polling days. He was surprised that the Head Teacher had not received any complaints. He informed Members that Keyworth North had the highest turnout in England of 71%, however a large proportion voted by post and therefore the polling station was often quiet. Due to the changes in the wards from 2015 he proposed an amendment that there was only one station at the Village Hall in Keyworth. This was a centrally located site with access via public transport.

Councillor Cottee stated that, until recently, he had been a school governor at Crossdale Drive Primary School and the governors were unaware of any complaints. He agreed that the Village Hall could have been used as an alternative but this had not been proposed as part of the consultation. He felt that the Returning Officer could possibly consider this in the future.

Councillor Clarke stated, as with the Robert Miles School, polling day could be used as an inset day and that the schools had been informed of the dates for future elections. He asked the Chief Executive for further clarification.

The Chief Executive stated that he had visited both sites and that the Head Teacher at Crossdale Drive Primary School had confirmed that there had been no formal complaints. As the Returning Officer it was his duty to ensure that there was a smooth and efficient election. He confirmed that the Head Teacher had agreed to continue to use the school as a polling station.

Councillor D Boote stated that Keyworth was a small and cohesive village and that it would be more convenient and cheaper to have one polling station at the Village Hall.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

In conclusion, Councillor Mason stated that there had been a great deal of consultation on this subject and that everyone had been listened to. Officers had worked hard and put forward sensible and workable solutions. She welcomed the fact that the Chief Executive had spoken to the Head Teachers.

RESOLVED that

- a) Council approve the:
 - (i) proposals setting out changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations, and
 - (ii) revised schedule of polling districts and polling places as set out in **Appendix 2**.
- b) Council requests the Chief Executive to formally publish the notice of the conclusion of the review and its findings.
- c) Should a polling place be unavailable in the run up to an election, the (Acting) Returning Officer in line with his powers under electoral law be given the authority to select an appropriate alternative and formal retrospective approval be sought by Council following the election should this be a permanent proposed change.

26. **Scrutiny Annual Reports 2013/14**

Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Executive Manager - Operations and Corporate Governance regarding the work of the Scrutiny Groups during the year and stated that it provided illustrations of how well the scrutiny process was working in Rushcliffe. He referred to the wide range of activities undertaken by the four Groups and highlighted the interaction with Cabinet and Council in influencing and developing Council policy whilst monitoring and challenging the work of the Executive.

Councillors Davidson and R Mallender supported these comments.

Councillor Plant welcomed the comprehensive report of the four scrutiny groups. She stated that it was the duty of backbench Members to hold the Executive to account. She highlighted the work undertaken by the Member Groups which had often been challenging and thanked officers for their continued support.

Councillor Butler stated that the work undertaken had often been complex but educational. He thanked all officers and external guests who had attended the meetings.

Councillor S Boote thanked the Community Development Group Members for listening to the issue of public toilets again. At the last meeting of the Group he had been advised to contact Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire to discuss the subject. He had received a very encouraging response as Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire would foster awareness of this issue with parish councillors to encourage or improve provision within the Borough. It would also be discussed at a future parish forum. Councillor Boote had previously informed Members of the Community Toilet Scheme that was supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government. He was pleased to announce that approximately 100 Councils had a scheme in place.

Councillor Wheeler thanked all the officers and Members that had helped and supported the Performance Management Board, especially his Vice Chairman Councillor Jones. The Board had welcomed the excellent feedback from customers and the positive performance by the Council. He stated that scrutiny was not politically motivated and that its purpose was to challenge and act as a critical friend. He informed Members that he and Councillor Jones had met with the Executive Manager – Finance and Commercial to discuss the monitoring of Parkwood Leisure. He reminded Members that Streetwise Environmental was now a stand alone company and would initially be scrutinised by the Partnership Delivery Group.

Councillor Moore, as Chairman of the Corporate Governance Group, stated that finance was often a dry subject but was also very serious. He too thanked officers and Members for their input, especially Councillor Plant his Vice Chairman.

Councillor Mrs Smith, as Chairman of the Partnership Delivery Group, highlighted some of the work undertaken by the Group, including Metropolitan and Waterloo Housing, South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership in respect of the effects on drugs and alcohol on crime. She informed Members that the Group had been very impressed with the Notts Wildlife Trust and the amount of hours of voluntary work undertaken.

RESOLVED that Council endorsed the work undertaken by the four scrutiny groups.

27. To Answer Questions Under Standing Order 11 (2)

Question from Councillor S J Boote to Councillor J N Clarke

What support can the Council give to traders, shopkeepers and small businesses who operate in their local communities in Rushcliffe, for example through the setting up of local business groups or traders' associations?

Councillor Clarke welcomed this question as this was a topic that he had recently been considering. He and Councillor Robinson had been formulating a proposal to develop mechanisms to address the economic growth in the Borough, and to support local business as this was an important issue. Although it was in its embryonic stage at the moment it was anticipated that there would be a report presented to Members in due course. I

Supplementary Question

Councillor Boote was pleased with this positive response. He asked how the Council could support the local shopping parades from being taken over by supermarkets.

Councillor Clarke stated that this was one of the reasons why it was felt that it was important that suitable mechanisms should be developed to address and support the commercial future of the Borough.

28. Local Government Act 1972

It was AGREED that the public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of the following item of business pursuant to section 100A (4) of the above Act on the grounds that it is likely that exempt information may be disclosed as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

29. Investment Opportunity, West Bridgford

Members considered the report of the Chief Executive regarding an investment opportunity in West Bridgford.

RESOLVED that Council approved:

- a) the offer made by the Chief Executive for the purchase of the landholding identified in the report in line with the figures detailed in paragraph 7.1.4.
- b) that, if required, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources and the Section 151 Officer be authorised to increase this offer, ensuring the minimum projected return identified in paragraph 7.1.5, in order to secure this strategic asset.
- c) That, in accordance with paragraph 7.1.6, if the offer is accepted by the vendor the Section 151 Officer be authorised to amend the 2014/15 Capital Programme to reflect this acquisition.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

MAYOR