

MINUTES of a meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor J Clarke (Chairman)

Councillors R Adams, G A Allman, R Ashman, R D Bayliss, R Blunt, R Boam, J Bridges, R Canny, N Clarke, J Cotterill, J G Coxon, D Everitt, T Eynon, F Fenning, J Geary, S Gillard, T Gillard, L Goacher, D Harrison, G Houl, J Houl, R Johnson, G Jones, J Legrys, K Merrie MBE, T J Pendleton, P Purver, V Richichi, N J Rushton, A C Saffell, S Sheahan, A V Smith MBE, M Specht and D J Stevenson

Officers: Mr J Arnold, Mrs T Bingham, Mr G Jones, Mrs M Long, Mrs M Meredith, Mrs B Smith and Miss E Warhurst

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S McKendrick, K Merrie and N Smith.

33. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor S Sheahan declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10 - Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities' Joint Strategic Growth Plan, as a member of Leicestershire County Council and due to the reference to HS2 in the report.

34. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

The Chairman referred to a number of recent engagements and related the concerns which had been expressed to him regarding the increase in the cost of erecting Christmas lighting for parish councils and the desire to have a museum in Coalville.

The Chairman referred to the outstanding turnout for the Remembrance Day service and parade. He commented that Coalville residents did the town proud once again. The Chairman also referred to the march of the Famous 50 which was a remarkable re-enactment of the march of the first UK volunteer civilian soldiers from Hugglescote to Coalville before setting off to war in France. He added that the marchers had not expected the spectators to join in as they marched toward Coalville, however the crowd did and many had been visibly moved. He explained that the march was one of the 17 community initiatives to receive funding from the council to deliver commemorative projects marking 100 years since the end of World War 1. The council had also sponsored Chorus Theatre to create a community play of the first 50 which had been performed in the church hall over the weekend.

The Chairman asked Councillor Johnson to pass on his thanks and congratulations to all involved at Hugglescote Parish Council for making this special remembrance truly remarkable.

35. LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor R Blunt referred to the events which had taken place to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1. He stated that he had been proud to join the Chairman and many members at the service in Coalville with a record number of people in

Chairman's initials

attendance. He added that the clock tower looked particularly good following its renovation and he was pleased to see the installation of the artwork.

Councillor R Blunt referred to the recent tragic incident at the King Power stadium. Thoughts and prayers were extended to the families and everyone connected with the club. The council had opened up a book of condolence and had lit up the civic centre blue as a mark of solidarity and respect.

Councillor R Blunt referred to the forthcoming voter ID pilot which would mean that voters in North West Leicestershire would need to bring their polling card to the polling station in order to vote. He added that this was a great opportunity to feed into the wider changes that were likely to be made in the next few years.

Councillor R Blunt announced that the Kegworth bypass would open this weekend. He commented on the difference this would make to the village and added that the council was working closely with the parish council to make further improvements to the village centre.

Councillor R Blunt announced that the Christmas in Coalville event would be taking place on 24 November.

Councillor A V Smith announced the outcome of the recent Quest assessment at Hood Park Leisure Centre. Quest is an independent biannual audit of leisure centres assessing their performance over a 2 day site assessment and a robust mystery visit. She announced that Hood Park had improved its previous 'good' rating to 'very good'. She congratulated all the staff on their excellent work.

Councillor S Sheahan commented that he had taken part in the Remembrance day service and it was a very appropriately moving occasion. He added that those who went to war and did not return ought to be remembered every year. In respect of the voter ID pilot he acknowledged that alternative methods of voting needed to be considered however he did not believe there to be a problem with voter fraud in North West Leicestershire. He emphasised the need to make provision for those who lost or did not receive their polling cards.

Councillor R D Bayliss updated members on the new council house building programme and was delighted to announce the completion of the first phase which had seen new housing stock being built for the first time in nearly 3 decades. He provided an update on progress at the schemes at Linford Crescent, Coalville, at the Willesley Estate, Ashby de la Zouch, the former police station in Coalville and the site of the former Cocked Hat in Greenhill. He referred to the gifted units from developers in Measham and Ashby which had also increased the supply of affordable rented housing. He added that by summer 2019, the council will have added 95 new homes to its housing stock.

36. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

37. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor J Geary put the following question to Councillor T J Pendleton:

“On the 17th October, travellers once again moved onto the town centre car park for the third time in little than twelve months.

Chairman's initials

Back in 1996, I first pointed out to the council the need for this council to develop a warden controlled traveller site similar to the one at Aston Firs, Sapcote Road, Burbage, within our district, to reduce the impact and costs of travellers setting up camp on district or county council owned land.

The council has now to undertake an assessment of their needs before we are able to move them on, when the only thing really needed is a controlled site within North West Leicestershire to accommodate them.

We are all aware of the need for such a site within our District Plan so could you please give me some indication as to when such a facility is likely to be achieved”.

Councillor T J Pendleton gave the following response:

“The need to make provision for gypsies and travellers is something which the Council is aware of. We have been working to identify potential sites since early in 2016. This has included two separate ‘call-for-sites’ issued to landowners, parish and town councils and residents. Unfortunately neither of these ‘call-for-sites’ resulted in any potential sites being notified to the council. At the same time officers have been, and are, looking at a variety of potential sources of sites and to date over 500 sites have been looked at. When the current assessment has been completed a report will be taken to a meeting of the Local Plan Committee for it to consider how to take this issue forward as part of the Local Plan”.

As a supplementary question, Councillor J Geary requested an estimated timescale for the needs assessment and details of the 500 sites which had already been considered.

Councillor T J Pendleton responded that it would be difficult to specify a timetable for the needs assessment, however it would coincide with the review of the Local Plan. He added that details of the sites could be requested from the Planning Policy Team Manager.

Councillor T Eynon put the following question to Councillor N J Rushton:

“It has been announced that North West Leicestershire is one of the eleven local authorities across England taking part in Voter ID pilots for the 2019 local elections. The pilots are intended to provide further insight into how best to ensure the security of the voting process and reduce the risk of voter fraud.

Of the four models of Voter ID checks:

- photo ID
- photo and non-photo ID
- traditional poll cards
- poll cards with scannable barcodes

I understand that North West Leicestershire is to test making it mandatory for electors to bring their poll cards with them when they vote.

QUESTIONS

- (1) What is the current estimated prevalence of voter fraud in elections in North West Leicestershire?
- (2) How will the post-intervention prevalence of voter fraud be measured?
- (3) What impact if any will there be on the process for postal votes?

- (4) How will North West Leicestershire be communicating this change to electors?
- (5) How will this communication campaign be funded?"

Councillor N J Rushton gave the following response:

- (1) "There is no evidence of voter fraud in North West Leicestershire. However, in August 2016 Eric Pickles published a report on electoral integrity in general, which set out a number of recommendations, one of which was to introduce a requirement for ID to be shown at polling stations. Before agreeing to this recommendation, the Cabinet Office wanted to satisfy itself of the best model to adopt in order to achieve this. There were 5 pilots carried out last year, but the Electoral Commission asked that these pilots be extended across the country to capture differing demographics and locations. NWLDC was invited to assist with this initiative in order to help shape the future of elections across the country.
- (2) Whilst NWLDC does not have an issue with voter fraud, we were invited to assist in the pilot process to help change the perception of voters in general. The Cabinet Office will carefully analyse all the data collected from each pilot Authority to ascertain the future direction of election management based on the findings.
- (3) A different process is undertaken to verify postal votes and this has been in place since 2007. This process verifies identity by matching the signatures on the postal vote application form with those on the statements which accompany the postal ballot papers. We use sophisticated software for this matching process followed by a manual check and sign-off by the Deputy Returning Officers. This process will not be affected by being a pilot voter ID authority.
- (4) Each local authority is required to develop a public awareness campaign plan in line with the Government Communications Service guidance. This helps provide assurance to the Cabinet Office that our public awareness campaign will be effective, evaluated and provide good value for money for the taxpayer.

Our Communications Team has the support of the Cabinet Office Communications Team in all campaign planning. They have met once already and will meet fortnightly in the run up to the election in 2019. The Cabinet Office have already provided us with example campaign plans and templates and evaluation templates, which we will now use to develop our own campaign.

Our campaign will include social media activity, digital media work, press announcements and printed publicity, and will include regular updates to all parish councils and elected members. Further, a legal order will be made to enable NWLDC to change the wording on its poll cards advising electors that they will need to retain it and take it with them to the polling station in order to vote.

- (5) The Cabinet Office will be funding all aspects of the Voter ID Pilot. In addition, the Communications Team will benefit from any training required to run the campaign successfully".

Councillor T Eynon commented that she was pleased to see that there was no evidence of voter fraud so it would be difficult to see how this pilot would reduce that. She added that the real risks were postal voter manipulation and voter registration. As a supplementary question, she asked whether the communications campaign would address the more integral concerns in North West Leicestershire.

Councillor N J Rushton responded that there was no voter fraud in North West Leicestershire and he welcomed the fact that the council had been chosen for the pilot. He referred members to the response which addressed the issue raised relating to postal votes. He added that the social media campaign would hopefully increase voter turnout.

The Chief Executive clarified that arrangements would be put in place for the replacement of poll cards and to ensure people were able to vote. She added that communication had already commenced with a radio interview earlier in the week.

38. MOTIONS

Councillor S Sheahan moved the following motion:

“Domestic abuse is one of the biggest issues in society today. The true scale of the problem is difficult to determine because a large proportion of domestic abuse goes unreported, but studies suggest around one in four women and one in five men are affected by domestic abuse in the UK every year. Tragically, two women are killed every week by their partner or ex-partner.

Many councils, including South Derbyshire DC and Hinckley & Bosworth BC, along with numerous housing providers, have signed up to the Make a Stand pledge. The pledge has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Housing in partnership with Women’s Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance.

By signing up to the Make a Stand pledge this Council would be committing to do the following by September 2019:

1. Put in place and embed a policy to support residents who are affected by domestic abuse
2. Make information about national and local domestic abuse support services available on our website and in other appropriate places so that they are easily accessible for residents and staff
3. Put in place a HR policy, or amend an existing policy, to support members of staff who may be experiencing domestic abuse
4. Appoint a champion at a senior level to own the activity we are doing to support people experiencing domestic abuse

It is proposed that this Council signs up to the Make a Stand pledge”.

Councillor S Sheahan spoke to the motion. He stated that by adopting the Make a Stand pledge, the council would be making a clear statement to those suffering from domestic abuse. He stated that this was important because much domestic abuse was hidden and difficult to deal with as far less account was taken of verbal and emotional abuse, the impact of which could be cumulative and long lasting. He added that abusive relationships often endured because people felt trapped in them, and whilst it was true that domestic abuse could affect people in all walks of life, economically disadvantaged women were more vulnerable to abuse as they were less likely to have the means to escape. Men also experienced abuse from female and male partners, and studies suggested that one in five men were affected. He commented that the role of drugs and alcohol in domestic abuse needed to be understood

Councillor S Sheahan stated that victims of domestic abuse needed support, which meant publicising sources of advice, ensuring access to safe, affordable housing and refuges. He referred to the existing network of services designed to support victims of domestic abuse, the Make a Stand pledge being a key piece of the jigsaw which would help unite and co-ordinate the council's response to domestic abuse. He concluded that signing the pledge would emphatically tell everyone concerned that we understand, we care and we are here to help.

The motion was seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss.

Councillor T Eynon stated that she was pleased to support the motion and welcomed the support from Councillor R D Bayliss. She added that as a housing provider, it was good to sign the pledge drawn up with the Chartered Institute of Housing. She referred to the support already offered by the council to the Living Without Abuse charity. She added that the council already achieved many of the targets set out by the Chartered Institute of Housing. She felt that the council's existing policies could be made more obvious to the public and she did not recall a reference to domestic abuse in the People Plan. She also felt that having a named champion for domestic abuse could be very useful. She stated that signing the pledge was a strong message to anyone suffering from abuse that housing providers, and in particular, council housing providers, would not tolerate domestic abuse. She urged all members to support the motion as it would encourage a review of our existing policies and ensure the high standards we set were met.

Councillor D Everitt expressed support for the motion and recounted his own experience of domestic abuse.

Councillor R Blunt thanked Councillor Everitt for his contribution and advised that the Chief Executive had volunteered to act as the champion for supporting people experiencing domestic abuse.

Councillor A V Smith stated that the council was delighted to be able to support the Living Without Abuse charity and this was something which had grown in strength and was raising more and more money.

Councillor R D Bayliss advised members that the Leader and Chief Executive had also committed to signing the White Ribbon pledge, setting out a wide range of actions which would complement those in the Make a Stand pledge.

Councillor S Sheahan exercised his right of reply and thanked members for their support.

The Chairman then put the motion to the vote and it was declared CARRIED. It was therefore

RESOLVED THAT:

The Council sign up to the Make a Stand pledge.

39. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

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40. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018.

Councillor R Adams commented that he had not yet received a reply to the supplementary question he asked at the meeting.

It was moved by Councillor J Clarke, seconded by Councillor M Specht and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

41. LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE AUTHORITIES' JOINT STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN

Councillor T J Pendleton presented the report to members, outlining the consultation process and the collaborative approach undertaken. He explained that the Joint Strategic Growth Plan set out the collective ambitions for future growth across Leicester and Leicestershire until 2050.

Councillor S Sheahan stated that he was happy to support the recommendations, however he was not completely happy with the Strategic Growth Plan. He welcomed the explicit support for reopening the Leicester – Burton line and the regeneration of Coalville town centre. He commented that the district and Coalville in particular had been left behind with respect of infrastructure and would lag even further behind if the development was going elsewhere.

Councillor J Legrys commented on the tremendous amount of work undertaken and welcomed the collaborative and regional approach. He made reference to the uncertainties relating to housing growth and the need to prioritise Coalville.

Councillor A C Saffell emphasised the need to better align housing with employment and commented that only 22% of employees at East Midlands Airport lived in Leicestershire.

Councillor R Canny welcomed much of the content of the growth plan and the recognition in respect of the gateway. She applauded the partnership approach however felt that a more coherent approach needed to be considered looking further afield. She made reference to the recent transport delays in the north of the district due to a solitary piece of roadworks in Long Eaton, which had resulted due to a lack of joined up thinking.

Councillor R Blunt commended the cross-party working which had taken place on the growth plan. He commented that for every 1% growth in GDP there was a 3% increase in traffic. He added that this was potentially frightening considering the growth in the area.

Councillor J Geary referred to the universal increases in commuting times. He emphasised the need to put infrastructure in place before development to ensure the situation did not get any worse.

Councillor T J Pendleton exercised his right of reply and thanked members for their comments on the Strategic Growth Plan. He commended the plan to members.

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor R Ashman and

Chairman's initials

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The revised Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) "Leicester and Leicestershire 2050: our Vision for Growth" be approved; and

The Chief Executive (or equivalent) of each SGP partner authority, following consultation with the Leader of that authority and the joint strategic planning manager for the SGP, be authorised to agree, prior to publication, any final minor amendments to the SGP which do not significantly change the overall content or purpose of the document.

42. PEER CHALLENGE REVIEW - PROGRESS UPDATE

Councillor T J Pendleton presented the report to members, highlighting the significant progress made to date. He thanked the Chairman of the Planning Committee and the members of the Planning Committee for implementing the changes recommended by the cross-party working group.

Councillor M Specht welcomed the update and commended the report and recommendations.

Councillor J Legrys expressed support for the recommendation and commended the Chief Executive for undertaking the peer review. He emphasised that members were now involved with planning applications at a much earlier stage.

Councillor D Everitt commented on the lack of detail in the Planning Committee minutes and felt this was a decline in democracy and a step in the wrong direction.

Councillor J Geary welcomed his involvement in the cross-party working group and commented that many of the points he had raised had been taken on board. He was pleased to see how much progress had been made but expressed concern regarding the postponement of the next meeting as he felt it was important to maintain the momentum.

Councillor R Ashman commented on the progress made and added that the situation was evolving. He emphasised the value of speaking to officers early on and providing them with the view of the local person.

Councillor T J Pendleton exercised his right of reply and stated that it had been a breath of fresh air to be able to talk frankly and the review had enable this. He explained that the next meeting had been postponed due to the additional work to be undertaken as requested by the Planning Advisory Service.

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor R Ashman and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The progress of reforms to the planning function recommended by the planning peer challenge and set out in the action plan be noted;
- b) The council authorises the Monitoring Officer to make any changes to the constitution needed to implement the working group's recommendations set out in paragraph 3 of the report.

Chairman's initials

43. REVIEW OF THE GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Councillor A V Smith presented the report to members, highlighting the requirement to prepare and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy and the minor changes which had been made to the existing policy.

Councillor T Eynon expressed concerns that the depth of gambling problems may not be known as it was often hidden. She welcomed the commitment to seek comments in future from the health services and Turning Point on whether there were risk pockets in our area. She also expressed concern that the gambling industry were relied on for some of the data as they had a vested interest. She stated that she supported the policy however wished that more support was available from the government for vulnerable people.

It was moved by Councillor A V Smith, seconded by Councillor M Specht and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.

44. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

Councillor M Specht presented the report to members, outlining the work of Policy Development Group over the last year and the recent increase in business and number of meetings. He thanked the members of the committee for their contributions and cross-party working.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor G A Allman and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be received and endorsed.

45. NOTIFICATION OF AN URGENT DECISION - BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PILOT BID

Councillor R Blunt presented the report to members.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor N J Rushton and

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.57 pm

Chairman's signature