

MINUTES of a meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor V Richichi (Chairman)

Councillors R Boam, E G C Allman, R Ashman, R D Bayliss, C C Benfield, D Bigby, A S Black, R Blunt, A J Bridgen, J Bridges, R Canny, J Clarke, D Everitt, T Eynon, M French, J Geary, L A Gillard, S Gillard, T Gillard, D Harrison, B Harrison-Rushton, M D Hay, G Hault, J Hault, R Johnson, J Legrys, K Merrie MBE, R L Morris, A C Saffell, C A Sewell, S Sheahan, J G Simmons, J Windram, A C Woodman and M B Wyatt

Officers: Mrs B Smith, Mr J Arnold, Mr A Barton, Mr D Bates, Miss E Warhurst, Mrs M Long and Mrs C Hammond

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Rushton and N Smith.

It was noted that Councillor Smith was undergoing tests in hospital and the Chairman asked that a card expressing the Council's good wishes be sent to Councillor Smith on his behalf.

46. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

47. INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Rupert Matthews, Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner was welcomed to the meeting.

The Chairman thanked those members who had submitted questions to the Commissioner in advance of the meeting and advised that these had been set out in the additional papers.

The Commissioner explained that his role was to hold the Chief Constable to account and to ensure that, when making decisions, the views of the public were taken into account. He then went on to respond to each of the questions and highlighted issues around the pressures faced by the police and the contents of the Police and Crime Plan, particularly around resources related to speeding issues and measures to increase police visibility. He advised that he had requested a report from the Chief Constable on recruitment and retention which would include a breakdown of ethnicity, age, gender and disability status. He advised that he would make a copy of this report available in due course. He also advised that he would provide a copy of a report he had requested on the statistics relating to the number of reported cases of spiked drink related crimes.

The Commissioner spoke about the procurement policy and how he would try to influence this with a view to ensuring that best value for money is being achieved and that the goods ordered were sustainable, an example being vehicles using green energy. He reported on a new initiative which he was introducing when dealing with any office which receives funds from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, whether it be through contract, commission or grant.

The Commissioner also reported on the role of the Police and Crime Panel and how it scrutinises the role of the PCC. There is the ability at this meeting for questions to be asked by members of the public and if any councillor has any specific questions or concerns about how he is running his office, then they are welcome to raise this at a future meeting of the Panel.

The Chairman handed over to Councillor A Woodman as Chair of the Community Safety Partnership which works closely with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner in delivering the priorities within North West Leicestershire. He advised that he had met with the Commissioner on a number of occasions and he had helped to support the district in terms of its Safer Streets funding for increased CCTV in Castle Donington; a Peoples' Zone, which is due to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Community Safety Partnership; the Rural Crime event held in Packington; and he will also be attending the next meeting of the Community Safety Partnership, which is the first time a PCC had undertaken to do this.

Councillor Woodman thanked the Commissioner for the work he had done for the district to date and for taking time out to attend tonight's meeting to answer Members' questions.

48. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman invited Councillor R Boam, Deputy Chairman to provide an update on the events he had attended since the last meeting. Councillor Boam advised that he had enjoyed a visit to the Castle Donington Wakes and he had laid a wreath at the Memorial for the Famous Fifty.

The Chairman gave an emotional and impassioned speech on the story behind the Unknown Soldier in remembrance of all the service men and women who never returned. He advised that he felt honoured to have supported the Royal British Legion at the recent Remembrance events in their valiant attempt to guarantee the memories of those who fought and died in the War.

49. LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R Blunt, announced that Newmarket had been successfully launched in early September to great reviews. Trading days are currently Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. He advised that responses from traders had been positive and that both permanent and pop-up food vendors occupied the catering units. As well as the food offer, Newmarket provided customers with a diverse range of products for sale including sweets, dried groceries, shoes, clothing, beauty products, jewellery and craft stalls. He added that enrolment days would be held by Stephenson College in November and a range of activities would be taking place over Christmas with a Santa's grotto, activities for children, craft workshops and late night shopping with live music. A programme of activities would be taking place in the period after Christmas.

The Leader was pleased to announce the progress being made to deliver Marlborough Square. He reported that work was being undertaken by Severn Trent Water who had recently completed repair work for a collapsed sewer which was needed before work could be commenced. In the knowledge that these underground works have now been completed, officers have moved forward to put the contract out to contractors. To speed up the process, a two stage tender approach is being used. Stage One prices were returned on 5 November and were currently being analysed with the intention of selecting a preferred contractor, who would then be asked to submit their final full price for the works. It was anticipated that Cabinet would receive a report from officers in early February to confirm the contractor's appointment. If all went according to plan, the council should see this key project delivered during 2022.

The Leader turned to the less positive news that the Central Government had missed the opportunity to invest in the future of Coalville through the Levelling Up Fund and no grant support was included in the spending review announcement for the Coalville Lyceum bid. He added that it was a collaborative submission with the Belvoir Shopping Centre and Stephenson College and was undertaken on the basis of "nothing ventured, nothing gained" and believed it was the strongest possible proposal for a community building

which would have accommodated a new cinema for the town. However, this enabled the Council to turn its attention back to its original plans for a cinema. Officers had already identified alternative ways in which the project could be brought forward and he hoped to be in a position to update Members in due course.

As his final announcement, the Leader was pleased to advise that the accommodation programme continued to move at pace. It was anticipated that Stenson House would be renovated by September next year, the back-office staff would be moved to Whitwick Business centre in July and the new Customer Service Centre would be opened in May. He advised that he was aware that owners of the Belvoir Centre had recently terminated a lease with a tenant who was on a rolling one-month tenancy in the part of the centre which would be occupied by the Council. However, it was a commercial decision for the owners of the shopping centre, and the units the Council would be occupying were the only ones suitable and available.

The operators of the centre would continue to work with the business affected to look at future options, and the Business Focus Team was available to assist.

The Chairman invited comments.

In response to questions from Councillor M Wyatt regarding the collapsed underground sewer, the closure of Buddy's Bar and the failed levelling up bid, the Leader advised that the Council had no power over Severn Trent and had no control over when it undertook repairs; nor did it have any business involving itself in a landlord and tenant arrangement. The tenant knowingly undertook a short-term lease and the owners of the Belvoir Centre had made a commercial decision on which the Council had no business to intervene. Finally, when a grant was made available it was tempting to apply but it had become apparent that Coalville did not appear to be on the Government's radar when allocating funding so he would be less inclined to apply for grant funding in the future.

In response to a question from Councillor J Legrys, the Leader advised that due diligence would be applied when undertaking the tender and subsequent contract processes to avoid a repeat of some of the issues experienced with the Newmarket project.

Councillor R Bayliss, Housing Portfolio Holder, updated Members on the Council's recent success in completing the delivery of the Green Homes Grant Phase 1B funded improvement work. He advised that through accessing Government funding of over £263,000, with additional funding from itself the Council had been able to carry out a range of energy efficiency improvements to 56 of the poorest performing homes in terms of their energy efficiency.

All 56 properties had now been elevated from their previous Energy Performance Certificate rating of D, E and F, to either A, B or C. Not only would this reduce the carbon footprint of tenants' homes, it would also significantly help tenants heat and light their homes more cost effectively, and supported the Council's target of becoming Zero Carbon by 2030.

Councillor Bayliss advised that feedback from tenants had been very positive, with 100% overall tenant satisfaction from a survey of those having had the work completed; and the successful completion of this pilot project had allowed the Council to gain much knowledge about the technologies involved, the grant funding process, and the challenges of that type of work being undertaken in tenants' homes. The learning would be taken forward to help inform subsequent energy efficiency programmes.

The important initial step would be followed up by further grant funding bids in 2022 under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund initiative, as the Council looked to move all its tenants' homes to an Energy Performance Certificate rating of C or above by 2030. That would require significant funding from the Council as well as any grants it could access, as over 2,700 homes require investment, alongside the need to maintaining the Decent

Homes standard of improvement, as well as continue to build and acquire new affordable homes.

The Chairman invited comments.

In response to a question from Councillor Bigby about the reality of meeting the requirement to improve 300 homes a year over the next 9 years, Councillor Bayliss advised that in order to meet the requirement, additional funding would be needed and in that respect there was some reliance on the availability and timing of Government grants being made available. In the meantime, initial plans were under development and Councillor Bayliss advised that he would be pleased to share these with Members once they had been finalised.

In response to a question from Councillor Legrys, Councillor Bayliss advised that in terms of the works that had been undertaken, 31 properties had air source heat pumps, two had external wall insulation, all 56 had solar photo voltaic with batteries, 13 had LED lighting and 12 had additional loft insulation. The works were included within the bid and similar works would be included in any future bids.

50. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

51. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

A number of questions were received.

The first question was from Councillor J Legrys and was addressed to Councillor A Woodman which read

“I have been contacted by residents who are concerned about foul water being discharged by Severn Trent Water during storms into their local watercourse. Can the Portfolio Holder please inform me

1. of the location of each discharge foul water point throughout North West Leicestershire
2. of the water quality results in our watercourses, as measured by this Council’s Environmental Health Team, particularly during storms
3. if the regular discharge of untreated foul water is affecting the Environmental Protection Orders for the Mease Catchment Zone
4. of the measures being put in place, as part of the Local Plan Review, to stop fouled storm water entering watercourses”

A written response was provided by Councillor A Woodman which read

I fully understand residents’ concerns about the watercourses in the district and potential foul water discharges but the council has no role in such matters. Any discharge into a watercourse or pollution of a watercourse is the responsibility of the Environment Agency to investigate. Residents need to report a pollution incident directly to the Environment Agency by calling 0800 80 70 60. I can confirm that the issue of stopping foul storm water entering watercourses from new development will be addressed as far as possible by the inclusion of policy as part of the Local Plan review.”

Councillor Legrys was invited to ask a supplementary question and he asked if he could have a response to the part of his question which asked for the location of each discharge foul water point throughout North West Leicestershire.

Councillor Woodman advised that it is a duty on the water companies but he will speak to officers to see if there is any further information that they can ascertain from Severn Trent Water.

The second question was from Councillor T Eynon and was addressed to Councillor K Merrie which read

“Can the Portfolio Holder inform me why it has taken over a year to force the private landowner and third-party operator to apply for Planning Permission for equipment erected without authorisation?”

A written response was provided by Councillor K Merrie which read

“The Councils Planning Officers were made aware that ticket machines and cameras had been erected in the Belvoir Centre car park at the end of June this year. Officers determined that planning permission was required to retain the ticket machines and cameras and the owner of the site was asked to submit a retrospective planning application to regularise the development straight away. The applicants planning consultant required time to prepare all the necessary information to support the retrospective application which was submitted in the middle of October. The application has been subject to consultation with the public and all comments received will be carefully considered before any decision is made.”

Councillor Eynon was invited to ask a supplementary question and she asked if the application would be considered by the Planning Committee, and, if so, does Councillor Merrie believe this may help to appease the public on this matter?

Councillor Merrie advised that once the planning application is received, he would discuss it with the Head of Planning and the Chairman of the Planning Committee and keep Members appraised.

The third question was from Councillor A Black and was addressed to Councillor A Woodman and read

“Part of my election pledge was to tackle the growing concerns over pollution levels within my ward of Bardon. Can the Portfolio Holder please give an update on the progress of installing equipment and monitoring air pollution in key areas within the district, in particular along Bardon Road. Also, can he make available any measurements and data collected from said monitors so the findings can be reviewed by the relevant Scrutiny Committee. This is particularly in focus now as residential and commercial developments continue at an exponential rate and we need to be showing the public that their council is taking responsible actions to prioritise the health of the residents”

A written response was provided by Councillor A Woodman which read

“The Environmental Protection Team has taken delivery of two zephyrs for monitoring air quality in Coalville as agreed at the Cabinet in June this year. These are currently being commissioned and one has been installed on Bardon Road on Tuesday 9 November. Officers are still finalising a suitable location for the second monitor but aim to have it installed by the end of the calendar year. Once installed they will be in situ for a full 12 months. The data from this year of monitoring will then be analysed and a single report compiled. This report will be presented to a Scrutiny meeting for comments in advance of Cabinet’s consideration thereafter”

Councillor Black asked a supplementary question in which she asked to be kept updated on the location of the siting of the second monitor.

Councillor Woodman confirmed that he would.

The final question came from Councillor D Bigby and was addressed to Councillor K Merrie and read

“In a supplementary Portfolio holder question on Ashby’s derelict Royal Hotel on 17th November 2020, I asked, “Given the failure to date of the owners to progress their plans to refurbish the Royal Hotel and their apparent reluctance to even carry out the bare minimum works needed to avoid an Urgent Works Notice, is it not time that this council considers starting the process of moving towards a CPO?”

Cllr Ashman’s reply included the statement, “At the current time and in view of the approach being taken, officers are not of the view that the need for permanent repair has accumulated to the point where there is potential for serious harm. If the situation persists once the planning application has been determined or during regular monitoring of the building’s condition, the Council still have the ability to pursue a repairs notice and potentially a CPO if this was the appropriate route to follow at that time”.

Twelve months later - there has still been no update to the outstanding 2019 planning application, members have not received any of the promised monthly inspection reports since the one dated 28th July, and English Heritage have found it necessary to place the Royal Hotel on its At Risk Register, describing its condition as “poor”, only one category above the worst “very bad”, with the comment “Slow decay; no solution agreed”.

Could the portfolio holder please provide an update on the planning department’s progress on negotiations with the owners of the Royal Hotel, the date and outcome of the latest condition survey (previously promised monthly), and comment on whether he believes that the Compulsory Purchase Order route may now be appropriate?”

A written response was provided by Councillor K Merrie which read

“I can confirm that progress is being made on the continuing discussions and negotiations with the owners of the hotel and we are close to receiving a revised package of information relating to the proposed enabling development works connected with the planning application. The package of information will also include amended designs for the proposed buildings either side of the hotel and will be subject to formal re-consultation in the near future.

I’m sure members may appreciate that that the issues around enabling development are both complex and time consuming and officers continue to spend a considerable amount of time in progressing matters.

The last condition report was sent to the Ashby members on 31 August and not 28 July as Councillor Bigby has suggested in his question and I’m aware that officers have now re-sent Councillor Bigby a copy of this report. The hotel was visited again on 4 November and this was delayed slightly as the owner could not attend the originally agreed date in October. An updated condition report following the visit on 4 November will be circulated to members in due course.

Offices have advised that there is currently no need for a further urgent works notice to be served, and while the planning application continues to progress, the Compulsory Purchase Notice route is not appropriate at this stage, but would not be ruled out if necessary as the previous Portfolio Holder advised last year”.

Councillor Bigby was invited to ask a supplementary question and he asked whether the Council would now impose a strict timetable for action with a sanction on the owners of the hotel for a Compulsory Purchase Order if the timetable were not met.

Councillor Merrie advised that he would not like to give a strict timetable as it was in the hands of Planning but it was on his radar and he would keep Members updated.

52. MOTIONS

Council considered and debated a number of motions.

The first motion was received from Councillor M Wyatt and read:

“Over a number of years more and more local residents, businesses and the local community have indicated they support the formation of a Town council for the Coalville special area which is unparished. Local democracy and local accountability should be fully supported and implemented when such a request is made.

We,

1. Instruct officers to commence preparation/initial work on a Community Governance Review (CGR)
2. Ask that a report, including the terms of reference of a proposed review, be submitted to Council in February to enable an informed decision to be made, and if agreed, to establish a CGR Cross Party Working Group to oversee the CGR;
3. Request that, following the CGR, a report comes to Council to decide whether or not to establish a Town Council which will consist of the unparished area of the Broom Leys ward, Bardon ward, the unparished area of the Castle Rock ward, Coalville East ward, Coalville West ward, Greenhill ward, the unparished area of the Snibston North ward and Snibston South ward.
4. The electoral ward of Thringstone to become a separate parished area with its own Parish Council.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor J Geary.

A discussion ensued on the advantages and disadvantages of having another tier of Government. There were comments both in support of and against the motion. It was reported that a petition had been commenced with a view to ensuring that the Council undertook a Community Governance Review and this was welcomed; as it was considered by some that if the proposal was supported by the electorate then they were more minded to support it.

A recorded vote was requested, the outcome of which is set out below.

There being 14 For, 21 Against and 1 Abstention, the motion was **LOST**.

The second motion was received from Councillor S Sheahan and read:

“This Council

- Recognises the continuing impact of the cost of living crisis on the residents of our district.
- Through data gathering, case studies and liaison with partner agencies, undertakes to highlight the difficulties many of the least well-off are facing due to increases in food and fuel prices, benefit cuts and planned tax rises. (Inflation is forecast to average 4% next year, fuel prices are expected to increase by a further 30% in April on the back of a substantial rise in October, National Insurance will go up by 1.5 percentage points in April and the 50% of Universal Credit claimants who are unemployed or cannot work will not benefit from the reduction in the taper.)
- Pledges to carry out a review of its own services eg fees and charges, support for debt and benefits advice, to mitigate the impact wherever possible.

- Commits to lobby Government to do more to help those in the greatest need.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor M Hay.

A lively debate ensued with some Members providing statistical data to support the motion together with some quotes from the press, however others felt quite strongly that the Council was already delivering the steps set out in the motion and gave examples of where this was happening.

The motion was put to the vote and was subsequently **LOST**.

The third and final motion was received from Councillor J Legrys and read:

“Privately Operated Car Parks in Coalville Town Centre –

The Coalville Town Centre Car Parks, located off Bridge Road/High Street and the North Service yard off High Street, are now privately owned. The owner has employed a third-party operator, Parking Eye, to enforce parking charges. The operator’s payment options are collected via camera-operated technology. Residents and shoppers are being inappropriately fined and their complaints are not being given a satisfactory response.

There are concerns that there is confusion about the public rights of vehicular access through this now private land, that signage and instructions for payment options are unclear and that the operator is not conforming to the British Parking Association Code of Practice. This is leading to a downturn in footfall as many shoppers and visitors now find it more convenient to shop in towns where the signage and parking charges are more straightforward and understood. It is important for those with a stake in the town centre to work together to promote Coalville Town Centre, as a place for shopping, leisure, local heritage and the National Forest.

This Council, through the Portfolio Holder, will undertake to work with the car park owners and operator to address the concerns and keep Coalville ward members informed of progress.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor R Blunt.

The motion received support from across the Chamber and concerns were expressed about the conduct of the car park operator and the confusion of the current signage.

The motion was put to the vote, and it was unanimously **AGREED**.

Motion to Create a Town Council submitted by Councillor Wyatt (Motion)	
Councillor Virge Richichi	Against
Councillor Russell Boam	Against
Councillor Elliott Allman	Against
Councillor Robert Ashman	Against
Councillor Roger Bayliss	Against
Councillor Carl Benfield	For
Councillor Dave Bigby	For
Councillor Angela Black	For
Councillor Richard Blunt	Against
Councillor Alexander Bridgen	Against
Councillor John Bridges	Against
Councillor Rachel Canny	Abstain

Councillor John Clarke	Against
Councillor David Everitt	For
Councillor Dr Terri Eynon	For
Councillor Marie French	For
Councillor John Geary	For
Councillor Louise Gillard	Against
Councillor Stuart Gillard	Against
Councillor Tony Gillard	Against
Councillor Dan Harrison	Against
Councillor Bertie Harrison-Rushton	Against
Councillor Michael Hay	For
Councillor Gill Hout	Against
Councillor Jim Hout	Against
Councillor Russell Johnson	For
Councillor John Legrys	For
Councillor Keith Merrie MBE	Against
Councillor Ray Morris	Against
Councillor Tony Saffell	Against
Councillor Carol Sewell	For
Councillor Sean Sheahan	For
Councillor Jenny Simmons	Against
Councillor Jake Windram	For
Councillor Andrew Woodman	Against
Councillor Michael Wyatt	For
Rejected	

53. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

54. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2021. It was moved by Councillor V Richichi, seconded by Councillor R Boam and subsequently

RESOLVED:- That, subject to an amendment in relation to Minute 44 - disposal of land (recorded vote) to show that Cllr Geary voted against; the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 22 June 2021 be approved as a correct record.

55. CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

Councillor R Blunt presented the report to Members.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor J Hout and subsequently

RESOLVED THAT:- The changes to the General Fund Capital Programme, as detailed in the report, be approved.

56. SPECIAL EXPENSES POLICY

Councillor R Blunt presented the report to Members. It was noted that a supporting briefing note had been included in the additional papers to explain the rationale behind the Policy.

Councillor D Everitt sought assurances that Thringstone would be included in the Policy.

It was moved by Councillor R Blunt, seconded by Councillor E Allman and subsequently

RESOLVED THAT:- The Special Expenses Policy, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved.

57. GAMBLING STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Councillor A Woodman presented the report to Members.

It was moved by Councillor A Woodman, seconded by Councillor R Ashman and subsequently

RESOLVED THAT:-

1. The proposed Statement of Licensing Policy, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved
2. The continuation of the delegation to the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for the updating of the Local Area profile, be approved.

At the close of the meeting, the Chairman gave a festive message given that this is the last Council meeting before Christmas

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.52 pm