

MINUTES of a meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 30 JUNE 2015

Present: Councillor J Bridges (Chairman)

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

Officers: Mr S Bambrick, Ms C E Fisher, Mr D Gill, Mr G Jones, Mrs M Meredith, Mr P Padaniya, Mrs M Phillips and Miss E Warhurst

17. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Clarke and A C Saffell.

18. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chairman advised members the item 12 on the agenda, Amendment to Officer Employment Procedure Rules, related to the Statutory Officers, namely the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer. He explained that those officers had received external legal advice that they had an interest in the item. As the Head of Paid Service and the Monitoring Officer were in attendance at the meeting, they would therefore leave the room when this item was considered.

During the discussion on Leader's and Portfolio Holders' announcements, Councillor J Legrys declared a non pecuniary interest in any discussions on Picnic in the Park as a volunteer at Hermitage FM, as they had contributed to the event.

19. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked all staff involved in organising Proms in the Park and Picnic in the Park over the weekend, adding that both of the events were an overwhelming success with over 1,500 visitors on Saturday night for Proms in the Park and a further 7,000 the following day for Picnic in the Park. He commented that this was great news and showed just how much the people of Coalville appreciated the work of officers. He thanked in particular the Cultural Services team who organised the entire weekend and made sure it went off without a hitch. He also thanked the leisure, street action, community focus and waste services teams for being there to tell residents about the many things the Council was doing for them, including free health checks, advice on recycling, information on new schemes such as Dog Watch and much more. He added that the event was well received and very much appreciated by residents.

The Chairman highlighted some events which he had attended recently, including the Normandy Star, Homestart and various parish council events. He referred again to Picnic in the Park, and reported that the High Sheriff had written to him personally to comment on how well the event had been run and how he had enjoyed it.

The Chairman outlined the charity events that were currently being organised and urged members to attend the magic night which would be taking place on 24 or 25 July.

Chairman's initials

20. LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor R Blunt updated members on the progress being made on the proposal for a combined authority. He reported that he met with the district council leaders, the leader of the county council and the city mayor who had officially agreed in principle to support a bid to Government for a combined authority. He added that this was a cross-party agreement. He explained that discussions had been taking place since the election, and the leaders collectively believe that a combined authority covering four specific areas will help regional growth in Leicester and Leicestershire; those areas being:

- Transport
- Strategic land use and planning
- Skills
- Funding and finance

Councillor R Blunt advised that there would be no change to any North West Leicestershire District Council services as a result of this proposal. He explained that the next step was to await the outcome of the bid. He stated that members would be informed of progress. He advised that it had been decided at the meeting that a Chief Executive to represent the district councils involved in the bid was required. He advised that our own Chief Executive had been put forward and unanimously agreed. He wanted to put this on record, as it was a credit to her.

Councillor T Neilson commented on the amount of detail that had been publicised on this issue since the election. He sought clarification on the next steps in terms of what the Council would have to consider when the bid came back, and the governance arrangements. He added that the Chief Executive was taking on quite a challenge as she was also leading on the Coalville project. He sought assurances that she had sufficient capacity.

Councillor R Blunt stated that there was a huge amount of detail to work out, and governance would be crucial. He added that the bottom line was that the bid needed to progress quickly, because if the Council did not put in a bid, the funding would go elsewhere. He commented that the performance of the Chief Executive was crucial, and he agreed that she was taking on two very big challenges; however in the 11 years she had worked for the Council she had not been found wanting.

In response to a question from Councillor J Clarke, Councillor R Blunt stated that transport was a key issue and the railway line had been a hot topic. He commented that it was crucial to have one voice on this issue for the bid, as differing viewpoints would dilute the message. He added that this would be an issue for discussion.

Councillor N Smith commented that he had worked with the Chief Executive for many years, and he assured members that she would not take on anything that she could not achieve. He felt that it was a tremendous accolade to her that the rest of the county wanted her to represent them in this matter.

Councillor R D Bayliss referred to the Leicestershire Revenues and Benefits Partnership which was established four years ago in conjunction with Harborough District Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. He stated that the purpose of establishing the partnership was to make savings, and this had become even more imperative due to the subsequent legislative changes. He advised that significant on-going revenue savings had been made following the review of the staffing structure and increased operating efficiencies. The total savings made in the last year were £315,000, of which the pro rata share for the Council by percentage income was £102,000. He stated that this was a new initiative and the new structure had presented some major challenges, and as such a temporary dip in performance could have been expected. He reported however that this

Chairman's initials

was not the case; benefit turnaround times were met, business rate collection was maintained at the target rate of 99%, and Council Tax collection rates had improved from the previous year. He commented that the Partnership was living up to its expectations.

Councillor R D Bayliss made reference to the successful completion of the Decent Homes Improvement Programme in March 2015 when 100% decency across the housing stock was achieved, and the long term business plan to ensure that the Council's housing stock was maintained to the decent homes standard. He advised that a further 590 properties would receive works this year, and added that there was still ongoing work to be done as decency was determined by the age of the components. He stated that there was a £4.28 million programme of works this year, and the intention was to complete the works in October. He advised that he would report back to Council in September to advise on progress.

Councillor T Neilson thanked the Head of the Leicestershire Revenues and Benefits Partnership for her work. He commented that the policy had not been harmonised across the authorities and he felt that this should have happened by now.

Councillor R D Bayliss advised that in respect of the harmonisation of policies, this was a partnership rather than a single authority, and therefore each authority continued to employ its own staff and the service was administered according to its own policies and procedures.

Councillor T J Pendleton made an announcement about the recent Download Festival on behalf of himself and Councillor A V Smith. He stated that Download was the largest event in the district which was attended by 80,000 people this year, 40,000 of which camped from Wednesday to Monday. He commented that as with any event of this size, there was an impact upon the northern parishes. The impact was positive in some aspects, with increased trade, and negative in others, in terms of increased traffic, noise and litter. He thanked all staff involved from services including environmental health, street action, stronger and safer communities and waste for their excellent hard work. He advised that officers were also involved in helping maintain traffic flow, food hygiene and supporting crown safety. He reported that there was a further huge reduction in crime and disorder at the event. He highlighted that in 2014, crime had decreased by an impressive 70%, and this year there had been a further 35% reduction. He added that this was all the more notable as there were an additional 20,000 people present at the event. He stated that this was due to proactive policing, and the event going cashless for the first time. In terms of noise, he reported that there had been only 4 complaints received throughout the duration of the event, and this was due to pre event planning and on site management. He concluded that there would always be room for improvement, however he was particularly pleased with the lack of noise complaints and the further reduction in crime figures.

Councillor J Legrys welcomed the improvements at Download and commented that such events brought a great deal of goodwill into the district. He thanked the staff involved who had not only provided an excellent service at this event, but also at the events in Coalville this weekend. He commented that the staff worked over and above what they were paid for.

21. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

No questions were received.

Councillor J Legrys declared a non pecuniary interest in any discussions on Picnic in the Park as a volunteer at Hermitage FM, as they had contributed to the event.

Chairman's initials

22. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor R Adams put the following question to Councillor R D Bayliss:

“The Portfolio holder will be aware that the sheltered housing scheme in the Broom Leys Ward known as Greenacres which contains 22 flats has been empty and decommissioned since September 2011. Will the Portfolio Holder agree that this is an unsatisfactory state of affairs and explain to this Council what he proposes to do about it?”

Councillor R D Bayliss gave the following response:

“The Greenacres sheltered housing scheme has been empty for some time as a result of the design of the flats proving to be unpopular with applicants on our housing register. In response to this changing pattern of demand, Cabinet considered a report regarding the scheme’s future in 2011, and made the decision to decommission it.

A number of alternative future uses for the building have since been explored in detail, including a proposal to develop a community scheme with the local Tenants and Residents Association, and redevelopment opportunities with Housing Association partners. However, these options did not prove to be financially viable at the time.

The site at Greenacres was examined in the feasibility report from the consultancy, Housing Quality Network (referred to below in the reply to Cllr Clarke’s question). I am pleased to report that the future plans for this building will be addressed as part of our Asset Management Strategy which will be presented to Cabinet in September 2015. The Cabinet report will integrate our ambitions with respect to new build Council housing into a wider asset management strategy, and present a positive way forward for the Greenacres site”.

On behalf of Councillor N Clarke, Councillor T Neilson put the following question to Councillor R D Bayliss:

“The approved budget for 2015/16 identified £400k which was to be used to purchase sites for affordable housing developments. Does the portfolio holder believe that the land where the Cocked Hat Public House once stood on Cropston Drive Coalville to be ideal for such a development? If so, what efforts are being made to secure the site for affordable housing and what time scales are involved in this matter?”

Councillor R D Bayliss gave the following response:

“The Housing Service is currently considering the council’s options for the provision of more affordable housing, including new build. A feasibility report on developing several sites across the district from the consultant, Housing Quality Network was received earlier this year.

Officers have identified suitable in-fill sites in and around our existing housing stock, and are currently testing their potential for development with planners. I can confirm that we will actively consider the potential for any suitable site in the district, including privately owned sites such as the former Cocked Hat public house plot that you refer to, as part of this process.

Any recommendations to acquire sites not in the council’s ownership will normally have to be approved by Cabinet in accordance with the council’s Acquisitions Policy approved in February this year”.

23. MOTIONS

No motions were received.

24. PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

25. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2015.

It was moved by Councillor J Bridges, seconded by Councillor J Cotterill and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

26. LOCAL PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Councillor N J Rushton presented the report to members, highlighting the amendments to the Terms of Reference which were required as a result of the change to the political balance of the Council following the elections.

Councillors J Legrys and T Neilson expressed support for the changes.

Councillor T Neilson thanked the members of the Advisory Committee for the work they were doing and he looked forward to seeing the outcome in September.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor V Richichi and

RESOLVED THAT:

The amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Local Plan Advisory Committee be noted.

27. ELECTED MEMBER REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE EXCELLENCE (APSE)

Councillor N J Rushton presented the report to members, outlining the benefits of the group and the nominations as set out in the additional papers.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillors D Harrison and M Specht be appointed to the Association for Public Service Excellence.

Due to the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Paid Service having an interest in the following item, they left the room at this point in the meeting.

28. AMENDMENT TO OFFICER EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURE RULES

Councillor N J Rushton presented the report to members, drawing their attention to the revised recommendation and the nominations as set out in the additional papers.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor T Gillard and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 be noted.
- b) The membership of the Investigatory Committee be amended to five members when considering disciplinary matters relating to chief officers who are not Statutory Officers.
- c) The membership of the Investigatory Committee be amended to seven members consisting of five elected members and two co-opted independent persons when considering matters relating to Chief Officers who are Statutory Officers (Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer).
- d) The two independent persons have equal voting rights with other committee members.
- e) The terms of reference of the committee be amended to include "and to advise the Council in relation to the proposed dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer".
- f) Council agree to remunerate the independent persons for the conduct of investigatory matters.
- g) Councillor R Blunt be appointed as Chairman of the Investigatory Committee for the municipal year.
- h) Councillor A V Smith MBE be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Investigatory Committee for the municipal year.
- i) Councillors J Clarke and J G Coxon be appointed to the Investigatory Committee.
- j) The Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the consequential amendments to the Constitution to ensure compliance with the legislative provisions.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.10 pm

Chairman's signature