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COUNCIL

Date and Time: Thursday 29 July 2021 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

COUNCILLORS -

Ambler (Chairman)

Axam	Davies	Neighbour
Bailey (from 7.33pm)	Delaney	Oliver
Blewett	Dorn	Quarterman
Butcher	Drage	Radley
Butler	Farmer	Smith
Coburn	Forster	Southern
Cockarill	Harward	Wheale
Collins	Kennett	Worlock
Crisp	Kinnell	Wright
Crookes	Lamb	

In Attendance: Cllr Crampton

Officers Present:

Patricia Hughes	Joint Chief Executive
Lee Rome	Committee Services Officer
Jenny Humphreys	Committee Services Officer

16 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Annual General and Extraordinary Meetings held on 20 May 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Clarke.

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations made.

19 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 - QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Questions had been received from Mr David Turver, details of which are set out in Appendix A attached to these Minutes.

Minutes Appendix A

20 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 - QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Questions had been received from Councillors Farmer and Butcher details of which are set out in Appendix B attached to these minutes.

Minutes Appendix B

21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that his charities for this year would be:

- Crookham Scouts who are fundraising for a new scout hut which will also be used and benefited from by other community groups.
- Young carers – which work under Hart Voluntary Action (HVA). The Chairman highlighted that he had attended an activity session recently with them.
- Animal assisted interventions – this is yet to be finalised, but the Chairman and Vice-Chair are keen to support schemes, particularly dogs that go into schools and into difficult situations.

He also asked members to consider and put forward any ideas they may have for future fundraising events (covid permitting).

He also highlighted the opening event of the wetlands area at Bramshott Country Park – which he attended with the Leader, Cllr Neighbour. The Chairman stated that he thought it was a really good example of a SANG.

22 CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, **Councillor Neighbour** highlighted that he supported the comments the Chairman had made on Bramshott Country Park's new wetlands area. He also reported on the Government's recent announcements on Unitary Council solutions and confirmed that these did not include Hampshire.

The Cabinet Member for Community, **Councillor Bailey** updated on:

Homelessness

Many people will have seen the recent social media post about the young man found rough sleeping in Fleet in the pouring rain that the Housing Team managed to engage and bring inside. Very pleased to say that the team have managed to secure this gentleman a bed space in a project specifically designed to help young people who are homeless and in crisis. Here he will receive tailored support to address his mental health, and substance issues and will provide a brilliant stable base for him to reintegrate into society into permanent housing. The project is in Dorking & this is the first time we have worked with them, so it is really exciting.

Community Safety

Community Safety commissioned a drugs bus, known as the 'mobile crack shack'. Local schools, scouts and other community groups were able to immerse themselves in the experience and have a live lesson in exploitation and possible consequences of drug taking involving county lines. It was a great success and will be back next year. Last Saturday Community Safety attended the BID Pop up shop in Fleet high street and worked alongside the Police, the Foodbank and the Lions delivering messages about crime prevention and local initiatives. The highlight was the creation of fingerprint certificates for those that wanted them and remembering the last minute wet wipes for ink that would have got everywhere! It could be said that community safety left their mark.

The Cabinet Member for Place, **Councillor Cockarill** announced that Emma Whittaker, Development Management and Building Control Manager was leaving Hart District Council after 16 years and highlighted her hard work and the support she has given to him and the team. He announced that Steph Baker will be the interim manager until a new permanent officer is recruited.

Councillor Farmer asked what the timetable will be for this recruitment of a permanent Development Management and Building Control Manager.

Councillor Cockarill confirmed that the recruitment process for this role had begun, and members need to remember that the new manager may have up to three months' notice period from an existing job. Further updates will be provided at Overview & Scrutiny committee meetings.

Over the past two years, we have had three permanent members of the Development Management team leave for career reasons. Obviously, I am unable to divulge personal details for GDPR reasons. This amount of turnover is what might be expected in a Local Authority the size of Hart.

It is true that the DM team have been working very hard under trying circumstances over the past 18 months, as have all of Hart's excellent Officers.

A number of the DM team stepped up to take on other roles outside of their normal work, to assist in the delivery of Hart's pandemic response. I and Mr Jaggard, the Head of the Place Service, take the welfare of our staff extremely seriously, which is why we are looking at ways, through the DM Improvement Plan, to streamline and reduce staff workloads and ensure that our team members continue to have the support they need.

Councillor Forster asked if the staff attrition rate we are seeing is roughly consistent and commensurate with other councils and what are we doing to look after the welfare of all staff.

The Chairman, Councillor Ambler responded:

That because this was a general staffing issue rather than a Place issue, that the Joint Chief Executive will supply a written response.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, **Councillor Oliver** announced that Garden Waste collections in Hart will resume following a recent 36 hour suspension last week. Press and social media posts will be issued this week informing residents. This is on the basis that no significant additional numbers of service staff have had to isolate due to the pandemic.

Councillor Forster asked if any credit would be given to residents affected by the garden waste missed collections. And can we have a policy that covers this in future?

Councillor Oliver confirmed that in agreement with Conservative colleagues in Basingstoke and Deane we have decided not to give credit in these extenuating circumstances due to collection services being disrupted due to inclement weather or pandemics.

The Cabinet Member for Commercialisation, **Councillor Quarterman** announced that as part of the ongoing Commercialisation strategy, the council has purchased Centenary House, Basingstoke, for £11.6 million. The office, which is let to a large construction company with a lease of over 16 years to run, will generate an annual rental income for the Council of £730,000 overall, representing a yield of 6%, comfortably in excess of a 4% target.

Councillors may remember that when we embarked on the Commercialisation strategy, our objective was to generate £2 million additional revenue by 2022. The three acquisitions we have made to date, flats at Edenbrook, the Pavilion at Hedge End and now Centenary House, mean that we have reached a total income from these three properties of £1.4 million - and so have reached 70% of our original target. An updated Commercialisation Strategy was debated at Overview and Scrutiny in June and approved by Cabinet at our most recent meeting in July, and we continue to seek opportunities to cover our remaining expected shortfall in line with that strategy. Councillors should note that all figures quoted here represent income before borrowing costs are taken into account, although we have covered all investment costs to date through internal borrowing.

23 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORTS

The Joint Chief Executive had no announcement.

24 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

The Minutes of the following Committees, which met on the dates shown, were received by Council.

Meeting	Date
Cabinet No questions asked.	3 June 2021
Cabinet (draft) No questions asked.	1 July 2021

Planning No questions asked.	26 May 2021
Planning No questions asked.	9 June 2021
Planning (draft) No questions asked.	14 July 2021
Overview & Scrutiny No questions asked.	15 June 2021
Audit (draft) No questions asked.	25 May 2021
Licensing (draft) No questions asked.	1 June 2021

25 OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS

The Chairman informed members that Committee Services had been in contact with Inclusion Hampshire, and they no longer require representation from Hart District Council, but have thanked the organisation for its continued support.

He also confirmed that the Vine Centre is currently reviewing the role of Hart representation within their organisation.

Councillor Crookes commented that he was surprised at the response from Inclusion Hampshire and asked how we would get updates on the grant money we give to them.

The Chairman said he was advised that there is an SLA in place and feedback is received at Overview & Scrutiny meetings.

The meeting closed at 7.51 pm

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12**QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC**

Mr David Turver asked:

1. Why have the actuals for FY18/19 and FY19/20 changed between the publication of the draft budget in February 2021 and the final budget published this month? Is there any impact on the published statutory accounts for those years?

Draft Published Feb 2021

Service Summary 2021_22				
Service Area	2018_19 Actuals	2019_20 Actuals	2020_21 Budget	2021_22 Budget
Summary By Service				
Corporate Services	5,469,133	7,693,925	5,208,407	3,893,592
Community Services	-4,356,913	612,948	1,030,169	2,459,232
Place	2,155,570	2,307,271	2,098,411	2,112,951
Technical and Environmental Maintenance	2,118,756	626,528	3,082,837	2,937,908
Grand Total	5,386,545	11,240,672	11,419,824	11,403,683

Final Published Jul 2021

Service Summary 2021_22				
Service Area	2018_19 Actuals	2019_20 Actuals	2020_21 Budget	2021_22 Budget
Summary By Service				
Corporate Services	5,102,290	7,330,086	5,208,407	3,251,951
Community Services	-4,356,913	612,948	1,030,169	2,268,244
Place	2,155,570	2,388,210	2,098,411	2,172,921
Technical and Environmental Maintenance	2,118,756	545,590	3,082,837	3,673,232
Grand Total	5,019,702	10,876,833	11,419,824	11,366,349

Councillor Radley responded:

In the first table you refer to i.e., the draft budget published February 2021, interest on investments for 2018/19 and 2019/20 was excluded from the summary by service and instead included as part of below the line adjustments. For transparency and accountability this was placed above the line for reporting in the latest version of the budget book to ensure that it forms part of the detailed monthly budget monitoring process. This has no effect on the statutory accounts which reports income and expenditure in a different format according to the CIPFA rules.

Mr Turver asked a second question:

2. There are big differences between the budgets agreed for the service areas in March and final budget published this month. What governance processes were used and who authorised such massive swings in the budget and are they in accordance with the constitutional budget

procedures 3 and 5 as well as financial regulations FR10 and FR12 which limit changes unless approved by full council?

Service Area	Draft 21/22 Budget	Final 21/22 Budget	Delta
Corporate Services	3,893,592	3,251,951	(641,641)
Community Services	2,459,232	2,268,244	(190,988)
Place	2,112,951	2,172,921	59,970
Technical and Environmental Maintenance	2,937,908	3,673,232	735,324
Total	11,403,683	11,366,348	

Councillor Radley responded:

There is a net difference between the draft budget and final budget of £37,000. This is due to changes in the assumptions in the value of recycling credits, grants and depreciation. The draft budget, due to its timing made assumptions based on information known at that time. As final numbers became available, they were incorporated into the Final Budget.

In summary the following updates were made:

- Grants – estimated numbers were used at the time of the draft budget. As final details were received these were incorporated into the final budget and categorised into the correct service area.
- SANG allocation in Tech & Environmental – S106 reserves were released which fund the SANG cost centres. This allocation was not included in the draft budget.
- Depreciation: final asset valuation reports were not available at the time of the draft budget these numbers were updated for the final budget. And therefore, none of the constitutional procedures Mr Turver referred to needed to be invoked.

Mr Turver asked a third question:

3. In the recently published final budget for FY21/22, the sum of the spending in the service areas for GL Codes 10000 – Basic Salary, 44069 – Homelessness and 90012 – Other Government Grants is not equal to the total for those GL Codes in the "Subjective" summary. In short, the budget apparently does not add up. It appears as though HANEED is missing from the service areas. What steps are being taken to make the budget internally consistent and what impact will correcting the errors have on the projected deficit?

Cost Centre	Draft 21/22 Budget	Final 21/22 Budget	Final 21/22 Sum of Detail	Delta Budget to sum of Detail
10000 - Basic Salary	4,591,233	4,513,475	4,385,458	(128,017)
44069 - Homelessness Costs	65,000	135,000	70,000	(65,000)
90012 - Other Government Grants	(485,000)	(1,379,219)	(1,338,274)	40,945
Total	4,171,233	3,269,256	3,117,184	

Councillor Radley responded:

The HANEED cost centre detail page was unfortunately missing from the scanned copy of the paper copy of the draft budget book. The budgetary numbers were not missing from the overall numbers. This is a matter of presentation.

Additional checks will be incorporated into the process for future publications so this will not happen again.

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

Have the ever-changing budgets and persistent errors impacted on the Waste Contract, where over one million pounds appears to have been lost down the back of the sofa?

Councillor Radley responded:

I can reassure you that that is not the case. Following the reconciliation of costs of the waste contract as part of the handover of the client management to Basingstoke costs of £1.1 million remained under a rechargeable cost code. It was agreed with Basingstoke that we would bring in independent specialists to review these costs, how they should be accounted for, and whether they should be rebilled. This work has started, and early indications are that this dates back to 2018 and investigations are continuing. This is an accountancy artifact which relates to the council cross charging. There is every expectation that these charges balance out with other charging which has flowed in the other direction. The net affect being zero. This is simply an accounting artifact.

Mr Turver asked a fourth question:

4. The recently released final budget for FY21/22 shows that the budget for HASETT – New Settlement in FY20/21 was zero. It consisted of ~£68K for employee costs and car allowances, offset by a somewhat implausible identical receipt from GL Code 44047 – Consultants Projects. In common with the other service areas, no overheads were allocated. Yet, the transparency report shows spending of £63.7K on consultants in "New Settlement" for FY20/21. What governance processes were used to authorise such a large spend against an overall zero budget, apparently in contravention of FR10 in the constitution?

Date	Referen	Amount	Supplier Name	Cost Centre Description
01/04/2020	10004329	£9,216.30	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
01/05/2020	10004486	£870.00	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
01/06/2020	10004713	£507.50	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
01/07/2020	10004960	£1,087.50	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
17/07/2020	10005073	£5,365.00	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
03/08/2020	10005176	£2,532.50	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
03/08/2020	10005181	£1,067.50	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
15/09/2020	10005605	£1,322.50	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
02/11/2020	10006253	£1,610.00	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
09/12/2020	10006449	£9,900.00	Mike Allgrove Planning Ltd	New Settlement
15/12/2020	10006560	£3,292.50	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
31/12/2020	10006622	£290.00	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
24/01/2021	10006812	£500.00	Taylor & Garner Ltd	New Settlement
04/02/2021	10006973	£13,840.00	DigitalDinos Limited	New Settlement
16/02/2021	10007121	£5,438.33	Premm Design Limited	New Settlement
01/03/2021	10007204	£1,450.00	Chelgate Limited	New Settlement
26/03/2021	10007451	£5,438.33	Premm Design Limited	New Settlement
	Total	£63,727.96		

Councillor Radley responded:

The New Settlement published budget for 20/21 did not reflect the release of reserves agreed by Cabinet in February 2020.

These reserves were drawn down at the end of the year on assumption of agreement made by full council on the 6 February 2020 and approved by Cabinet.

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

Hart recently advertised Garden Community contracts with an indicative value of £56,000, against a FY21/22 budget of £25,000. Isn't it time for some proper forensic accountants to get to the bottom of what's going wrong with budgeting and financial controls?

Councillor Radley responded:

I am not in a position to comment on how Place department operate, but we do maintain that our departments, at the end of the year have balanced their budgets and I am quite convinced they are working within those limits.

Mr Turver asked a fifth question:

- In addition, the Shapley Heath Opportunity Board papers from show that four Baseline Studies had reached the status of "Finalised" by 8 March, before the end of the financial year. These must have cost money, but do not show on the Transparency Report nor on the Contracts Register. How much was spent on Baseline Studies and Strategy Reports in FY20/21?

Type of Evidence	Evidence	Drafted Brief	Consultant Procured	Survey/Report Underway	Survey/Report Finalised	Report to SHGCOB
Baseline Surveys	Topographical Survey and Ground Survey					
	Transport	x				
	Landscape	x	x	x		
	Agricultural Land Classification	x	x	x		
	Heritage	x	x	x		
	Flooding	x	x	x	x	
	Drainage	x	x	x	x	
	Water Cycle/Management					
	Utilities	x	x			
	Air Quality	x	x	x	x	
	Noise	x	x	ON HOLD		
	Contamination	x	x	x		
	Ecology/Biodiversity	x	x	x		
	Woodland, Trees and Hedgerows	x	x	x	x	
Strategy Reports	Homes	x				
	Economy and employment					
	Retail					
	Education					
	Green Infrastructure (including Community Facilities/Sports/Leisure/Play Space)	x				
	Health Needs	x				
	Health Impact					
	Active Lifestyles					
	Climate Change Mitigation					
	Renewable Energy					
	Innovation/Future Proofing - Transport					
	Innovation/Future Proofing – Technology and Lifestyle					
	Urban Design					
	Place Stories and Branding	x	x	x		

Councillor Radley responded:

The Shapley Heath Opportunity Board Papers clearly state that the Baseline Studies were funded by promoters.

No money was spent by the Council on Baseline Studies or Strategic Reports in 2020/21

Mr Turver asked a sixth question:

6. The agenda pack for July Cabinet shows that £283,000 was transferred from reserves to fund Shapley Heath. How is it possible to spend £283,000 against a zero budget whilst running a deficit and what governance processes authorised this spend?

Transfer from Reserves		
Housing Initiatives	26	Funding 2020/2021 work at Providence House
Fleet Pond Overflow Repair	35	Provision released as no longer required
Corporate Reserve	283	Funding 2020/2021 work on the New Settlement at Shapley Heath
Homelessness Grant	46	Funding 2020/2021 work on Social Inclusion and Partnership – Homelessness
Homelessness Trailblazer Grant	101	Funding 2020/2021 work on Social Inclusion and Partnership – Homelessness
Flexible Homelessness Grant	20	Funding 2020/2021 work on Social Inclusion and Partnership – Homelessness
Domestic Abuse	65	Funding Domestic Abuse Initiatives during 2020/2021
Dilly Lane Notice Boards	1	Dilly Lane Noticeboard works during 2020/2021
SI06 Open Spaces	53	1/20th draw down for open spaces works in 2020/2021.

Councillor Radley responded:

Expenditure for Shapley Heath spend was presented to Cabinet on the following dates:

Feb 2020: Budget report 2020/21

Q2 2020/21: Cabinet - 20 12 03 - Budget Monitoring

Q3 2020/21 Cabinet - 21 03 04 - Budget Monitoring

Shapley Heath is funded by Government Grants. Grants have been received over several years. With Cabinet's consent, grant funding can be transferred to and from an ear-marked reserve between financial years. Members provided the approval for a £283,000 transfer from reserves at Cabinet on the 3rd July to fund 20/21 expenditure. This paper was subject to scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

How much of the £500,000 set aside in reserves for Shapley Heath remains unspent?

Councillor Radley responded:

I will have to give you a written answer.

Mr Turver asked a seventh question:

7. How much was spent in total on Shapley Heath Garden Community in FY20/21 and can you provide a detailed breakdown of that spend (and receipts) please?

Councillor Radley responded:

I think your requests for receipts have been misinterpreted as wanting to see invoices. Which is why you were told to go down the Freedom of Information (FOI) route. However, I am happy to answer the question here briefly and can give a more detailed written answer later.

The headline figures are:

Staff costs - £114,261

Supplies and Services - £72,102

Total controllable costs before recharges - £186,363

Income received for 2021 year from MHCLG - £130,000

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

From memory, the budget for employment costs was £68,000 and I think Cllr Radley said it was almost double that. How can we spend more than double the budget?

Cllr Radley responded:

I have no information to know this is an overspent so I will speak to officers and send a written response to Mr Turver.

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Farmer asked:

In November 2019, The Council engaged the Planning Officers' Society Enterprises (POSe) to assist the Council in carrying out a Peer Review of the Council's Development Management Service.

Development Management (DM) is one of the principal front-line services provided by the Council in its role as the Local Planning Authority. The functions provided by the service cover a variety of matters including pre-application discussions and advice, the determination of planning applications, dealing with planning appeals, planning enforcement, and dealing with heritage matters.

DM is one of the most public facing services that the Council provides.

POS Enterprises issued their final report on 31st December 2019, which highlighted recommendations for where this key service could be improved.

An action plan, responding to the recommendations made by POSe, was reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny, and subsequently approved by Cabinet in December 2020.

What specific progress has been made in the implementation of this critical action plan and what evidenced improvements to the Development Management service have subsequently been achieved?

Councillor Cockarill responded:

The Development Management Service was discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee last week. It was agreed the Joint Chief Executive, Head of Place and myself would give an update again at the August O&S Committee meeting.

The headlines are:

- We have introduced an urban design function to improve the quality of place making to new developments. We are using the building for healthy life as a design code, to inform developments. Officers are working with developers to promote health and well-being and reflect the principles of the NHS Healthy New Towns initiative.
- Having recently acknowledged the Climate emergency officers have been working with developers on measures to mitigate against the effects of this. I'm expecting low carbon homes to come through the planning process shortly.
- The team have a new approach to conservation area appraisals working with parish and town councils. The first one coming through is Odiham and North Warnborough and there has been some learning during this process. The team are looking to roll out this process for Crondall, Fleet and Hartley Wintney.

- The Development Management team are on a journey from good to great and despite the covid pandemic have provided an essential service whilst looking at ways to improve that.

Councillor Farmer asked a supplementary question:

It has been over one and a half years since the peer review was published and eight months since the resulting action plan was approved by Cabinet. We have seen the rate of planning applications increase and regrettably more planning officers leaving the team. This has placed added pressure of the team. What more could have been done by the Portfolio Holder for Place to implement the action plan more quickly and support the Development Management Team and what personal responsibility does he accept for the performance levels of this service?

Councillor Cockarill responded:

I think Cllr Farmer has answered the question in his question. We would have been able to process more quickly if we hadn't had the staff challenges, particularly with people leaving in senior roles. The implementation plan is something officers and members have to work together on and the O&S working group is working alongside me as is the Planning Working Party. We have implemented a number of changes to the way we do Planning Committee following the report. As a council we all need to make sure we are working with our officers to support them.

Councillor Butcher asked:

Can you please confirm how many dogs have been reunited with their owners and how many strays have been found new homes since the dog warden service was transitioned to the new providers (SDK)?

Councillor Kinnell responded:

For the period from 1st April - 30 June, there were 11 service requests made. 5 of these were aborted, requiring no action. Six dogs were collected and taken to kennels, five of the six, were reunited with their owner and the remaining stray dog was rehomed.

Now without comparing these figures against previous years data, they're pretty much meaningless, so I asked Mark Jaggard to provide me with the data that was recorded on Uniform for 'stray dogs over the past five years, for the same period:

From 1st April
 30th June 2020: 11 strays
 1st April - 30th June 2019: 5 strays
 1st April - 30th June 2018: 7 strays
 1st April - 30th June 2017: 1 stray
 1st April - 30th June 2016: 6 strays

There is no further breakdown provided on these figures, therefore the data that we now receive on stray dogs from SDK Environmental is far more comprehensive and gives a far more accurate reflection of the situation.

I would also like to take this opportunity since we're on this subject, to request that those responsible for trying to discredit the new service provision, particularly on social media, stop, as it is not true. Yes, we had a great in-house service before the dog warden left, but we continue to benefit from a great service working with SDK, but, with the added benefit of resilience.

Cllr Butcher asked a supplementary question:

What financial savings has the removal of the two local jobs delivered and how was the company in Slough selected, that only provides a rotary basic stray dog service compared to what we previously had, that included dog fouling, dog attacks etc. Do we believe that the savings merit the potential suffering caused to families by the service cuts?

Cllr Kinnell responded:

I will provide a written answer but disagree, there are no service cuts.