

Public Document Pack

COUNCIL

Date and Time: Thursday 30 September 2021 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

COUNCILLORS -

Ambler (Chairman)

Axam	Crisp	Neighbour
Bailey	Crookes	Oliver
Blewett	Davies	Radley
Butcher	Delaney	Smith
Butler	Drage	Southern
Clarke	Farmer	Wildsmith
Coburn	Forster	Worlock
Cockarill	Harward	Wright
Collins	Kennett	
Crampton	Kinnell	

Officers Present:

Daryl Phillips	Joint Chief Executive
Lee Rome	Committee Services Officer

26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 29 July 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Lamb, Cllr Quarterman and Cllr Dorn.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

29 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 - QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

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

30 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 - QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Questions had been received from Councillor Crookes, Councillor Crampton and Councillor Lamb, details of which are set out in Appendix B attached to these minutes.

31 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that he conducted the following visits:

Wednesday 8 September - RAF Odiham Annual Reception.

Monday 20 September - Hampshire County Council Chairman's Civic Day.

Sunday 26 September - Mayor of Basingstoke Civic Sunday Service.

Thursday 30 September - Hazeley Heath.

32 CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, **Councillor Neighbour** announced that he visited the Hazeley Heath site and thanked the Chairman and Councillor Southern for attending with him. The site uses 'no fencing' cattle controls and it was hoped that success here will lead to Hart securing other heathland and rolling the scheme out further.

The Cabinet Member for Community, **Councillor Bailey** updated on Anti-social Behaviour. Anti-social behaviour can have a huge negative affect on the quality of life of residents. Over recent months The Community Safety Team had been working closely with the Police to secure a closure order on a property causing severe ASB to neighbours and the local community in Yateley. The team was in court today and Councillor Bailey was pleased to state that an order had been awarded. He thanked the team who had put in many hours of work into getting this order.

Councillor Bailey also provided an update on Afghan Families. He thanked members in Hook who had provided support to the team that spent several days earlier this month helping to set up and welcome members of the Afghan community as part of operation "Warm Welcome". The team, along with Basingstoke and Deane, set up a bridging hotel for people who had recently been evacuated from Kabul. Homes had been offered in the district for 3 Afghan families. One family had already moved in and two more would follow shortly. The latest home to become available was from Thames Valley Metropolitan HA that Hart did not have had nomination rights to so does not detract from lettings to our Hart families.

33 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORTS

The Joint Chief Executive reminded Council about the Member Development Feedback Survey that closes on Friday 1st October and asked for responses to help improve future training.

34 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

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

Cabinet - 5 August 2021

No questions were asked.

Cabinet (draft) - 2 September 2021

Councillor Farmer asked about **Minute 46 - BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY** which stated that the Shapley Heath project was paused. He asked what pausing meant and whether this included ongoing work with developers, and what work was continuing. He also asked if the studies that had been completed would be published and when.

Councillor Neighbour stated that he would provide a written response. The written response will be published as an addendum to the minutes.

Councillor Farmer asked for clarification on what options were being looked at in the Local Plan business case.

Councillor Neighbour stated that the business case would be presented to Cabinet and that all the information would be provided at that point.

Planning - 11 August 2021

No questions were asked.

Planning (draft) - 8 September 2021

No questions were asked.

Overview & Scrutiny - 17 August 2021

No questions were asked.

Audit - 27 July 2021

No questions were asked.

Standards (draft) - 15 September 2021

There was a recommendation for Council in **Minute 6 – THE HART MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT**.

Councillor Clarke put the recommendation, seconded by **Councillor Kennett**.

Councillors raised the following points:

- The need for healthy debate in Council.
- That the Council or its Members should not be brought into disrepute and that the amendments to the code reinforce that.
- That debate on social media can occasionally be problematic.

- Members should consider health and wellbeing implications when endorsing or posting on social media and should discourage personalisation.
- All debate should be around policy and improving policy for the people of Hart.
- That the code encourages exemplary behaviour.
- Issues in the use of social media, and a willingness to adhere to the revised Code of Conduct when using it.
- Members should consider health and wellbeing implications when endorsing or posting on social media.

DECISION

That the revised Hart Members Code of Conduct be adopted.

35 OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS

No feedback was provided.

The meeting closed at 7.41 pm

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Mr David Turver asked:

Can you please share with the public the results of the investigation carried out by the external consultants into the £1.1m adverse variance on the Waste Contract?

Councillor Radley responded:

We have had to wait much longer than we would have hoped for BDBC to release to us their financial figures which we needed to resolve this discrepancy. Having received this data I am personally content that there are absolutely no hidden issues or matters of concern. However, a member of the public has raised a formal (and in my opinion ill founded) objection to Hart's end of year accounts which means that our auditors are required to take a detailed review of Hart's financial statement. This is a formal process and much as I would like to give Mr Turver the comfort he seeks and to lay this matter firmly to rest, it is inappropriate to do so until Ernest & Young have completed their audit and submitted their report. I am confident that the auditors will find no issues nor that Hart residents will be out of pocket in relation to the variance Mr Turver cites.

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

Should it be officers or executive members who take responsibility for this mess and do the decent thing and resign?

Councillor Radley responded:

The variance is a matter of mechanical accounting. As I stated I am certain there is no issues of concern or matters hidden. Residents of the district will not be out of pocket. This is simply accountancy balancing of books.

Mr Turver asked a second question:

Now that the Garden Community project has been postponed, how much has the project cost so far this financial year; what spending commitments are remaining and what is the expected full year outturn?

Councillor Radley responded:

The decision on the future of the project will be made based upon the outcome of the business case analysis currently being drawn up for review by Cabinet. The expenditure in this year-to-date has been £81k to the nearest thousand pounds.

Mr Turver asked a supplementary question:

That's over £0.5m spent since FY18/19; what tangible deliverables have been produced with all money and what will you allow Hart taxpayers to see?

Councillor Radley responded:

A wide variety of studies and consultations have been undertaken that will be considered in any review of the Local Plan and lead to a stronger Local Plan.

Mr Turver asked a third question:

FY2018/19 started with zero budget for the New Settlement, in November 2018 £50K was approved, that was overspent by December and overall £90K was spent in the year. In FY20/21, the budget started at £167K, rose to £500K, fell to £68.6K (2 x £34.3K half year budget) and eventually fell to zero. Overall £283K was transferred from reserves to cover the expenditure. Do you agree that the Audit Committee should subject the New Settlement to an internal audit to learn the lessons of proper budgeting and financial control for other projects?

Councillor Axam responded:

Whilst we don't recognise all the numbers quoted in your question, I can tell you that this matter will be discussed at the next audit committee who will decide how to proceed.

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Crookes asked:

In previous correspondence I was informed that Cabinet would consider and approve an Odiham Common Management Plan by the end of 2021. This item does not appear on the Cabinet work programme. In a recent Odiham Common consultative meeting we were informed that the Council has already submitted a Woodland Management Plan that does not honour the agreement reached last year with the residents and a Countryside Stewardship grant application.

Will you now make public both the Woodland Management Plan and Countryside Stewardship grant application and provide any update since their submission?

Councillor Neighbour responded:

The original submissions to the Forestry Commission and Natural England had to be revised and were accepted. The information will be included in the management plans that are public documents and are due to go Cabinet in the current municipal year. The consultative group have had the Woodland Management Plan and the Countryside Stewardship Application. Any updates to these will be given to the group as and when they occur.

Cllr Crookes asked a supplementary question:

Can we agree that there will be no felling before the management plan is agreed, given there may be some felling due to ash die-back and dead trees?

Councillor Neighbour responded:

Up to 50 trees were agreed to be felled under the Halo scheme which would be identified after the survey. Ash die-back and dead trees would not be included in this number. We will be happy to continue discussions about the actual number and location of trees that will be felled.

Councillor Crampton asked:

Hart District Council asked residents to complete an online consultation on the new Shapley Heath Garden Community project. They were told that this would “give them a voice and a chance to share their views”.

When will you therefore share the results of this consultation with our residents?

Councillor Cockarill responded:

An engagement process was carried out to find out what the Community valued in their community, not a consultation on Shapley Heath. The results will be published shortly and will inform Hart's planning policy going forward.

Cllr Crampton asked a supplementary question:

Will it be published in full including all the free text comments?

Councillor Cockarill responded:

Yes, subject to GDPR constraints.

Councillor Harward asked:

Frogmore Green is a small village green that is mainly surrounded by bungalows and low-rise cottages. Over the years, this locality has benefitted from consistent and robust Planning decisions that have preserved its scale and character.

In this vein, a recent Planning application to build a chalet bungalow a few doors from The Bell was refused as the proposed ridge height modestly exceeded that of surrounding bungalows. A correct decision in my view as it prompted an excellent re-submission which accords with the scale and design of its surroundings. However, a more recent approval a few doors away will replace The Bell Inn (also a bungalow) with a three-story development that will dwarf its surroundings.

I have been asked why this large dominant development was granted when this modest chalet bungalow was refused. A question that I find impossible to answer. Could someone help me please?

Councillor Oliver responded:

Thankyou Cllr Harward for your question, although I am a little bemused you are asking it as you attended the relevant planning meeting, spoke in objection and as a planning agent, I would suggest, have some knowledge of planning regulations.

Each planning application is considered on its individual merits. The reasons for approval were set out in the report to Planning Committee, there was a Committee site visit the day before the Committee sat, and he would have heard first-hand the lengthy Committee debate given that he spoke for the Town Council against the application. If Councillor Harward is still in any doubt why the application was approved he should revisit the Committee debate by watching it on the YouTube video.

Cllr Harward asked a supplementary question:

I have been approached by a resident who had an application refused recently and is now considering resubmitting based citing this precedent. There is a public perception that the planning process has been undermined by this, do you agree?

Councillor Oliver responded:

Planning is a statutory function of the Council with robust procedures, and each application is considered on its individual merits. I am confident precedent will not apply in this case I would expect that the applicant would get the same response from planning officers. I would recommend that the applicant speak to planning officers before resubmitting.