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COUNCIL

Date and Time: Thursday 24 November 2022 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

COUNCILLORS -

Worlock (Chairman)

Wildsmith	Crampton	Kennett
Axam	Crisp	Makepeace-Browne
Bailey	Davies	Neighbour
Blewett	Delaney	Oliver
Butcher	Dorn	Quarterman
Butler	Engström	Radley
Clarke	Farmer	Smith
Coburn	Forster	Woods
Cockarill	Hale	

Officers Present:

Daryl Phillips	Chief Executive
Graeme Clark	S151 Officer
Claire Lord	Committee and Members Services Officer
Jenny Murton	Committee Services and Members Officer

35 PRESENTATION TO FORMER COUNCILLOR SIMON AMBLER

A cheque for £10,464.48 was presented to former Councillor Simon Ambler, representing monies he raised during his 2021/22 tenure as Chairman. The money will be split between Hart and Rushmoor Young Carers Charity and 1st Crookham Scouts. Representatives of both organisations were also present.

36 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Matters Arising from Minutes of 29th September 2022.

Councillor Forster was given the opportunity to ask supplementary questions to the original questions that were answered in writing from the previous meeting of Council in September.

Councillor Forster accepted this opportunity and raised a question about CCTV availability.

The supplementary question was answered by Councillor Bailey, who confirmed that he did not recognise the point made by Councillor Forster and went on to assured the meeting that Hart District Council took matters of community safety very seriously.

Councillor Forster also accepted the opportunity to ask a supplementary question on the issue of utilisation of the car parks. He asked, given the utilisation of the Fleet car parks whether the Portfolio holder would once again consider the matter of a period of free parking. He also asked whether the Portfolio holder would acknowledge the poor choice in the current parking machines was also a factor in their underutilisation.

The question was answered by Councillor Oliver who stated that he was not going to revisit the question of free parking and that the choice of the machines had not been his; but according to the date of the purchase order they had been procured at the time when former Councillor Morris and Councillor Forster himself were the relevant Portfolio Holders.

The Minutes of the meeting of 29th September 2022 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from

Councillor T Collins
Councillor S Kinnell
Councillor R Lamb
Councillor T Southern

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations made.

39 URGENT ACTION: CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENT OF HEAD OF PAID SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

Councillors were asked to note recent appointments to the positions of Head of Paid Services and Monitoring Officer within Hart District Council.

- Head of Paid Services – Mr Daryl Philips (with no change to Mr Philips' current duties as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer).
- Monitoring Officer – Ms Stephanie Baker (in addition to her current duties as Development Management and Building Control Manager) which took effect from Monday 24th October 2022.

40 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 - QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Questions had been received from Mr T Smart and Mr D Turver, detailed in Appendix A.

41 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 - QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

A questions had been received from Councillor Dr A Crampton detailed in Appendix B.

42 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

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

Meeting	Date
Cabinet	6 October 22
Cabinet (draft)	3 November 22
Overview & Scrutiny	27 September 22
Overview & Scrutiny (draft)	8 November 22
Audit (draft)	25 October 22
Licensing (draft)	4 October 22
Planning (draft)	21 September 22
Planning Enforcement Sub Committee (draft)	17 October 22
Planning (draft)	19 October 22
Staffing (draft)	20 October 22

There were no questions on the minutes.

43 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman commented on some of the events she had attended during the last 2 months which included;

6 Oct: Lord Mayor of Portsmouth - Civic Heads Dinner
9 Oct: Mayor of Winchester - Law Sunday
12 Oct: Lord Mayor of Southampton - Civic Day
14 Oct: Opening of Yateley United FC Community Centre
18 Oct: The Lord-Lieutenant and SE Reserves Forces Cadets Association Awards Ceremony
23 Oct: Lord Mayor of Southampton Civic Service
25 Oct: University Centre, Farnborough - Graduation Ceremony
29 Oct: Official opening of Cake Box in Blackwater
29 Oct: Pelly Concert Orchestra
30 Oct: Eastleigh Borough Council Festival of Remembrance
4 Nov: Re-opening of Frogmore Daycare and Wellbeing Centre

6 Nov: Chairman of Hart Council's Civic Service
9 Nov: Chairman of New Forest Civic Day
10 Nov: Farnborough College of Technology - Councillors meal
11 Nov: Act of Remembrance - 2-minute silence
12 Nov: Opening of new George Wing at The Old Raven House in Hook
13 Nov: Remembrance Sunday Service at Gally Hill Road War Memorial - **Vice Chairman, Cllr Wildsmith, attended on behalf of the Chairman**
13 Nov: Fleet Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade

The Chairman updated the meeting on her charitable work. She informed the meeting she had raised £200 at the Civic Service and she hoped to be organising more events in the Spring.

She told the meeting that a venue had been found for the Duke of Edinburgh meetings.

The meeting was asked to save dates in their diaries for Hart Civic day, 21st March 2023 and for 20th April 2023 which would be a celebration dinner for Councillors.

44 CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council

Informed the meeting that

The site inspection has taken place and the Solar panels should be in place on the Council Offices by Christmas.

The Leaders from both Hart and Rushmoor had attended a meeting to discuss progress the opportunity to enter into joint service provision. The meeting was informed that unfortunately the plans are progressing more slowly than was hoped for.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance

Confirmed to the meeting that the new S151 officer Mr Graeme Clark, was now in role and was working with the finance team to produce the 2023/24 budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Digital and Communications

Updated the meeting on the redevelopment of the website. In preparation for the beta launch in February. The content of the website and the forms within it have been updated to meet plain English and Accessibility standards. Following the Beta launch members will have the opportunity to comment on the website before it goes live in March 2023.

The meeting was informed that the website project was currently on schedule and on budget.

Cabinet Member for Community Services

Made the following statement:-

Last week we had our annual Rough Sleepers Count – this is an estimate based on reports across the district from a network of agencies, coordinated through our Housing Team. The results have to be verified officially at national level, but we anticipate reporting a zero this year (last year it was 1)

This month we have launched more features to our Housing Register portal, giving improved accessibility to residents who are looking to access local homes. The team have launched a property availability alert – letting applicants know when they have a likely match for the time of home they are seeking. The team are now testing “Alexa” , and plan to launch this in the next month – giving even simpler access to viewing homes and placing bids.

The Community service team have been collecting for Hart Foodbank and the food will be dropped off at the Foodbank on Monday, ready to be prepared into Christmas Hampers.

Finally, Louise Lyons our Private Sector Housing Manager is leaving the council after 28 years service. Louise has led the team who help our most vulnerable and older residents - getting disabled facilities grants in place, to enable adaptations so people can stay in their homes. Wish Louise all the best as she takes some time out with her family.

The Portfolio Holder for Place

Made the following statement:-

As Members are aware, we, along with Hampshire County Council, have commissioned Sustrans to produce a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the District.

An LCWIP is a strategic plan which identifies a walking and cycling network with recommendations made for infrastructure improvements and priorities for future investment. To inform the development of Hart's LCWIP, we will be hosting an online engagement workshop for members and other stakeholders who are directly involved with or have an interest in active travel projects. The purpose of this workshop is to establish the key cycling corridors and walking zones as well as understanding what the barriers are to active travel in the District.

We will hold the on line workshop Tuesday 13th December 17:00 – 18:45. If you wish to attend, please could you confirm your attendance before Thursday 8th December by emailing planningpolicy@hart.gov.uk

If Members are unable to attend on this Tuesday, we will be holding a drop-in workshop here Wednesday 14th December 15:30 – 17:30

The Portfolio Holder for the Environment

Made the following statement:-

Firstly, I am pleased to announce that Hart District Council is once again supporting the national Small Business Saturday campaign. An initiative to encourage people to us local small businesses and retailers and keep our high streets alive. To this end, on Saturday 3rd December all council car parks across Hart will be free to use between 8am and midnight.

Secondly, I am pleased to say that Hart have authorised its Waste contractor Serco to install local fuel stores in its depots to allow for diesel additives to be used on all its waste collection vehicles, a major contributor to HDC carbon emissions. This will allow fuelling that will reduce emissions by 55% from 59 to 27 tonnes of carbon per annum next year. Further reductions from the use of HVO fuel are being considered when a sustainable source can be guaranteed. This shows this administration's commitment to meeting our climate change targets.

The Portfolio Holder for Commercialisation and Corporate Services

Made the following statement:-

1. Members will probably be aware that since 4th November the swimming pools at the Hart Leisure Centre have been closed as the result of boiler failure. The latest information we have received from Everyone Active is the replacement parts have now been fitted and that the pools are being brought back up to temperature with a planned re-opening on Saturday 26th November.

2. Hart's cabinet has drafted a revised Corporate Plan for 2023-2027, which sets out our vision and priorities for the District under three key focus areas, Planet, People and Place. This is currently out for public consultation until Sunday 18th December, and I would encourage members and residents to have

a look at this and respond using the brief questionnaire via Hart District Council's website. Alternatively, paper copies are available on request via email to communications@hart.gov.uk, by telephone to 07816 109683, or in person at the Hart Civic Offices in Fleet.

45 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORTS

The Chief Executive reported that the new S151 officer, Mr Graeme Clark, had settled into the management team well. He explained to the meeting that the recent major upheavals in management at the Council had meant that the Council was going through a period of adjustment and he asked the Members to make allowances during this period. It was stated that there was a certain amount of team building to do, however, should members have any issues they were welcome to bring them either to the CEO or the S151 officer.

46 POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACE REVIEW – HOOK AND YATELEY WEST

The Council was asked to approve the proposal to create a new polling district in the Hook Ward, with a new polling place being allocated. The report also sets out details of the proposed new polling place for the Yateley West Ward.

A query was raised as to how people would be informed of this change. It was explained that the change would go out in the polling packs, however there would also be a mail shot and posts on Social Media. It was suggested that candidates should also highlight the change when they were canvassing, This was seen as an excellent idea.

Decision

- That Hook Ward be split into three polling districts: Rotherwick, Hook East and Hook West.
- That the 3rd Bramshill Scout Lodge, Monteagle Lane be designated as the polling place for the Tudor and Vigo (YT) polling district

47 INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

This Item was **Withdrawn**

48 OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS

Councillor Dorn gave an update from the recent Farnborough Airport Consultative Committee (FACC) meeting. The meeting was updated on items that had been discussed including public safety zones and 3rd party risk contours, the success of the International Airshow and the Airport's roadmap to net zero. The meeting's attention was brought to some online briefing on the Airspace Modernisation Strategy.

Councillor Quarterman gave an update on the Blackbushe Airport Consultative Committee October meeting. The meeting was informed that the Airport was recovering well post Covid. It was explained that the Airport had purchased some land in Yateley and was hoping to do a land swap, to give the residents a Yateley some more Common Land that was easily accessible and to allow the Airport to develop the land adjacent to it.

Councillor Crampton read a report from Councillor Southern regarding the November meeting of the Basingstoke Canal Authority. The main issue related to the shortage of water currently in the canal. This shortage was affecting not only water-born activities but also funding available to the authority. The meeting was told that it is hoped that the new South East Water pipeline will stop all extractions from the Greywell aquifer and then this water can be diverted in to the canal which will raise its levels.

Councillor Bailey told the meeting that he had attended the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Crime Panel and was happy to tell the meeting of the appointment of Scott Chilton to the position of Chief Constable.

Councillor Makepeace Browne asked for a copy of the table showing who the representatives on the various Outside Bodies to be circulated.

The meeting closed at 8.17 pm

Appendix A

Questions from Mr Timothy Smart

“My question relates to the September Council Meeting decision to move to a single CEO model while considering a shared CEO model. What are the 3 most significant criteria the Cabinet will set to determine whether to propose a shared CEO model with adjacent Councils?”

Reply from Leader Councillor David Neighbour

I need to correct the perception of the work that is being undertaken with Rushmoor. It needs to first be put into context. It's not simply about sharing a Chief Executive. We are looking at a much bigger picture in which sharing a Chief Executive is only one small part.

The two councils in July agreed to find ways to work collaboratively, share resources and drive significant and sustained improvements. In exploring the opportunity of working together several benefits are achievable:

1. A reduction in overall costs. By identifying ways to deliver services and share resources, it will be possible to reduce duplication and overall management costs.
2. A stronger voice in the County and with Government. The increased scale and combined resources will bring a stronger voice to represent our communities.
3. Improved joined-up service delivery. By working closely together, in an area that shares many similar challenges and history, it will be possible to deliver better organised, coordinated and joined up services for our communities.
4. Better use of scarce resources. The combined capability of two organisations working collaboratively together to recruit and jointly manage, will provide an opportunity to attract and retain higher calibre candidates.
5. Improved resilience. In potentially sharing services and staff resources, over time each council will improve its resilience to deal with both planned and unplanned events.

The two councils are committed to develop business cases to support any changes, detailing the potential opportunities, such as sharing a Chief Executive, and recommending which order any changes are made. Where the business cases prove worthwhile, we will rapidly implement shared working arrangements. We are keen to ensure an open and transparent dialogue with our communities over these changes. At this stage work on preparing a business case for a shared Chief Executive is not yet complete but whatever happens, the business case will need to address the 5 points I made earlier.

Questions from Mr David Turver

This is a series of questions to Cabinet members regarding their recent statements about the Shapley Heath at Council and Cabinet.

To the Leader, David Neighbour:

1. At September Cabinet you insisted the Shapley Heath Audit took place “at a point in time” in November 2021 which is before it was even commissioned. Do you now accept the Shapley Heath Audit was only commissioned by Audit Committee at their meeting in December 2021, the developer studies were completed on or before October 2021 and published in January 2022; the audit work was carried out afterwards by TIAA in March and April 2022 and the first draft report was delivered in late June 2022 with the final report circulated in early July 2022?

Reply from Leader Councillor David Neighbour

I accept I misspoke. In November 2021 I was party to internal discussions with Officers about the need to commission an audit associated with the Shapley Heath Project. These discussions were then taken forward in a formal recommendation to the December 2021 Audit Committee.

2. The deliverables that had to be completed to achieve the first milestone of the Shapley Heath project were: the Communities Survey, Vision and Objectives, Communication and Engagement Strategy, Technical Studies, Strategic Viability Appraisal and Phase One Masterplan (Concept). The Technical Studies comprised 13 Baseline Studies and 14 Strategy Reports. At the September Cabinet meeting you said you disagreed with TIAA's assessment that no milestones had been achieved. Can you set out which of the planned deliverables were published and how on earth they constitute the achievement of the first milestone?

Reply from Leader Councillor David Neighbour

I do disagree with the TIAA commentary on elements of the project. It views things as though everything occurred in a perfect world. I think the TIAA report should have acknowledged the point that a lot of useful work was done under difficult circumstances that made operating the usual project management and political management regimes very difficult, especially having regard to the fact senior officers and management generally had their workload distorted by the sudden insertion of Covid19 related priorities.

Despite the “non-standard” (or some might say “poor”) project governance, the project was in fact using a project approach as advocated by Homes England in a format that they required, and as TIAA say, had not exceeded budget. “Tangible outputs” were achieved. For example, these were the Technical Studies comprising Baseline Studies. The TIAA authors say no “Key Milestones” were achieved, but the project was curtailed 5 months early before any key ‘milestones’ were triggered.

3. Issues were raised about the financial controls of the Shapley Heath project as part of the objection to the 20/21 accounts. EY found “no matter of misreporting or any other concern for the audit of the accounts”, yet TIAA found “no evidence provided to support the project having been accurately and appropriately financially managed.” In addition, it is reported that the Audit fees are rising from £80K to £250K. If the current auditor cannot find problems when evidence is presented to them, what confidence can the public have that they can find hidden problems in the accounts?

Reply from Leader Councillor David Neighbour

Ernst and Young (EY) are external auditors. They have complied with the NAO's 2020 Code of Audit Practice, International Standards on Auditing (UK), and other guidance issued by the NAO.

We understand that EY spent much time carefully and diligently reviewing Mr Turver's objections to the 2020/21 accounts. The EY work is much more detailed and comprehensive than the lighter touch TIAA report.

EY did not find substance to Mr Turver's complaint or allegations. It is important not to try to re-write history with the benefit of hindsight and put a fresh interpretation on events simply because it is easy to criticise a finding that one does not agree with.

To Cabinet Member for Place, Graham Cockarill

4. You also said that nobody from the Opportunity Board raised any issues with you about the Shapley Heath project as if that somehow absolved you as Chair of any responsibility. Three of your Cabinet colleagues, sat on the Opportunity Board with you, does this mean that they are more, or less, responsible than you for the failures of the project?

Reply from Councillor Graham Cockarill

I respectfully disagree that the project failed. The Cabinet took the opportunity afforded by the Government to explore a way of meeting our future housing needs. This is exactly what the Planning Inspector suggested we do when he approved our Local Plan. The project has delivered an evidence base against which we can judge the appropriateness of a new settlement option when we begin work on the next Local Plan.

5. At the same meeting, you claimed that the project has “met its primary objective” despite the fact that no milestones have been achieved. The stated objectives were to “establish a vision for a Garden Community and evidence whether such a vision is both viable and deliverable”. Where is the published Vision that has been established and where is the evidence that the vision is both viable and deliverable?

Reply from Councillor Graham Cockarill

At the danger of repeating myself, Madam Chair, the project has delivered a number of baseline studies and reports which now form part of the evidence base for the next Local Plan. The viability and/or deliverability of a new settlement will be assessed as part of the next Local Plan, alongside all other potential options.

6. On 25th February 2021, along with the rest of the Council, you approved the overall budget including funding for the New Settlement. The New Settlement budget covered staffing for only 2-3 people and £25K for consultants. Did any budgetary alarm bells start to ring when the Thematic Groups were stuffed with unbudgeted Council Officers, advertisements were placed for contracts worth up to £56K, a new website appeared along with an extensive survey and you appeared in professionally produced videos to promote the survey; wasn't it clear then that the spending was going to massively exceed the budget?

Reply from Councillor Graham Cockarill

The Planning Inspector suggested that we explore the New Settlement option through the traditional planning policy route. If we had done that, then the cost to this Council would have been prohibitively expensive. By taking the opportunity to become part of the Garden Project Programme we have managed to undertake a block of work which we would otherwise not have been able to do. It is unfortunate that the Government's funding priorities changed, which meant that continuing the Programme became financially unviable for this Council. However, we are now in a good position to be able to assess the New Settlement option against all other potential options for meeting the Government's future housing target for Hart (assuming this Government lasts long enough to get a planning bill of sorts through Parliament).

To Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, James Radley

7. Back in July 2021, I asked you a number of questions about obvious budgeting and financial reporting irregularities in the Shapley Heath project. The Shapley Heath Audit Report confirmed these concerns, saying there was no evidence that “the project had been accurately and appropriately financially managed”. At the time you brushed off these concerns and actually defended the Council's financial controls. As Cabinet member for Finance, what steps did you take to investigate the obvious weaknesses that were quite correctly highlighted by my questions?

Reply from Councillor James Radley

At the Hart council meeting of July 2021 Mr Turver asked me a total of seven questions within addition a number of supplementals. These were in the main related to seeking clarification as to the nature of entries in a number of budget related tables to which Mr Turver, as always, received accurate answers. Mr Turver also asked about Hart's financial controls and then as I would now I was able to reassure him that these are robust.

The Audit report into the management of the Shapley Heath project has raised issues related to matters of process and project management governance about which the council has rightly sought to engage an outside adjudicator to investigate. There are however no suggestions of financial mismanagement.

The Shapley Heath project was partially funded by government grants and third party contributions along with funding from this council. It has produced a robust evidence base which this council shall be able to use to inform choices which would need to be made if the government were to impose on Hart an increased housing target. Anyone who tracks the signals coming out of Westminster will be aware that such a change in how housing is allocated is a distinct possibility. This council will, thanks to the Shapley Heath project and other studies which are in progress be prepared with evidence led policies when faced by such a challenge.

Appendix B

Question from Councillor Dr Anne Crampton

A recent newspaper article highlighted that this Council has a £5 million investment in Qatar. Although it matured on 15th November this year, would it now be appropriate to implement a responsible investment policy for Hart District Council?

Reply from Councillor James Radley

Hart's Treasury Strategy is approved by full council each February, following a review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Qatar bank is listed in the Treasury Strategy as an allowable counterparty and the Hart's cash deposit was listed in the report to O&S in December 2021 and Cabinet in September 2022. You are correct that this deposit has now reached the end of its fixed term and has been repaid to the Council. Overview and Scrutiny will be reviewing the Strategy in January ahead of Cabinet and Council and this is the opportunity for members to discuss their views on ethical investments.

Given that the British Government recently accepted a £10bn investment from Qatar and as Cllr. Crampton is known to have contacts within government can she reassure those of us who share her concerns that she will also be taking the matter up with the Conservative administration in Westminster?

Supplementary Question from Councillor Dr Anne Crampton

I have already brought it up with colleagues in Westminster.

The Qatar regime, as you know, has abused human rights and is known to be against LGBTQ+ as well as not being very green, would it be possible to remove it now, before we review the Responsible Investment Policy.

Reply from Councillor James Radley

I do not wish to prejudge the views of O&S or the views of Cabinet, but I believe that should O&S decide to remove Qatar, or any other regime they viewed as unethical, this would fall on sympathetic ears when the recommendation came to Cabinet; and if O&S didn't feel that they wished to do that, I as a member of Cabinet would certainly be raising that point.