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COUNCIL

Date and Time: Thursday 25 November 2021 at 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

COUNCILLORS -

Ambler (Chairman)

Axam	Davies	Oliver
Bailey	Delaney	Quarterman
Blewett (arrived 7.12pm)	Dorn	Radley
Butcher	Drage	Smith
Butler	Farmer	Southern
Coburn	Forster	Wildsmith
Cockarill	Harward	Worlock
Collins	Kinnell (left 7.46pm)	Wright
Crampton	Lamb	
Crookes	Neighbour	

Officers Present:

Daryl Phillips	Joint Chief Executive
Sabrina Cranny	Committee Services Officer
Lee Rome	Committee Services Officer

36 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 30 September 2021 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Kennett, Councillor Wheale, Councillor Clarke and Councillor Crisp.

38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

39 PRESENTATION – CHIEF INSPECTOR KIRSTEN TROMAN, HAMPSHIRE POLICE DISTRICT COMMANDER, HART & RUSHMOOR

Chief Inspector Troman gave a presentation to Council outlining local policing priorities and provided supporting data.

Councillors asked questions around the following areas:

- Sexual Offences
- The national detective shortage
- Increases in burglary
- The 'Street Safe' scheme
- ASB linked to the night-time economy in Fleet, and the workings of the police in tandem with Hart's Community Safety Team
- Domestic crime and 'volume' crime
- Rural crime

Particular praise was offered for the PCSO who foot patrols Elevetham Heath and Fleet Town centre, as their visible presence was felt to have had a positive impact on ASB in these areas.

The Chairman thanked Chief Inspector Troman for attending Council.

40 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.

41 COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14 - QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Questions had been received from Councillor Butcher, the details of which are set out in Appendix B attached to these minutes.

Councillor Kinnell left the meeting during this item at 7.46pm, after question 1 (see Appendix B).

Councillor Delaney left meeting at 7.49pm, during question 2 (see Appendix B).

42 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that he conducted the following visits:

- 10 Oct: High Sheriff of Hampshire - Law Sunday Matins at Winchester Cathedral
- 24 Oct: Mayor of Bracknell Forest - Civic Service
- 27 Oct: Cross Barn, Odiham - AGM & opening of new cinema/AV system
- 11 Nov: Remembrance Day – 2-minute silence at Gurkha Square
- 14 Nov: Remembrance Sunday Parade - Church Crookham
- 14 Nov: Remembrance Sunday Parade – Fleet

43 CABINET MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, **Councillor Neighbour** announced that:

- Fleet Pond had been awarded the Green Flag and he thanked all parties involved

- Funding of £10k per year had been awarded for the stewardship scheme at Odiham Common which will help to fund the management plan coming to Cabinet in the spring.
- Whitewater Meadow at Hook has now been adopted and play equipment will be installed over the next year.
- Council Leaders met in Hampshire to discuss the potential for a County Deal. Another meeting will be held in January after the Government White Paper is released. Potential options are being worked out in anticipation of this. More will be reported back after this.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, **Councillor Radley** reminded Council that there will be a meeting for all Councillors on 16th December to discuss Tier 3 savings, and about the importance of these discussions in respect to Budget setting going forward. A briefing paper will be provided for Councillors as a starting point.

The Cabinet Member for Community, **Councillor Bailey** made the following announcements:

- Household Support Grant – a new grant fund launched in November (funded by government but distributed by HCC) – to help offer financial support to residents impacted by covid, with essentials over the winter. The aim is to give small grants for food, clothing, utilities. This is being administered by the Community Team - details on our website. Please refer in any residents that you know are struggling.
- Community Safety have been focusing on community engagement and attended the World Sight Day event on 06/11/2021 in Fleet with the Hart Lions, allowing members of the public to challenge their sight by using our beer goggles and then thinking about the impact of alcohol on capabilities.

Councillor Delaney returned to the meeting at this point, 8.03pm

Councillor Bailey continued:

- Every November we report the rough sleeping estimate for Hart based on our knowledge of who was sleeping rough on a date in November. I can confirm we are reporting 1 rough sleeper out on the night of the 10th of November going into the morning of the 11th. This is half the number last year. He is known to us, and we have been working with him for a fair while, but engagement has been sporadic, and he has been alternating between a tent and friends sofas however I'm pleased to say he has now moved into settled accommodation. They have left behind a fair bit of mess so have contacted the street cleaning team to get this

The Cabinet Member for Place, **Councillor Cockarill** made the following announcements:

- I am pleased to announce that this Administration is delivering what we promised: A strong and robust Local Plan to ensure that we provide both the new homes that the district needs, but which also enables us to resist development in areas where we don't want it to happen. Key to this was

putting in place a robust 5-year land supply. As a result, we have already seen off the unacceptable developments at both West of Hook and Pale Lane.

- Tonight, I can announce that we have reinforced that land supply position. We can demonstrate an ongoing 10 years' supply including supporting the delivery of much needed new homes for Surrey Heath. Just as importantly, we have reinforced the Local Plan's housing trajectory to ensure that we meet the Government's Housing Delivery test beyond 2028. I am pleased that Council unanimously supported the adoption of our Local Plan in 2020 and that we are delivering on what we promised to our residents.

44 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORTS

The Joint Chief Executive had nothing to report.

45 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

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

Cabinet - 7th October 2021

No questions were asked.

Cabinet (draft) - 4th November 2021

Councillor Crookes asked that in approving the level 2 business cases in Decision 2 of the minutes, had Cabinet acted within its rights?

Councillor Radley responded that a motion had been submitted to Council later in this meeting seeking approval for that decision as the budget (and amendments to it) is set by Council.

Overview & Scrutiny - 21st September 2021

No questions were asked.

Overview & Scrutiny (draft) - 19th October 2021

No questions were asked.

Planning – 13th October 2021

No questions were asked. Since no request to debate had been received the Departure to the Local Plan was deemed to be **ACCEPTED**.

Planning (draft) - 10th November 2021

No questions were asked.

Planning Major Sites Sub-Committee (draft) - 22nd September 2021

No questions were asked.

RECOMMENDATION

There was a recommendation for Council in **Cabinet 7 October 2021 – Minute 61 Food Recovery Plan** that the Food Recovery Plan 21-22 be approved.

Councillor Neighbour put the recommendation, seconded by **Councillor Radley**.

Councillor Forster asked if the Food Recovery Plan would need to be updated in light of the declared Climate Emergency.

Councillor Neighbour stated that a written response would be provided.

DECISION

That the Food Recovery Plan 21-22 be approved.

46 CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

A Climate Emergency update was given by The Leader of the Council, **Councillor Neighbour** as follows:

“Upon declaring a Climate Change Emergency in April, Full Council asked for 6 monthly updates. I've decided to provide a verbal update in November, with a formal annual report in May with officers in attendance to help with Q&A.

We are undergoing a carbon pathway assessment to help inform our evolving climate change action plan over the next decade. We have already put into action a number of initiatives.

Most recently the Planning Committee have given approval for two solar farms in the west of Hart, capable of powering up to 30,000 homes, almost 70% of the District.

The first phase of Hart's Green Grid moves forward as tenders are being selected for a cycle path between Hartland Park and Fleet railway station. We are also partnering with Hampshire County Council in creating a wider local walking and cycling strategy.

Our recent electric survey highlighted that three quarters of Hart respondents were planning to change to an electric car within five years. We are installing more EV charging points across the district, having already installed them at both Church Road car park and at the new Edenbrook flats.

Our leisure centres use of solar panels continues to save around 16.7 tonnes of carbon emissions every year.

The Countryside Team are switching to battery powered equipment such as hedge trimmers, mowers and chainsaws. The community garden project at Edenbrook will encourage residents to grow their own vegetables and using sustainable compost generated by our wider activities within the team.

The Climate Change working group has evolved to include Blackwater Valley Friends of the Earth, we now include themed items which have included tree planting schemes and the new Environment Act. We also launched a communication plan that geared up both for Big Green Week in September plus daily posting during the COP26 event in Glasgow.

The next draft service plans already include a survey to help the greening of our car parks and buildings, as well as a formal tree planting scheme.”

Councillor Forster asked whether it was the Northern or Southern route of the Green Grid that was being progressed.

Councillor Neighbour confirmed it was the Northern route.

Councillor Forster asked why there had been no Solar PV implementation in phase 3 of Hartland Village.

Councillor Oliver stated that the developer had gone beyond all planning and other specifications and that Air Source Heat Pumps had been agreed for implementation in all properties in phase 3 as part of the development and the installation of PV Solar panels have been asked for in addition to this.

Councillor Quarterman asked if there had been any feedback from Friends of the Earth.

Councillor Neighbour stated that Friends of the Earth had recently issued a press release detailing a ‘manifesto of actions they want Local Government to take’ and that Hart District Council was working toward those and encouraging Hampshire County Council to do so in areas that required the authorities to work together.

47 OUTSIDE BODIES - FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS

Councillor Bailey had recently attended the Police and Crime Panel meeting where the four-year plan of the new Police Commissioner was discussed. Areas of note were a focus on the victims of crime, a crackdown on unauthorised encampments, and giving a voice to rural communities.

48 MOTION TO COUNCIL

The following motion was moved by **Councillor Wildsmith** and seconded by **Councillor Neighbour**.

“That Hart District Council Resolves to

- i. *Acknowledge the efforts that this Council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;*
- ii. *Further recognises*
 - *that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers in the Hart District*

- council area as well as other local authority areas result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,*
- *that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for local companies, community groups and councils including Hart District Council to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, if they wished, and*
 - *that revenues received by such local companies, community groups or councils that chose to become local renewable electricity providers could be used to help improve the local economy, local services and facilities and to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions;*
- iii. *Note that the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee, as a result of its 2021 Technological Innovations and Climate Change inquiry, recommended that a Right to Local Supply for local energy suppliers be established to address this;*
- iv. *Accordingly resolve to support the Local Electricity Bill, currently supported by a cross-party group of 278 MPs and 79 other Local Authorities and which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply company; and*
- v. *Further resolves to*
- *inform the local media of this decision,*
 - *write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill, and write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at Camden Collective, 5-7 Buck Street, London NW1 8NJ or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support."*

Councillors debated the motion in the following areas:

- The nature of Members Bills in Parliament
- Cross party support for the Bill at Westminster
- Specifics about the Bill with regard to regulation and how companies participate
- Local authority involvement in similar schemes
- The lack of clarity around schemes needing to be Carbon neutral, and the potential Climate Change impacts

DECISION

The motion was CARRIED.

49 MOTION TO COUNCIL

The following motion was moved by **Councillor Radley** and seconded by **Councillor Neighbour**.

“That The Council Resolves (with regard to the Cabinet deliberations following scrutiny by Overview and Scrutiny Committee) to endorse the Level 1 and 2 saving proposals as set out in the Cabinet reports of the 2 September and 4 November 2021 and to empower officers to commence work immediately on implementing the proposed savings so that they can take effect at the earliest opportunity.”

Councillors debated the motion in the following areas:

- Whether Council approval was required for the decisions taken at Cabinet
- The consequences of delaying a decision on approval
- The relationship between approving the decisions and the next round of Budget approval

An adjournment was taken during this item between 8.56pm and 9.06pm

DECISION

The motion was CARRIED.

The meeting closed at 9.12 pm

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Mr. David Turver was unable to be present at the meeting. His questions were read out by the Chairman, **Councillor Simon Ambler**.

Mr David Turver had asked:

Hart needs a revised Local Plan in place by five years from adoption, which is April 2025. Various steps will need to be completed such as Examination and various consultations. The Council will also need to find sites to meet the housing delivery test and make adjustments resulting from new household projections due to be published in 2023. The Inspector also said that "appropriate and proportionate area/site assessments [and] viability testing would need to be done in an impartial manner". Can you sketch out the broad activities and timelines required to meet the April 2025 deadline?

Councillor Cockarill responded:

There is a confusion in the wording used by Government in this area which unfortunately leads to misinterpretations. The law does not require new Local Plans to be in place within 5 years of adoption, only that a Local Plan is assessed to see whether it requires updating. The Government guidance uses the words "assessment" and "review" in a loose manner, leading to the incorrect assumption that we need a new Local Plan by 2025.

There are, however, a number of factors which might affect the relevance of some of our current policies. For instance, the current Local Plan was adopted prior to Hart's Climate Emergency Declaration, so there may be a need to revise some of the policies relating to the environment and climate change.

Therefore, we have decided to undertake an assessment of our current Local Plan, taking into account such things as the Climate Emergency Declaration and of course the emerging planning White Paper and subsequent guidance, to see which, if any, of our policies need updating.

Based upon the outcome of that assessment, which we expect will be in about a year's time, Cabinet will then be asked to consider what next steps need to be taken. This could be no action necessary, update some of our existing policies, or possibly start work on a whole new Local Plan.

Mr David Turver had asked:

At the September Council meeting we were promised that the Shapley Heath survey results were going to be published "in full" (subject to GDPR check) "shortly". Most reasonable people would have expected "shortly" to mean within a couple of weeks. They are still being kept secret, with a vague commitment to publish sometime in the New Year. Can you give a precise deadline for when these important results will be made available to the taxpayers of Hart who paid for the survey?

Councillor Cockarill responded:

The necessary work to allow us to release the survey is almost complete, and we expect to be able to publish these on 13th December, subject to the results of the outstanding surveys being returned prior to that date.

Mr David Turver had asked:

Back in September we were promised a "a business case for the cost benefit analysis of starting to commence the preparation for the next local plan review". Subsequent papers have been notable because they contained no costs and no benefits of stopping Shapley Heath and changing course. Are we to assume that all of the FY21/22 budget for Shapley Heath has been spent already, despite the project being terminated early, and so no savings will be made, or is this just another example of weak financial controls?

Councillor Radley responded:

I can assure Mr Turver that I am confident that there are no examples of weak financial controls at Hart; and I doubt very much that he is aware of any either. Yet another disingenuous phrasing of a question.

The 21/22 budgeted figure for expenditure on the research into the potential for a New Settlement is £156,938.

Actual expenditure excluding recharges at the 31st October was £92,503.24.

The forecast full year expenditure through to 31st March 2022 is £135,388.

Mr David Turver had asked:

As you know, Hart is facing a significant structural budget deficit for the foreseeable future. The Level 1 and Level 2 savings identified so far do not fill the financial black hole. Nearby East Hampshire and Havant councils get along fine with just one CEO and senior management team shared between them. Yet Hart, one of the smallest local authorities in the country, has two CEOs. What actions are you taking to ensure this shameful waste of taxpayers' money does not continue?

Councillor Neighbour responded:

Members may recall that on the retirement of the previous Chief Executive the senior leadership team of Hart District Council was changed from a Chief Executive and two Corporate Directors to two Joint Chief Executives which save £80k per year.

The Senior management costs at the two authorities highlighted cost £2m each whereas at Hart it is £1.4m. There are 2 Councils smaller than Hart in Hampshire, and 64 that are smaller nationally according to 2019 figures.

Costs per head in Hart per person are £13.80 per head, in East Hampshire & Havant it is £16.43 and in Basingstoke it is £22.72 (where Senior Management includes all staff being paid more than £50k). The challenge of the budget deficit is noted, and we will not stand still. We always look at the management structure in place to ensure it is fit for purpose and are currently content that this is the case.

COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 14

QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Butcher asked:

Can the portfolio holder with responsibility for the dog warden service please provide an update on the status of the contract process for the service? Has this gone to market yet, if not is there an opportunity to review the target deliverables & SLAs?

Councillor Kinnell responded:

In light of decisions reached by Cabinet, Hart's 'Stray dog collection, kennelling, and rehoming' service will be offered for tender on the 2nd December.

The scope of the tender, and any deliverables, will be determined in consultation with the service's portfolio holder. All procurement will be undertaken in line with Hart's procurement policies.

Cllr Butcher asked a supplementary question:

The savings that were identified as part of a reduced service included the expenditure on the dog warden van. When do we expect to realise the savings and is there a reason why the dog warden van remains outside the Council offices?

Councillor Kinnell responded:

A written response would be provided.

The written response received was as follows:

The future of the van depends very much on the outcome of the tendering of the Dog Warden service. It still has a MoT, it is insured, and it remains in a serviceable condition. In the meantime, the van has been started, checked over, and driven to a temporary storage location.

Councillor Kinnell left the meeting at this point, at 7.46pm

Councillor Butcher asked:

Can the cabinet member responsible for Parking please clarify what the income that is raised from Fleet Town Council for the market is used to fund? Is it linked to regeneration or some other purpose?

Councillor Delaney left meeting at this point, at 7.49pm.

Councillor Oliver responded:

This is a really good question because it allows me to highlight the support that the Council is currently giving to Fleet town centre and other local communities across the district.

At the outset I must stress that all income that is received is used to support the delivery of Council services. Often, such as with the market on Gurkha Square, the income received is used to offset what would otherwise be funding lost from parking income.

It is of course possible to redirect funds to specific ringfenced projects, but it would mean a change made in our approach to the Council's structural budget. That means that Members will first need to specifically identify from where that funding is being taken from.

Having said that, let's look more positively at what we are currently doing to support Fleet Town Centre and regeneration generally. As a Council we actively support local activities not just in Fleet but also elsewhere in the district. To support the Fleet market, we made the immediate decision at the start of the pandemic to waive any rent from the market. No income has been received from Fleet Town Council since they took over running the Market in March 2020, so the question of where this has been invested is redundant. Last night not only did we support Fleet Festivities by offering sponsorship, but we went further and deployed staff resources on the ground as well as issuing 60 parking passes. Elsewhere we are currently working with Hartley Wintney Parish Council to support the Christmas Market, and I know we will be doing things with Hook where the Cracker is taking place, and for the whole District we will again be supporting Small Business Saturday in two weeks' time by making use of all our car parks free!

Cllr Butcher asked a supplementary question:

There is a lot of work going on in the background with myself and members from Fleet Town Council, Fleet BID, Hampshire County Council and other external bodies regarding the regeneration of the market. Our aim is to get the market thriving again and we would like to see a relaunch of a refreshed market for early next year.

As part of this will the cabinet member support an initiative where Gurkha Square is made available to Fleet Town Council at no cost for at least 12-months?

This would be based on the assumption that the town council passes this benefit to the traders. As a suggestion, this could be funded from the COVID recovery grant.

Councillor Oliver responded:

I have been discussing this with Fleet Town Council and Cabinet colleagues about how to support the regeneration of the market and focus it upon supporting local businesses and traders. The use of Covid Recovery grants in this process is being discussed with Officers in respect to whether the grants are possible for that purpose. Discussions are also ongoing around whether Gurkha Square is the appropriate focus for the market as greater shopper footfall is focussed on the other end of Fleet High Street.