

## **Council**

**Date and Time:** Thursday 26 September 2024 at 7.00 pm

**Place:** Council Chamber

**Present:**

### **Councillors -**

Smith (Chairman)

Dorn	Davies	Oliver
Axam	Farmer	Quarterman
Bailey	Forster	Radley
Brown	Hale	Southern
Clarke	Harward	Taylor
Coburn	Highley	Thomas
Cockarill	Jones	Vernon
Collins	Khepar	Wildsmith
Crampton	Makepeace-Browne	Woods
Crisp	Neighbour	Worlock

### **Officers Present:**

Daryl Phillips, Chief Executive

Sharon Black, Committee and Member Services Manager

Kathy Long, Committee Services Officer

## **22 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting of 25 July 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Proposed by: Cllr Dorn; Seconded by Cllr Woods; unanimously agreed by those present at the July meeting.

## **23 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Butler and Delaney.

## **24 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

## **25 Council Procedure Rule 12 - Questions by the Public**

A question had been received from Chris Harvey. Chris Harvey could not attend the meeting so the Chairman asked the question on their behalf, detailed in Appendix A.

The response from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Climate Change is also detailed in Appendix A.

### **Questions from Members of the Public**

#### **26 Council Procedure Rule 14 - Questions by Members**

No questions had been received

#### **27 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair announced that he had undertaken a range of engagements:

16 August	Hartland Men's Shed Opening BBQ
16 August	Odiham Art Group Private View
5 September	RAF Odiham Annual Reception - Vice Chairman attended on behalf of the Chairman

#### **28 Cabinet Members' Announcements**

**The Leader of the Council, and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Direction, and Partnerships, Cllr Neighbour** reported on the next phase of ecological improvements for Fleet Pond with the target to deliver a suite of costed ecological enhancement projects and management changes at Fleet Pond Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and potentially beyond the site, to improve the biodiversity and resilience of the site.

There was to be the creation of an enhanced habitat at Whitewater Meadows which would include creating wetland features, increasing the accessibility of the existing paths, and tree and hedgerow planting. This work would form the foundation of habitat improvements for biodiversity net gain (BNG) units and Hart's future Habitat Bank.

**The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr Radley** had nothing to report at this point in the year.

**The Portfolio Holder for Community Services, Cllr Bailey** reported that the council held its first job fair on 4 September in collaboration with JobCentre Plus. The event was a huge success, with 225 people attending despite the dreadful weather. 32 employers, support organisations and voluntary groups were there and have shared lots of positive feedback. Such was the success, another event will be scheduled for Spring next year.

Last week the Council launched a Winter Cost of Living grant, with awards of up to £5,000 available for organisations supporting vulnerable people and those in need during the winter months. There has already been a lot of interest, some from organisations that haven't reached out to us before which is a good sign the promotions are working well. The application window closes on 14 October.

There is also an Armed Forces Community Grant to be launched later in October , where grants of up to £4,000 will be made available to organisations that support those with a military background, or cadets. A total of £25,000 is being made available and more details will follow prior to the launch on 21 October.

Finally we are also holding a Low Cost Home Ownership drop in event on 8 October, at the Harlington Centre. This is aimed at anyone wanting to get onto the housing ladder, including older people, as we have some shared ownership dedicated for over 55s. There will be free advice from solicitors and financial advisors and we ask Members to encourage residents to attend.

Cllr Bailey expressed his thanks to community team for drop in event and hopefully found useful.

**The Portfolio Holder for Digital and Communications, Cllr Clarke** had nothing to report.

**The Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy and Development Management, Cllr Oliver** advised that the Council's response to the Government's consultation on the proposed Planning Reforms was submitted on 24 September and was available on the website together with a covering letter detailing our objections and concerns to the proposals. I don't intend to detail them today but in summary their new standard methodology for calculating district housing numbers based on affordability will do nothing to suppress house prices or encourage delivery of the 100's of thousands of planning permissions already granted but land banked by developers. Delivery rates are dropping in Hart today due to cost pressures and mortgage rates. Moving development out of infrastructure rich major towns and cities into the countryside will not speed up homes delivery.

The policy team is also finalising work on the draft Affordable Homes SPD which is proposed to be consulted on this Autumn and adopted in the Spring. This will include the requirement to provide affordable homes at social rent levels in line with our commitment in the Corporate Plan.

The Development Management performance has improved quarter on quarter over the past nine months such that they are now exceeding KPI targets on all counts.

Considerable efforts are being expended in further improvements which will enhance the service's stability and resilience including reducing reliance on Extensions of Time such that more cases are determined within the statutory time limits. There is greater emphasis throughout the team on customer engagement during the application process and a tighter case-management approach which should improve customer service.

With the return of Stephanie Baker to the role of Development Management leader Mark Berry has been retained to undertake the review of DM approved in the service plan for this year. He will assess progress from the peer review undertaken 5 years ago around key metric progression and actions completed

since 2019 . He will also look at further actions needed due to changes in the planning environment and from best practice elsewhere. The results will come to Cabinet in the new year.

Our key risk both to Planning Policy and Development Management is staffing. There is a significant shortage of planning professionals in the UK and with the Governments proposed reforms this is likely to become severe. It is all our responsibility to support our staff and treat them with respect as we enter into a period of flux in the planning landscape. I am sure I can rely on everyone to keep Hart DC a great place to work.

Councillors will be aware of the long history of planning matters relating to Bramshill House, a Grade 1 Listed Jacobean Mansion and Registered Park & Garden. A couple of years ago a new owner purchased the site, and has been working positively with the Council, Historic England and the National Trust. The owner is restoring the house and grounds to a single house and removing a number of the buildings which the former Police College. The restoration is at a very interesting stage and I am proposing for Councillors to visit the site to see the restoration. I will ask one of the Planning team to contact all Members with a proposed date.

Members were encouraged to attend the visit to Bramshill House.

**The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory, Cllr Wildsmith** was very pleased to say that our first permanent Environmental Protection Officer started employment in the first week of September He will be having a focus on prevention and education. He has also visible on our streets, taking enforcement action against those who drop litter. He has so far conducted 7 patrols across the district, issuing a total of 21 fines. I look forward to reporting more on the prevention work and partnerships at future meetings.

**The Portfolio Holder for Parking and Community Safety, Cllr Collins** had no announcements

**The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Corporate Services, Cllr Quarterman** gave an update to let Members know that the final phase of kerbside collections of Waste Electrical Equipment will be starting this week, with households getting letters inviting them to use the small electricals collection service. After this we will start work on rolling the service out to those using communal bins and our lanes properties.

## **29 Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive had nothing to report.

## **30 Minutes of Committees**

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

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet (draft)	5 September 2024
Overview and Scrutiny	13 August 2024
Overview and Scrutiny (draft)	10 September 2024
Audit (draft)	23 July 2024
Development Management (draft)	17 July 2024
Standards (draft)	15 August 2024

Minute 8 – Dealing with Allegations Procedure. The Committee recommends to Council to adopt the refreshed Section 28(6) Arrangements for dealing with Allegations with one amendment as follows: That the wording on Page 5, in section 2, be amended to say “against a person acting in the capacity as a District councillor” so that it was clearer for all involved.

Council considered and agreed this.

Proposed by Cllr Neighbour; Seconded by Cllr Worlock; unanimously agreed.

It was noted that the vacancy for one or two Independent persons had not yet been filled but that cover was being provided through an agreement with Rushmoor Borough Council. It was anticipated an advert would be published shortly.

### **31 Motion to Council**

The following motion was proposed and moved by Cllr Crampton and seconded by Cllr Farmer.

“This Council regrets the decision taken by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments which could push up to 17,992 people in Hart into fuel poverty.

We call upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor urging a review of the decision to restrict eligibility to those in receipt of pension credit and other benefits. This is to ensure vulnerable pensioners, particularly those that do not claim pension credit are protected from financial hardship.

Council notes that many eligible for credits do not claim them and will lose winter fuel payments as a result. Therefore, we resolve to undertake an awareness campaign to encourage residents in Hart to check their eligibility. This includes the use of social media and the local press.”

In seconding the motion, Cllr Farmer proposed an amendment to be added to the end of the motion, seconded by Cllr Forster:

“We also call upon the Cabinet to support those pensioners on low incomes who just miss out on Pension Credit, and especially those who have unavoidably high energy needs because of disability or illness, by making interim support funding available from the Community Hardship earmarked reserve up until the end March 2025.”

The proposed amendment was discussed and a recorded vote was held:

**For:** Crampton; Dorn; Farmer; Forster (4)

**Against:** Axam; Bailey; Brown; Clarke; Cockarill; Collins; Crisp; Davies; Harward; Jones; Khepar; Makepeace-Browne; Neighbour; Oliver; Quarterman; Radley; Thomas; Vernon; Wildsmith (20)

**Abstain:** Coburn; Hale; Highley; Smith; Southern; Woods; Worlock (7)

The amendment was **Defeated**.

A further amendment was proposed by Cllr Oliver and seconded by Cllr Makepeace-Browne:

To add to the end of the first paragraph, the sentence “However, we understand the new Government’s dire need to stabilise the country’s finances due to the incompetent and reckless actions of the Conservative party over the last decade.”

Council debated the amendment (during this discussion, Cllrs Crampton, Farmer, Forster and Southern left the meeting at 7.46pm)

A recorded vote was held:

**For:** Axam; Bailey; Brown; Clarke; Cockarill; Collins; Crisp; Davies; Harward; Jones; Khepar; Makepeace-Browne; Neighbour; Oliver; Radley; Thomas (16)

**Against:** Coburn; Dorn; Hale; Highley; Woods; Warlock (6)

**Abstain:** Quarterman; Smith; Taylor; Vernon; Wildsmith (5)

The amendment was **Carried**

The substantive motion now read:

“This Council regrets the decision taken by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments which could push up to 17,992 people in Hart into fuel poverty. However, we understand the new Government’s dire need to stabilise the country’s finances due to the incompetent and reckless actions of the Conservative party over the last decade.

We call upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor urging a review of the decision to restrict eligibility to those in receipt of pension credit and other benefits. This is to ensure vulnerable pensioners, particularly those that do not claim pension credit are protected from financial hardship.

Council notes that many eligible for credits do not claim them and will lose winter fuel payments as a result. Therefore, we resolve to undertake an awareness campaign to encourage residents in Hart to check their eligibility. This includes the use of social media and the local press.”

The substantive motion was discussed and a recorded vote was held:

**For:** Axam; Bailey; Brown; Clarke; Cockarill; Collins; Davies; Dorn; Harward; Jones; Khepar; Makepeace-Browne; Neighbour; Oliver; Radley; Taylor; Thomas; Vernon; Wildsmith; Woods (20)

**Against:** none

**Abstain:** Coburn; Crisp; Hale; Highley; Quarterman; Smith; Worlock (7)

The substantive motion was **Carried**.

### **32 Appointment of Monitoring Officer**

Cllr Neighbour proposed to the Council that Ashley Grist be elected as the new Monitoring Officer with effect from 1 October 2024. This was seconded by Cllr Radley and voted for by a recorded vote:

**For:** Axam; Bailey; Brown; Clarke; Coburn; Cockarill; Collins; Crisp; Davies; Dorn; Hale; Harward; Highley; Jones; Khepar; Makepeace-Browne; Heighbour; Oliver; Quarterman; Radley; Smith; Taylor; Thomas; Vernon; Wildsmith; Worlock (26)

**Against:** none

**Abstain:** Woods (1)

The Chairman confirmed that Ashley Grist had now been appointed as the new Monitoring Officer from 1 October 2024.

### **33 Outside Bodies - Feedback from Members**

Cllr Clarke reported that he had attended the Bourley, Minley and Bramley Conservation Group the previous day. Chaired by the MOD, this included a number of stakeholder groups. Topics at the meeting had included new bylaws, public access, SPA habitats, dog attacks, fire resilience and gorse clearance. The group works effectively and the training areas have seen improvements year on year.

Cllr Quarterman reported that the Blackbushe Airport Consultative Committee had met the previous week and had heard that there had not been any further progress on the proposal for land exchange which was awaiting a Planning Inspectorate decision.

The meeting closed at 8.18 pm