

COUNCIL
20 JANUARY 2016
7.30 - 8.20 PM



Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Dee Hamilton), Councillors Virgo (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Mrs Angell, Angell, Dr Barnard, Bettison, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brunel-Walker, Dudley, Finch, Finnie, Ms Gaw, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Hill, Mrs Ingham, King OBE, McCracken, Mrs McCracken, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Ms Merry, Ms Miller, Peacey, Phillips, Porter, Mrs Temperton, Thompson, Turrell, Wade and Worrall

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors G Birch, Leake, Skinner and Tullett

34. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 November 2015 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

35. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

36. Mayor's Announcements

Loan Shark Prevention

Lin Fisher from the Trading Standards Illegal Money Lending Team attended the meeting to advise Members how to identify when residents were victims of loan sharks. The presentation included things to look for and questions to ask residents in order to confirm that they had entered into an illegal agreement and may be at further associated risks. Members were advised that Bracknell Forest Council were using age appropriate educational packs to inform its pupils about money issues and it was hoped that key messages would then be taken home to parents.

The Mayor thanked her for a very informative presentation.

Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection

Councillor McCracken reported that he and the Mayor had attended Coral Reef Waterworld's VIP pool party on 16 January to mark the closure of Coral Reef on 24 January for refurbishment.

Councillor McCracken advised Members that there were still spaces available for the Bracknell Half Marathon which was being held on Sunday 8 May.

Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor advised the Members present that since the last Council meeting she and the Deputy Mayor had been busy attending engagements across the borough and highlighted turning on the Christmas lights, attending Thames Hospice Concert and Cinderella on Ice as well as celebrating Self-Care Week.

Mayoral Charity events

The Mayor encouraged the Members present to attend her two Charity events: Mayor's Charity Quiz being held on Friday 26 February at Easthampstead Park and the Charity Curry evening being held on Monday 29 February at the Tamarind Tree restaurant.

37. **Executive Report**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bettison, presented his report on the work of the Executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 25 November 2015. The Executive had met once on 15 December 2015.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- Draft Homelessness Strategy:
 - There had been an unfortunate increase in homelessness in recent years and the Council was making a positive response to avoid the disruptive and expensive use of bed and breakfast accommodation by setting up Downshire Homes which had purchased Tenterden Lodge.
 - The new draft strategy set out four priorities:
 - good quality advice and prevention services
 - work in partnership to avoid duplication and maximise expertise
 - meet need for emergency accommodation
 - maximise access to housing
- The proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme would affect working age households only by changing the following:
 - maximum discount for working age households reduced to 80%
 - child maintenance payments would be taken into account when calculating income
 - self-employed were assumed to earn at least national living wage after 12 months
 - income disregards for working people increased by £5 per week
 - hardship fund increased to £20k
- There was a need to enhance Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) already agreed to avoid restrictions on occupation and/or jeopardise five year land supply. It was noted that all SANGS were funded by S106 contributions so there was no cost to Council. Five schemes at cost of £95k:
 - refurbishment of bridge at Anneforde Place
 - pedestrian entrance to Englemere Pond
 - reed beds and scrub improvement, Englemere Pond
 - pond restoration at Shepherds Meadows
 - car park improvements Horseshoe Lake

- Revenue Budget 2016/17
 - Draft proposals for consultation were based upon the new Council Plan and Government indications of likely reduction in grant of up to 40%.
 - £2.3m spending was responding to demographic and legislative pressures and initial savings of over £4m had been identified.
 - The Transformation Board was working to identify additional savings of around £2m in 2016/17.
 - Draft settlement published on 17 December showed 80% reduction in revenue support grant and additional proposals would be considered at the next Executive meeting.

- Capital Programme 2016/17 – 2018/19
 - Proposed programme for 2016/17 – 2018/19 approved for consultation
 - Major investment in future of Borough including:
 - Bracknell town centre infrastructure
 - Binfield Learning Village
 - Coral Reef [subject to affordability]
 - additional chapel at Cemetery & Crematorium

The agenda report contained recommendations that the Council was asked to resolve in respect of the following matters:

- the revised Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme
- Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) Capital Spending (External Funding)
- virements in the Capital budget
- virements in the Revenue budget

Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme

On the proposition of Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing, seconded by Councillor Heydon it was

RESOLVED that:

- i) the revised Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme be approved and adopted.

Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) Capital Spending (External Funding)

On the proposition of Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection, seconded by Councillor Turrell it was

RESOLVED that:

- ii) the spending of a further £95,000 of developer contributions on SANGS for this financial year be approved.

Capital Budget 2016/17

On the proposition of Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, seconded by Councillor Heydon it was

RESOLVED that:

- iii) virements totalling £0.481million to the 2015/16 Children, Young People and Learning Programme, as set out in Annex G of the Borough Treasurer's report, in order to meet the demands of the School Places Plan be approved;
- iv) £0.05million in the 2015/16 unallocated Basic Need Grant be approved to be used at Ascot Heath Schools as described in paragraph 5.35 of the Borough Treasurer's report.

Revenue Budget 2016/17

On the proposition of Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection, seconded by Councillor Heydon it was

RESOLVED that:

- v) virements over £0.100million relating to the 2015/16 budget as set out in Annex F and G of the Borough Treasurer's report be approved.

38. Pay and Workforce Strategy

The Council considered the report regarding the ninth Pay and Workforce Strategy 2015-18 which had been reviewed in the light of changing priorities, new legislation and other issues which impact on the Council.

On the proposition of Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, seconded by Councillor McLean, it was

RESOLVED that:

- i) the 9th Pay and Workforce Strategy be endorsed.

39. Pay Policy Statement

The Council considered the Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17.

On the proposition of Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, seconded by Councillor McLean, it was

RESOLVED that

- i) the Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17 be agreed.

40. **Establishment of an Appointment Committee**

The Council considered a report regarding the establishment of an Appointment Committee to appoint to the position of Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing.

Councillors reflected on the significant impact that Glyn Jones had on transforming services before his retirement as both the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing and as a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team. Everyone present wished him well with his recovery.

On the proposition of Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing seconded by Councillor McLean it was

RESOLVED that:

- i) a Committee of the Council of five members (4:1), including at least one Member of the Executive (plus up to two substitute members per group) be appointed, with the following terms of reference:

"To interview and appoint on behalf of the Council to the post of Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing";

- ii) Councillors D Birch, Dr Barnard, Harrison, McLean and Mrs Temperton be confirmed as the nominated members; and
- iii) Councillors Mrs Birch, Leake and McCracken be confirmed as the substitute members.

41. **Questions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10**

Councillor Mrs Temperton asked Councillor Bettison, Leader of the Council the following published question:

On December 18 the Government notified the Council that it was reducing its Revenue Support Grant to Bracknell Forest by £5.4m - a cut of 32%. The budget out for consultation had assumed, following indicators from the Government, a cut of £3m. The Council now has just about 6 weeks to adjust all of its financial plans.

Does the Leader of the Council think this is effective Government and that the arguments given for the extra Bracknell Forest cuts are justified? Will there now have to be service cuts that were not expected before the announcement?

In response Councillor Bettison stated one of the key pledges made by the new Conservative Government was to eliminate the national deficit by 2019/20. He stated that this was a continuation of the work started by the Coalition in response to the enormous debt that the country had been left with following the previous Labour Government. He reflected that the country had been living beyond its means, that this was unsustainable and that it was taking a significant amount of time to repair the damage that has been caused. He noted that within the overall settlement a number of key services were being protected, notably the NHS, defence and the police. As a consequence local government was having to bear a larger share of the cuts in public expenditure that were needed to eliminate the deficit. He stated that was effective government.

He added that he was neither happy or complacent with the settlement and had led a delegation of Berkshire Leaders to see the Minister to make strong and compelling arguments for treating Berkshire more favourably. It would not be known until February whether they had been effective.

He stated that the settlement, if confirmed, would cause the Council to be faced with some difficult choices and due to the magnitude of the grant reduction he feared residents would notice a difference in the services provided by the Council. He added that the Council would be consulting extensively on a package of measures to enable the Council to balance its budget over the medium term and he expected to be able to announce these proposals at the meeting of the Executive on 9 February 2016.

Councillor Mrs Temperton asked a supplementary question about how the Council could be expected to build and release 950 houses during the following year to be able to yield the resulting Council Tax when a good yearly release was 360 houses. Councillor Bettison agreed with her concern and acknowledged that neighbouring authorities had also forcefully raised this with the Minister. He reported that there was a proposal by the Local Government Association to penalise developers through a levy compensating local authorities for a proportion of the potential Council Tax income. The proposed scheme was aimed to incentivise progress on development works but was a long term plan and not an immediate solution.

Councillor Bettison confirmed that no single area in the borough would be singled out in response to Councillor Mrs Temperton's second supplementary question regarding the anticipated impact on her own ward, Great Hollands North. He added that everyone was in this together so he expected that unfortunately all residents would feel the difference to services following the grant reduction.

MAYOR