

COUNCIL
12 JULY 2017
7.30 - 8.27 PM



Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Angell, Angell, G Birch, Brunel-Walker, Dudley, Mrs Ingham, McCracken, Mrs McCracken and Skinner

9. Minutes of Previous Meeting

In response to a query Councillor Turrell confirmed that a response had been made to the petition submitted to the Council meeting held on 26 April 2017.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 26 April 2017 and 24 May 2017 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

10. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Wade declared an affected interest in item 7, Bracknell Forest Homes Proposed Merger, by virtue of being a member of the Bracknell Forest Homes board.

11. Question Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 9

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9 (Public Participation), one question was submitted by Mr R Francis resident of Woodridge Close, Wildridings and Central Ward with regard to transparent decision making:

How many pages of reports delivered to the council have been restricted since the election of the current council in May 2015? What proportion of all such reports does this figure constitute? Does the council endorse the importance of an open, active and accountable democracy?

In response the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bettison OBE, explained that including that evening's Council meeting since the May 2015 elections there had been 17 Council meetings and at 7 of those meetings exempt information was presented to Councillors. Out of 158 agenda items one item was completely restricted and six had restricted appendices. The main report included what information it could without revealing exempt information. Therefore 2166 pages of agendas have been published with 230 pages restricted equating to 10.6% of the pages being restricted.

He added that the Council was very careful to include as much as it could in the agendas and in the majority of cases only the appendices to the report were exempt but the debate was conducted in public. He explained that meetings only moved to consider an item without the public present when the discussion was likely to reveal exempt information. The single report which was completely exempt related to the acquisition of property, the Magistrates Court, and was considered as the Council was preparing to make a bid. It would have put the Council at a commercial disadvantage to reveal its plans at that time.

Councillor Bettison OBE added that all agendas and minutes are published on the Council's website. The Council's public participation scheme supports open, active and accountable democracy.

In response to a supplementary question about why no questions had been asked by Conservative councillors in this period Councillor Bettison OBE stated that members of his Group were kept well informed and were able to input into Executive decision making process.

12. **Mayor's Announcements**

Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Councillor Dr Barnard asked the meeting to join him in congratulating years 8 and 9 pupils from Ranelagh who had successfully come third in the National Mock Trial competition in Nottingham.

Councillor Dr Barnard reported that he had been pleased to attend the recent topping out ceremony at the Kings College, Binfield. The Council had been presented with a trowel by the contractors, Mace. He reflected that this was an opportunity to restate the commitment to make sure that the new education provider would promote achievement for all and provide a high quality learning environment. The school would open in September 2018.

Priestwood Vale Football Club

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor were delighted to be able to support the recently established Priestwood Vale Football Club. The Mayor thanked Nathan Selah, Club President for his commitment encouraging children to get involved and was pleased to hear that they would be sponsoring the Fire Fighter's Charity with their away kit.

Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing

Councillor D Birch reported that the Council had entered into a contract for E benefit solution. By the end of September residents would be able to update their benefit account and gain answers to queries on-line.

Civic Service

The Mayor thanked her fellow Councillors for joining her at the Civic Service held on 9 July at Wellington College. It had been a lovely occasion and £379 was raised for her chosen charity, the Fire Fighter's Charity.

13. Executive Report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bettison OBE, presented his report on the work of the Executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 26 April 2017. The Executive had met three times on 9 May, 6 June and 12 July 2017.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- The Residents' Survey had sampled 1800 residents which reflected the demographics of the Borough within an accuracy $\pm 3\%$. 90% of respondents were satisfied with the local area as place to live and 96% agreed that people from different backgrounds get on. 68% of respondents were satisfied with the way Bracknell Forest Council runs things and 62% agreed that the Council provided value for money. The highest satisfaction levels were reported for parks, open space, countryside, waste and recycling, leisure, sports and arts facilities. The Leader noted that many respondents felt they were unable to influence decisions.
- The Citizen & Customer Contact "Plan" phase had been agreed as part of the Transformation programme. An integration of all access channels moving to digital where possible would be part of the key-enabling programme to facilitate digitalisation of services. The Council would promote self-reliance but those in most need would be identified.
- The Commercial Property Investment Strategy was on track to deliver £3M income by 2019/20. The Executive was proposing that £20M be released from 2018/19 capital programme to accelerate delivery of the programme.
- Plans for community based intermediate care service had been agreed. The Bridgewell Centre would focus on intermediate care teams providing range of home centred medical and social care support.
- Approval was given for offers to be sought from registered social landlords to develop purpose built accommodation for 10 residents with learning disabilities at The Lodge, Sandy Lane. This would be more convenient local provision for clients, carers, families and would provide anticipated revenue savings of approximately £150k p.a.
- The Community Based Support Service tender had been awarded to provide domiciliary care with five providers (reduced from eighteen). The new model would create greater capacity and resilience and require providers to work with the voluntary sector. Providers were incentivised to reduce requirements for support.
- A two year contract was agreed for 0 – 19 Public Health nursing service covering Health Visiting and School Nursing.
- A contract was agreed for 35 self-contained units in Holly House for a 15 year lease for young single homeless people. This would generate an annual saving of £70k.
- Special meeting of the Executive agreed block contracts to provide up to twenty residential care places. This was considered an important way of maintaining affordability as demand currently exceeded supply.

- The Community Safety Partnership Plan 2017-18 was agreed. The Plan's priorities were:
 - Protection of vulnerable people
 - Violence and serious organised crime
 - Reduce re-offending
 - Prevention and early intervention
 - Bracknell town centre
- The Overview & Scrutiny Commission had held a positive meeting as the Crime & Disorder Committee on 6 July 2017.
- The issues and options public consultation had been agreed for the Joint Central & Eastern Berkshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan which was being developed for four councils.
- It was agreed not to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANG) for large Prior Approval schemes beyond defined settlements. This protected the implementation of agreed Site Allocations Local Plan & Comprehensive Local Plan.
- The Bracknell Town Centre new Marks and Spencer store would have a soft opening on 27 July with the main Lexicon opening on 7 September. Coral Reef was due to be opened later in September.

Councillor Mrs Temperton stated that there had been an excellent response to the Residents' Survey which was well done and provided excellent feedback to each Councillor about their ward. In response to her query about whether Councillors would be involved in proposals to remedy the position that people do not feel able to influence decision making Councillor Bettison OBE concurred that Councillors were best placed to understand what it was like to live in the borough and that this work would be done with elected Members.

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

RESOLVED that £20 million capital funding be released in 2017/18 from the indicative 2018/19 Capital Programme in order to accelerate delivery of the Council's agreed Commercial Property Investment Strategy.

14. **Bracknell Forest Homes Proposed Merger**

The Council considered a report seeking Council's agreement to amend the Bracknell Forest Homes transfer agreement terms and rules to enable the merger of Bracknell Forest Homes with Housing Solutions Ltd.

Councillor Wade had declared an affected interest in this item and therefore did not take part in the discussion or the vote.

In response to a question regarding the impact of the merger on the existing shares purchased by Bracknell Forest Homes' residents Councillor D Birch agreed to update Councillors. He had attended a presentation which indicated the merger would amalgamate the two companies and therefore considered that shareholders would not be affected. Councillor Mrs Temperton sought clarification as this was contradicted by the proposed rules at C3 and C4 appended to the report.

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

RESOLVED that:

- i) the requirement that shareholding should be open to residents of Bracknell Forest Homes properties be removed from the rules of the new amalgamated organisation;
- ii) board membership rules for the new organisation allow Bracknell Forest Council to nominate a board member to be selected in line with the new organisation's selection policy; and
- iii) the community gateway provisions be removed from the rules of the new organisation.

15. Local Government Ombudsman Finding - Monitoring Officer Report

The Council considered a report appraising the Council of a finding of maladministration with no injustice by the Local Government the Council in response to a complaint.

On the proposition of Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport and seconded by Councillor D Birch it was:

RESOLVED that:

- i) the Ombudsman's report findings be noted (Appendix A of the agenda report);
- ii) no further action to be taken in relation to the matter set out in the report;
- iii) it be noted that a copy of the report had been circulated to all Members of the Council; and
- iv) the draft report at Appendix B of the agenda report be approved to comply with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

16. Establishment of Committees and associated issues

The Council considered a report setting out the revised position regarding the appointment of Members to serve on committees and other bodies since Annual Council on 24 May 2017.

On the proposition of Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council and seconded by Councillor D Birch it was:

RESOLVED that:

- i) Councillor Ms Gaw be appointed to the substitute vacancy on the Education Employment Sub Committee;
- ii) Councillor Virgo be appointed as the Council's representative on the Berkshire Record Office Capital Working Group and the Standing Conference for Archives; and

- iii) Councillor G Birch be appointed as the Council's representative on the Binfield Badger Group Management Committee.

17. **Question Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10**

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

The Queen's speech did not include a commitment to reintroduce the 2017 Local Government Finance Bill that would have allowed local government in England to keep the £26 billion in business rates raised locally each year. It had been hoped that this money would have enabled local government, that is best placed to respond to local needs, to pay for valuable services. Councils are facing an overall funding gap of £5.8 billion by 2020, Bracknell Forest being part of this. Is the Leader confident that from this new government's obvious willingness to release more money, the many promised consultations will lead to increased funding for local government so that they can get on with the job they do best?

Councillor Bettison OBE responded that the Queen's speech had not included a commitment to reintroduce the 2017 Local Government Finance Bill which meant that changes to how business rates are collected would be delayed by at least a year. He had received this advice informally at the recent Local Government Association Conference. This Council plus the five other Berkshire Councils had previously indicated to the Secretary of State that they were willing to be a pilot to test new collection methods. At the next Berkshire Leaders' meeting he would confirm that this ambition continued.

Councillor Bettison OBE stated that he was not confident that the shuffling of business rate collection would result in a bonanza for Councils. He added that he did still believe that there was a more sensible way of Councils collecting business rates and keeping them rather than sending to central government for them to subsequently divide up and redistribute which generated a cost in itself.

He believed that a new process could connect businesses with their local area for the betterment of all in the locality. He did however note that with this would come a transfer of risk to the Council if the collection rate was not good.

Councillor Bettison OBE stated that he had set up a national network of unitary Councils to provide representation because they were in the same position as County Councils but without the same financial backing.

Councillor Mrs Temperton asked a supplementary question about whether the Council hoped to achieve a more robust agreement that would last longer than the previous four year agreement offered by central government.

Councillor Bettison OBE assured Members that he was working hard and closely with central government. He stated that the Council's reputation for prudence and forward planning meant that when it gave its opinion that people did listen.

MAYOR