

COUNCIL
18 SEPTEMBER 2013
8.00 - 9.10 PM



Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Jan Angell), Councillors Kendall (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Angell, Baily, Mrs Barnard, Dr Barnard, Bettison, Birch, Mrs Birch, Blatchford, Brossard, Ms Brown, Brunel-Walker, Davison, Dudley, Finch, Finnie, Gbadebo, Mrs Hamilton, Mrs Hayes, Heydon, Kensall, McCracken, Mrs McCracken, McLean, Mrs Pile, Porter, Sargeant, Mrs Temperton, Virgo, Ward, Ms Wilson and Worrall

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Mrs Ballin, Harrison, Ms Hayes, Leake, Ms Miller, Thompson, Turrell and Wade

23. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Subject to the amendment of minute 11 to read "Clement Heights, extra care sheltered housing in the borough" it was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 17 July 2013 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

24. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

25. Mayor's Announcements

Executive Member for Environment

Councillor Mrs Hayes reminded Councillors that there would be a Recycling Roadshow at Bracknell Leisure Centre on the morning of Saturday 28 September 2013 for small electrical appliances. The Roadshow would move to the car park of Sandhurst Town Council in the afternoon. She asked Councillors to support the initiative.

Councillor Mrs Hayes was pleased to announce that Bracknell had been awarded Gold in the Britain in Bloom competition. She thanked the Landscape Service Manager and his team, Bracknell Town Council, Bracknell Forest Homes and Bracknell Residents for working together to achieve this success.

Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection

Councillor McCracken informed members that the RSPCA have an award scheme known as Community Animal Welfare Footprints which covers four areas of service provided by the public sector that had some impact on animal welfare. Each Footprint had three levels - bronze, silver and gold - which carried progressively more demanding criteria. Councillor McCracken was pleased to congratulate the

Environment, Culture and Communities department for their achievement of two Gold awards in the categories Contingency Planning and Stray Dogs.

Councillor McCracken announced that the date for the 30th Bracknell Half Marathon had been confirmed for Sunday 27 April 2014 and entries would open in early November.

Executive Member for Economic Redevelopment

Councillor Brunel-Walker encouraged the members present to watch the progress of the demolition of the town centre via the regeneration web cams positioned on Easthampstead House and Ocean House.

Councillor Brunel-Walker informed the meeting that he had attended a Citizenship Ceremony that afternoon and his friend had taken the oath and was very proud to become a British Citizen.

Executive Member for Children and Young People

Councillor Dr Barnard gave details of the academic results across the borough's schools which had performed above expectations. He highlighted the results at Easthampstead Park Community School which had risen from 43% of pupils achieving 5 GCSE results to 57%. He thanked Liz Cook and her team for their hard work and Councillors Ward and Kendall for their contribution to improving results in the borough. He added that Edgbarrow School's results, at 88%, marked them out as one of the best schools in the country. He thanked all the schools and their staff for their commitment and hard work.

Annual Civic Service

The Mayor reminded members present that the Annual Civic Service was being held at the Parish Church of St Michael & St Mary Magdalene, Easthampstead on Sunday 22 September 2013 at 3pm.

Mayor's Charity Events

The Mayor announced that she was hosting a Casino night at The Grange Hotel in aid of her charity Thames Hospice Care. All were welcome to attend on 19 October 2013 and tickets were available from Customer Services at £12 each.

26. **Presentation from Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police**

The Chief Constable, Sara Thornton, gave a presentation on significant policing issues across the Borough and Police and Crime Commissioner, Anthony Stansfeld also attended to answer Members' questions.

The Chief Constable emphasised the following points:

- The HMIC review had highlighted the forces protection of front line policing numbers
- Thames Valley Police had recorded a 21% reduction in recorded crime from 2010/11 to 2012/13 which was the second highest in the country
- It was noted that detection rates for violence against the person with injury were below target but this was a reflection of increased reporting
- The overall visible presence had increased to 2,419 officers and the priority was to increase Special Constabulary officers

- Specialist investigations had taken place to disrupt organised crime groups and this was connected to a changed focus on rural crime
- Councillors were encouraged to sign up to Thames Valley Alert which was one of any methods being used to improve communications and build trust and confidence
- Methods to tackle bureaucracy included piloting tough books to take electronic statements and 300 new body worn video cameras for frontline staff
- It was explained that previously only firearms officers had been trained to use tasers but numbers were increasing as it had been proven to be a significant deterrent. Tasers had only been fired in 6.5% of incidents where its use had been authorised
- Thames Valley Police were working with the College of Policing to develop the professional skills of all staff
- It was noted that there had been a 15% government funding cut but this equated to 20% in real terms over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15

The Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner then responded to questions from the Council.

In response to a question from Councillor McCracken regarding their experience of Freedom of Information requests and their approach the Police and Crime Commissioner stated that he had received 40 requests to date and the Chief Constable concurred that the number of queries were increasing. In 2005 Thames Valley Police had received 500 queries but they were expecting to receive 1,000 by the end of the year. Like Bracknell Forest Council the police force had been working to publicise as much information on the internet as possible and had a new member of staff working to increase the information which would hopefully decrease the number of requests.

Councillor McCracken asked that given the probability of a reduction in overall funding from Central Government was it their intention to seek to raise the deficit via the precept. In response the Police and Crime Commissioner stated that he understood a referendum would cost Thames Valley £2million and it was intended for any increases to be kept below 2.5% which would equate to the price of a pint of beer.

The Police and Crime Commissioner recently raised the issue of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) at the Police and Crime Panel and the difficulties peculiar and specific to Berkshire. Councillor McCracken asked him to explain his thinking on the matter and the Police and Crime Commissioner replied that for other areas such as Oxford and Buckinghamshire it was easier to put in place and discussions had started with the relevant Leaders. With Berkshire having six unitary authorities it was significantly harder to implement as it would mean substantial changes to ways of working. Once a model was in place elsewhere it would be possible to look at how it would impact social services and children's services.

Councillor McCracken asked that how the first year of Police Commissioning had been for both the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that it had been a good, albeit rough year, but he had been delighted by the performance of Thames Valley Police, the HMIC report and receiving no qualifications in the audit report. He felt that the service was coping well with cuts and performing well. The Chief Constable responded that there were less meeting and less bureaucracy with the new structure which led to a speed and decisiveness around decision making. She added that there as clarity of objectives and prioritisation.

As Chairman of the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, Councillor Dudley had received reports of serious traffic incidents caused by red-light violations and had been advised that there appeared to be a lack of commitment from Thames Valley Police to resolve this and he queried if they had any problems with enforcement. The Police and Crime Commissioner said this was a priority for the police and they would look into his concerns. The Chief Constable replied that they did not have a problem with enforcement and she would look into any particular location but that their traffic activities had a history of reducing injury numbers in the area.

In response to a question from Councillor Virgo about the Police and Crime Commissioner's opinion on proposed drunk tanks to tackle drunk and disorderly behaviour he replied that he supported it absolutely. He added that this behaviour was costly and time-consuming and a financial charge would assist covering the expense. In addition the use of body worn video cameras was increasing conviction rates for such incidents as it provided irrefutable evidence.

In response to a question from Councillor Birch about how Thames Valley Police would maintain prevention activities especially for drug and alcohol intervention and domestic violence prevention the Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that this was something they were committed to despite budget cuts. It was noted that success would lead to increased reporting.

Whilst Councillor Brunel-Walker was pleased to see visible policing was still a priority they had lost their Neighbourhood Police Officer in Crown Wood and the Neighbourhood Action Group had folded. He added that there was a spike in activities such as theft of cars and theft from cars and wondered what could be done locally. In response the Chief Constable replied that the Neighbourhood Policing team had not been cut but it took time to replace officers. 'Have Your Say' meetings were being held and she encouraged the use of Neighbourhood Watch to reduce crime. Local Police Area Commander, David Gilbert added that the Neighbourhood Policing team had two vacancies and they were working to recruit the right people. Councillor Dudley added he was disappointed this had taken over eighteen months.

Councillor Miss Wilson asked their opinion on resources being spent investigating historical rape cases and whilst the Police and Crime Commissioner agreed with her sentiment the Chief Constable was clear that achieving a sense of justice for victims was key. Such high profile activity increased public confidence in reporting crimes and they had already seen an increase. Work was ongoing to raise awareness of the impact of activities such as 'sexting', understanding consent, an exploitation play 'Chelsea's Choice' was shown to young people and they were working in partnership with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board to explain to young people which activities were causing offense.

In response to Councillor Brossard's question about the high number of drivers not wearing a seat belt and using mobile phone whilst driving the Chief Constable concurred that as this was a cause of fatal accident this was a priority for the force and targeted operations were being carried out in the Thames Valley area.

The Mayor thanked the Chief Constable for her presentation and to both the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner for answering Members' questions.

27. Food Law Enforcement Plan

The Council considered the report to ratify the draft Food Law Enforcement Plan for 2013-2014. The Plan addressed local delivery of enforcement and advice within the areas food hygiene, food standards and animal foodstuff.

The Director of Environment, Culture and Communities committed to providing Councillor Mrs Temperton a written response to her query about when Residential Care Homes would be retested for food hygiene.

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

RESOLVED that the Food Law Enforcement Plan for 2013-2014 be ratified and the supporting information be noted.

28. External body representation and Leader's Delegations

The Council considered the report seeking nominations for two representatives to serve on an external organisation, South Hill Park Trust Ltd. The report advised Members of the actions the Leader has taken since those reported to the last Council meeting.

On the proposition of Councillor Bettison, Leader of the Council seconded by Councillor Birch it was

RESOLVED that

- i) Councillors Kendall and Mrs McCracken be appointed to the Board of South Hill Park Trust Ltd for a second four year term of office ending November 2017; and
- ii) the Leader's actions, as set out in paragraph 6 of the agenda report, be noted.

29. Question Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10

Councillor Mrs Temperton to Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance the following published question:

Following the Chancellor's spending statement in June in which he reduced support to local Government again, it is clear that almost £7m will need to be cut from next year's budget in Bracknell Forest. The Quarterly Service Reports, ending June 2013, indicate that the usual in-year savings/underspends have not manifest themselves yet this year.

Does the Council expect to be able set a balanced budget in 2014/15 without an increase in the Council Tax next year?

In response Councillor Ward stated yes, the Council expected to be able set a balanced budget in 2014/15 and yes, the Council expected to do this without an increase in the Council Tax next year.

Councillor Mrs Temperton asked for reassurance that the more vulnerable residents would not face the brunt of the budget cuts required to achieve this. In response to the supplementary question Councillor Ward replied that it was the Council's policy to protect the most vulnerable and this was considered as Councillors went through budget lines. He hoped that most Councillors would be involved in this process. He stated that he also hoped to be able to continue the Members' Initiative Fund which

allocated £10K per Councillor which could be spent individually or pooled. This year's project had worked better than before due to the flexibility of using revenue rather than capital funding. He added that there would not be any revenue budget available to allocate to a second year and, if continued, the fund would be created from the Council's balances. He concluded that this was what the Council hoped to be able to do.

MAYOR