

**COUNCIL – ADVISORY MEETING
24 NOVEMBER 2021
7.30 - 9.00 PM**



Present:

Councillors Ms Merry (Mayor), Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Bhandari, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Brunel-Walker, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, Green, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Neil, Porter, Temperton, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors D Birch, Dudley, Mrs Ingham, Parker and Skinner

25. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 15 September 2021 be approved, and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

26. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harrison declared an affected interest in Item 11, Motions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11, and in particular Motion 5 – 2021, by virtue of being a shareholder in sustainable aviation fuel.

27. Mayor's Announcements

Welcome to new Chaplain

The Mayor welcomed her new chaplain Father Malcolm Chalmers of Holy Trinity Church who had stepped into the role. Father Malcolm's first engagement had been to officiate at the civic service on Sunday 24 October at The Parish Church of St Michael & St Mary Magdalene, Easthampstead. The Mayor reflected that they had been honoured to be joined by the Deputy Lieutenant Mrs Lindsay Beard JP DL and dignitaries from neighbouring boroughs.

Older People's Day Events

The Mayor thanked Councillor Ms Gaw, Older People's Champion, for organising the bingo session hosted by Shopmobility and Councillor Temperton for arranging the silver week tea party with a quiz provided by Easthampstead Park School.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Events

The Mayor had attended the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Celebration event on 2 October which recognised new and existing fire fighters and their support teams for their hard work during the pandemic. Crowthorne Community Fire station was officially reopened on 15 October which offered a shared location for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service.

Honouring the Armed Forces

The Mayor had visited the poppy pod which was set up in the Lexicon allowing online donations to be made to support the Poppy Appeal. Remembrance Sunday events were held across the borough with wreaths laid by councillors in their wards. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended services in Bracknell and the Leader of the Council attended the service in Sandhurst. Sandhurst and Bracknell Town Councils were thanked for organising the parades.

Open Learning Centre

Joining Councillor Dr Barnard, the Mayor had observed the work being carried out to support community learning by taking part in a water colour class for beginners and meeting students of all ages at the English language café.

Tribute to James Finnie

On 30 October 2021 a memorial service was held for ex-Councillor Jim Finnie, Freeman of the Borough and former Crowthorne ward councillor. After the service a small ceremony was held to formally name the square outside of Crowthorne Library as Jim Finnie Square – a tribute to someone who had dedicated so much of his life to the Borough. The Mayor thanked Immediate Past Mayor, Councillor Mrs McKenzie for attending on her behalf.

Other highlights

The Mayor highlighted a number of other events she had attended including the opening of the Lexicon's Christmas Market, the talent at the Crowthorne and Sandhurst Art Exhibition, the Involve and Homestart Annual General meetings, the weekly online Citizenship Ceremonies, the Presentation ceremony for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service as well as the opening of the Crown Court at the start of the Judicial Year. The Mayor concluded by reporting that all 26 of the borough's iconic poppies were safely stored.

Improvements to Lily Hill Park

Councillor Angell was pleased to report that significant improvements were being made at Lily Hill Park in the Bullbrook ward. £13.5k of Section 106 open space/recreation funding had been agreed. 23 new spires would be erected containing photos and information on the park's history, including text in braille for those visually impaired.

28. **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 15 September 2021. The Executive had met three times on 21 September, 19 October and 16 November 2021.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- The Residents Survey on Covid 19 Impact included many insights:
 - 67% of residents questioned were satisfied with the way the Council was supporting the community during pandemic which was an increase from 56% in July 2020

- 86% of residents who volunteered intended to keep volunteering in the community
- 83% residents believed the pandemic had a positive impact on appreciation of local wildlife and environment
- 54% believed the pandemic had had a negative impact on children's education
- The top priorities for Council identified by the survey respondents were:
 - Helping local business and economy rescue (20%)
 - Supporting vulnerable and affected people to recover (16%)
 - Reopening facilities and services (15%)
- The surplus land at the Depot Site had been offered to the Cambian Partnership with a site development plan required by October 2022
- Due to market conditions it was agreed to defer the development decision about Market Street – Block D until 2024
- Revised Local Development Scheme 2021 – 2024 had been agreed reflecting the latest timing for Local Plan submission before Christmas and the Joint Minerals & Waste Disposal Plan.
- The Bracknell Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016 – 2036 “made” following the positive vote in favour of the Plan on 9 September 2021.
- The Public Protection Partnership Business Plan 2022/23 local priorities were agreed including animal Welfare, fly tipping, licencing and air quality linked to climate change. The approach to Wokingham Borough Council leaving the Partnership was agreed.
- The Community Hubs at Bucklers Park and Binfield were nearing completion. The preferred approach was for Parish Councils to operate and there was recognition of cost pressures so possible support package to be agreed. Alternative procurement approaches were also agreed.
- The Equality Scheme 2022-25 was agreed, actions from the Scheme would be reflected in 2022/23 Service Plans and were based on five objectives:
 - Inclusive in all we do
 - Accessible for all
 - Accountable and Fair
 - Diverse and inclusive workforce
 - Recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic
- The Education Capital Strategy 2022-26 was agreed to address surplus capacity at primary stage and discuss with Headteachers and Governors the future use of school estate with the potential to enhance the local special needs offer.
- The Strategic procurement plan for All Age Advocacy Tender was agreed.
- The distribution and procurement approach agreed for supermarket vouchers to meet March 2022 distribution deadline for the Household Support Grant
- A proposal to acquire six properties via S106 and borrowing was discussed to address the shortage of one bedroom accommodation for temporary placements of homeless households.

- The Overview and Scrutiny review of Food Waste in Flats and HMO's examined options for extending successful food waste collection scheme. Recommendations agreed included:
 - Progressive roll out to up to 1800 properties in Spring 2022
 - All new HMO licences and renewals to contain condition regarding waste storage and disposal
- The Overview and Scrutiny review of Blue Badges was prompted by BBC research covering approximately 30% of local authorities. The review had recommended a review of refusal letters to ensure sufficient clarity and development of local guidelines on approach to assessing applications.

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

- **Funding for shortage of one bedroom accommodation for temporary placements of homeless households**

Councillor Temperton asked whether it could be confirmed when the keep fit classes, which had been run across community centres pre Covid for older residents, would be restarted and if this was not planned then an explanation provided. Councillor Bettison OBE committed to responding.

Councillor Temperton reiterated that at the Council meeting on 24 February 2021 the Leader had agreed that the Climate Change Strategy would be more prominent on the Council's home page on the website but this did not appear to have been actioned. Councillor Bettison OBE replied that he was aware of this and was looking into how to rectify this. Councillor Brunel-Walker, Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration confirmed he would discuss this with the Head of Communications and Marketing as he was aware that how residents searched, and accessed information was tracked and was not typically through the Council's home page anymore.

In response to Councillor Brown's question as to whether new guidelines on Blue Badge application process would be available on the Council's website the Leader agreed that the priority was supporting residents to be better informed, more fairly dealt with and accessibility improved information was part of this.

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

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that:

- i) the total capital spend of up to £1,177,200 commencing in the 2021-22 financial year, be approved, in order to purchase six properties to ensure that Council has suitable temporary emergency affordable housing; and
- ii) £450,000 (£75,000 per property) of this total, be approved, to be funded through S106 affordable housing commuted funds, which will not incur borrowing costs and that borrowing be approved to fund the remaining balance of £727,200. The cost of borrowing and MRP (minimum revenue provision) will be met by net rental income so will be cost neutral.

29. Adoption of Statement of Licensing Policy Principles under S.349 of the Gambling Act 2005

Council considered the report containing the responses received during the consultation period and sought adoption of the Statement of Licensing Policy Principles under the Gambling Act 2005.

On the proposition of Councillor Porter, Chair of Licensing and Safety Committee, seconded by Councillor Harrison it was

RECOMMENDED that

- i) the Statement and the consultation responses be received;
- ii) the Public Protection Partnership Manager, in consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing and Safety Committee Chairman, be delegated authority to make any minor corrections to the report prior to publication and
- iii) the Statement for adoption and publication by the 31st January 2022 be approved.

As the decision was reserved for Council and could not be delegated to the Chief Executive, a quorate Council meeting would be arranged to confirm adoption.

30. Bracknell Forest Community Governance Review

Council considered the report which sought agreement to commence a full community governance review of the Bracknell Forest borough area.

On the proposition of Councillor Allen, Chair of Governance and Audit Committee, seconded by Councillor Mrs Birch it was

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that

- i) the commencement of the formal process to undertake a full community governance review of the Bracknell Forest borough area as set out in section 5 of the report be agreed; and
- ii) authority to agree the review Terms of Reference be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Boundary Review Group.

31. Meetings Arrangements

Council considered the report which sought approval to the proposed governance arrangements for councillor decision-making meetings when the current arrangements expired on 31 December 2021.

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

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that

- i) the current arrangements for council, executive and committee meetings agreed at the 28 April 2021 council meeting remain in place for a further three months until 31 March 2022;
- ii) before the arrangements expired, the decision whether to extend them for a further three months until 30 June 2022 be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council;

- iii) in the limited circumstances where a decision was reserved in law to the council and could not be delegated a quorate in-person meeting of the council would be held;
- iv) all non-decision-making meetings to continue to take place remotely;
- v) the suspension of the six-month councillor attendance rule, set out in s85 of the Local Government Act 1972, be extended to the next Annual Council meeting currently scheduled for 18 May 2022. Should the interim meetings arrangements continue beyond that date a decision to extend the suspension further be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

32. Schedule of meetings 2022-23

Council considered the report which set out the proposed schedule of meetings for 2022-23.

On the proposition of Councillor Leake, Chair of Employment Committee, seconded by Councillor Allen it was

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that the schedule of meetings 2022-23 as set out in the annex to the agenda report be approved.

33. Questions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10

Councillor L Gibson asked Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning the following published question:

Following up on the debate regarding provision for Children Looked After, at the last meeting of this full Council, can you please report back on your deliberations?

Councillor Dr Barnard responded that he had sought guidance from officers regarding the proposal to establish a children's home in order to keep children in the area and attending their local school. He stated that Bracknell Forest was not seeking to provide a Children's Home as discussed because of the resources required to commission such a facility, the unknown outcomes for children homed there and the diverse range of children requiring differing support. He reported that it may have a detrimental effect on the Council's ability to support individual children. He reiterated that the most important thing for children entering the Looked After system was the provision of a nurturing environment within a family home. He advised that recruitment of foster carers was the focus for the Council. He confirmed that the key requirement of providing education for any children that needed to move school place were able to attend a good or outstanding school within the borough. He reported that a residential joint project with Public Health was looking to provide a family setting for two young people with very specific yet significant needs who were currently placed outside of Bracknell Forest. He concluded that the Council was committed to a foster first approach and encouraged more foster carers to come forward to work with the Council.

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

In order to achieve value for money for residents, how does the Council assess the quality of work delivered versus the cost of contractors and ensure it is in line with the expectations guaranteed throughout the tender process? How is the work evaluated and the contract reviewed following feedback from customers/residents?

Councillor Bettison OBE replied that the Council ensured value for money for its residents by inspecting specific items of work when delivered and, on longer term contracts, officers regularly monitored the results of work, met with contractors and took feedback from residents and councillors. He stated that the Council was conscious that whenever it commissioned work or a service it was being delivered on the council's behalf.

Councillor Temperton requested, as a supplementary question, that a statement explaining in detail the monitoring of contracts and standard of work be added to the website so that councillors could reassure their residents of the value for money provided and signpost residents to it. Councillor Bettison responded that feedback from customers was welcomed and anything that could be done to help them know how to provide it would be done. He expanded that what was required would vary between different services, but he concluded that he was confident that those responsible for the website content would be able to signpost residents as appropriate.

34. **Motions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11**

Motion 04/2021 was moved and seconded by Councillors Temperton and Neil respectively as follows:

The Council asks the Executive to look into providing live streaming of public meetings once we return to face to face meetings.

An amendment to the motion was proposed and seconded by Councillors Bettison OBE and Leake respectively as follows:

- 'asks' to be replaced with 'supports'
- 'to look into' to be replaced with 'in'

Councillors Temperton and Neil accepted the proposed amendment and the substantive motion became:

The Council supports the Executive in providing live streaming of public meetings once we return to face to face meetings.

On being put to the vote the new substantive motion was carried.

Motion 05/2021 was moved and seconded by Councillors Turrell and Brunel-Walker respectively as follows:

Bracknell Forest Council fully supports the UK government's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Council encourages the local aviation industry to contribute to this by adopting, at the earliest opportunity, new operational practices and innovative solutions such as Sustainable Aviation Fuels. The Council recognises that these changes have the potential to cut carbon emissions whilst delivering

new employment and economic benefits, nationally and locally, which is welcomed.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

CHAIRMAN