

**COUNCIL**  
**11 SEPTEMBER 2024**  
**7.30-8.25PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Penfold (Mayor), Cochrane (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Bailey, Bidwell, Collings, Egglestone, Ejaz, M Forster, S Forster, Frewer, Frost, Gillbe, Haffeggee, Harrison, Hayes MBE, Jefferies, Karim, McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mossom, Neil, O'Regan, Pickering, Purnell, Robertson, Smith, Temperton, C Thompson, P Thompson, Virgo, Watts, Webb, Welch, Wright and Zahuruddin

**Present Virtually:**

Councillors Zahuruddin

**Apologies:**

Councillors Barnard, Brown, C Eberle, T Eberle and Gaw

**15. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the council meeting held on 10 July 2024 be approved and signed by the mayor as a correct record.

**16. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Dorothy Hayes declared an affected interest in agenda item 7 as she had been the chair of the joint disposal board.

**17. Mayor's Announcements**

The mayor announced the sad passing of her husband Nick Penfold. He had passed away in late August and as consort, had attended many events with the mayor when his health allowed.

It was noted that July had been a busy month with a number of interesting events taking place and August had been slightly quieter. Thanks was given to the deputy mayor for stepping in and attending events when the mayor was unable to.

It was noted that the following events were attended by the mayor:

- Senior Schools Music Festival
- Bracknell Chorale Summer Concert
- Awards Ceremony at Newbold College
- AGM of Wokingham Arts Society
- Home Start AGM
- Winkfield St Mary's Summer Fair
- Opened High Score in Princess Square
- Reading Pride
- Citizenship Ceremonies

The following were attended by the deputy mayor:

- Sovereign's Parade at RMAS
- King's Award for Voluntary Service Nominees
- Reading Pride

#### Mayor's charity

The mayor's charity 2024/25 was The Ark and Andrea McCombie, the chief executive officer was in attendance to speak about the work of the charity.

The chief executive advised of the history to the charity and that over the years it had greatly expanded its reach. The charity provided a number of social activities for disabled people, particularly those that found themselves quite isolated. This ranged from a Friday night disco to day outings. They had just completed a project with Holloway University, which hopefully would be published in the next couple of weeks demonstrating the value of those types of activities.

The charity had also been involved with helping vulnerable people during the pandemic with support in transporting medication and doing shopping rounds. They had delivered some 45,000 volunteering hours at the centre which took a lot of coordination and was a much valued service.

It also provided the signal for carers service on behalf of the council which provided support to unpaid family carers in the borough. There were just under 1,000 carers registered with it now and as a basic offer provided information and advice or one to one support for those in greater need. The care support worker in place had around a 99% success rate for attendance allowance and carers allowance forms and was highly valued. She had won a Pride of Bracknell Award this year.

Overall, the charity was offering a vast amount of services to residents, and were excited to be the mayor's charity. Not only did it give them the ability to raise funds, it gave them the opportunity to continue to support more people as demand increased. They also felt privileged to be able to raise awareness for disabled people and unpaid carers. The Ark looked forward to work with the council and thanked the mayor and councillors for their support.

#### Staff Raffle

There would be a staff raffle before Christmas with all proceeds going to the mayor's charity. Prizes for this were required and any donations from councillors, or people they knew, would be appreciated.

## 18. **Executive Report**

The leader of the council, Councillor Temperton, presented her report on the work of the executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 10 July 2024. The executive had met once on 16 July 2024.

The leader highlighted the matters that had been considered within her presentation: [Executive Report - Leader's Presentation](#) .

The report contained recommendations that the council was asked to resolve in respect of the following:

- Capital Expenditure Outturn 2023/24

- Revenue Expenditure Outturn 2023/24

On the proposition of Councillor Neil, Executive Member for Finance and Corporate improvement and seconded by Councillor Temperton it was

**RESOLVED** that the Council carry forward the specific schemes listed in paragraph 5.5 of the [Capital Expenditure Outturn 2023/24](#) report, being:

- Management of open spaces software
- Library printers

On the proposition of Councillor Neil, Executive Member for Finance and Corporate Improvement, and seconded by Councillor Temperton it was

**RESOLVED** that Council noted the Treasury Management performance in 2023/24 as set out in Annexe B of the [Revenue Expenditure Outturn 2023/24](#) report.

19. **Adoption of revised Contract Standing Orders to the Constitution**

The council considered the report regarding a set of contract standing orders for inclusion in the council's constitution.

On the proposition of Councillor O'Regan, Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee and seconded by Councillor Neil it was **RESOLVED** that the proposed Contract Standard Orders into the Constitution be approved.

20. **Question Submitted Under the Public Participation Scheme**

The questions and responses submitted under the Public Speaking Scheme were published in advance of the meeting – [Public Participation – Question and answer](#)

By resident, Chris Wright, to Councillor Temperton, the Leader and Executive Member for Council Strategy and Climate Change

Chris Wright asked for further clarification specifically on whether the chief executive made a misleading statement when she said that the element of the privacy notice was not changed since the system was introduced in 2020, which was approved by councillors at the time. This difference being from what was agreed and published in the transcript of the RE3 Joint Waste Board meeting in 2020. Clarification was asked on whether this statement was misleading.

Councillor Purnell, the Executive Member for Environment and Community Cohesion, responded that the council took concerns about transparency and accountability very seriously, particularly when it came to management data and adherence to principles of good governance. The statement made by the chief executive was intended to clarify the council position on the booking system and specifically in relation to data collection practices.

By resident Chris Turrell, to Councillor Gillbe, Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside:

As a supplementary question Chris Turrell asked if the council 's consultation response included references to an evidence-based approach to planning policy and neighbourhood plans?

In response, Councillor Gillbe the Executive Member for Planning, Transport and Countryside, advised that it was a thorough process that they were having to go through, but assured the speaker, and the wider public, that all consultation responses on any subject were evidence led and did take account of the planning policy framework.

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

The four questions and responses submitted under the Council Procedure Rule 10 were published in advance of the meeting –[Council Procedural Rule 10 – Question and answers](#)

(i) By Councillor McLean to Councillor Wright, Executive Member for Adults and Public Health:

As a supplementary to his question detailed in the agenda papers, Councillor McLean asked the Executive Member whether they supported Peter Swallow's recent block on an attempt to stop the cuts to the winter fuel allowance.

Councillor Wright, Executive Member for Adults and Public Health responded that she was not aware of this recent occurrence and would look into it. She felt that the Council had a very good system to support people struggling with their energy bills and there was a welfare program in place. They were well aware of that people were struggling and they knew where to come to with warm hubs and support of voluntary services.

The Mayor advised that it was not relevant to the supplementary question whether or not the executive member supported Peter Swallow, the member of parliament for Bracknell, proposal to the House of Commons and referred to the question which had been already answered.

(ii) By Councillor Harrison to Councillor Jefferies, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection:

As a supplementary to his question detailed in the agenda papers, Councillor Harrison requested whether the executive member would commit to getting funding for additional cameras to be built into next year's budget plans?

In response, Councillor Jefferies, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection advised that he was fully committed to upholding public protection for Bracknell Forest. The fly-tipping for environmental crime fell under the Public Protection Partnership (PPP) remit and this was a very important matter to the administration. On, 1September 2024, members were invited to participate in a session being run by the PPP and collaborate on priorities and the pressures that affected the PPP. The strategy around environmental crime went far beyond CCTV. The current strategy took an intelligence led approach to tackling the issue of fly-tipping. This included looking at trends and locations identified by the analysis of intelligence as well as looking at high risk areas. Hotspots were constantly sought to raise awareness and seek information from the public. The PPP would continue to deliver an effective service.

However, it was noted that, financial pressures would be dictating the priorities of the future but would like to commit and assure that this would remain an important issue on the council's priorities in protecting the public.

(iii) By Councillor Allen to Councillor Neil, Executive Member for Finance & Corporate Improvement:

As a supplementary to his question detailed in the agenda papers, Councillor Allen first asked for clarification on the answer given that when referring to Bracknell Forest's core spending power reducing by 8% in real terms between 2010 and 2014, that it actually meant 2010 and 2024. It was confirmed that this was correct.

Councillor Allen went on to ask the executive member about the situation in relation to use of reserves. It had been stated that the plan was to reduce the use of reserves to balance the budget each year, with the hope that by 2027 would not need to be used. Given that the executive member had said that the social care budget was increasing by £5m per year and the challenges of the council getting any additional funding from the government were negligible, alongside the significant drain on reserves from the safety valve program was it far more likely to have no reserves left by 2027.

In the response from Councillor Neil, Executive Member for Finance & Corporate Improvement, it was noted that the pressures faced last year were included in the 2024/25 budget and that this also included contingency of £4 million which was the highest sum ever. Despite this, officers were still reporting an overspend of £0.4m and £3.2m. The corporate management team and budget managers across the organisation were looking at all options to bring protected spending down to the budgeted figure between now and year end.

At this stage the focus was on curtailing non-essential expenditure that the council had which would not have any material impact on service delivery. It was possible that further steps would need to be taken in the autumn if this wasn't enough and proposals which would include services changes would always be brought forward before councillors before they were implemented.

(iv) By Councillor McLean to Councillor Temperton, Leader and Executive Member for Council Strategy and Climate Change:

As a supplementary to his question detailed in the agenda papers, Councillor McLean asked Councillor Temperton, Leader and Executive Member for Council Strategy and Climate Change, why the executive didn't know whether they supported attempts to stop the winter fuel allowance affecting residents, but they did know that they wanted to change the name of the executive to the cabinet to provide clarity and consistency and whether residents should expect council priorities to be changing names rather than doing something that actually impacted residents more closely such as the winter fuel allowance?

Councillor Temperton responded that it was felt that this was an important change to take because she had said to residents that she wanted to take the council to them and she had. The leader had undertaken a lot of consultation with residents and there was a lot of confusion with the terms executive officer and an executive member and the differences in the responsibilities. Whereas the term Cabinet was clearly understood. The cabinet was elected members and it was considered that residents would understand much more the clarity of professionals being executive directors and officers and the cabinet being elected members.

## 22. Motion Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11

Since the agenda had been published the mayor advised that there was a minor alteration to the motion (highlighted below in bold).

“Council expresses concern in relation to the Government’s statement in Parliament on 29 July, that the previous Government’s national New Hospital Programme (NHP) is to be completely reviewed **because of their inadequate funding of the programme**. This has brought uncertainty and probable delays to the provision of improved, safe and modern hospital services for residents of Bracknell Forest. Council supports the statements made by the Royal Berkshire and Frimley Park hospitals that, pending clarification of what the Government’s review will entail, they will continue to progress at pace with their re-development plans.”

Motion 05/2024 was moved by Councillor P Thompson and seconded by Councillor M Forster.

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- Bracknell Forest is the only borough in Berkshire without its own acute or community hospital. Consequently, our residents rely mainly on the Secondary Care hospital services provided by the hospitals at Frimley Park, the Royal Berkshire, and Wexham Park.
- Frimley Park Hospital is included in the NHP for complete re-development, because it was built using Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), which makes up around 65 per cent of the current building. RAAC deteriorates over time and is now at the end of its life, which the hospital has said poses a potential safety risk to patients, visitors, and staff. Two wards have already been closed, and temporary measures are being taken by the Trust.
- The Royal Berkshire Hospital is also included in the NHP, for substantial re-development. That Hospital Trust has said that its ageing estate makes it difficult for them to deliver modern healthcare in the way they would like – the buildings were designed at a different time to care for fewer patients with different needs than those of today.
- Both hospitals’ redevelopments were due to be completed by 2030, but the National Audit Office has reported numerous delays in implementing the NHP, and they have described it as ‘an ambitious and high-risk programme in many ways’.
- The demand on our hospitals is huge. Over 7 million people in England are currently waiting for NHS hospital treatment. Also, the population of Bracknell Forest has almost doubled from 64,000 in 1971 to some 125,000 currently. Further increases are expected, not least because of the Government’s intention to require more new housing to be built in our Borough.
- At its meeting on 19 March this year, Council approved the establishment of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, jointly with Hampshire County Council and Surrey County Council, to scrutinise the relocation of Frimley Park Hospital. Council appointed Councillors Egglestone and Virgo to sit on

the committee; and requested them to undertake a programme of public engagement activities to communicate the committee's work and decisions to residents, and to enable residents the opportunity to feedback into the process so that their needs and views are properly represented.

Council:

- Asks the Leader of the Council to convey to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, this Council's concern over the impact on residents of any delay in the re-development of Frimley Park and the Royal Berkshire hospitals.
  
- Asks Councillors Egglestone and Virgo to:
  - Convey to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, this Council's concern over the impact on residents of any delay in the redevelopment of Frimley Park hospital.
  - Report to Council on the programme of public engagement which they were requested to carry out, also on the progress of the Joint Committee.
  
  - Encourages the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel, in collaboration with the Health and Wellbeing Board, to rigorously monitor the delivery of the much-needed redevelopments of Frimley Park and the Royal Berkshire hospitals, and to report their views on progress to Council at the earliest opportunity."

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

**CHAIRMAN**