

COUNCIL
9 SEPTEMBER 2020
7.30 - 10.20 PM



Present:

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

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Heydon and Tullett

19. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Subject to the following amendment:

- *Minute 13:* 'Councillor Turrell reported that the Downshire Way duelling scheme had been completed, within budget and on time' be amended to read 'dualling'.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 July 2020 be approved, and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

20. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

21. Mayor's Announcements

Joint Venture Partnership

Daniel King, Managing Director, West London and Thames Valley and Mike Woolliscroft, Chief Executive Officer, Partnerships South from Countryside attended the meeting to introduce the organisation and provide an overview of the upcoming projects.

Emergency Services Day

On behalf of residents, colleagues and all at Bracknell Forest Council the Mayor thanked all of the Borough's Emergency Services.

Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor reflected that since the last Council meeting she and her consort had attended a few engagements in person including the Bracknell Puzzalogical Escape Room and the College Town Montessori school to celebrate its 30th birthday. She was pleased to see that the Borough's 'Open for Business' initiative had been warmly welcomed and widely supported.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Ms Gaw, Older People's Champion, for organising the Mayor's first virtual tea party with Astbury Manor Residents.

Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing

Councillor Birch, Executive Member for Adult Service, Health and Housing was proud to announce that the groundbreaking ceremony at Heathlands had been held the day before. The ceremony marked the start of the redevelopment to provide a new 66 bed site in a joint funded venture with the Clinical Commissioning Group. He thanked all those that had been involved in the project which was anticipated to open at the end of next year.

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning

Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning asked the meeting to join him in acknowledging the hard work of school staff who had provided inspirational leadership. He recognised that following the delivery of remote learning and welcoming the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children into schools the summer had seen additional support provided to GCSE and A level students. Staff had also got schools ready physically for the start of term as well as provide pastoral support to parents who may have been worried.

He added that there had been confirmed cases in three schools: one case at Edgbarrow, two cases at Garth Hill College and two cases at Bracknehale. He advised that individuals and those in close contact with them had been contacted to self-isolate.

He appreciated everyone working together to respond so quickly to this incident in a measured and managed way.

He concluded that he was pleased to confirm that work would start on the Youth Hub next week and the Youth Council would be joining him in celebrating the start of this project.

Councillor Bettison, OBE, Leader of the Council

Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council announced that the Mayor, Councillor Ms Merry had been appointed as his deputy Armed Forces Champion. This role supported both serving military personnel and veterans. He looked forward to working with her to represent the Council at military functions and continue this important work.

22. Chief Constable's Presentation

Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Matt Barber; Chief Constable, John Campbell and Local Police Area Commander, Felicity Parker attended the meeting to provide an update on local policing issues and crime figures within Bracknell Forest.

In response to a question relating to county drug lines becoming less visible during lockdown the Chief Constable confirmed that an operation was ongoing to make a hostile environment and working in partnership with the Council it was a priority to protect vulnerable residents.

It was queried whether the Police had the resources to disperse larger groups and would marshalls come under the control of the Police. The Chief Constable advised

that he did not anticipate that marshalls would be under police control but noted the regulations were currently being written. He explained that Thames Valley Police had been maintaining an additional public order reserve across the force area which was a team of officers which had successfully been deployed across the area as required to disrupt and prevent gatherings.

In response to a question regarding disappointment with the police support to incidents in the north of the Borough involving the traveller community and subsequent damage caused it was explained that each group behaved differently. The Chief Constable noted that there were no approved transit sites across the whole of the Thames Valley. The Local Area Commander explained that a local assessment was undertaken in each case to inform decisions to invoke section 61 orders, provide consistency of response and working with Community Safety Partnership. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner recognised that there were gaps in the current legislation and that 13 transit sites were required across the area but he had sympathy for those affected by local incidents.

It was confirmed in response to a question about how the new tri-service facility in Crowthorne would be utilised that the Thames Valley Police had a very good relationship with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Local Area Commander added that it was intended to be used as a touch down space for neighbourhood team officers.

In response to a question regarding how accurate the data was on the Police.uk website and how often was it updated it was confirmed that the data was supplied by Thames Valley Police. The examples quoted related to reasons provided as to why crimes were not resolved.

The Mayor thanked the Chief Constable, Local Police Area Commander and the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for their attendance and informative presentations.

23. **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 22 July 2020. The Executive had met once on 25 August 2020.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

Financial strategy

- reviewed and updated by Executive to reflect the Covid related pressures and uncertainty
- Significant Covid-19 related pressures in current year (between £6.8 - £14.2m) concerning car parking, leisure income, social care (adults and children) and The Look Out/Planning Fees
- best and worst case outturn scenarios had been developed after using contingency funds e.g. best case -£1.9m and worst case +£5.6m

Budget Planning Framework 2021 onwards

- seven key budget principles had been agreed in February 2020 and were still valid in Covid/post-Covid world
- noted many Covid related service/income pressures would continue beyond 2020/21 and that ongoing Government support levels were unknown

- work was underway planning for worst reasonable case of £15m budget gap over three years

Capital Programme

- 2019/20 outturn and carry forwards had been agreed
- Additions to programme recommended to Council relating to Berkshire Archives (£17k), Market Street (£175k) and Cemetery & Crematorium Memorial Area (£54k) together with the retention of Cemetery & Crematorium bungalow for social care and housing needs

Other issues

- Temporary Changes Addendum agreed for the Statement of Community Involvement
- Councillors Brunel-Walker and Heydon appointed to the Joint Venture Board
- Councillor Heydon appointed as a member of the Town Centre Regeneration Committee with Councillors Allen and Atkinson appointed as non-voting observers.

The report contained recommendations that the Council was asked to resolve in respect of proposed additions to the current year's capital programme.

Councillor Brown asked when it would be assessed how the ongoing pandemic was impacting on social care budgets. Councillor Bettison OBE replied that this was an ongoing process and residents had been asked to complete a questionnaire which looked at the many aspects of the impact of covid on them and their families. The Council was working with third sector partners to ascertain what needs were. He recognised that against a reducing budget there could be individuals who required additional support. 1,800 people volunteered during this period. We need to continue to support those that need help. Councillor Dr Barnard added that in relation to Children's social care the working practices established within the family safeguarding model mean that need can be assessed and rapid and effective change undertaken to deescalate issues within families to help contain the costs whilst providing support. He added that there was no intention of cutting packages of support but using resources available effectively. Councillor Birch explained the transformation programme was still in place and the Council was looking at outcome based commissioning of services and innovative ways to deliver shared services or facilities with partner agencies.

Financial Update

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

RESOLVED that the proposed additions to the current year's capital programme detailed in paragraph 5.37 of the Director: Resources report at Appendix A of the agenda report be agreed.

24. **Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England draft recommendations**

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is reviewing Bracknell Forest Council's electoral arrangements. The new arrangements for the Borough are scheduled to come into effect at the Council elections in May 2023. The Commission's consultation on their proposals for a new pattern of electoral wards.

The cross-party Boundary Review Working Group appointed by Council had considered the Commission's draft warding pattern recommendations. Councillor Birch, Boundary Review Working Group Chairman, thanked the members of the working group, the Director and officers and in particular Ann Moore, Head of Democratic and Registration Services and Phil Sadler, Electoral Services Manager for their hard work. In addition, he thanked everyone who had either submitted information to the working group or had submitted a consultation response directly to the Commission.

Councillor Temperton, Leader of the Labour Group requested that it be formally recorded that Councillors Brown, Neil and Temperton would abstain from the vote. Although they supported the majority of the Working Group's consultation response the Labour Group were unable to support the inclusion of a proposal to redraw the Hanworth Ward boundary.

On the proposition of Councillor Birch, Chairman of the Boundary Review Working Group, seconded by Councillor Dr Barnard

it was **RESOLVED** that the Boundary Review Working Group's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's draft recommendations for new warding arrangements for Bracknell Forest be approved.

25. **Member Development Strategy 2020-24 and Member Development Report 2019-20**

The Council considered the Member Development Annual Report which appraised all Members of the Member Development activities and their outcomes during 2019-20 and sought approval of the Member Development Strategy 2020-2024.

Councillor Allen, Chairman of the Member Development Charter Steering Group thanked members for their participation in the member development programme which was focused on keeping Councillors informed. He thanked Jen Lawson, Democratic & Registration Services Officer for supporting the development of the new strategy and acknowledged that the pandemic had fast-tracked one objective which was to deliver training differently. He added he was pleased to announce that the Council had continued to demonstrate the Charter Plus standard for Member Development in the direction of travel assessment.

Councillor Harrison, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection reminded members to keep referring to the electronic newsletter, Democracy Snapshot, which promoted how to access to a wide range of development opportunities.

On the proposition of Councillor Allen, Chairman of the Member Development Charter Steering Group, seconded by Councillor Harrison, it was

RESOLVED that:

- i) the Member Development Strategy 2020 – 2024 be approved; and
- ii) the Member Development Annual Report 2019 - 20 be noted.

26. **Champion's Annual Report**

Each Champion was asked if they had anything to add to their submitted report:

- Councillor Ms Gaw, Older People's Champion advised the meeting that although the day would be marked the activities planned for the Internal Day for Older Persons in October had been postponed.
- Councillor Wade, Small Business Champion added that there had been significant change since May with the Lexicon doing well, the Joint Venture Partnership presentation demonstrated confidence in Bracknell, businesses related to travelling or entertainment were struggling and although restaurants benefited from government schemes these had now ended.
- Councillor Gibson, Voluntary Sector Champion recognised the voluntary sector in Bracknell had been phenomenal during the pandemic including the role of Councillors and thanked everyone for their hard work.

The Council received the Champions' Annual Report for 2019/20, and the Mayor thanked the Champions for their work.

27. Question Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10

Councillor Mrs Temperton asked Councillor Turrell, Executive Member for Planning and Transport the following published question:

- (a) How does the Government's White Paper- Planning for the Future affect the Council's ability to meet the proposed % of affordable homes in the Local Plan?
 (b) What could be the effect of the proposals in this paper on the finances of Bracknell Forest Council?

In response Councillor Turrell stated that the White Paper was currently in consultation form, acknowledged that it was extensive and proposed large-scale changes to the planning system. The Executive was considering the Council's consultation response on 20 October. The response would look in detail at each of the proposals including those for affordable housing and would address how the Council anticipates proposals would affect delivery in the future. He asked the meeting to note that the government intends that the new system would deliver "at least as much – if not more" onsite affordable housing. He added that the proposed changes would be subject to primary and secondary legislation which would take time to come into effect. He stated that until that time, the Council would continue to determine planning applications based upon the adopted policy position which sought 25% affordable housing on sites which meet the threshold.

He concluded that it was too early to assess whether the proposed changes will affect the finances of the council in any significant way, other than the distinction that funding secured through the planning process was for the delivery of infrastructure rather than for service delivery.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Temperton that it was important for all members to be provided with information on any changes when they come into effect Councillor Turrell confirmed that he would ensure that all members were kept fully informed and updated on changes to Council planning policy.

28. Motion Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11

An altered Motion 02/2020 was moved and seconded by Councillors Temperton and Brown respectively as follows:

The view of this Council is that charging for the use of the Look Out play area should be a one-off as a result of Covid-19 safety measures and not a test case for future charging of playgrounds in Bracknell Forest.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

CHAIRMAN