

COUNCIL
13 SEPTEMBER 2023
7.31 - 9.49 PM



Present:

Councillors Ejaz (Mayor), Penfold (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Bailey, Barnard, Bidwell, Brown, Cochrane, Collings, C Eberle, T Eberle, M Forster, S Forster, Frewer, Frost, Gillbe, Haffeggee, Hayes MBE, Jefferies, Karim, McLean, Neil, O'Regan, Purnell, Smith, Temperton, C Thompson, P Thompson, Virgo, Watts, Webb, Welch, Wright and Zahuruddin

Apologies:

Councillors Egglestone, Gaw, Harrison, McKenzie-Boyle, Mossom, Pickering and Robertson

18. Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was noted that there was an error in the minutes at agenda 7, motion 04/2023 where the original motion had been recorded incorrectly, this would be amended.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 July 2023 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

19. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

20. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reported on her activities since the last Council meeting in July. She had attended supper at the Bishop of Reading's house where it had been lovely to meet so many leaders from across the County and also attended Funfest with looked after children and their foster parents where she had met some amazing young people.

The Mayor had taken some time off in August and attended seven public events and four meetings. One of the events attended was at SO Resi apartments, where the Mayor had learnt that almost 70 units would be allocated for social housing, which was comforting. The Mayor felt that there was a long way to go, but was confident that this council would accelerate its plan to help struggling families.

The Mayor celebrated, along with many Members of Parliament, Mayors and Councillors, Pakistan's Independence Day and Defence Day. A debt of gratitude was owed to the Pakistan army, and its people who sacrificed many lives during the 20 years of war in Afghanistan. One of those who lost his life in battle was Captain Farhan Janjua, who was the son of the Mayor's second cousin.

On 3 September 2023 the Mayor was joined Councillors Temperton and Cochrane for the Annual memorial service. The Mayor encouraged all Councillors to attend going forward. It was held annually on the first Sunday in September.

The Mayor attended the Fire and Rescue services award ceremony at the residence of Lord Lieutenant, James Puxly's, Welford Estate. Bracknell watch based Manager Steven Borham, Crew manager Chris Marten and firefighter Stephen Blackman all received long service awards and Stacey Moyes from Crowthorne received the merit certificate. Bracknell also made it to the shortlist of white watch of the year.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor had opened four new businesses in Lexicon which would add to the economic growth and vibrancy of the town.

Tomorrow morning the Mayor would be joining the Wellness Team for a two mile walk in Lily Hill Park to encourage walking for physical wellbeing and mental health.

21. **Executive Report**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Temperton, presented the report on the work of the Executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 12 July 2023. The Executive had met once on the 18 July 2023.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

Finance and Business Change | Revenue Expenditure Outturn

- The outturn revenue expenditure for 2022/23, subject to audit, was £87.06m.
- This represented an under-spend of £0.506m compared with the approved budget.
- The Executive approved a budget carry forward of £0.036m.
- The general reserves balance at 31 March 2023 was £11.077m, with none of the balance required to help fund the 2023/4 revenue budget.
- Budget carry forwards of £0.036m were approved along with the earmarked reserves and virements relating to the 2022/23.

Finance and Business Change | Capital Expenditure Outturn 2022/23

- The projected capital programme outturn for 2022/23 of £23.701m, which was 40 per cent of the approved budget of £58.792m.
- Carry forwards totalling £34.114m due to underspends were approved.
- The council had an overall capital financing requirement of £220.1m as of 31 March 2023.
- The actual level of borrowing at the end of March 2023 was £85m with investments of £15.8m, leaving a net debt of £69.2m compared with £36.5m last year.

Planning and Transport | High Street Multi Storey Car Park – Condition

- The Executive approved the planned closure of High Street Car Park at the end of October 2023 following the recommendation made by structural engineers.
- The assistant director of property would engage with affected stakeholders.
- The Executive also approved the plan for savings that would be released into expenditure budgets in the current year from the mid-year closure.
- This would be used to fund decommissioning work, including putting up hoarding, securing the site, and commissioning pre and post decommissioning structural surveys.

- The High Street Car Park site would be added to the Bracknell town centre southern gateway site masterplan area. Outline plans would be presented for consideration to the Executive in autumn 2023.

Councillor Barnard asked whether Shop Mobility had been consulted with and what work would be undertaken with them and also asked when the southern gateway site masterplan would be shared with Councillors.

Councillor Temperton confirmed that work was being undertaken with Shop Mobility to ensure that they would be still be accessible and that Councillors would be sighted on the southern gateway site masterplan as soon as it was available and would be able to have an input on the site.

Economic Development and Regeneration | Joint Venture Progress

- The Executive confirmed it would continue support for the Market Street development and agreed proposed changes to the council's previously agreed position.
- Changes included supporting a 10 per cent increase to the council's 50 per cent contribution to the development costs, due to increased construction costs and rephasing of expenditure.
- Authority would be delegated to the Assistant Director of Contract Services to enter into an agreement with the Bracknell Forest Cambium Partnership for required off-site car park provision.
- The Executive Director for Place, Planning and Regeneration would review the council's current town centre parking standards. They would identify a range of future options to reduce reliance on car usage; promoting the use of more sustainable public and private transport, which aligns with the council's climate change ambitions.

Adult Services, Health and Housing | Supported Living – Strategic Procurement Plan

- The Executive approved the strategic procurement plan for an Independence Support and Supported Living service through a flexible framework under the light touch regime as detailed in the strategic procurement plan.
- Authority was delegated for the Supported Living Flexible Framework award decision to the executive director for people, following consultation with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing.
- The procurement would also ensure the council met its statutory duties of The Care Act 2014, which sets out clear expectations for local authorities.

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

Revenue Expenditure Outturn

On the proposition of Councillor Neil, Executive Member for Finance and Business Change seconded by Councillor Karim it was **RESOLVED** that Council note the treasury management performance in 2022/23 as set out in Annex B of the associated report.

Councillor Temperton, Leader of the Council, highlighted some achievements of the administration and since the last Council meeting.

- The borough's first ever climate change summit had been hosted. More than 130 people from local schools, businesses, town and parish councils and voluntary and charity organisations joined forces to discuss how to drive down climate change locally.
- A wide range of support and activities had been promoted to help families throughout the school summer holidays, including the Holiday Activities Fund, cost of living voucher scheme and the Summer of Fun events.
- The borough's first Support for Households event was held on the 4 August in Princess Square. It was attended by hundreds of residents and saw 15 partner organisations provide cost of living support.
- The first Great Wellness Exchange was announced, which would take place throughout September. It would also include Silver Sunday activities to help reduce social isolation.
- The Council celebrated a milestone in the Binfield Health and Community Centre project when Binfield Surgery relocated into the building on 14 August 2023.
- A new operator (Age Concern Bracknell Forest) was appointed to run the Buckler's Park Community Hub. Age Concern Bracknell Forest would offer a range of activities and services to people of all ages once the hub opens later this year.
- A-level results were in line with national averages while GCSE were above national averages in most subjects.
- Cycle September was launched to encourage better health and more active travel around the borough.
- More than £100,000 of grants were awarded to charities, faith groups and voluntary organisations to help local households with the cost of food or energy, including keeping warm over the winter.
- The first 100 days programme was completed, where low income families were helped to save or receive £51,435 through council tax and welfare support grants. £34,263 was distributed between 122 families for essential and crisis support related to food, energy, and other costs.

22. **Standards Annual Report**

Council considered the report advising Council of activity within its Standards framework from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

23. **Climate Change Progress Report**

The Council considered the recommendations regarding the Climate Change Progress Report.

Councillor Haffegge asked a question in relation to scope 3 emissions which the report briefly touched on. Councillor Haffegge asked Councillor Temperton explain what scope 3 emissions were, why these were important, what levels of magnitude these were likely to be and whether there was anything to add further to the approach of assessing them.

Councillor Temperton responded that scope 1 was building and fleet and could be accessed by utility bills which was 1-2% of our emissions. Scope 2 was utilities, which was easy to measure and access. Scope 3 was the hard one, it was all the commission services by the council and included the travelling of staff to and from

location, pension funds and purchasing of goods. This was a harder scope to actually measure and was the scope that needed to be got to grips with over the next year and officers had already started to look into how best to measure scope 3 right now.

On the proposition of Councillor Temperton, Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Council Strategy and Climate Change and seconded by Councillor Purnell it was **RESOLVED** that Council note the progress made by the Council in relation to its climate change strategy and detailed in the Annual Report.

24. **Appointment to Committees and Council Meeting Dates**

The Council considered the recommendations regarding the Appointment to Committees and Council Meeting Dates.

An additional recommendation was proposed that Councillor Zahuruddin be appointed to the vacant Liberal Democrat seat on the Planning Committee.

On the proposition of Councillor Temperton, Leader and Executive Member for Council Strategy and Climate Change seconded by Councillor Barnard it was **RESOLVED** that:

- i. Councillor Allen is appointed to the additional Bracknell Forest seat on the Joint Public Protection Committee, subject to the Executive agreeing to the increase of councillors on the committee at the Executive meeting on 19 September 2023.
- ii. Councillor M Forster is appointed to the vacant Liberal Democrat seat on the Employment Committee.
- iii. Councillor Zahuruddin is appointed to the vacant Liberal Democrat seat on the Planning Committee.
- iv. That Councillor Barnard is appointed to one of the vacant seats on the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education.
- v. That the following changes to the 2023/2024 meetings schedule are agreed:
 - Wednesday 21 February 2024 – Budget Meeting
 - Wednesday 28 February 2024 – contingency date for adjourned budget Meeting
 - Thursday 7 March 2024 – ordinary council meeting
- vi. That Part 4: Section 3 of the constitution is amended to reflect that the annual Budget Meeting will be a Special Meeting convened to agree the budget with a single item of business.

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

Councillor Harrison asked Councillor Purnell, Executive Member for Environment and Community Cohesion the following published question:

Would the Executive Member responsible for liaison with community groups please update the Council on what they have done to ensure a viable future for the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare?

In response, Councillor Purnell, Executive Member for Environment and Community Cohesion provided the following published response:

I agree with Councillor Harrison that the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare site is a valuable asset which has had a positive impact on a wide range of communities. Including people with mental, physical, and learning disabilities giving them an opportunity to work together in the fresh air, build their confidence, develop new skills and find support for their health and wellbeing.

A recently bereaved lady found a new way of life after visiting the site. "It's a very special place," she says. "I was a bit apprehensive and overwhelmed to start with but spending time at Jealott's Hill and enjoying its fresh air, wildlife and flowers has helped me overcome my grief to some extent. Bereavement caused me to seek new friends and opportunities and here, that's exactly what I get" This quote was taken from Royal Horticultural Society website who call the project "An innovative community growing space.....a source of solace and new beginnings"

I don't think there is a single person in this room or watching this meeting today who does not agree that every effort must be made to save this precious Landshare. I am working closely with council officers, the Friends of Jealotts Hill Community Landshare and partners to identify ways in which the Landshare can be sustained. The site is owned by Syngenta and has been leased to Silva Homes who have been the lead organisation in managing the Land share and employing the staff that work there. Silva Homes have given Syngenta notice on the lease and the site closed at the end of August to the public with activity since, focussed on tidying the site and handing it back to Syngenta at the end of September. Silva Homes have cited the ongoing financial liability for the operations of the site with decreased levels of use since the Covid pandemic and it not being aligned to their strategic priority to invest in the communities they operate in.

Since being made aware of the possible closure of the site the Council has had several meetings with Silva Homes including one with Syngenta to understand the issues, liabilities, and opportunities for sustaining the Landshare. The council's Chief Executive has written to the Chief Executive's of both Silva Homes and Syngenta to request a meeting and further discussion. I have also personally met with the Chair of the Friends of the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare to offer my support in trying to sustain the project. Options to sustain the Community Landshare include establishing a CIC (Community Interest Company) are being explored with the support of Involve Community Services. The Council has also been looking to identify alternative organisations whose aims align with the Landshare who may be interested in taking on a lease and management of the site.

I can assure Cllr Harrison that I am committed to supporting and working positively with the Friends of the Jealotts Hill Community Landshare, fellow borough, town and parish councillors, as well as partner organisations like Involve. I will do all I can to ensure a viable future for the Landshare and look forward to further discussions with him on the next steps in doing so.

Councillor Purnell agreed that Councillor Harrison could send his supplementary question to her outside of the meeting.

Councillor Virgo asked Councillor Wright, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing the following published question:

Our sexual health provision is at crisis point. What urgent action will be taken to make it fit for purpose in our expanding town?

In response Councillor Wright, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing provided the following published response:

Data from the Office for Health Improvement (OHID) and the local services do not indicate a crisis in the sexual and reproductive health services. The trend in newly diagnosed sexually transmitted infections (STI) are showing an upward trend in 2022, however the rates are lower than 2019 and lower than the national trends. This trend is similar to local authority areas with similar demographics.

Data from our local services indicate that from April to June 2023 98 per cent of service users calling the service for an appointment during reception's opening times were triaged within 30 minutes, with 97 per cent of service users seen within two days. The services are meeting the standards set for management of STI by the British Association of Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH).

Councillors can be assured that the current evidence does not indicate a crisis in sexual health service provision in Bracknell Forest, but there are always matters that need to be reviewed and addressed to respond to the needs of our population.

The Council is committed to commissioning services that meet the future needs of the growing population and our changing demographics. We are therefore engaged with our local authority partners on an East Berkshire sexual health needs assessment which will inform the future commissioning of Sexual Health services in Bracknell Forest over the next year. As part of this we will be seeking to improve digital access to sexual and reproductive health services which is a priority locally. The Public Health teams have been working with experts in good digital design to understand how we can do this well. It is important so that people access both the testing they may require alongside good quality triage and tailored advice.

Finally, if someone is experiencing symptoms they should not wait for a test, but should get to a clinic as soon as possible, to receive the treatment that is required. They can access local services or any clinics outside the area as well. Links on how to access sexual health clinics can be found in my written answer.

Councillor Virgo asked Councillor Wright, Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing the following supplementary question:

I understand that there is to be a review of the sexual health services all over shortly, I would like to ask the Executive Member to whether she would look at other authorities who provide sexual health services like the London North West Health area in Ealing who take a very different approach by opening every week day to provide their help to those in full time employment and find it difficult to make an appointment.

In response Councillor Wright confirmed that the Council would be looking for a new provider in due course when the current contract ended and would take Councillor Virgo's advice into consideration and would look at the health needs of the community and the best options for the community.

Councillor P Thompson asked Councillor Gillbe, Executive Member for Planning and Transport the following published question:

Can the Executive Member give an update on this Council's plans for this autumn, 2023, to repair the many potholes in public roads in Bracknell Forest

Borough Council area [which are of great concern to many residents] and report to Council, each year, before winter?

In response Councillor Gillbe, Executive Member for Planning and Transport, provided the following published response:

Without doubt, the travelling public are contending with a national pothole problem. Like all highway authorities nationally, the challenge in Bracknell Forest centres around an ageing road network which needs increased maintenance investment.

Whilst the generally difficult winters in the UK, combined with increasingly frequent severe weather events and ongoing traffic demands are all factors in the national pothole problem, there is no doubt that insufficient maintenance funding is at the core of this issue.

Council's receive annual grant funding for highway maintenance from central Government but this has broadly remained at a static level for many years (if not a decade) and the scale of this funding has simply not matched the demands of the ageing infrastructure. And of course, this Government grant is not provided solely for road maintenance, but also for meeting the needs of wider highway assets like street lighting, highway structures and drainage systems. Rising inflation has of course worsened this situation, with some construction materials having increased by over 35% in the past 18 months.

In practical terms, roads have a life-span beyond which they require resurfacing; but this process is expensive and there are many candidate roads. Even with the additional Council funding provided there is no alternative but to repair potholes in locations where our first choice would otherwise be to provide a whole new road surface. This is not unique to Bracknell Forest and all highway authorities face this reality.

But despite this challenge, the Council must be responsible. We must do all we can to maintain a safe highway network for our residents. This means managing the unavoidable pothole problem in a systematic, responsive and affordable way.

Our engineers continuously inspect and monitor the highways, necessarily making risk assessments to prioritise our resources within the limitations of our funding. Our highway inspectors patrol and identify potholes, but of course the public also play their part by reporting potholes too. There is no doubt, however, without an increase in Government funding this pothole challenge will be relentless.

Throughout the past winter and early spring (broadly October to April) the Council made 709 carriageway repairs, involving 1871 tonnes of road material.

Post winter (from May onwards) there has been a further push to stabilise network condition with 754 carriageway repairs alongside our annual road resurfacing programme – a combined total of 5798 tonnes of material.

Councillor P Thompson asked Councillor Gillbe, Executive Member for Planning and Transport the following supplementary question:

What proportion of our roadways are currently considered to be beyond their expected lifespan and what action is the council taking to address the funding shortfall as it is exacerbating these hazardous conditions?

In response Councillor Gillbe confirmed that the council's engineers undertook an annual condition survey across the boroughs 450kms of road, and that this informed the resurfacing forward plan which was based on a worst first basis. Whilst many candidate roads would be visibly poor in condition, others would be less obvious such as where there were structural weaknesses which is why a data led and responsible approach was important. Currently 11% of the overall road network was in a condition which required resurfacing as it had reached the end of its useful life. This figured matched the average for England and Wales. Despite the shortfall in Government funding, the council had increased its own capital funding towards highway maintenance in recent years. However, no Local Authority will be able to fix this problem unless supported adequately by government and this was the message that Councillor Gillbe would seek to deliver at the highest level as maintain safety for the travelling public was key. Councillor Gillbe also praised Councillor P Thompson as a passionate advocate for his community, and that his emails to Councillor Gillbe on behalf of his residents were a testament to this. Councillor Gillbe stated that he was happy to meet up with him outside of the meeting to discuss any specific examples within his ward and would be happy to go on a field trip to be shown the evidence.

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

Motion 05/2023

Motion 05/2023 was moved by Councillor Temperton and seconded by Councillor Haffegge respectively, as follows:

This Council declares a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency

To that end, this Council invites the Executive to;

- i. Resolve to review, broaden and accelerate its Climate Change Strategy, and to commit to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions as close to 2030 as possible.
- ii. Co-produce with the community a Community Climate Emergency Strategy, with the aim of making the wider Bracknell Forest area net-zero as close to 2030 as possible.
- iii. Explore the feasibility of raising a Bracknell Forest Local Climate Bond to support decarbonisation projects throughout the Borough.
- iv. Revise the Biodiversity Action Plan to include audits of the State of Nature in the Borough and to highlight local biodiversity threats due to the Climate Change. Reports of these will be presented annually. Any expected ecological impacts will also be added to Executive and Council reports.

An addition was made to the motion by Councillor Temperton, and seconded by Councillor Haffegge, therefore the motion would read as follows:

This Council declares a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency.

To that end, this Council invites the Executive to;

- i. Resolve to review, broaden and accelerate its Climate Change Strategy, and to commit to achieve net-zero CO2 emissions as close to 2030 as possible.

- ii. Co-produce with the community a Community Climate Emergency Strategy, with the aim of making the wider Bracknell Forest area net-zero as close to 2030 as possible.
- iii. Both the strategies should be done so in a financially transparent way to demonstrate accountability, affordability and economic benefits, with clear interim, smart targets.
- iv. Explore the feasibility of raising a Bracknell Forest Local Climate Bond to support decarbonisation projects throughout the Borough.
- v. Revise the Biodiversity Action Plan to include audits of the State of Nature in the Borough and to highlight local biodiversity threats due to the Climate Change. Reports of these will be presented annually. Any expected ecological impacts will also be added to Executive and Council reports.

A recorded vote was called by Councillor M Forster on the motion and the voting was as follows:

FOR (34): Councillors Allen, Bailey, Barnard, Bidwell, Brown, Cochrane, Collings, C Eberle, T Eberle, Ejaz, M Forster, S Forster, Frewer, Frost, Gillbe, Haffegge, Hayes, Jefferies, Karim, McLean, Neil, O'Regan, Penfold, Purnell, Smith, Temperton, C Thompson, P Thompson, Virgo, Watts, Webb, Welch, Wright, Zahuruddin

AGAINST (0): None

ABSTAIN: (0): None

The motion was carried.

Motion 06/2023

Motion 06/2023 was moved by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor C Eberle respectively, as follows:

This Council recognises that it has some way to go in achieving its published values, particularly in terms of inclusivity, engaging with residents, and involving residents in important policy decisions. Council requests the Executive to report at a future meeting on efforts to enhance resident engagement, including practical measures aimed at improving working arrangements so as to give residents a stronger, genuine voice in the Council's business.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

Motion 07/2023

Motion 07/2023 was moved by Councillor Barnard and seconded by Councillor McLean respectively, as follows:

The Council continues to recognise and promote the vital importance of good emotional health and well-being for our residents, particularly but not exclusively for younger people, and commits to working with partner organisations and local communities to further improve awareness of advice, support and opportunities available to all to support this aim.

Furthermore, the council will work to ensure that promoting positive emotional well-being and mental health will underpin the objectives of the new Council Plan.

An amendment was made to the motion by Councillor Barnard, and seconded by Councillor McLean, therefore the motion would read as follows:

The Council continues to recognise and promote the vital importance of good emotional health and well-being for our residents, particularly but not exclusively for younger people, and commits to working with partner organisations and local communities to further improve awareness of advice, support and opportunities available to all to support this aim.

Furthermore, the council will work to ensure that promoting positive emotional well-being and mental health will be an essential objective of the new Council Plan.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

CHAIRMAN

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