

COUNCIL

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Monday, 25th September, 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Dale Grounds in the Chair;

Councillors Kier Barsby, Will Bostock, Ian Briggs, Jodine Cronshaw, Samantha Deakin, Anna Ellis, Andy Gascoyne, Paul Grafton, Julie Gregory, Arnie Hankin, Oliver Hay, Tom Hollis, Christopher Huskinson, Dawn Justice, Sarah Lewsey, Trevor Locke, Sarah Madigan, Gordon Mann, Cathy Mason, Andy Meakin, Warren Nuttall, Nicholas Parvin, Matthew Relf, Phil Rostance, Dave Shaw, John Smallridge, Helen-Ann Smith, Lee Waters, John Wilmott and Jason Zadrozny.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Jamie Bell, Vicki Heslop, Rachel Madden and David Walters.

Officers Present: John Bennett, Craig Bonar, Lynn Cain, Hannah Cash, Ruth Dennis, Louise Ellis, Theresa Hodgkinson, Peter Hudson, Jas Hundal, Mike Joy, Chris Stephenson and Shane Wright.

C.37 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

C.38 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24 July 2023, as now submitted, be received and approved.

C.39 Announcements from the Chairman, Leader, Members of the Cabinet and the Head of Paid Service

Chairman of the Council

The Chairman took the opportunity to give an update in respect of the events he had hosted and attended since his appointment in May 2023. He thanked his partner Laura and the Council's Civic Team for their ongoing support and

commitment towards helping him forge partnerships, friendships and connections across the county as part of his role as Chairman.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive welcomed John Bennett to the meeting in his new role as Executive Director of Place and gave a brief insight into his previous roles and achievements.

Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council firstly thanked the Chairman for being such a great Ambassador for Ashfield and for all his hard work in attending so many events across the County thus far. He then welcomed John Bennett to the Council and shared his excitement and ambitions for working with him in the future.

Thanks, and congratulations were then extended to Andrew Topping from the Chad Newspaper who was leaving his role as local reporter to take up a teaching position at Nottingham Trent University.

Lastly, the Leader took the opportunity to offer his apologies to Councillor Cathy Mason for his conduct at the previous meeting. He felt that his passion for providing social housing had temporarily overtaken his regard for respect for fellow Councillors in the Chamber and the fact that he had singled her out and caused offence was not acceptable. He hoped that the apology could be accepted and that a line could be drawn for ensuring considerate and inclusive debates in the future.

C.40 Presentations of Awards

The Chairman took the opportunity to highlight the following achievements:

- Kirkby Leisure Centre selected as a top finalist for Best Efficiency and Transformation category and named regeneration and restoration project of the year at Insider Media 2023 Property Awards
- The Chief Executive, Theresa Hodgkinson, shortlisted in the Sherwood Forest Hospitals Trust Excellence Awards and “highly commended”
- Kingsmill Green Flag award
- Gillian Welch awarded with the inaugural Nottinghamshire County Council Boots and Berets 2023 Award for Employee Forces Hero
- Ashfield District Council awarded Council of the Year for the East Midlands region in the ‘Energy Efficiency Regional Awards’ and, in particular, for delivering the successful insulation of 104 bungalows across the District over the past 12 months.

C.41 Questions from the Public

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, the following question had been submitted by Kerry Thornton:

“Leamington is recognised as the most deprived ward in our district and the Council's own Public Open Space strategy and Be Healthy Be Happy report identify the importance of green spaces in tackling inactivity. Given the level of deprivation, that impact on health and wellbeing and the Council's own Health and Wellbeing report about this area, can the Council explain how the plans to potentially build on the Rec at Hardwick Lane align with their policies?”

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jason Zadrozny, responded by stating that the Council had pledged to build a further 200 homes over the next 4 years and that the Hardwick Lane site was appropriate. The Council has invested in a substantial Play Park Strategy having recently secured funding for improvements at The Twitchell Recreation Ground and therefore Leamington Ward residents would not be missing out.

A comparison was offered in respect of the previous Labour Administration's non-investment in Council homes and the current, escalating need for suitable Council property provision for the 4,320 people presently on the Council's housing list. To conclude, the Leader gave some examples and anecdotes from satisfied residents now settled in their new Council homes across the District.

The Chairman then gave Ms. Thornton the opportunity to ask a supplementary question and she responded as follows:-

“When will the Leader of the Council meet the residents' group to discuss the Council's plans in further detail?”

The Leader of the Council responded to the supplementary question by reiterating the many different methods available to Ashfield residents to consult, comment and ask questions of Council officers in respect of this particular housing proposal. He concluded by stating that recent data had confirmed that the Hardwick Recreation Ground was not being used and could therefore provide suitable land for much needed Council homes.

C.42 Petitions

No petitions were received for consideration.

C.43 Report on an Urgent Key Decision

In accordance with Rule 17.2 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, the Leader informed Council of an executive decision that had been taken pursuant to Rule 16 (Special Urgency Provisions.)

The decision related to a necessity to complete a major project without delay to enable Government funding to be realised and maximised following the project contractors going into administration.

The decision was key and contained exempt information and the full 28 days' notice could not be given. The Rule 16 Notice and the non-exempt elements of the decision were duly published on the Council's website.

C.44 Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts

Council was requested to approve the commencement of public consultation on the amendments to polling places and polling districts as set out in the report.

RESOLVED that

- a) the information contained in the report, be received and noted;
- b) approval be given for a public consultation exercise to commence on 2 October 2023 and conclude on 31 October 2023.

C.45 Changes to Committee Memberships

RESOLVED

that the changes to Committee memberships as advised by the Leader and as circulated, be received and noted.

C.46 Recommendations from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees

Council was requested to consider and approve six recommendations from Cabinet meetings held on 31 July and 18 September 2023.

Minute No. CA.11

Cabinet – 31 July 2023

Funding Update

RESOLVED that

- a) the revised Towns Fund reprofiled funding programme for the Capital Programme, as outlined in the Cabinet report, be approved;
- b) the submission of an expression of interest to the Arts Council be noted and the grant monies be accepted with the Council acting as the Accountable Body, should the bid be successful;
- c) following receipt of funds, Section 106 monies be included in the Capital Programme, as detailed in the Cabinet report.

Minute No. CA.12

Cabinet – 31 July 2023

Draft Financial Outturn 2022/23 for General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme

RESOLVED

that approval be given to carry forward the £21.419m underspend on the Capital Programme to 2023/24, due to slippage (delays to schemes) included in the approved Programme shown at Section 4 of the Cabinet report.

Minute No. CA.16

Cabinet – 31 July 2023

Proposed Demolition and Redevelopment of two Community Centres for Affordable Housing

RESOLVED

that subject to planning consent and confirmation of Homes England funding, the use of Housing Revenue Account reserves and if needed commuted sums, to fund the site clearances and the development of 4 new Council homes, be approved.

Minute No. CA.20

Cabinet – 18 September 2023

Corporate Plan 2023-2027

RESOLVED

that the new Corporate Plan for 2023-2027, as presented, be approved.

Minute No. CA.23

Cabinet – 18 September 2023

2023/24 Forecast Outturn for General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme as at July 2023

RESOLVED

that the amendments and the addition of new schemes to the Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28 and the funding of the Capital Programme as set out in Section 7 and Appendix 3 of the Cabinet report, be approved.

Minute No. CA.27

Cabinet – 18 September 2023

Approval to Purchase a Site at Lowmoor Road from Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) by Ashfield District Council (ADC)

RESOLVED

that funding to support the purchase of the Lowmoor Road site from Nottinghamshire County Council, in accordance with the draft Heads of Terms (HOTs) as presented, be approved.

C.47 Updates from Members of the Cabinet on their Portfolio Activity

The following Cabinet Members gave updates in relation to their portfolio activity:

Councillor Samantha Deakin – Executive Lead Member for Parks and Environmental Services

Councillor Matthew Relf – Executive Lead Member for Growth, Regeneration and Local Planning

Councillor John Wilmott – Executive Lead Member for Governance.

Councillor Jason Zadrozny – Leader of the Council.

(During the Cabinet Member updates and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 30, it was moved by Councillor Matthew Relf and seconded by Councillor Helen-Ann Smith that Procedure Rules 10 [Duration of Meeting] and 23 [Conclusion of Proceedings] be suspended, for the duration of the meeting, to enable all matters on the agenda to be satisfactorily concluded. Having been put to the vote, the Council agreed with this course of action.)

C.48 Notices of Motion

No motions were received for consideration.

C.49 Questions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13

Question 1

from Councillor Kier Barsby to the Leader of the Council:

“Given that there are more people on our housing list than properties owned by this authority and with very few becoming available each year, does he agree with me that the prospect of building new council homes in Ashfield is a positive step forward.”

The Leader of the Council responded and said yes to the question.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.5, Councillor Barsby was invited to ask a supplementary question as follows:

“Would the Leader clarify for this Council membership that even when more houses are built than the total number of properties owned, it does not increase but flatlines due to the Right to Buy?”

The Leader responded again and advised that although Right to Buy was a great thing for Ashfield tenants, the Government had never rectified the imbalance of not allowing the Council to use the sale money from properties to build new Council houses. He reaffirmed that it was vital that the Council utilised available areas of land within the District to build new Council homes for future provision, whilst giving examples of how he believed the former Labour administration had failed to take action during their tenure.

Question 2

from Councillor Sarah Madigan to the Leader of the Council:

“Given that here in Ashfield, we have many people who are older and many being dis-abled it follows that toilet provision is of the utmost importance. So many people have told me that before leaving their home they need to know that there is easy accessibility to toilets. This is the by far most common enquiry I’ve received. People of all ages and abilities from all over Ashfield use and enjoy Sutton Lawn, so I would like to ask the Leader for his assurance that this vital amenity whatever the outcome of the Rumbles affair will be kept open.”

The Leader of the Council responded and firstly gave a brief synopsis of the current situation regarding legal negotiations being undertaken for future café provisions on Sutton Lawn. He stated that the Council was committed to safeguarding the toilets and café provision on Sutton Lawn but could not comment further due to legal process.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.5, Councillor Madigan was invited to ask a supplementary question but she declined.

Question 3

from Councillor Cathy Mason to the Leader of the Council:

“With the Asset of Community Value submission regarding Brierley House being acknowledged by the Legal department, which by all accounts suspends any action regarding the building while it is undergoing that procedure, is the Council prepared to lift the ban placed on booking the facility during this period which may be up to 2 months. So that those wishing to benefit from the health and wellbeing effects their meetings give, can continue for the time being, whilst also generating income to the council.”

The Leader of the Council responded and firstly stated that having made a decision earlier on the agenda in relation to the closure of Brierley House, this decision could not be rescinded for the next six months unless certain criteria were met as outlined in the Council’s Constitution.

He did however, go on to state that he appreciated the Councillor’s point and would consider removing the ban on taking bookings for Brierley House whilst it remained open and would contact Councillor Mason in writing once his decision had been made.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.5, Councillor Mason was invited to ask a supplementary question as follows:

“In accordance with a similar six month community engagement exercise being carried out currently for Willetts Court, could the Council give the residents some community engagement for Brierley House to find out what they would like to do with it?”

The Leader responded by reiterating the fact that a decision had already been made to close the facility and also commented that the Carsic Ward was lucky to have two alternative community venues, namely Aspley Court and St. Marys' Court.

However, to assist Councillor Mason, the Leader stated that he would make officers within the Place and Wellbeing Team available to her to consider any potential alternatives/initiatives for community provision within the Carsic Ward going forward.

C.50 Questions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.2 - In relation to Cabinet and Committee Meeting Minutes published since the last ordinary meeting of the Council

No questions were received from Members.

C.51 Section 100A Local Government Act 1972: Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED

that in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act and in respect of which the Proper Officer considers that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

C.52 Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme - Additional Funding (Exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3)

Approval was sought for additional funding to support the delivery of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Round 3b) funded projects.

RESOLVED that

- a) approval be given to proceed with capital investment in decarbonisation technologies and infrastructure for Hucknall Leisure Centre and Urban Road Central Offices;
- b) the amount of capital budget allocated from the Council towards Hucknall Leisure Centre be increased, to meet at least the minimum decarbonisation targets set by the grant funding body, Salix;
- c) the amount of capital budget allocated from the Council towards the Central Office project be increased to meet at least the minimum decarbonisation targets set by the grant funding body, Salix, and to assist the Council to attain its net zero ambitions.

The meeting closed at 9.08 pm

Chairman.