

COUNCIL

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

on Monday, 12th February, 2024 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, Vicki Heslop, Tom Hollis, Christopher Huskinson, Dawn Justice, Sarah Lewsey, Trevor Locke, Rachel Madden, Sarah Madigan, Gordon Mann, Andy Meakin, Warren Nuttall, Nicholas Parvin, Phil Rostance, Dave Shaw, John Smallridge, Helen-Ann Smith, David Walters, Lee Waters, John Wilmott and Jason Zadrozny.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Jamie Bell, Cathy Mason and Matthew Relf.

Officers Present: John Bennett, Lynn Cain, Ruth Dennis, Theresa Hodgkinson, Peter Hudson, Mike Joy, Abbie Smith and Shane Wright.

C.67 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

C.68 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 27 November 2023, as now submitted, be received and approved.

C.69 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 from November 2023 to January 2024 including a visit to Kings Mill Hospital on Christmas Day as part of the recent Toy Appeal.

An announcement was also made that once his tenure as Chairman of the Council ended in May 2024, he would be commencing work as a volunteer with the 'Enlighten the Shadows' charity at their new offices in Kirkby.

Leader of the Council

The Leader took the opportunity to advise Council that this would be the first meeting in 50 years where there was not one Labour Councillor present in the Chamber.

Congratulations were given to Councillor Paul Grafton who had recently celebrated his 70th birthday and to Tony Delahunty, a broadcaster for Mansfield 103.2 Radio, who had recently celebrated his 80th birthday and the achievement of broadcasting media every day for 1,100 days without a break.

Mention was made regarding the recent Ashfield District Council Employee Awards and the Discover Ashfield Awards and how excellent staff, and local organisations and businesses were being recognised and awarded for their achievements.

Executive Lead Member for Community Safety and Crime Reduction

The Executive Lead Member advised that a resident had recently been prosecuted for causing anti-social behaviour within Sutton Town Centre. An injunction had been granted and a fine given of £2,000.

C.70 Presentation of Awards

No presentation of awards were made.

C.71 Questions from the Public

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

"As you will be aware national legislation came into force on 31st December 2023 regarding XL bullies.

From 31 December 2023 it became against the law to:

- * Sell an XL Bully dog*
- * Abandon an XL Bully dog*
- * Give away an XL Bully dog*
- * Breed from an XL Bully dog*
- * Have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle*

Hundreds of dogs in shelters have been euthanised already due to the non rehoming law, hundreds and hundreds more are reportedly being abandoned in the streets by their owners who are either struggling with all the new legislation's, or having exempted their dog, being given eviction notices from their homes due to having a banned breed.

From February 1st 2024, it will be a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog unless it is covered by public liability insurance, microchipped, neutered and has a Certificate of Exemption. If the owners are unable to achieve every one of these in just a few weeks, they by law must arrange for their pet to be euthanised.

Cost.

Insurance - £25 (dogs trust)

Microchipping - around £20

Neutering - up to £400

Government exemption -£92.40

This totals up to over £500, which many people simply cannot afford.

To put this in context, The average monthly food budget in the UK is £194 per person.

Under the Government's compensation scheme, owners of XL Bully dogs who elect to have their dogs euthanised are then entitled to claim £200 towards these costs.

Locally vets for pets in Ashfield have now confirmed they will euthanise healthy dogs - while this is a national issue, it's happening here in Ashfield!

Many people in Ashfield strongly disagree with Healthy animals being put down unnecessarily through no fault of their own.

Could you outline your position on this? Also what stance and actions Ashfield District Council intend to take to support these dogs and their owners."

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jason Zadrozny, responded by thanking Ms. Denny for her question. He said that Ashfield is a community of animal lovers and that this legislation has been difficult for a lot of people as they do not like to see healthy, safe animals being put to sleep. He went on to explain that the Council has no role in enforcing the XL Bully dog ban that was introduced by the Government.

He explained that enforcement is a matter for the Police, for example, if they are walking a dog without a muzzle, as it is with other banned breeds like Pitbull Terriers. He explained that this Council's role with animals is in relation to stray dogs and he has been working with officers to make sure that the Council is not putting itself in a position where it might be putting healthy animals in a position where they might be euthanised.

In terms of the financials, the Leader explained there is advice and financial support available to owners who want to keep their dogs; for example, there is a lot of support and information for owners from the RSPCA. He gave details of the Veterinary Care Fund which is a partnership of the Blue Cross, the RSPCA and Battersea which will help with up to £250 towards the cost of neutering and microchipping as well as the insurances for eligible, financially struggling owners. The Leader will be asking officers to signpost and work with owners for this support and to veterinary practices that will make the application on behalf of the owner. The Leader explained that this fund will

also help with other costs relating to a pet's health where the owner is struggling financially.

The Leader said he would be writing to all veterinary practices in the Ashfield District, expressing his opinion that they should not be putting healthy, safe dogs down and will be asking all Council's Departments to work as sensitively as possible to help residents abide by the law whilst saving healthy safe dogs from being prematurely destroyed.

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

"With the Government bribing people with £200 to put down their pets and Nottinghamshire Police spending half a million pounds on policing XL Bully dogs despite only allocating a budget earlier this year of only eighty thousand; as Leader will you confirm that this Council will be compassionate to pet owners when dealing with other agencies and also when dealing with other agencies, encourage them to do the same?"

The Leader of the Council responded to the supplementary question by confirming that Ashfield District Council is not the Nottinghamshire Police Force and is not a tool for them to enact this law. The Council of course works with them as partners strategically, but officers will not be doing the Police's job for them in this regard. He reiterated that the Council will be working with owners to try and make sure they can follow the law in a safe way, in a supported way, that saves dogs that do not need to be put to sleep.

C.72 Petitions

No petitions were received for consideration.

C.73 Pay Policy Statement 2024 - 2025

Council was requested to approve and adopt the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25.

RESOLVED

that the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25, as presented, be received and approved.

C.74 Electoral Registration and Election Matters

Council was requested to appoint and authorise nominated officers to act as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers, as outlined within the report.

RESOLVED that

- a) with effect from 13 February 2024, Theresa Hodgkinson, Chief Executive, be appointed and authorised as Deputy Electoral Registration Officer pursuant to Section 52(2) of the 1983 Act;

b) the following officer be authorised to act as Deputy Electoral Registration Officer for the purpose of signing Temporary Voter Authority Certificates, in addition to the Statutory Electoral Registration Officer (Ruth Dennis), Deputy Electoral Registration Officer (Theresa Hodgkinson) and those previously authorised by the Council in March 2023:

- Ian Dobson, Electoral Services (AEA) Consultant (for elections during 2024/2025).

C.75 Annual Select Committee Report 2023/24

The Chairman of the Principal Select Committee, Councillor Kier Barsby, presented the Annual Select Committee Report for 2023/24 with a contribution from Councillor Oliver Hay as the Chairman of the Inward Focus Select Committee.

RESOLVED

that the work undertaken by the Select Committees, as detailed within the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2023/24, be received and noted.

C.76 Recommendations from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees

Council was requested to consider and approve two recommendations from Cabinet.

Minute No. CA.43

Cabinet – 29 January 2024

Community Safety Partnership – Strategic Plan

RESOLVED

that the new Community Safety Plan for 2024-2027 and the accompanying action plan, as presented, be approved.

Minute No. CA.51

Cabinet – 29 January 2024

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

C.77 Updates from Members of the Cabinet on their Portfolio Activity

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

Councillor Jason Zadrozny – Leader of the Council

Councillor Vicki Heslop – Executive Lead Member for Governance

Councillor John Wilmott – Executive Lead Member for Community Safety and Crime Reduction

Councillor Helen-Ann Smith – Deputy Leader and Executive Lead Member for Parks and Environmental Services

Councillor Chris Huskinson – Executive Lead Member for Leisure, Health and Wellbeing.

C.78 Notices of Motion

No motions were received for consideration.

C.79 Questions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13

No questions were received from Members.

C.80 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.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Chairman.