

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Date: Thursday, 15 October 2015

Venue: Council Chamber - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

M J Ford, JP
(Mayor)

Mrs C L A Hockley
(Deputy Mayor)

Councillors: B Bayford, Mrs S M Bayford, Miss S M Bell, J V Bryant, Mrs P M Bryant, T M Cartwright, MBE, P J Davies, Mrs M E Ellerton, J M Englefield, K D Evans, G Fazackarley, N R Gregory, Miss T G Harper, L Keeble, T G Knight, A Mandry, Mrs K Mandry, Mrs S Pankhurst, R H Price, JP, D L Steadman, D C S Swanbrow, Mrs K K Trott, N J Walker, D M Whittingham, C J Wood and S D T Woodward



1. PRAYERS

The meeting opened with prayers led by the Mayor's Chaplain, the Reverend Bill Day from St Mary's Church, Hook-with-Warsash.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T J Howard, D J Norris and P W Whittle, JP.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Mayor be authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30 July 2015.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that the next charity events would be:
the "Last night of the Proms" featuring Spinnaker Brass and Portsmouth Military Wives Choir – Saturday 17th October 7:30pm at Ferneham Hall (tickets £10);
Lunch at Portchester Parish Hall at 12noon on Sunday 22nd November – bring your own drinks, (tickets £10);
Christmas Concert with Spinnaker Brass at 7:30pm on Saturday 5th December at Holy Rood Church, Stubbington (tickets £7.50);
and the Tea Parties on Thursday 5th November – Rod Cameron talk on "He's Behind You, Oh No He's Not!" and Thursday 3rd December – Songs for Christmas with the Vox Pop & Rock Choir" (tickets £4).

5. EXECUTIVE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader was delighted to present the Mayor with an award for the Most Innovative Small Business Friendly Project from the Federation of Small Businesses. The Council has won the award for its work on the Innovation Centre at the Solent Enterprise Zone at Daedalus.

6. EXECUTIVE MEMBERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Police and Crime Panel

The Executive Member for Public Protection provided an update for Members following the Police and Crime Panel meeting he had attended on 2 October in Winchester.

The main issues discussed were:

- The outcome of an Independent Case Review undertaken by Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board into the handling of a recent Missing Child Inquiry and the lessons learnt.

- Monitoring of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan.
- The draft Commissioner's Annual Report for the year 2014-15. Also, the draft Annual Report of the Police and Crime Panel for the year 2014-15.
- A paper reviewing the Police and Crime Panel's budget for 2014-15, and monitoring the budget for 2015-16 in advance of the proposed budget for 2016-17.

The Panel also received a paper on the Police and Crime Commissioner's Communications and Engagement Strategy. The Panel was not happy with this paper as it focussed mainly on the Estates Plan. The point was raised that the Police and the public are not being kept informed – for example, the Operational Change Programme had made many changes to the Force throughout Hampshire, with no communication to the public. It was pointed out that, with any culture change programme, it had to be led from the top and an independent person needed to have an overview.

The Executive Member commented that the same could be said about communication of the Estates Plan. It was agreed at the last Executive Meeting, that Fareham Police Safer Neighbourhood teams would move into the Civic Offices. Interestingly, local Fareham Police had still not received any communication on this matter from either the Commissioner or from Hampshire Police.

The Police and Crime Commissioner had plenty of feedback on this item, and promised to report back to the Panel.

South and South East In Bloom

The Executive Member for Streetscene was pleased to announce that the Borough has received its 12th consecutive winning entry in the Small City category, receiving a Gold Award and being declared Category Winner.

Fareham's parks and gardens also came out with top awards including:

- Holly Hill Woodland Park – Gold Award
- Sensory Garden of Reflection - Gold Award
- Westbury Manor Garden - Gold Award
- Warsash Common - Gold Award
- Civic Gardens - Gold Award

Earlier in the summer, Northern Junior Community School received a Gold level award and were overall Hampshire Winners in the Schools category.

In addition to this the Fareham Conservation Volunteers received a "Britain in Bloom Commendation" and the Borough received the Hampshire County award as the highest marked entry.

The Executive Member commented that this success is the result of a consistent commitment to the provision of parks and environmental services and it's all thanks to the hard work of our passionate volunteers and Council Officers. Residents and visitors to the Borough are always very impressed with the quality of parks and gardens around Fareham.

Social Rent Reduction

The Executive Member for Health and Housing reminded Members that at the last meeting of the Council, Councillor Davies asked a question about the plans to reduce social rents by 1% per annum over the next four years. The Executive Member advised that she had written to the MPs for Fareham and Gosport to raise the issue that whilst this is good news for existing tenants, there are longer term financial consequences for those councils who own housing stock and for Housing Associations.

The Executive Member had received a reply from Caroline Dinenage MP, giving her assurances that she has written to the Minister about the concerns raised. The Executive Member will continue to update Members with the outcome of this correspondence.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

8. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions presented at this meeting.

9. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations given at this meeting.

10. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE

(1) Minutes of meeting Monday, 7 September 2015 of Executive

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 7 September 2015 be received.

(2) Minutes of meeting Monday, 12 October 2015 of Executive

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 12 October 2015 were tabled.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 12 October 2015 be received; and
- (b) the Pay Policy Statement for 2016-17, contained in minute 10(1)(b) and appended to the minutes be approved.

11. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY BOARD

(1) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 23 September 2015 of Scrutiny Board

The Mayor confirmed that the comments of the Scrutiny Board contained within minute 6(ii)(a) would be deferred to item 19 – Management Structure.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Board held on 23 September 2015 be received.

12. REPORTS OF OTHER COMMITTEES

(1) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 22 July 2015 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 22 July 2015 be received.

- (2) Minutes of meeting Thursday, 23 July 2015 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 23 July 2015 be received.

- (3) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 19 August 2015 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 19 August 2015 be received.

- (4) Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 16 September 2015 of Planning Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 16 September 2015 be received.

- (5) Minutes of meeting Monday, 21 September 2015 of Audit and Governance Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 21 September 2015 be received.

- (6) Minutes of meeting Friday, 24 July 2015 of Appeals Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Appeals Committee held on 24 July 2015 be received.

- (7) Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 22 September 2015 of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee held on 22 September 2015 be received.

13. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 17.2

Question by Councillor K K Trott:

1. Would the Leader agree with me that the government is seeking to provide more low cost homes for purchase, through the sale of Council homes and Housing Association properties, which will reduce the number of these homes that are available for rent and, since many of our lower income households are never going to be able to afford to buy or rent at market levels: where does the leader believe the current and future residents are going to be able to afford to live?

Verbal Response by the Executive Leader:

1. The Government proposals will in the short term reduce the number of properties available for rent however the intention is that for each property sold, a new property will be bought or constructed. Meeting the needs of our residents who cannot access the housing market is one of our key priorities. We are committed to increasing the number of affordable homes in the Borough through the release of developable plots of Council land and working with Registered Providers to acquire private sites. Fareham has a programme to build new dwellings and following the success of the excellent new sheltered housing scheme at Collingwood Court, we are already constructing 16 one bed General Purpose units in

central Fareham together with 6 two bedroom houses built to Passivhaus standard and a new sheltered housing scheme in the Western Wards. Welborne will provide us with a unique opportunity to deliver a significant number of affordable homes.

Question by Councillor K K Trott:

2. Would the Leader confirm that Fareham Borough Council's Housing Strategy states that residents should not be expected to pay more than one-third of their income on meeting their housing costs and would he also agree with me that with "affordable" rents set at 80% of market rate, many local people are expected to spend more than one-third of their income on housing costs?

Verbal Response by the Executive Leader:

2. The current Affordable Rent model releases the necessary funding required to deliver much needed affordable housing across the country. Affordable rents are just one of the tenures available to those requiring social housing and our Strategies set out our commitment and ambition to provide a range of housing solutions. For those people on a low income either through work or welfare, housing costs are met in part or full by Housing Benefit.

Question by Councillor K K Trott:

3. Would the Leader agree with me that the government has been duplicitous in having required Local Authorities to take on a proportion of the National Housing Debt, in the case of Fareham Borough Council some £49 million, in exchange for the freedom and flexibility to set their own rents, but has now chosen to interfere and set further rent controls which will impact adversely upon our ability to maintain and build new homes?

Verbal Response by the Executive Leader:

3. In 2010, the Government announced plans to replace the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system with a devolved system of council housing finance called self-financing. The subsidy system was eventually abolished in April 2012, with each Council affected taking on a share of housing debt, in Fareham's case £49.3m, and this was to be repaid from rents received in the future. Councils now have to maintain a long term business plan to ensure that enough rental income is generated to run an effective housing service and to repay outstanding debts.

In April 2012, the net rental income on the HRA over the business plan period was projected to be enough to repay all of the debt and invest the surplus capacity (around £11m at the time) into new Council homes such as Collingwood Court, Palmerston Avenue and Sylvan Court. This spare capacity was projected to grow in the years beyond the business plan period and would therefore be available for even more new housing schemes.

The implications of the Government's proposals to reduce rents by 1%, mean that the rental income will reduce by £111,000 compared to this year's rent. However, the effect on the HRA business plan is greater, because rents were expected to increase rather than fall. Consequently, the policy change would result in the annual rent being over £220,000 less than we expected to receive.

The Government indicates that the policy would apply through to 2020, and in this situation, the rental income would be around £2.2m less than was expected in the HRA business plan over the 4 year period. This clearly has a negative impact on our plans to build new Council homes and could undermine the financial viability of the HRA if it continued beyond 2020.

It is for these reasons that the Council responded by opposing the Government's proposals to introduce this rent reduction measure. However, I can reassure members that the proposals do not, at this stage, undermine the specific commitments we have made for new Council homes and we will work closely with Government as the detail of this proposal is brought forward in draft legislation, to ensure the consequences of the changes for the Council and our Registered Provider partners, are understood.

I should observe however that for people actually in situ and enjoying the rent reductions the Government's policy is very good news indeed!

Question by Councillor P W Whittle:

4. On behalf of residents of the Borough who have raised questions, will the Executive Leader please confirm the position regarding provisions and steps being taken by Fareham Borough Council for refugees, including housing, health, subsistence, support and welfare?

In the past the top tier councils (eg. Hampshire County Council) have taken a lead role, but Government announcements from the Home Office and elsewhere indicate an obligation upon all councils, including unitary authorities and district councils (even though statutory duties do not cover every aspect).

What policy has Fareham Borough Council adopted and when?

What clarification has the Council established about the current requirements upon Fareham Borough?

What cooperation has Fareham Borough Council organised with others, eg. Hampshire County Council, agencies or other bodies such as charities?

What specific steps has Fareham Borough Council taken towards refugees at this time?

Response:

The Mayor stated that as Councillor Whittle was not present at the meeting, the response would not be given.

Question by Councillor C J Wood:

5. Does the Executive Leader believe the government is wrong to continue to cut the amount of government grant this council receives?

Verbal Response by the Executive Leader:

5. The Government has made it very clear that, in order for the UK economy to continue to recover from the worst recession we have seen in decades, there needs to be a balancing of the public sector books by taking steps to reduce the UK's public expenditure. There is inevitably a difficult task in determining from where savings should come but it is inevitable that all areas will need to contribute in some way to the austerity agenda, and that includes local government, if we are not to leave huge bills to be picked up by future generations including his.

The local government sector has proven that it is sufficiently agile and innovative in the way local services are delivered and Fareham has been leading the way in that regard. In recent years, the Council has been able to continue improving the way it provides services to its customers despite seeing the level of Government funding reduce by over 50%. Examples include diverting our cash reserves to commercial property for a strong return, focussing our efforts on what really matters to our customers through Vanguard systems thinking and actively finding new ways to generate income such as letting vacant space in the Civic Offices, all of which have helped us sustain and improve our services while freezing council tax for seven years.

Further reductions in Government support are inevitable but I am confident that our track record will stand us in good stead to meet the challenges ahead and make our contribution to the growing strength of the UK economy.

Question by Councillor C J Wood:

6. How many people have been fined for littering so far in this financial year?
How many people have been fined for dog fouling so far in this financial year?

Verbal Response by the Executive Leader:

6. In the current financial year, 3 fines have been issued for littering (15 in the full year 2014-15).
No fines have been issued for dog fouling this year or last.

The Council's approach to littering/dog fouling is primarily to educate and advise people of the negative impact on the environment and the

community. Therefore, if our enforcement officers see littering or dog fouling taking place, their first course of action will be to ask the person/dog owner to pick up the litter and dispose of it in a bin. A penalty fine would be issued if the person did not wish to comply with the request. As such, the number of fines issued is a meaningless measure and does not reflect the significant level of work undertaken by enforcement officers. In effect, a fine is a sign of failure as we have been unable to persuade a person to comply.

Question by Councillor C J Wood:

7. How satisfied is the Executive Leader that our local plan protects our strategic gaps?

Verbal Response by the Executive Leader:

7. The Council has been successful in retaining the two Strategic Gap designations in the recently adopted Local Plan, having successfully promoted these designations through both the Core Strategy and Development Sites & Policies Plan public examinations. The two Strategic Gaps are between Stubbington/Fareham and Western Wards/Whiteley (the Meon Gap), and 2) Stubbington/Lee-on-the-Solent and Fareham/Gosport.

The Strategic Gap policy in the Local Plan clearly enables the Council to refuse any development proposals where it significantly affects the role of these gaps in separating the relevant settlements. Clearly the Council has to determine any planning applications for development submitted to the local planning authority.

14. MOTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 15

There were no motions presented at this meeting.

15. ANNUAL REVIEW OF CORPORATE STRATEGY 2011-2017

RESOLVED that the Council approves the amendments to the strategy document, as set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

16. ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES

RESOLVED that the Council approves:

- (a) the increase of the number of seats allocated to the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee from 12 to 14;
- (b) the allocation of seats, as set out in Appendix A for the remainder of the municipal year 2015-16; and
- (c) the nominations of the political groups to seats on committees, along with the nominations of deputies and the appointment of a Chairman and Vice-

Chairman for each committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2015-16, as set out in Appendix B (tabled at the meeting and appended to these minutes).

17. SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

An updated Appendix A: Schedule of Meetings 2016/17 was tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Council approves the proposed schedule of Council and committee meetings for the municipal year 2016-17, as set out at Appendix A to the report.

18. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that it is in the public interest to exclude the public and representatives of the Press from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the matters to be dealt with involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

19. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

During the debate on this item, Councillor T G Knight requested a recorded vote.

Having been duly seconded and on the recommendations being put to the meeting, it was declared CARRIED with 22 Members voting in favour (Councillors B Bayford, Mrs S M Bayford, Miss S M Bell, J V Bryant, Mrs P M Bryant, T M Cartwright, P J Davies, Mrs M Ellerton, K D Evans, G Fazackarley, N R Gregory, Miss T Harper, Mrs C L A Hockley, L Keeble, Mrs K Mandry, Mrs S Pankhurst, D L Steadman, D C S Swanbrow, Mrs K K Trott, N J Walker, D M Whittingham and S D T Woodward), 3 Members voting against (J M Englefield, T G Knight, R H Price, JP) and 2 Members abstaining (C J Wood and A Mandry).

RESOLVED that the Council approves:

- (a) the deletion of the current post of Director of Community;
- (b) that the designation of the Director of Environmental Services be amended to Director of Operations and the designation of the Director of Planning and Development be amended to Director of Planning and Regulation;
- (c) that authority being given to the Monitoring Officer to amend the Scheme of Delegation to Officers to transfer functions currently under the responsibility of the Director of Community amongst the other Directors, as instructed by the Chief Executive Officer;
- (d) that the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make the necessary amendments to the Pay Policy statement for 2015-16 to reflect the above approved changes; and

- (e) that the report and the minute of the decision be no longer treated as exempt information and be open for public inspection, with the exception of paragraphs 23 and 24 which will remain exempt from publication on the grounds that it is not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 7.45 pm).