
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor McEwing
The Sheriff, Councillor L Harris
Councillors P Baillie, J Baillie, Barnes-Andrews, Mrs Blatchford, Bogle, Burke, Chaloner, Claisse, Coombs, Denness, Fitzhenry, Fuller, Furnell, Hammond, Hannides, B Harris, Hecks, Houghton, Inglis, Jordan, Kaur, Keogh, Laurent, Letts, Lewzey, Mintoff, Morrell, Moulton, Murphy, Noon, O'Neill, Dr Paffey, Painton, Parnell, Payne, Pope, Rayment, Savage, Shields, Taggart, D Thomas, T Thomas, Vassiliou, Whitbread, White and Wilkinson

40. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20th July 2016 be approved and signed as a correct record.

41. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND LEADER

- (i) Members stood in a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor Holden-Brown (Swaythling ward) who passed away on 14th September, 2016.
- (ii) The Mayor informed Members that SVS will no longer be running the Annual Toy Appeal. SCRATCH will be accepting donated new toys for Christmas present and the Mayor's Office will arrange for the delivery of presents to them.
- (iii) The Mayor announced that she would be attending an event following Council meeting to mark International Peace Day.
- (iv) Former Mayor John Martin attended Council to present the Mayor with gifts from a recent delegation to the Port from Turkmenistan.
- (v) The Mayor informed Members that the Leader had called for an Extra Ordinary Council meeting to be held on Wednesday 19th October at 6pm.
- (vi) The Mayor was escorted into the Chamber by Abel Sea Cadet Jack Cozens to commemorate Merchant Navy Day on 3rd September.

42. DEPUTATIONS, PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Council received and noted deputations from:

- (i) Mr Shane Dickson representing the Southampton and Winchester group of the Motor Neurone Disease Association; and
- (ii) Mr Ray Beare regarding traffic accidents, pollution and congestion on the major roads in and out of the City on the west side.

43. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

The report of the Leader of the Council was submitted setting out the details of the business undertaken by the Executive.

The Leader and the Cabinet made statements and responded to questions.

The following questions were submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.1.

1. Loose paving slabs

Question from Councillor Moulton to Councillor Rayment

Why are so many paving slabs loose and dangerous in London Road, Guildhall Square and Shirley Precinct?

Answer

1. Loose paving

The HSP contract does not require paving repairs if loose / rocking. It does, however, oblige intervention if causing a danger / hazard.

2. Dangerous paving

To reduce Council revenue spend, the HSP contract does not require repairs unless causing a raised trip hazard greater than 20mm (as Category 2 criteria for all pedestrianised areas). However, BBLP consider case-by-case – i.e. occasionally, loose slabs through exposed location, potential for imminent failing or the nature of the hazard presented, get repaired notwithstanding the trip height.

3. Site specifics

All 3 sites are routinely walked monthly. Between programmed visits, the HSP relies on reports from members of the public, etc. All 3 sites will have repeat visits shortly:

3.1 London Road

Certain areas have been subject to successfully defended claims. These are subject to additional deterioration monitoring - i.e. to trigger refurbishment rather than reactive repairs.

3.2 GHS

West Marlands Rd / GHS boundaries have this year undergone significant paving replacement. A revisit will ensure no residually defective areas remain.

3.3 Shirley Precinct

Particular attention to possible damage from the weekly market operator is made. If damage is directly attributable, then liability for repairs will be passed to the operator.

2. Shirley Depot/Police Station

Question from Councillor Moulton to Councillor Letts

Will you agree to produce a Planning Development Brief for the Shirley Depot/Police station site, to set out acceptable criteria such as usage, access and building heights? Will you ensure that residents are engaged in this process?

Answer

The Council has jointly marketed this site with Hampshire Police. The marketing has been robust and terms are now agreed and well advanced in legal hands. The contract is not conditional on planning.

If the purchaser comes forward with a planning application in the short term that will be the appropriate time for matters such as usage, access and building heights to be considered. If no proposal is forthcoming these matters are best considered as part of the local plan process.

3. Fallen Trees on the Common

Councillor Claisse to Councillor Rayment

It is noticeable that when trees fall over in high winds on Southampton Common, unless they block paths, they are simply left to decay. Do we not have a contractor to remove these?

Answer

The Council have had a working practice across the whole city for a number of years whereby they leave fallen trees if they are safe and not blocking footpaths or roads. Wherever possible cord wood and larger logs are left on site as "habitat" piles and only cleared where they may pose a risk to health and safety.

NB – We do currently have contractors who clear trees when they pose a risk and we will have an in house tree surgery team in place within the next few weeks who will take over this work. We also use logs for restricting access to motorbikes on some sites and as seats and informal play.

4. Poor Air Quality

Councillor Pope to Councillor Rayment

Successive administrations of this Council have failed to adequately address Southampton's poor air quality. Traffic chaos and industrial development are making air quality worse. Can you please explain how and why large warehouse and industrial developments have been given planning permission at Lidl, at Test Lane and how it was that the Council did not object to the large number of developments in Barker-Mill land just north of Brownhill Way? Can you also please explain why officers in your department have failed over months to manage extra traffic arising from these developments, leading to repeated traffic chaos? And why would residents trust performance under your "leadership" would be any better in the future?

Answer

Planning;

- 1) The planning system allocates site for development through Local Plans following public consultation. In the case of Test Lane, the site was allocated for business and warehousing development in 2006. The Adanac Park development is within Test Valley Borough Council and is a long standing development allocation in the TVBC Local Plan. These allocations establish the principle of development: the subsequent planning applications deal with the detail which include air quality and transport issues.
- 2) At the planning application stage, air quality and transport issues were addressed and the applications for both Test Lane and the Lidl Distribution Centre were found by members of the Council's Planning and Rights of Way Panel to be acceptable.
- 3) Various planning applications were submitted to TVBC for different parts of Adanac Park in 2015. The Council was consulted as an adjoining authority. Responses are made under the officer scheme of delegation. Although there was general support for development of business employment on these sites, in accordance with policy and a previous permission, officers did question and did not support large scale office development on this site as we encourage such uses within Southampton City Centre. However, TVBC are the decision maker for development of these sites and are not obliged to follow the Council's comments.

On the Lidl Distribution Centre, important material considerations were the economic development/employment benefits. We also considered the wider environmental issues. Lidl are an expanding business. At present their entire network of stores in the South of England are served by distribution centres in South London or Weston Super Mare. The new facility will reduce vehicle movements on the wider network.

On a wider sustainability scale, the proposed development would result in a significant reduction in heavy goods vehicle movements on the road network in Southern England. The existing distribution centres are some distance away which is inefficient when compared to the current proposal. The applicants estimate that the new facility would result in a total of 4,678 miles 'saved' per day, the equivalent of approximately 1.7 million miles per year. This is an important material consideration in favour of the development.

Transport;

For the development sites outside of SCC administrative area such as Lidl, Hampshire County Council as highway authority are responsible for liaising with the developer to ensure the traffic associated with the construction of these development sites and the associated off-site highway works are managed effectively and have a construction management plan in place.

SCC transport officers continue to liaise with HCC to ensure the impacts on the city road network are managed and to minimise disruption for local residents and businesses.

Air Quality;

Air Quality is a material planning consideration that has been given due consideration in the decision making process relating to these developments. Air quality assessments for the Test Lane and Lidl Depot developments were submitted to SCC as part of the applications and were considered to be suitable

and sufficient. The assessments demonstrated that the majority of traffic movements would use the M271 northwards and air quality impacts in the Redbridge area would be negligible in terms of current planning guidance. Subsequently, refusal of either application on air quality grounds was difficult to justify. However, SCC did accept that recent developments in the M271 corridor did present a risk from cumulative effects. Therefore, the Test Lane approval included requirements to mitigate air quality impacts through a s.106 agreement. These measures include the need to develop a sustainable travel plan and installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

5. Arts Complex

Councillor Pope to Councillor Letts

In the Daily Echo in April, responding to questioning from Redbridge campaigner Denise Wyatt on the sale of Test Lane to pay for the Arts Complex, you were quoted as saying that sale proceeds were “not being spent on the arts complex, that’s already been paid for.” Then at Full Council in July, you asked for yet another £2million for the project, to add to over £14million including millions added last year. Why did you lie to Southampton residents about the Arts Complex already being paid for?

Answer

We are not spending the receipt from Test Lane on the arts complex. The additional resource needed to close the gap in fund raising was already in our plans, the report in July formalised where that funding would come from.

6. Southampton Cultural Development Trust

Councillor Pope to Councillor Kaur

Given the failure of the Southampton Cultural Development Trust to generate the latest extra £2m for the Arts Complex that Full Council then had to be asked to approve, the resultant total cost to this Council is over £16million for this over-time and over-budget project. Please give the reasons for the failure of the Trust to generate these funds whilst Councillor Burke was Labour's appointed representative for the Council? Please also explain why the project is over-time and over-budget.

Answer

The Cultural Development Trust was formed in 2010 to support fundraising efforts for projects including the Arts Complex. Activity has taken place throughout this period and under the direction of a number of different Administrations. Generating funding for projects that are underwritten by the Local Authority was always going to be challenging, and this has proven to be the case. As I understand officers have advised you, Full Council approved the fundraising targets, and the underwriting by the Council, in March 2007 and September 2009.

The project is particularly complex and has been subject to the vagaries of the overall economic climate, the subsequent impact on construction sector inflation and challenging site conditions. Officers can provide a written brief if that would be helpful.

The Council's investment in Studio 144 will deliver more than a building – the creation and delivery of participation opportunities in cultural activity will benefit all residents. Tenants of Studio 144 already work with residents from across the City and successful city's communities, and neighbourhoods rely on vibrant cultural opportunities for all.

7. Brownhill House

Councillor Pope to Councillor Payne

The Labour Administration closed Brownhill House in Redbridge earlier this year, against residents wishes and making staff redundant. Yet August Cabinet reports an estimated overspend up to £700,000 on "reablement", a key function of Brownhill House. Your Administration's actions have directly led to this overspend. Could you please explain this? Further, letting agents have been advertising lets in Brownhill House to "professionals". Would you agree that not only is this inadvisable given the ongoing reablement and "bed blocking" problems in the Cabinet Report, it is also "immoral" in the words of residents?

Answer

Although there are bed blocking problems at the hospital (University the figure of £620k overspend quoted in the Cabinet report is not attributable to the closure of Brownhill House. The majority of this overspend (over £420k) is due to staffing costs elsewhere in the Reablement and Hospital Discharge Team associated with achieving Care Act compliance (7 day working) and changes to existing staff terms and conditions. A smaller element of the overspend does relate to Brownhill but only in as much as it is the residual costs of the service being operational for the first 2 months of this year and ongoing salaries relating to staff notice periods (the budget was removed for the whole of 2016/17).

Since being vacated, Capita have been managing the building through a guardian service on site pending a Council decision on re-use or disposal. Options being considered for the future use of the building and have yet to be decided.

Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust), these are not due to reablement services. Brownhill House provided a residential reablement unit for short term periods of up to 6 weeks. Since its closure on 1 June 2016 reablement services for this client group have continued to be provided, and, for most people in their own homes. A key aim of the original proposal was to promote recovery and independence by enabling more people to receive reablement in their own homes. National research has consistently demonstrated the significant benefits of home based reablement for clients. This is being provided by the internal domiciliary care provision within the integrated rehab and reablement service as well as by external reablement domiciliary care providers on Lot 5 of the domiciliary care framework. Additional therapy provision has also been recruited as part of the new integrated rehabilitation and reablement team to support this.

8. Hate Crime

Councillor P Baillie to Councillor Kaur

What is your definition of a Hate Crime?

Answer

Any crime that is motivated by hostility on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender or identity.

9. Anti Jewish Feeling

Councillor P Baillie to Councillor Kaur

When will you be writing to Jeremy Corbyn asking him to stop the anti-Jewish feeling emanating from the higher regions of the Labour Party?

Answer

I am disappointed at the cheap political point scoring. There is no place for any type of hate crime in any political party. I'm pleased Jeremy Corbyn launched an enquiry into anti-semitism which found that it is not an endemic problem, but will be tackled effectively if it arises.

Hypocritical of the Conservatives to talk about hate crime when there are plenty of examples where their policies and actions are deemed racist by many of our communities in Southampton (examples were given).

10. HRA Stock Survey

Councillor Baillie to Councillor Letts

When will the HRA stock survey / valuation be finished?

Answer

Our HRA Stock is surveyed and valued on an ongoing rotation basis.

We are currently undertaking a specific exercise to identify the buildings and types of building that will require the highest pro rata regular expenditure on repairs and maintenance over the next 5, 10 and 15 years and identify the most cost effective (based on a lifetime cost approach) major refurbishment and/or redevelopment options.

We expect to have a first draft with recommendations on which projects should be progressed first by the end of October.

11. Renewal/Refurbishment of Walk-up Blocks

Councillor Baillie to Councillor Letts

Would you explain the process for the renewal / refurbishment of the walk-up blocks including the level of public consultation you would expect to take place for each block?

Answer

As Councillor Ballie will be aware from our discussions at Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee last week we are now adopting an approach to regeneration that prioritises the buildings and types of building that will require the highest pro rata regular expenditure on repairs and maintenance over the next 5, 10 and 15 years and identifies the most cost effective major refurbishment and/or redevelopment options (based on a lifetime cost).

Opportunities to develop infill sites and the potential to improve local facilities and infrastructure as part of programmes of work will also be addressed as will opportunities to increase density and the mix of housing.

It is proposed that new homes will be designed to be low energy, low maintenance, healthy homes that are cost effective to heat and built to last whilst providing a healthy living environment. Major refurbishment projects will have similar aims.

We will engage residents from existing tenant's groups and the Peoples Panel in looking at best practice and emerging technologies in housing design to develop and evolve our specifications for new homes.

Where buildings are identified for major works, tenants and leaseholders of those buildings will be advised of the proposals as well as the proposed timetable. They will then be supported through any home move in accordance with our agreed policies.

Wider consultation on the mix and design of new development will be undertaken as part of the planning process.

12. Townhill Park Phase 3

Councillor P Baillie to Councillor Letts

What is the new finishing date for Townhill Park Phase 3?

Answer

The regeneration of Townhill Park will now be delivered in a series of smaller phases that will overlap rather than three larger phases that run one after the other.

We are currently well advanced with proposals to deliver Plots 1 and 2 with a start on site for Plot1 planned in Spring 2016 and Plot 2 later that year with the first new homes available for occupation in Spring 2019.

As you will be aware from our discussions at Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee we are developing new funding models to bring forward regeneration more quickly and we are already in discussions with proposed partners to bring forward the next two plots on Townhill Park as soon as possible thereafter. We are already planning for the necessary decanting of tenants and acquisition of leasehold interests.

A detailed programme for all 13 plots at Townhill Park will be finalised shortly.

13. Housing Repairs

Councillor Laurent to Councillor Payne

Could the Cabinet Member tell me what is the normal reaction time for a plumbing issue?

Answer

The repair categories are as follows and it would depend on the type of plumbing fault as to which response time it would fit into:

Same day; Average response time 1.8 Hrs

24 Hour; Average response time 3.4Hrs

Non-urgent (within 10 days, appointment or floating); Average response 8 days

14. Itchen Bridge

Councillor Fuller to Councillor Rayment

Will the Council commit to installing contactless payment points on the Itchen Bridge toll booths?

Answer

We already have a contactless payment system that provides an efficient and cost effective means of cashless payment. Users apply for a smartcard which allows them to top up their account on line, pay for bridge crossings and obtain if appropriate resident or business concessions.

There are no plans at this stage to change the existing system but when the bridge systems are upgraded all potential payment systems will be considered.

15. School Deficits

Councillor Fuller to Councillor Paffey

How many schools in Southampton are currently expecting deficit for this financial year?

Answer

Of the 52 Southampton City Council maintained schools, there are 18 schools forecasting a deficit in 2016/17.

Schools funding is currently subject to a freeze by central government, with further changes proposed from 2018/19, and the role that local authorities will play in allocation of funds to schools will change accordingly.

The Schools Forum, which is independent of the Council, agreed to revised policies for surplus and deficit budgets on 14th September. These policies were approved by Heads and Representatives, and will be operational from 1st October 2016.

At present, the School Improvement and Finance teams are working with schools to ensure balanced budgets are set, and to put together Deficit Recovery Plans where a deficit is expected.

16. New Council Houses

Councillor Fuller to Councillor Payne

How many new Council houses does the Council expect to have built by the end of the year?

Answer

Since additions to the HRA stock were last discussed at Full Council, a further 54 units have been completed at the newly-built extra care scheme at Erskine Court, Lordshill, which opened in July.

44. MOTIONS

(a) Armed Forces Covenant

Councillor Fuller moved and Councillor Moulton seconded

Southampton City Council recognises the important role that the Armed Forces, both Regular and Reserve, play in protecting the security, independence and interests of the United Kingdom both at home and abroad. As such, we re-affirm our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and will undertake any actions needed to achieve a Bronze Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme in the coming year. We will also commit to meeting all the criteria required to achieve Silver and Gold Awards in the same scheme which will enable us to be nominated for those awards in future years.

UPON BEING PUT TO THE VOTE THE MOTION WAS DECLARED CARRIED

RESOLVED that the motion be approved.

45. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES OR THE MAYOR

1. Hate Crime

Councillor P Baillie to The Mayor, Councillor McEwing

Would you explain why you refused to allow my motion regarding Hate Crime in the form of anti-Jewish sentiment which appears to be coming from the higher regions of the Labour Party? Have you allowed your own political ideals to cloud your judgement? And why do you feel that this type of Hate Crime doesn't affect Southampton? and why seemingly you can't be bothered to try and do anything about it?

Answer

Councillor Baillie, I do not need to justify myself to you or anyone in this Chamber. However, my reasoning being for disallowing your Motion was on the grounds that we voted unanimously against the Hate Crime Motion at July's full Council.

I am disappointed that you think I am party politicking on such an evil offence.

We had legislation against Racism, Race Relations Act 1976, amended 2001 repealed 2010 and incorporated into the Equality Act. However, that did not stop derogatory comments about Scots and Welsh and I have been subjected to that on many occasions. Scots and Welsh are not minority groups in England. Irish people are and were protected under the Race Relations Act 1976 and 2001 as they were a minority group at those times. Most people treat it as friendly banter and it is, however, there are some who still continue to use derogatory comments and do not understand that their language is offensive and I treat them accordingly.

You suggest that I am not bothered and do not want to do anything about this – this is as far from the truth as you can get.

You all know my background as a Trade Union activist. I have responsibility for Equality monitoring in my workplace and in my Union Branch. I am offended that you are so base to suggest party politics.

Your Motion was not directly related to Southampton so there had no justification for being on the agenda.

At the start of full Council I mentioned the United Nations Peace vigil, you are most welcome to join me for this meeting.

46. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

It was noted that Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee have approved this years' Scrutiny Inquiry topic as 'Combating Loneliness in Southampton' the following Councillors have been appointed to the inquiry, Councillors Burke, Coombs, Furnell, Laurent, Murphy, Parnell and T Thomas.

47. SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2016

The report of the Leader of the Council was submitted seeking approval of the Workforce Strategy 2016.

RESOLVED

- (i) To approve the proposed Workforce Strategy and draft Action Plan (attached at Appendix 1); and
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Chief Strategy Officer, following consultation with the Leader, Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer and the HR Strategy Managers to finalise the Strategy and Action Plans and take necessary action for implementation. This will include the Children and Adult Social Care Workforce Development Plan, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members and Service Directors.

48. SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL STRATEGY 2016-2020

The report of the Leader of the Council was submitted seeking approval of the Council Strategy 2016-2020.

RESOLVED

- (i) To approve the draft Council Strategy 2016-2020, attached as Appendix 1; and
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Chief Strategy Officer, following consultation with the Leader of the Council, to finalise the draft Council Strategy 2016-2020, including incorporating any changes made at the meeting, and to make any in-year changes and to refresh relevant sections of the Strategy in 2017, 2018 and 2019 so that it aligns with any new budgetary or policy developments which will impact on the council's activities.

49. LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT - FOUR YEAR FUNDING SETTLEMENT 2016/17 TO 2019/20

The report of the Cabinet Member for Finance was submitted seeking approval of the Local Government Finance Settlement, Four Year Funding Settlement 2016/17 to 2019/20.

RESOLVED

- (i) To approve the efficiency plan for Southampton City Council as detailed in Appendix 1; and
- (ii) To approve to accept the Government's offer of a four year funding settlement 2016/17 to 2019/20.