
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
17 NOVEMBER 2021

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Houghton
The Sheriff, Councillor Rayment
Councillors J Baillie, P Baillie, Bell, Bogle, Bunday, Chaloner, Coombs,
Cooper, Denness, Fielker, Fitzhenry, Fuller, D Galton, G Galton, S Galton,
Guest, Guthrie, Hammond, Hannides, B Harris, L Harris, Kaur, Laurent,
Leggett, Magee, Professor Margetts, Mitchell, Moulton (minutes 39 - 49b),
Noon, Dr Paffey, J Payne, W Payne, Prior, Renyard, Savage, Shields,
Spicer (minutes 39 - 49a) , Stead, Streets, Vassiliou and White

Apologies from Councillors, Harwood, Vaughan and Windle

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record subject to an amendment to minute number 37 to include the Conservative Group as part of the recorded vote who were “for” the recommendations in the report. The amendment was reflected in the signed minutes of the meeting.

40. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND LEADER

(i) Remembrance Day

Mayor announced that Remembrance Sunday had gone very well, the event was well organised and attended well by all sectors. Thank you to all those who organised the event and input on the day to ensure it went well.

(ii) Baby Moulton

The Mayor congratulated Cllr Moulton and his wife Zara on the safe arrival of their baby girl “Hannah Jasmine”.

(iii) Engagement

The Mayor congratulated Cllr Kaur on her recent engagement.

(iv) Sisters City Southampton

Mayor announced that it was 60yrs ago that Southampton had been twinned with Hampton, Virginia and they had written to commemorate the anniversary. As a Council we would celebrate the anniversary and reciprocate a letter back.

41. DEPUTATIONS, PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Council received and noted the following deputations:-

- (i) Ruth Magennis – Southampton City Council’s position on fossil fuel investments as a Member of the Hampshire Pension Fund.
- (ii) Ms M Simmons – Children’s Safeguarding

42. LOCAL APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Assets seeking approval for the Local Appointment of External Auditors.

RESOLVED: that Council accepts the PSAA invitation to 'opt-in' to the sector led national scheme for the appointment of external auditors for the five financial years commencing 1 April 2023.

43. RIVER ITCHEN FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment seeking approval of the River Itchen Flood Alleviation Scheme.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the addition of £10.2M to the Growth capital programme as a contribution to the flood alleviation scheme which will be delivered by the Environment Agency be approved. The £10.2M will be funded from Strategic CIL developer contributions; the Investment Strategy, to be delivered as part of the Outline Business Case in Spring 2022, will profile when the investment will be required (by financial year) during the project. The profile will be presented as part of the Capital Programme in February 2022 for capital programme budget setting; and
- (ii) That the addition of £10.2M to the Growth Programme is subject to approval to spend. Approval to spend will be sought once the final project and its costings are agreed with the Environment Agency following the submission of the final Outline Business Case (likely to be in Spring 2022).

44. SOUTHAMPTON - MUMBAI TWINNING

Report of the Cabinet Member for Growth detailing proposed twinning with City of Southampton and City of Mumbai.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Council resolves to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the Cities of Southampton and Mumbai, India signalling our intention to 'twin' with Mumbai, and that there should be further discussions towards the ambition of agreeing a more formal civic twinning arrangement; and
- (ii) Any further detailed arrangements shall be subject to a further report to Council.

45. INTEGRATED TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS PROGRAMME 2021/22 - APPROVAL TO SPEND

Report of the Cabinet Member for Growth seeking approval to spend the Integrated Transport and Highways Programme 2021/22.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the updated capital programme for Integrated Transport and Highways, the revised financing of the programme and the associated capital spend for 2021/22, including amendments detailed within this report and in accordance with financial procedure rules, of £74.55M as detailed in paragraph 17 and Appendix 1 be approved;
- (ii) That the overall budget addition of £2.33M, to the Place capital programme funded by government grant and S106 developer contributions, as detailed in paragraph 18 and Appendix 1 be approved;
- (iii) That budget virements between existing schemes within the programme as detailed in paragraph 19 and Appendix 1 be approved; and
- (iv) That the details of the projects within Transforming Cities Programme and Future Transport Zone Programme as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3 be noted.

46. DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PLEDGE

Report of the Leader of the Council seeking formal adoption of a Diversity and Inclusion Pledge linked to the Equalities Act 2010.

RESOLVED: To adopt and proactively support the Diversity and Inclusion Pledge.

47. GAMBLING ACT STATEMENT OF LICENSING PRINCIPLES

Report of the Leader of the Council seeking adoption of the revised Gambling Act Statement of Licensing Principles.

RESOLVED: That with effect from 31st January 2022 Council adopts the revised Statement of Licensing Policy as attached at Appendix 2 and subject to any amendment that may be made by the Licensing Committee (if appropriate).

48. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS REPORT NOVEMBER 2021

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. Hampshire Pension Fund

Question from Councillor Chaloner to Councillor Hannides

Does the Cabinet Member for Finance believe that the Hampshire Pension Fund should divest itself of investments in Fossil Fuels and can he confirm the actions he is willing to take to seek to bring this about?

Answer

It doesn't surprise me the Labour Group feel they achieved nothing in the past 9 years to encourage the Hampshire Pension Fund to divest away from Fossil Fuels. I suspect, they were relying on a Conservative-run Council to do something about it.

I believe it's important for investment funds to look very carefully at balancing their obligations to their investors whilst demonstrating responsible investment in the management of their portfolio. Whilst Southampton City Council is not in a position to decide how the Hampshire Pension Fund is managed, it will use its membership on the Board to recommend there is a full appraisal of current investments in Fossil Fuels and to receive advice on how best to divest of these investments and the implications of doing so. This will provide Board Members with the information and data to consider the option of adopting an investment strategy which has a greater emphasis on environmentally friendly investments.

2. Flood Defences

Question from Councillor Bogle to Councillor Moulton

What further plans does the Administration have in place to mitigate flood risk and improve flood defences beyond the RIFAS scheme on the West of the Itchen?

Answer

The Southampton Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (2012) outlines the proposals for coastal flood defences in Southampton. Delivery of the defence will be phased based on the areas carrying the highest risk. The Coastal Strategy is due to be revised by 2023 to take into account the latest climate change predictions which will help determine the next phase for delivery. Since taking on this portfolio responsibility I have been keen to speed up delivery of these vital defences as a priority; whilst also looking at how we can improve our open spaces and natural environment at the same time.

A new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is underway and will be completed by the end of 2022 and is aimed at raising awareness of Southampton's flood risk and how it is proposed this will be managed. Future schemes could include attenuation schemes – where water is temporarily stored, before use of flow systems allows it to be routed through normal drainage routes – and Daisy Dip is one location that would be a priority for this. Another focus of this work is the use of more sustainable drainage (SuDS)

features on streets and working with schools to install multi-purpose SuDS to manage water and provide a learning resource at the same time.

Amendments to strengthen local planning policy are due to take place as part of the Local Plan Review. This will seek to encourage developers to deliver more sustainable drainage features that provide additional benefits to amenity, biodiversity and water quality.

The Weston Shore Coastal Erosion Scheme to reduce coastal erosion to a popular cycle path and former coastal landfill site is due for delivery in 2022. As I stated in a previous Council meeting it was a shame this scheme wasn't progressed faster by the previous administration; but we are committed to delivering on this to protect our environment and prevent further coastal erosion here.

Partnership working with Southern Water to examine options to reduce flooding to Millbrook Road West is now underway and we are also looking to tackle other highway related "hotspots" as a priority and part of the new administrations significant investment into our roads and pavements, so that it is safer for all to walk, cycle, scoot or drive in Southampton.

3. Electric Vehicles

Question from Councillor Leggett to Councillor S Galton

Given the Council's vehicle fleet is only 26% Euro 6 compliant or electric could the CM outline the plans to increase this rate, by when to show the Council is leading by example.

Answer

There are 18 projects currently with our procurement teams covering approximately 150 vehicles. We anticipate these lots will be fulfilled and vehicles replaced over the next 6-12 months. This will take our fleet to around 60% compliant.

We remain committed to delivering on our Greener City plans and are also looking at additional fuel reduction measures we can take.

49 vehicles in our fleet are now fully electric and we have set ourselves the target of achieving at least 90% by 2030. The current vehicles represent a significant proportion of the fleet vehicles where manufacturers can provide a viable EV option. We are now preparing ourselves to have a suitable infrastructure in place to ensure our vehicle replacement programme can accommodate the next generation of larger EV's as they become available and viable.

4. Schools

Question from Councillor Paffey to Councillor J Baillie

Could the Cabinet Member outline his vision and plans for increasing the number of School Streets, Modeshift STARS and other measures around the city's schools aimed at reducing unnecessary traffic and improving air quality for children?

Answer

Could the Cabinet Member outline his vision and plans for increasing the number of School Streets, Modeshift STARS and other measures around the city's schools aimed at reducing unnecessary traffic and improving air quality for children?

The My Journey sustainable transport team continues to work with schools across the city to support them and the wider school community travel safely and sustainably to and from school. The Council was successful in securing the DfT Local Capability Fund (revenue) which enables the Council to continue to offer sustainable transport advice, education and awareness campaigns to schools, with funding committed for the current and 2022/23 financial years. This includes continuing to help schools secure their Modeshift STARS accreditation, with recent success at Sholing Junior School where they secured the highest accreditation possible - the Platinum award.

School Streets - The current focus this year (2021/22) is to support the 9 schools and their "school streets" trials to further enhance these to include new signage and supporting traffic management measures to ensure the current trials (Experimental Traffic Regulation Order) can transition to permanent, subject to the formal consultation processes currently underway and securing community support.

Following consultation, Cantell School has now been approved as the next location to take part in the School Street scheme. From 1 November, Violet Road (between Copperfield Road and Primrose Road) will be signposted as a bus gate restriction, in place from 8am to 9:30am, and 2:15 to 3:45pm. This will be supported by camera enforcement and fines will be issued for vehicles found to be using the road without proper permissions.

We will be re-opening the application process for additional school streets in the New Year and have already begun communicating with schools to highlight the opportunity school streets may present them.

In addition, the council is committed to supporting major school expansion schemes such as St Marks to ensure investment is made in a range of highway improvements to enable the streets around the schools to be safer for all the school community and promote active travel options.

5. Bus Interchange

Question from Councillor Shields to Councillor Moulton

Why does the City Council's current Bus Service Improvement Plan no longer include proposals for a bus interchange in Albion Place?

Answer

The Bus Service Improvement Plan does not go into project specifics but sets the strategic direction for bus service improvements that will guide future funding requests from Government and the next steps for the development of the Enhanced Partnership between the bus operators and SCC – that will be completed in the spring 2022.

p.40 of the adopted BSIP states, "Continue to deliver the improvements along the TCF corridors and interchanges by 2023". Interchange improvements at Albion Place continue to be developed as part of the Transforming Cities Fund Programme.

6. Permitted Developments

Question from Councillor Bogle to Councillor Moulton

What are the administration's plans to mitigate the effects of the new permitted development rights to convert shops, businesses and other facilities (class E) to residential?

Answer

From August 1 2021 the Government changed permitted development rights in-order that shops, businesses and other facilities (use class E) can be converted to residential uses (class C3) whilst no longer needing prior approval from the Council regarding the impact on the vitality of centres. The permitted development rights apply to changes of use of floorspace of 1,500 sq m or under which has been vacant for 3 months or more.

This change is part of the Government's approach to speed up the delivery of new homes.

A Council can seek to make an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights. The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) explains that where the change is to a residential use (as in this case) an Article 4 Direction should be "necessary to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts (this could involve the loss of the essential core of a primary shopping area which would seriously undermine its vitality and viability, but would be very unlikely to extend to the whole of a town centre)"...and..."be based on robust evidence, and apply to the smallest geographical area possible" (NPPF para. 53).

The Council is currently considering an Article 4 Direction for this purpose, and considering which of the city's shopping areas can be classed as 'core areas'. The Council wishes to protect the core shopping areas which lie at the heart of our communities and provide important local facilities for residents, whilst also ensuring flexibility in other areas. A decision will be made by Cabinet in due course.

An Article 4 Direction is subject to public consultation, and also (in-order to avoid compensation claims from owners) a 1 year notice period prior to implementation. The Secretary of State also has the power to intervene.

If the Council implements an Article 4 Direction, this means that planning permission would be required for these changes of use. The Council's existing planning policies would then apply to the core areas, and these aim to locate residential uses on upper floors, in-order that shops and similar 'public facing' facilities are located at street level.

Background Notes

The Ministerial Statement regarding the change:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-07-01/hcws145>

The permitted development rights apply to changes from class E to class C3.

Class E uses include for example shops, cafes / restaurants, banks, most indoor sports, health services, nurseries, offices, light industry

Class C3 uses are dwelling houses

The permitted development rights still require prior approval for other specified matters, including for example transport and highways, contaminated land, flood risk, access to natural daylight, noise, loss of health facilities, and impact on heritage assets. (In addition, the effect of other provisions are that permitted development rights would not apply to new flats which do not meet nationally prescribed internal floorspace standards).

The planning fees the Council can charge for prior approvals are significantly less than for planning applications. From January to April 2021 the Council determined 20 prior approvals (under the pre-existing rights) and the Development Management team have calculated that this equated to the loss of £82,479.

The Council's Core Strategy defines the city's shopping areas. These are the city centre (main shopping centre and local centres); Shirley town centre; Lordshill, Portswood, Bitterne and Woolston district centres and 16 local

centres. The Bassett Neighbourhood Plan also protects the shops / community uses in Copperfield Road.

7. Community Fund

Question from Councillor Renyard to Councillor Vassiliou

What consideration was given to the type of organisation being encouraged to apply for the new Community Fund when setting the closing date?

Answer

The motivation behind setting the closing date for grant applications was to get the activity up and running and we would have had very little time to process applications to approve and ensure spend happened as soon as possible and within this financial year. The Protecting Communities Fund requires us to convene a Technical Panel for the approval of applications which obviously adds to the process time.

We have however now agreed to extend the deadline to 19th December 2021.

The new priority will be to ensure money is at least paid within this financial year, but work can start any time after. Successful projects can bid again and/or request an extension in year two.

8. Transforming Cities Funding

Question from Councillor Bunday to Councillor Moulton

What assurances can the Cabinet Member give that the administration's recent reversal of sustainable travel initiatives do not put any of Southampton's hard earned Transforming Cities Funding at risk?

Answer

Any adjustments to transport projects such as the trial schemes implemented as part of the Emergency Active Travel Fund in 2020 have been carefully considered and changes made supported by evidence on traffic flows, journey times, road safety and public engagement.

The Transforming Cities Fund programme is a standalone programme of integrated transport improvements and linked to a detailed business case which secured the £57m of DfT funding. Any adjustments to this programme are carefully considered by SCC officers, working closely with DfT officials that follows a change control process. This will ensure adjustments that are required to specific projects, will continue to align with the original bid objectives.

9. Staff Bonuses

Question from Councillor Leggett to Councillor Fitzhenry

Can the Leader outline what type of bonuses are being investigated to reward the efforts of the Council's frontline workers during the pandemic?

Answer

Verbal response provided at the meeting.

"A thank you to all staff for the last 18 months and what they have done through the pandemic. As a new administration there is a need to understand where the organisation is at, waste as an example, together with awareness of all other commitments and the £27m gap and overspends. This is all on the radar but as such not in a position to share anything as yet"

10. Covid in Schools

Question from Councillor Paffey to Councillor J Baillie

Could the Cabinet Member update Council on his plans for managing the rise of Covid cases in schools?

Answer

After half term the incidents of Covid in schools have stabilised, but clearly this can change rapidly.

Schools continue to monitor the situation in their own institutions and then react to any increase in numbers following advice from the PHE team. Currently some schools are continuing to insist on the wearing of masks in communal areas and some have maintained bubbles.

There have only been a small number of whole classes being sent home for a short period to undertake remote learning. This has mostly been due to staff illness and an inability to ensure appropriate levels of staffing.

Regular testing continues in secondary schools, but participation rates have dropped. There will be another push to try to improve on this in the near future.

Saliva testing is being considered for primary schools, but further clarity is needed on how much longer testing will be funded. Currently it is confirmed that funding will continue until March, but it is unclear what will happen after that.

Advice is being sought from health colleagues on what their view is on Christmas party's and Nativity Plays. There is concern that bringing large groups of parents and children together in an enclosed environment could lead to an increase in infections in time for the holidays.

Data continues to be collected from schools and shared with appropriate colleagues including the PHE, Councillors and the Education Team. Where spikes are identified advice is provided to the school by a specialist from PHE.

Covid vaccinations have now been administered to all secondary schools across the City. Uptake varies from around 30% up to 50%. A second mop up round is being requested in schools to improve on this rate. Fortunately there have been no anti-vax demonstrations around this process although police did warn a number of schools to expect this.

49. MOTIONS

- a) Councillor Mitchell moved and Councillor Leggett seconded

Net Zero 2035 Motion

This council recognises the urgency of tackling the climate crisis, particularly for Southampton, which as a coastal city will face many of the worst consequences of climate change. This council accepts that relying on the Government's 2050 Net Zero target for our city is too late and lacks ambition. Council commits to take the lead in tackling the climate crisis during this decisive decade and pledges to make the city of Southampton Net Zero by 2035.

UPON BEING PUT TO THE VOTE THE MOTION WAS DECLARED LOST.

RESOLVED: that the motion be rejected.

- b) Right to Food Motion

This council recognises that childhood poverty in Southampton has a detrimental outcome for future generations in our city. Council further notes that initiatives such as the Right to Food seek to ensure that food is sustainability produced, meets dietary needs and is both available and affordable. Food security can be achieved through action such as Universal Free School Meals, Community Kitchens, and calculating wage rates for families to be able to afford a healthy diet.

This Council is committed to ending food poverty in our city and therefore commits to:

1. Join other cities across the UK, including Portsmouth, to declare Southampton a *Right to Food City*
2. Build on SCC's child obesity strategy by taking steps to support community kitchens and local food initiatives

3. Designate a lead member for food poverty in Southampton to champion and coordinate cross-party and multi-agency efforts across the city
4. Write to all three Southampton MPs to ask them to support legislation to enshrine a Right to Food into UK Law”.

UPON BEING PUT TO THE VOTE THE MOTION WAS DECLARED LOST.

RESOLVED: that the motion be rejected.

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

It was noted that no requests for Questions from Members to the Chairs of Committees or the Mayor had been received.

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

It was noted that there were no appointments to Committees, Sub-Committees and Other Bodies.