
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
19 JULY 2023

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Laurent
The Sheriff, Councillor Shields
Councillors Allen, J Baillie, Blackman, Mrs Blatchford, Barbour, Barnes-Andrews, Beaurain, Bogle, M Bunday, T Bunday, Chapman, Cox, Denness, Every, Fielker, Finn, Fitzhenry, A Frampton, Y Frampton, Galton, Goodfellow, Greenhalgh, Houghton, Kataria, Kaur, Kenny, Keogh, Lambert, Leggett, Letts, McCreanor, McEwing, Mrs Mintoff, Noon, Dr Paffey (except items 22-28), W Payne, Powell-Vaughan (except items 29-32), Quadir, Rayment, Renyard, Savage, Ugwoeme, Webb, Whitbread, Windle, Winning and Wood

22. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies had been received from Councillors P Baillie, Moulton and Wood.

23. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council Annual General Meeting held on the 17th May 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

24. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LORD MAYOR AND LEADER

Announcements from the Lord Mayor:

- (i) Following the Coxford Ward Election on 22nd June 2023, the Lord Mayor welcomed Councillors Greenhalgh and McCreanor and returning to the Council, Councillor Renyard.
- (ii) The Lord Mayor announced that the meeting was open to being filmed and reminded those filming that the right to film was limited to the duration of the meeting and recording must cease when the meeting closed. Filming or recording was not permitted if the effect would be to interrupt or disturb the proceedings or if it was intrusive of a specific individual or individuals. If in her opinion this was occurring, it would not be permitted, and she would ask you to stop. Similarly, some members of the public attending the meeting may object to being filmed, photographed or recorded. The Lord Mayor would be making those attending the meeting today aware and would ask those filming, to respect their wishes, and would expect that these were complied with.
- (iii) The Lord Mayor reminded Members that on 27th July 1998 tragedy struck on board a Seaplane in the Solent. On that day we sadly lost the Mayor Mr Michael Andrews who was representing the City on a flight across the Solent. She invited all to remember that day and the tragedy that unfolded as we approach the 25 year anniversary.

Announcements from the Leader:

- (i) The Leader welcomed the new Coxford Members. Recognising that as a result of the Election, the Administration were represented by 50% women and this achievement should be recognised.
- (ii) The Leader thanked officers for the work undertaken ensuring that Coxford residents had access to Councillors and their casework was resolved during the recent unprecedented period as the Election was rightfully postponed.
- (iii) The Leader formally announced changes to Cabinet. Councillor Renyard had been appointed to Safer City, changes had been made to responsibilities within the Portfolio and that of Communities and Leisure to reflect the return of Councillor Renyard to his previous role. Councillor Leggett had stood down from Finance and Change and been replaced by Councillor Letts who had previously held office as the Cabinet Member for Finance as well as Leader of the Council, and that Waste would be moving to Environment and Transport.
- (iv) The Leader thanked Councillor Leggett for his five year term of office as Cabinet Member and for all of his hard work and commitment during this time in the various roles he had held.

25. DEPUTATIONS, PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

It was noted that no requests for deputations, petitions or public questions had been received.

26. REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2022/23

Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change detailing the Revenue and Capital Outturn for 2022/23.

RESOLVED: to

General Fund – Revenue

- i) Notes the General Fund revenue outturn for 2022/23 has been balanced by drawing down £11.38M from reserves to meet the year-end deficit, as outlined in paragraph 4 and in paragraph 2 of Appendix 1.
- ii) Notes the performance of individual portfolios in managing their budgets as set out in paragraphs 3 to 7 of Appendix 1 and Annex 1.1.
- iii) Agrees the requests to carry forward un-ringfenced grant funding totalling £0.16M as outlined in paragraph 8 of Appendix 1.
- iv) Notes the performance of the Property Investment Fund (PIF) as detailed in paragraphs 9 to 11 of Appendix 1 and Annex 1.2.

Housing Revenue Account

- v) Notes the HRA revenue outturn for 2022/23 as outlined in paragraph 7 and paragraph 22 of Appendix 1 and Annex 1.4.

Capital Programme

- vi) Notes the actual capital spending in 2022/23 for the General Fund was £62.94M and for the HRA was £35.88M, as outlined in paragraphs 10 and 11 below and detailed in paragraphs 2 to 5 of Appendix 2.
- vii) Notes the capital financing in 2022/23 as shown in table 3 of Appendix 2.
- viii) Approves the revised capital programme for 2022/23 to 2027/28 and its financing as summarised in paragraph 10 of Appendix 2 and detailed in Annex 2.2.
- ix) Approves the latest prudential indicators for the revised capital programme as detailed in Annex 2.3.

27. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC - EXEMPT PAPERS INCLUDED IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM (IF NEEDED)

The Lord Mayor moved that in accordance with the Council's Constitution, specifically the Access to Information Procedure Rules contained within the Constitution, the press and public be excluded from the meeting in respect of any consideration of the exempt appendices to the following Item.

Appendix 12 and Appendix 13 are exempt from publication by virtue of category 3 of rule 10.4 of the council's Access to Information Procedure Rules i.e. information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person. It is not in the public interest to disclose this information due to an ongoing commercial dispute which is subject to a protected alternative dispute resolution procedure. If the information was disclosed then the Council's financial position would be available to other parties to the dispute and prejudice the Council's ability to achieve best value.

28. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change detailing the Medium Term Financial Strategy Update.

RESOLVED: to

General Fund – Revenue

- i) Notes the updated budget position and MTFs forecast.
- ii) Notes the content of the draft CIPFA Review report at Appendix 1 and the further work that CIPFA are undertaking to support the council in improving its financial position.
- iii) Agrees the approach as outlined in the Financial Strategy set out below (paras 24 to 31).
- iv) Agrees to the setting up of a voluntary improvement board as outlined in paragraph 29.
- v) Supports and endorses a move to 'cash limited' budgets for each service, which is intended to reinforce accountability and control. See paragraphs 49 to 54 on how this will operate.
- vi) Agrees the Reserves Policy at Appendix 4.
- vii) Agrees the parameters for the fees & charges policy as set out in paragraphs 69 to 79.

- viii) Approves the in-year budget cost control measures, which are mitigation to ensure the council lives within its agreed budget for 2023/24 attached at Appendix 6.
- ix) Agrees the procurement strategy and procurement forward programme 2023-25 contained at paragraph 108, appendix 7 and Annex 7.1 to go forward to procurement, subject to review of the Cost Control Panel.
- x) Agrees the proposed revisions to the Financial Procedure Rules as described in paragraphs 54 and 113 to 117, and set out in detail at Appendix 9, subject to any comments and changes once this change has been considered at Governance Committee.
- xi) Agrees to delegate authority to the Executive Director Corporate Services (S151 Officer), following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, to accept Health Determinants Research Collaboration funding and approve spend in the event the funding is received (see paragraphs 99 to 102).

Housing Revenue Account

- xii) Notes the budget pressures facing the Housing Revenue Account and the measures being considered to mitigate these set out in Appendix 12.
- xiii) Approves the approach to recovering costs of the Landlord Controlled Heating Account as set out in paragraphs 123 to 130 and specifically option 2 of a phased increase over five years.

Capital Programme

- xiv) Approves the creation of a new Strategic Capital Board (para 114), with its terms of reference given in Appendix 8.
- xv) Approves an indicator limit of no more than 11% for the ratio of capital financing to the Net Revenue Budget of the council for the General Fund. This is a key Prudential Indicator which will limit the scale of the capital programme's impact on the revenue budget (see paras 42 and 45).
- xvi) Approves the in-year budget adjustments to the General Fund capital programme, as detailed in paragraph 117.
- xvii) Supports the aim of reviewing the whole capital programme against the criteria of Purposeful Investment (see paragraphs 30 and 113-117).
- xviii) Notes the plans for transformation and agrees the delegation to the Executive Director Corporate Services to apply, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change and subject to a business case, capital receipts to the transformation programme in line with the strategy agreed at the February 2023 council meeting. The current balance held on capital receipts is around £2.8M.

29. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

A verbal report of the Leader of the Council was given 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. Improved Bus Routes

Councillor Blackman to Councillor Keogh

QUESTION: With some areas of the city in 'bus deserts', including the Sports Centre which is planned for modernisation, could the Cabinet Member report on progress to improve the coverage of bus routes in the city?

ANSWER: The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) sets out a vision for buses in Southampton. As part of the BSIP, the Council has now entered into an Enhanced Partnership with local bus operators (March 2023). The Enhanced Partnership sets out obligations on The Council and on local bus operators to achieving the ambitions in the BSIP. The Enhanced Partnership has set up a new governance board where issues such as new bus network planning will be discussed and worked through with bus operators and the Council.

The bus network is currently under a review following the withdrawal of a bus operator (First Bus) in Feb 2023 and the subsequent taking over of the majority of those routes by Bluestar (Go South Coast Group). The Council will work with Bluestar via the Enhanced Partnership to review the bus network to ensure that it is sustainable and fit for purpose for Southampton.

2. Budget

Councillor Fitzhenry to Councillor Kaur

QUESTION: Can the leader confirm when she first knew of the councils revised budget black hole?

ANSWER: The Cabinet and I have been discussing the financial position since February. We have had regular meetings with the Executive Management Team to develop the plan that is presented today. The financial situation at the start of any year is a developing one especially this year with the increasing economic pressure the council and residents are facing, hence we have requested some external validation of the forecast.

3. St. Mary's Leisure Centre

Councillor Fitzhenry to Councillor Kaur

QUESTION: Can the leader give a personal commitment that St. Mary's Leisure Centre will stay open given the significant financial challenges the council faces?

ANSWER: Yes.

4. Grass Cutting Service

Councillor Galton to Councillor Keogh

QUESTION: Given the numerous complaints over the length of uncut grass, especially in the west of the City and within our cemetery grounds, will the Cabinet Member commit to not cutting these staff and improving the service levels to meet our tax payers expectations of a basic service?

ANSWER: The number of complaints about our green spaces is low. In the last 12 months there have been 44 service requests (24 of these in the West operating district), and 14 complaints received via customer services. Considering that the warm and wet spring in 2023 that saw accelerated grass growth in the city I feel the performance of our teams has been good and should be commended. Several of the service requests were invalid, involving customers asking for us to cut areas that are designated to encourage wildlife - these are not on our spring and summer mowing programmes.

Regarding cemeteries, there is a proposal to remove a vacant part-time post in bereavement which will not impact on existing level of grounds maintenance. We employ a small number of permanent posts alongside seasonal temporary workers to maintain city cemeteries. It is more cost effective to employ seasonal temporary workers than to employ additional permanent staff. In some areas of our cemeteries we are not allowed to cut the grass due to ecology restrictions regarding wild orchids and butterflies.

5. SEND Programme

Councillor J Baillie to Councillor Winning

QUESTION: Does the updated financial situation of the council mean that there will be further reductions/cuts to the SEND expansion programme?

ANSWER: No.

6. Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

Councillor Blackman to Councillor Leggett (Councillor Letts responded)

QUESTION: Further to the publication of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Update will the Cabinet Member and the Administration do everything to ensure that Southampton City Council's destiny remains in its own hands?

ANSWER: Yes, but we have a lot of work to do, from my initial analysis we have a clear and workable plan which I hope to deliver and give clear updates to you as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and other Members as appropriate.

7. Financial Risk

Councillor Moulton to Councillor Leggett (Councillor Letts responded)

QUESTION: In light of the council's perilous financial position and given the risks involved, was it really wise or responsible for the Labour Council to have planned to borrow £27M to fund an office block on the Toys R Us site?

ANSWER: The decision on any investment made by the Council, in public buildings or commercial buildings, is usually based on whether we can get a good return or by investing we can generate a quicker return than we would otherwise get from a site. So in the past we have made investments where this has enabled a particular development to come forward faster and we can then take an income from accrued business rates. As I am aware the Council has no current proposal to support this particular development, and bearing in mind I have been in the role for approximately 24 hours and I haven't had the time to definitely check that, but my gut reaction is that an investment of this type at this time, would not be a decision that I would support.

8. City of Culture Legacy Funding

Councillor Moulton to Councillor Leggett (Councillor Letts responded)

QUESTION: Given the Labour Administration is now looking at significant cuts to core council services, was it really appropriate to commit an extra £1.2M to supporting the new Cultural Trust to fund Southampton's City of Culture bid 'legacy'?

ANSWER: My understanding is that a sum of money has been pledged, but in return for that sum it would lead to significant investment in the City by Arts Council England. Part of that investment is to replace the roof on the Art Gallery, which has been hanging over this Council for 15 years and to see that roof replaced and the Art Gallery, which is one of the jewels in our crown protected, I think offers good value for money. In addition to that there is significant other investment coming in from the Arts Council on the basis of our continued support for arts and heritage built on the bid for City of Culture last year. A bid that we were encouraged to put forward by Arts Council England. So it is about working with partners to get the best deal for the City.

9. Finance

Councillor Galton to Councillor Kaur

QUESTION: Do you regret not getting more involved in understanding, as you previously described it, the "financial stuff"?

ANSWER: To reassure you and Members I am heavily involved and have been throughout on the Council's finances. Just because at a previous meeting I highlighted that we have a finance lead on my Cabinet, does not mean that I am not also involved. In fact there is a collective response from the Cabinet who are all equally committed to Council finances and having a sustainable organisation. I meet and discuss the finances of Council with the Executive Management Team and my Cabinet on a very regular basis. The plan presented in today's Medium Term Financial Strategy is a plan that I have personally been heavily involved with, it is a plan supported by Auditors, CIPFA and Government who have confidence in our leadership to deliver it.

10. Carbon Neutral Target

Councillor Barbour to Councillor Keogh

QUESTION: Does the carbon neutral target in the Green City Charger relate to the operations of the city council or all the activities, businesses and services that operate within the city?

ANSWER: The Green City Charter (2019) established a vision and a set of commitments that seek to deliver far-reaching change to our environment. It provides a framework for city stakeholders to aspire to and over 100 residents, businesses and organisations joined the Council in doing so. The Charter was developed in partnership with the founding signatories and a carbon neutral target of 2030 was included, providing the opportunity for signatories to use offsetting to reduce their carbon footprint.

The Council went on to establish its own plans, adopting the Green City Plan in 2020 and confirming that carbon emissions from its own operations and services would seek to be net zero by 2030. That involves taking practical steps to reduce emissions and using offsetting as a last resort.

In the Council's Corporate Plan 2022/30 the concept of Southampton becoming a zero Carbon City by 2035 was introduced. This would encompass all emissions within the city including those which, to date, have not been captured by more specific goals set by individuals and organisations.

30. MOTIONS

(a) Councillor Goodfellow moved and seconded by Councillor Keogh

Southampton's School Street programme has proven to be very successful and popular with parents and children alike, creating safer, healthier, and happier environments across our city.

As a Council we value the support of the many volunteers who are integral to this programme. However, we understand the challenges many schools face in operating school street closures.

Council therefore commends the actions of the Executive in applying for powers to enforce moving traffic violations through the use of automated number plate recognition cameras and we urge Government to grant permission sooner rather than later and for additional resources to be provided.

Amendment moved by Councillor Fitzhenry and seconded by Councillor J Baillie

3rd paragraph, 1st line after "of the" delete "executive" and insert "previous Conservative Administration for preparing for the statutory consultation and the current Labour Administration for progressing this and"

3rd paragraph, 1st line delete "in" and insert "and"

3rd paragraph, 3rd line after "cameras" delete "and"

3rd paragraph, 4th line after "later" insert "noting this is anticipated to be by the end of July and for additional resources to be provided."

3rd paragraph, 4th line insert after “provided” “such as through future Active Travel Fund awards. Council urges the Executive to progress use of its own allocated LTP capital budget of £30k for the installation of new camera sites and associated signage”.

Insert new paragraph 4 “Furthermore, Council believes that these powers should only be used to improve road safety and not as revenue raising opportunity. Finally, Council believes that camera enforcement should be used as an additional tool to improve safe travel to schools and not as a substitute for school crossing patrols and where there are vacant school crossing patrol posts every effort should be made to fill these positions”.

AMENDED MOTION TO READ:

Southampton’s School Street programme has proven to be very successful and popular with parents and children alike, creating safer, healthier, and happier environments across our city.

As a Council we value the support of the many volunteers who are integral to this programme. However, we understand the challenges many schools face in operating school street closures.

Council therefore commends the actions of the previous Conservative Administration for preparing for the statutory consultation and the current Labour Administration for progressing this and applying for powers, to enforce moving traffic violations through the use of automated number plate recognition cameras. We urge Government to grant permission sooner rather than later, noting this is anticipated to be by the end of July and for additional resources to be provided, such as through future Active Travel Fund awards. Council urges the Executive to progress use of its own allocated LTP capital budget of £30k for the installation of new camera sites and associated signage.

Furthermore, Council believes that these powers should only be used to improve road safety and not as revenue raising opportunity. Finally, Council believes that camera enforcement should be used as an additional tool to improve safe travel to schools and not as a substitute for school crossing patrols and where there are vacant school crossing patrol posts every effort should be made to fill these positions.

UPON BEING PUT TO THE VOTE THE AMENDMENT IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR FITZHENRY WAS DECLARED LOST

UPON BEING PUT TO THE VOTE THE SUBSTANTIVE MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR GOODFELLOW WAS DECLARED CARRIED

RESOLVED that the motion be approved.

- (b) Councillor Fitzhenry moved and seconded by Councillor Galton a late Motion tabled and further amended at the meeting

Southampton Council is facing the worst financial crisis in its history. Labour, led by Councillor Kaur and the Cabinet Member for Finance Councillor Leggett has brought corporate bankruptcy to be a real possibility for our city inflicting a huge negative impact on our city’s residents and businesses for years to come.

As such, it is this council's belief that in these dire circumstances Councillor Kaur should resign immediately and allow some other person with greater financial acumen and a solid plan to take over and lead the city through this very difficult and sad period.

UPON BEING PUT TO THE VOTE THE AMENDMENT IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR FITZHENRY WAS DECLARED LOST

RESOLVED that the late, amended motion be rejected.

31. 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 Lord Mayor had been received.

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

It was agreed Councillor Renyard be appointed to the Police and Crime Panel.

It was noted that at the request of the Leader the allocation of seats to Governance Committee was increased from 5 to 7. Members appointed to Governance Committee were Councillors McEwing, A. Frampton, Denness, Rayment, McCreanor, P Baillie and Chapman and that Councillor A Frampton was elected as Chair.

It was noted that dispensation had been given for Councillor Paffey to be appointed to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to take account of the firebreak rules in the Constitution.

The following changes to Committee membership were also noted.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee: Councillor Lambert to replace Councillor Letts and Councillor Greenhalgh to replace Councillor Rayment. The Election of a Vice-Chair would take place at the next meeting of the Committee.

Licensing Committee: Councillor Moulton to replace Councillor J Baillie and Councillor A Bunday to replace Councillor A Frampton.

Planning and Rights of Way Panel: Councillor J Baillie to replace Councillor Powell-Vaughan.

Children and Families Scrutiny Panel: Councillor Webb to replace Councillor Quadir.