

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD AT BRAUNSTONE CIVIC CENTRE
THURSDAY 11th JANUARY 2024 AT 7.30PM

PRESENT: Councillor Nick Brown (Chair), Councillor Anthea Ambrose (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Shabbir Aslam, Andy Evans, Leanne Lee, Becca Lunn, Sam Maxwell, Gary Sanders, Christiane Startin-Lorent and Robert Waterton.

Officers in Attendance: Darren Tilley, Chief Executive & Town Clerk.

Observing the meeting was Councillor Richard Forrest.

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

65. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Imran Uddin.

66. Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of any Disclosable Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary Interests by members.

67. Public Participation

In accordance with Standing Order 3.6, members of the public may attend the meeting for the purpose of submitting a petition and/or making representations, giving evidence or answering questions in respect of any item of business included on the agenda.

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

68. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2023 (item 4 on the agenda) were circulated.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

69. End of Quarter Financial Position – Cashbook, Reserves and Financial Comparisons

The Committee received a summary of the Council's Cash, Reserves and Financial Comparisons for the period 1st April to 31st December 2023; and considered actions to ensure the Council had sufficient cash and reserves to function (item 5 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the eight *primary reasons* for the cash balances being low, as detailed in the *Cash Flow* section of the report, be noted; and be addressed in the forthcoming 2024/2025 budget and precept setting;
2. that the *Options for Addressing the Cash Deficit*, as detailed in the relevant section of the report be pursued as follows:
 - a) Blaby District Council be requested to release the balance of £27,920.44 in Section 106 funding for Thorpe Astley Park to the Town Council,
 - b) Blaby District Council be requested to release the first tranche of the 2024/2025 precept, or any part thereof either on or before 20th March 2024 or if this was not possible, during April 2024, and
 - c) an application be made to the Cooperative Bank for a short-term overdraft facility on the General Operating Account, with a value of no more than £250,000;
3. that delegated authority be given to the Responsible Financial Officer, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to negotiate and make arrangements with Blaby District Council and the Cooperative Bank to facilitate the arrangements set out in 2 above, including determining:
 - a) cash amounts to be arranged, within the limits set out in 2 above,
 - b) timescales, and
 - c) entering into the appropriate legal and contractual arrangements and undertaking the associated administration;
4. that, in the event that formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State would be required for either an overdraft facility or a short term loan (including early payment of the precept or part thereof), then IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that the following resolution be approved "to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for a loan/overdraft facility of £100,000 in March 2024 over the borrowing term of March and April 2024 for the purpose of meeting expenses pending the receipt of revenues receivable in the 2024/2025 financial year";
5. that the *Budget and Cash Management and Monitoring* proposals, set out in the relevant section of the report, be approved as follows:
 - a) when setting the 2024/2025 budget, consideration be given to Capital Projects and Schemes be accounted for in a separate Capital Projects Cost Centre, and
 - b) the Council make use of the Cooperative Bank Business Select Instant Access Account, as set out in paragraph 2 of the proposals,

Banking Arrangements;

6. that the Financial Comparisons Report be considered as the first substantive item on the Policy & Resources Committee agenda and that the Chief Executive & Town Clerk consider alternative report formats; and
7. that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Council setting out the context of the current cash flow position and the approved actions to ensure the Council had sufficient cash and reserves to function.

Reasons for Decisions

1. *The position in respect of the Council's Reserves and the commitments and overspends during 2023/2024, were all matters that the Council would be able to address.*
2. *To take immediate action to ensure the Council had sufficient cash in the short term to function.*
3. *To ensure that mutually agreed arrangements could be negotiated and made with both Blaby District Council and the Cooperative Bank, within the general principles and proposals set out, avoiding the need to call additional meetings of the Policy & Resources Committee to approve minor or technical differences in approach.*
4. *Further legal advice was being sought on whether formal borrowing approval would be required for an overdraft facility or any other short term loan given these would straddle financial years. If formal borrowing approval was needed from the Secretary of State, Council would need to both consider and approve the borrowing request for submission.*
5. *By placing the income and expenditure relating to major capital schemes into a dedicated Capital Projects Cost Centre, it would be easier to identify income and expenditure trends in the operational service budgets and flag issues and potential action to address these earlier in the financial year. When receiving the precept instalments, placing the equivalent of the payroll commitment into an instant access savings account, it becomes easier to identify trends in cash balances in the general operating account and therefore, manage commitments, receipts and payments accordingly.*
6. *To enable Councillors to have time to consider financial matters, in a format which was clear to understand, and for the financial position to form the context for the Committee's subsequent decisions.*
7. *To ensure that all members of the Council were fully informed of the cash flow situation and the short and long term proposals to address the issue and avoid a repeat occurrence. To assist members when setting the 2024/2025 budget and precept. To enable Council to debate, discuss and question the context and actions accordingly.*

70. Business Plan 2024/2025

The Committee considered, for recommendation to Council, the Council's Strategic Aims and Delivery Objectives, along with Service Objectives, in order to determine whether they were relevant to address current and emerging issues faced by the Council and the community (item 6 on the agenda).

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

1. that the Council's Mission Statement be updated as follows:
 - a) to include both Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley in paragraph 1, and
 - b) remove the word "unlawful" from paragraph 4;
2. that the progress with the 2023/2024 Delivery Objectives, including recommendations for 2024/2025, as set out in the report, be received, noted and endorsed;
3. that the Council's current Service Objectives be noted and endorsed, subject to Community Development Objectives 7 and 8, and Corporate Management & Capital Project Objective 13, being amended to include reference to Thorpe Astley as well as to Braunstone Town; and
4. that the proposed Business Plan for 2024/2025, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and adopted.

Reasons for Decisions

1. *The Mission Statement set out the Council's vision to provide high quality services and support the needs of the community, recognising that this would be within available resources:*
 - a) *following consideration of the outcome of Blaby District Council's Community Governance Review of Braunstone Parish in 2022, Braunstone Town Council recognised Thorpe Astley as a distinct community and settlement within the Parish of Braunstone, and*
 - b) *to clarify that all discrimination was unacceptable;*
2. *To note progress with the implementation of the 2023/2024 Delivery Objectives so far and set out proposals for 2024/2025.*
3. *To ensure that the Council's objectives were relevant and reflected changing issues within the community. The wording of Community Development Objectives 7 and 8 and Corporate Management & Capital Project Objective 13 being slightly amended in line with the Council's decision to recognise Thorpe Astley as a distinct community and settlement within the Parish of Braunstone.*
4. *To focus the Council's resources on four main areas of activity in the medium term to ensure effective delivery of initiatives and projects given the limits on resources.*

71. Capital Plan 2024/2025

The Committee considered, for recommendation to Council, priorities and projects for the 2024/2025 Capital Plan (item 7 on the agenda).

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

1. that the Completed Projects (section a), having now been completed, be removed from the rolling programme of Capital Projects;
2. that the Current Projects (section c) be rolled forward, as amended, on to the 2024/2025 Capital Plan (Appendix 1);
3. that the Proposed New Projects (section d) be added to the 2024/2025

- Capital Plan (Appendix 1); and
4. that, subject to the above, the Proposed Capital Plan for 2024/2025 be approved, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, including the timescales for delivery, estimated costs and potential funding sources.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To confirm that the projects had been completed and there was no further work outstanding.*
2. *To confirm that the projects were outstanding and were still required.*
3. *To recognise the need to undertake investment and improvement as identified.*
4. *To provide a realistic and deliverable plan for investment in and improvement to the Council's infrastructure.*

72. Budget (including Fees and Charges) and Precept 2024/2025 and future estimates

The Committee considered, for recommendation to Council, the budget and precept for 2024/2025, including fees and charges and to set out proposed estimates for future years (item 8 on the agenda).

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

1. that a new Cost Centre for Capital Projects be created and all revenue funds for all major capital projects, grants loans and the expenditure be included in this new cost centre;
2. that a budget of £1,000 be included as a one-off in the 2024/2025 budget for Grants for community events to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of D-Day;
3. that the following budgets be created from 2024/2025, as detailed in the report and at Appendix 1:
 - (a) Electric Vehicle Chargers (expenditure & income), and
 - (b) Utilities (Solar Export) (income),
4. that the following budgets be deleted from 2024/2025:
 - (a) Refundable Deposits (expenditure), and
 - (b) Signs (Community Development) (expenditure);
5. that the "Seasonal Decorations" expenditure budget be set to zero in 2024/2025;
6. that an approximate 5% (actual cash figures to be rounded) increase be applied to Community Centres, sports pitches and miscellaneous fees and charges from 2024/2025 and that a detailed report be submitted to the next meeting of Policy & Resources Committee (scheduled for 7th March 2024) for consideration and approval;
7. that £50,000 be raised on the precept to cover the predicted cash deficit on 31st March 2024 and £29,000 to replenish half the balance of funds drawn from the Council's savings account in 2023/2024;
8. that the Estimates for 2024/2025, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved as the Council's Budget for 2024/2025;
9. that a Net Precept Requirement for £981,884 for the financial year

- 2024/2025 be submitted to Blaby District Council; and
10. that the projections for the next 5 years be subject to reassessment and presented to Policy & Resources Committee and Council during March 2024.

Reasons for Decision

1. *By placing the income and expenditure relating to major capital schemes into a dedicated Capital Projects Cost Centre, it will be easier for the Management Team and Committees to identify income and expenditure trends in the operational service budgets during the year and flag issues and potential action to address these earlier in the financial year.*
2. *To enable events commemorating the 80th Anniversary of D-Day to be organised and to ensure their success.*
3. *To create new budgets to clearly account for both the operational expenditure and the actual income.*
4. *To remove budgets no longer required:*
 - (a) *Refundable Deposits are offset against Room Hire income, and*
 - (b) *the Town Watchers Scheme no longer exists and traditional neighbourhood watch schemes have been superseded by the online Neighbourhood Link.*
5. *Due to the pressure on the precept in 2024/2025.*
6. *To avoid a huge jump in prices in subsequent years and given the pressure on the precept for 2024/2025.*
7. *In order to replenish reserves and address the predicted cash deficit in the current financial year.*
8. *To meet the Town Council's operating budgets for 2024/2025 along with funding for the Capital Plan and service pressures as identified in the report.*
9. *The precept requirement for the year being the difference between expenditure and income, calculated in accordance with Section 50 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.*
10. *To ensure that the Council's medium term financial figures were kept up to date and were robust.*

73. Shakespeare Park – Improvement & Development

The Committee received an end of project report concerning the refurbishment of the play area at Shakespeare Park (item 9 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the completion of the final phase of the Shakespeare Park Improvements, *Phase 3 - Playground Improvements*, as set out in the relevant section of the report, be noted; and
2. that the underspend of £440, as set out in Table 1, be returned to the general fund.

Reasons for Decisions

1. *To note that the project, which would provide for an increase in sport participation and improve recreation and play facilities in a part of the Town with high rankings of multiple deprivation across a range of domains, had been completed.*
2. *To note that the project had been delivered efficiently and effectively and to return the remaining earmarked reserves to the general fund.*

74. Improvements to Walking and Cycling Routes

The Committee received an update on the delivery of proposals for improvements to the connections between walking and cycling routes (item 10 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that progress on the delivery of proposals for improvements to the connections between walking and cycling routes, as shown on the programme enclosed with the agenda, be received and noted.

Reason for Decision

The scheme would provide improvements for pedestrians and cyclists connecting facilities, amenities and communities across Braunstone Town, Meridian and Thorpe Astley.

75. Climate Reduction Initiative: installation of Solar PV Panels and Battery Storage

The Committee received updated savings from the installation of Solar PV Panels and considered utilising the underspend on the project towards the installation of battery storage (item 11 on the Agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the update on the *Solar PV Panels and associated Battery Storage*, as set out in the respective section of the report, be endorsed;
2. that the position with the *Finance*, as set out in the relevant section of the report be received and noted and that the installation saving, and balance of Public Works Loan, of £18,789, be put towards the costs of battery storage; and
3. that the proposals for installing battery storage be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration and approval.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To deliver the Council's Climate Change & Environmental Objectives, reduce the Council's Carbon footprint, make savings and generate revenue.*
2. *To note the final costs of the projects, including the underspend, and to allocate the balance of Public Works Loan funding to further reducing the*

Council's carbon footprint.

3. *To fully assess the options, proposals, costs, financial savings and impact on the Council's carbon footprint.*

76. Improvements to Impey Close Play Area and Open Space

The Committee finalised proposals for the refurbishment and enhancement of Impey Close Play Area and surrounding Open Space; and approved the next stages (item 12 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the three responses from the public consultation be noted;
2. that the addition of a new swing suitable for younger/disabled children be included in the proposed works;
3. that assessment of the proposed works to the footpath be obtained from a suitably a qualified civil engineer contractor; and
4. that funding sources be investigated to help towards the cost of the proposed work.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To engage all residents with the plans and seek their views on options.*
2. *To ensure that suitable equipment is provided for all young people.*
3. *To ensure that any proposed works to the footpath were suitably undertaken to prevent any issues with flooding in other areas.*
4. *To ensure that all sources of funding towards the cost of the project would be considered.*

77. Licensed Bar and Café Contract

The Committee considered arrangements for extending the Licensed Bar and Café Contract for up to 12 months and to review and amend the existing Premises Licence (item 13 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader & Deputy Leader of the Council:

- a) to determine whether to offer the current Licensed Bar & Café Contractor, JAAAK Ltd, extensions to the current Licensed Bar & Café Contract, made on 27th June 2019, based on the same terms, either in full or in stages, up to a maximum of 1 year, i.e. 10th July 2025, and
- b) to make an application to the Licensing Authority to vary the Council's Premises Licences to remove or vary the two conditions relating to children and request alternative mitigating conditions.

Reason for Decision

To provide for the opportunity to establish the Café Service from the Civic Community Lounge. Having the ability to offer extensions in full or in stages would provide for opportunities to review expansion plans for the café service

and ensure its success. Given the service had been expanded to include a café, children should be permitted to enter the café, while ensuring it remained a safe environment.

78. Customer Service Standards

The Committee considered, following consultation, revised and updated Customer Service Standards for adoption (item 14 on the agenda).

The Chief Executive advised that a positive response had been received from the staff in the Customer Services Team, who supported the proposals. A further consultation response had been received from a member of the public who also supported the proposals.

RESOLVED that the revised Customer Service Standards, enclosed with the agenda, be approved and implemented on 15th January 2024.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Customer Service Standards reflected the nature and scale of activities undertaken by the Town Council.

79. Draft Working Time Policy & Procedure

The Committee received a proposed Working Time Policy & Procedure for consideration and consultation (item 15 on the agenda).

The proposed Working Time Policy and Procedure had been developed to cover new obligations concerning flexible working, including home working, and to ensure there was a clear and transparent process for managing working hours and annualised hours.

RESOLVED

1. that the proposed draft Working Time Policy & Procedure, enclosed with the agenda, be approved for consultation with staff, Councillors, and the Council's HR Advisor; and
2. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk to:
 - a) make minor amendments to the draft Working Time Policy & Procedure, including ensuring that paragraphs are correctly referenced and cross-referenced,
 - b) determine the consultation period and process; and
3. that any proposed amendments be presented to the meeting of Policy & Resources Committee, proposed for 7th March 2024 for consideration and approval.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure that staff, Councillors and the Council's HR Advisor could input into the proposed Working Time Policy & Procedure to ensure that it*

- would be practical and fit for purpose.*
2. *To ensure that the document could be prepared for consultation.*
 3. *To ensure that the Council had a policy in place setting out a process for flexible working requests and for managing working time and annualised hours to ensure fairness and maintain a work-life balance.*

80. Draft Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure

The Committee received a proposed Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure for consideration and consultation (item 16 on the agenda).

The proposed Leave Entitlement Policy and Procedure had been developed to detail all entitlements for time off work, whether paid or unpaid, and how requests would be determined to ensure there was a clear and transparent process form managing leave entitlements.

RESOLVED

1. that the proposed draft Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure, enclosed with the agenda, be approved for consultation with staff, Councillors, and the Council's HR Advisor; and
2. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk to:
 - a) make minor amendments to the draft Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure, including ensuring that paragraphs are correctly referenced and cross-referenced,
 - b) determine the consultation period and process; and
3. that any proposed amendments be presented to the meeting of Policy & Resources Committee, proposed for 7th March 2024 for consideration and approval.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure that staff, Councillors and the Council's HR Advisor could input into the proposed Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure to ensure that it would be practical and fit for purpose.*
2. *To ensure that the document could be prepared for consultation.*
3. *To ensure that the Council had a policy in place setting out details of holiday and other types of leave staff were entitled to, and how leave requests would be managed to ensure fairness and maintain a work-life balance.*

81. Outside Bodies Report

The Committee received reports from members of Outside Bodies:

a) Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils

No Report.

b) Shakespeare Park Sports Pavilion Management Association

Councillor Maxwell had expressed the Council's continuing support to the Management Association to make a success of the Pavilion facilities at Shakespeare Park.

Discussion had taken place at a recent meeting concerning registration as a charity; however, the Committee felt they would need more help with the process. Councillor Uddin had agreed to lead on this and had been in touch with the Council.

RESOLVED that the Outside Bodies reports be received and noted.

Reason for Decision

To keep up to date with the discussions and work of both Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils and Shakespeare Park Sports Pavilion Managements Association.

82. Blaby District Parish Councils Group

There was no feedback from the Blaby District Parish Council's Group and the Blaby District Council Parish Liaison Group.

RESOLVED that the item be removed from future agendas.

Reason for Decision

The local group had been struggling and it was likely that it was no longer meeting.

83. Approval of Accounts

The Committee considered payments from 25th October 2023 until 31st December 2023 (item 19 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the list of Approved Expenditure Transactions for the period 25th October 2023 until 31st December 2023 be approved.

Reason for Decision

To authorise payments in accordance with the Accounts & Audit Regulations and the Council's Financial Regulations.

84. Parks Fleet Vehicles

RESOLVED that in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press/public be excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 3.5 and 3.7 apply). *Reason for exception – Commercial Interest.*

The Committee considered renewal of leases for the parks fleet vehicles (item 20 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the quotation received from supplier 5 to provide two of the preferred vehicles, Isuzu D-Max Diesel Extended cab trucks, over a lease period of 3 years as detailed in the report, be approved; and
2. that in the event that it was not possible to agree a contract with the preferred supplier to provide the Isuzu D-Max vehicles, delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, to accept the quotation from supplier 1 as detailed in the report.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To ensure that the lease of parks vehicles met the specifications required for the parks and open spaces service and would be adequate and provided value for money.*
2. *To allow an alternative supplier to be requested to provide the required vehicles in the case that the preferred supplier contract is unable to go ahead.*

85. Mossdale Meadows Flood Alleviation and Drainage Improvements

RESOLVED that in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the press/public be excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 3.5 and 3.7 apply). *Reason for exception – Commercial Interest.*

The Committee considered received an update on preparing the tender process, timescales and proposed financing for rebuilding the Culvert and carrying out flood alleviation and drainage improvements at Mossdale Meadows (item 21 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that revised designs and plans be commissioned to include the updated proposed work to Mossdale Meadows for consideration at the next meeting; and
2. that the updated draft timeline for required work be approved.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To provide updated plans to include additional works to Mossdale Meadows to alleviate ongoing flooding issues in all areas of the park.*
2. *To provide a plan of works to be carried out and target dates to work towards.*

The meeting closed at 10.00pm.

NOTE:

CRIME & DISORDER ACT 1998 (SECTION 17) – The Council has an obligation to consider Crime & Disorder implications of all its activities and to do all that it can to prevent Crime and Disorder in its area.

EQUALITIES ACT 2010

Braunstone Town Council has a duty in carrying out its functions to have due regard to:-

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and;
- foster good relations between different groups

To ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment on the basis of race, disability, sex, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity.

These issues were considered in connection with each of the above decisions. Unless otherwise stated under each item of this report, there were no implications.

These minutes are a draft and are subject to consideration for approval at the next meeting scheduled on 7th March 2024.

SIGNED:

DATE: