

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

21st MARCH 2024 at 8.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Tracey Shepherd (Town Mayor), Councillor Paul Kennedy (Deputy Town Mayor) and Councillors Anthea Ambrose, Nick Brown, Andrew Evans, Richard Forrest, Sam Fox-Kennedy, Leanne Lee, Rebecca Lunn, Sam Maxwell, Gary Sanders, Darshan Singh, Christiane Startin-Lorent, Marion Waterton, Robert Waterton and Mark Widdop.

Officers in Attendance: Darren Tilley, Chief Executive & Town Clerk and Pauline Snow, Deputy Executive Officer & Community Services Manager.

Also in attendance was County Councillor Amanda Hack.

There were three members of the public present at the meeting.

COUNCILLOR TRACEY SHEPHERD, TOWN MAYOR, IN THE CHAIR

6200 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Shabbir Aslam, Sevim Aslan, Alex DeWinter and Satindra Sangha.

6201 Disclosures of Interest

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

6202 Public Session

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

There were three members of the public present at the meeting. Two members of the public expressed concern regarding recent flooding on Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road that extended under the M1 motorway bridge at the parish boundary between Lubbesthorpe and Braunstone. The members of the public explained that during recent flooding, homes and farms were completely cut off and all roads were impassable. It was suggested that this had got worse due to the New Lubbesthorpe estate being built, with additional water run-off from the sites under construction. The members of the public advised that they had attended a meeting at Lubbesthorpe Parish Council and Blaby District Council regarding the recent flooding.

Councillor Nick Brown stated that as Lubbesthorpe residents, they had rightly brought their concerns to Lubbesthorpe Parish Council. Nonetheless, the Town Council were happy to contact relevant authorities to inform them of the situation and request support for those affected.

Councillor Amanda Hack, County Councillor for Braunstone Division, advised that she would be happy to look into this further as she was a member of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Panel, to consider the effect of new development on flooding.

6203 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of Braunstone Town Council held on 25th January 2024 were circulated (item 4 on the agenda).

It was proposed by the Town Mayor and seconded by the Deputy Town Mayor and was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Braunstone Town Council held on 25th January 2024 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

6204 Financial Position – Cashbook and Reserves

The Council received a report 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 (item 5 on the agenda).

Councillor Brown provided an update as follows:

- i. **Borrowing Request:** The Government had not responded to the Town Council's request for approval to borrow up to £50k before the end of the financial year. The Town Clerk had contacted the civil servant dealing with the application updating them on the financial position and asking for a response; to date, a response/decision was awaited.
- ii. **Financial Position:** with March salaries set to be paid on Friday 22nd March, there would be approximately £15,000 left in the operating bank account; with commitments and invoices for payment next week, it was anticipated that the balance on 31st March would definitely be at least £10,451, as predicted in the report, potentially it would be around £12k.
- iii. **Short term loan:** The above means, that with National Insurance and Pension payments around £18k due in the first half of April, the Council would need to draw a short-term loan from Blaby District Council towards the end of the first week in April. The amount would depend on 31st March balances, but was anticipated to be around £60 - £70k. This would cover the March National Insurance and pension payments and the April salary payments, along with April's operational expenditure.

- iv. Liaison with Blaby District Council: The Chief Executive & Town Clerk met on Wednesday 20th March with Blaby District Council's Executive Director & Section 151 Officer and their Head of Finance. An update was provided on the Town Council's current financial position and projections and the measures being put in place to replenish reserves, manage cash flows and address and mitigate future risks. District Council officers were happy with the progress that had been made over the last couple of months with reducing the potential deficit and the action being taken to ensure the resilience of the Council going forward. Councillor Brown thanked officers at the District Council for recognising the need to both support the Town Council, while ensuring that steps were taken to prevent a repeat occurrence, and for their acknowledgement that the Council had responded and had an appropriate and realistic plan going forward.

It was proposed by Councillor Nick Brown and seconded by Councillor Anthea Ambrose and was

RESOLVED that the following action to ensure the Council had sufficient cash and reserves to function, be received and noted.

- a) the *Progress with addressing the Cash Deficit*, as detailed in the relevant section of the report and in the cash flow forecast at Appendix 1;
- b) that the terms of a short-term loan from Blaby District Council, as detailed in the *Short-Term Loan* part of the report section *Progress with addressing the Cash Deficit*, were approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 7th March 2024; and
- c) that *Further Reserve Measures* had been approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 7th March 2024, summarised in the relevant section of the report.

Reasons for Decision

1. *The position in respect of the Council's Reserves and the commitments and overspends during 2023/2024, were all matters that the Council could and was addressing.*
2. *The terms of the short-term loan were both reasonable and balanced and would ensure the Council had sufficient cash in the short term to function.*
3. *To provide a contingency while the Council replenished its reserves to a comfortable position to cover both cash flows and unforeseen circumstances.*

6205 Review of Medium-Term Priorities and Financial Planning

The Council undertook a mid-year review of the Council's medium-term priorities and financial planning, alongside the Treasury Management, Investment and Reserves Strategies (item 6 on the agenda).

It was proposed by Councillor Nick Brown and seconded by Councillor Anthea Ambrose and was

RESOLVED

1. that the current projections attached at Appendix 1, based on known financial pressures identified in the report, be approved;
2. that the Council's Strategic Aims, Delivery Objectives and Committee/Service Objectives, attached at Appendix 2, be used as the basis for calculating the annual budget and any external funding sought;
3. that once the revenue reserve reaches the equivalent of three months' net expenditure; the additional funds be earmarked to invest in infrastructure and assets, as identified in the Capital Plan at Appendix 3, and in the development and remodelling of services, including the Town Council's operations;
4. that the Financial, Treasury Management and Investment Strategies, as set out in the report, be adopted;
5. that the revised Reserves Policy, attached at Appendix 4, be approved; and
6. that the Earmarked Reserves be approved, as set out at Appendix 5.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To provide a foundation for preparing budget estimates for 2025/2026 and beyond.*
2. *To ensure the Council focussed its activity and spending on its key priorities and objectives given the current financial constraints and future financial uncertainties.*
3. *To maintain the standard of the Council's facilities and open spaces and to ensure the highest possible standards within the resources available in the future.*
4. *To effectively manage the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, taking into account the associated risks.*
5. *To ensure the financial resilience of the Council, that it would be able to function, invest in its assets and deliver services to residents; while avoiding significant increases in council tax precept in future years.*
6. *To ensure that reserves earmarked relate only to a commitment or a restricted use; maximising the level of funds to replenish the revenue (general fund) reserve.*

6206 Announcements

a) Town Mayor

The Town Mayor made the following announcements:

"On Thursday 7th March I opened the second Chatty Café, located in the Civic Community Lounge here at the Civic Centre. I particularly wish to thank Councillors Anthea Ambrose and Marion Waterton for hosting the Chatter and Natter table each Thursday lunchtime between 1pm and 2pm. I also wish to thank the operator, JAAAK Ltd, for their support".

“Along with the opening of our first Chatty Café at Gilly’s Café on Watergate Lane on 27th June; I am delighted that we have two Chatty Cafés Right Here – Right Now tackling loneliness and isolation in our community”.

“Forthcoming programme of events include:

- a quiz night tomorrow evening at 7pm here at the Civic Centre, organised by St Crispins Church;
- the Spring Craft Fair on Saturday 30th March at Thorpe Astley Community Centre;

I will be holding a raffle in aid of my charitable fundraising and would like donations for raffle prizes – if you are able to support with donating raffle prizes, please speak to me after the meeting – thank you;

and

- on 21st April 2024 at 10:30am, the Quilting Open Day, organised by Leicestershire Quilters, here at the Civic Centre”.

“Finally, my Awards of Merit evening will take place on Thursday 11th April here at the Civic Centre. The event includes a celebratory hot supper, in order to raise funds for Chatty Cafés and tackling loneliness. Residents and Councillors can purchase tickets for the event. Any groups receiving net proceeds from the Programme of Events or nominees for an Award of Merit will be given complimentary tickets as my guests for the evening”.

“Please support those who are receiving awards and help raise money for our Chatty Cafes’ and tackling loneliness. Tickets are £13 each and are on sale now from Reception”.

b) Leader of the Council

Councillor Nick Brown reported on a visit by Civil Servants from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Department following the NALC Award for Council of the Year 2023.

The visitors attended the Library, Civic Centre, Thorpe Astley Community Centre, Shakespeare Park Sports Pavilion and the Walking/Cycling route through Mosssdale Meadows where they talked to residents and users of the Town Council Services. A lunch was provided where they had an opportunity to talk to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Town Council where concerns were raised on the issue of Parish and Town Council’s being able to access government funds and grants directly.

c) Chief Executive and Town Clerk

The Chief Executive & Town Clerk reported on the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities Department visit and highlighted how impressed the visitors were with the new Walking/Cycling route that

connected Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley and the difference it had made in the Town.

6207 County and District Councillor Reports

a) Leicestershire County Council

Councillor Amanda Hack, as County Councillor for Braunstone Division, reported on the following matters:

- Search for missing child in flood waters had now been scaled back. Thanks were made to the emergency services for the commitment and hours undertaken to find the young boy.
- Leicestershire County Council budget and cashflow was no better and many services were now in crisis. To balance the budget, staff recruitment had been reduced or stopped and reserves were being used to balance the budget at the end of the financial year.
- £4.5 million had been made available to fund public transport to be spent within 1 year but work to improve the transport system needed more than 1 year to undertake.
- Homelessness was increasing and tackling this had been passed to the Local Area Co-ordination team. There was concern that staff would need additional training to tackle this complex issue.
- Amy Street Flooding – talks had been held with representatives of Blaby District Council and City Council regarding the flooding issues on Amy Street, including replacement and clearing of gullies. Severn Trent would also be asked to undertake a full review of capacity of drainage under the road.

Councillor Robert Waterton advised that he had attended both meetings at Blaby District Council regarding flooding. He had met representatives of Severn Trent at Amy Street and suggested non-return valves were installed for residents.

Councillor Amanda Hack responded that Amy Street was built adjacent to a flood plain but previously had not been the subject of significant flooding. The river banks close to Amy Street were suffering from degradation and landslip.

b) Blaby District Council

Councillor Nick Brown, as District Councillor for Braunstone Millfield Ward, reported that Blaby District Council would be using reserves to balance the accounts at the end of 2023/2024 financial year.

Work was currently being undertaken on the Local Plan which would start in 2025 for 15 years. Consultation on the plan would commence in late Spring/early Summer and included plans to improve environmental protection and to manage extra traffic from development.

Councillor Brown reported that as Chair of the Scrutiny Commission he had included residential housing being converted to children's homes on the agenda due to the disproportionate level of these in Braunstone Town.

6208 Questions from Councillors

No questions had been submitted.

6209 Reports of Standing Committees: Community Development Committee – 1st February 2024

Council received the Report of the meeting of the Community Development Committee held on the 1st February 2024 (p7887-7892).

Page 7888, Minute 77 – Leicestershire Police Local Independent Advisory Group

Councillor Anthea Ambrose advised that a suitable representative was required to be appointed from the Town Council to the Leicestershire Police Local Independent Advisory Group. If any members were interested, they were asked to contact the Chief Executive & Town Clerk.

It was moved by Councillor Anthea Ambrose and was

RESOLVED that the Report be adopted.

6210 Reports of Standing Committees: Planning & Environment Committee – 15th February 2024

Council received the Report of the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on 15th February 2024 (p7893 – p7905).

Page 7899, Minute 68 – Planning Application 23/1066/OUT

Councillor Robert Waterton advised that as a member of the Planning Committee at Blaby District Council he was aware of the planning application at Enderby and would take into account the impact on the highways when determining how to vote.

It was moved by Councillor Robert Waterton and was

RESOLVED that the Report be adopted.

6211 Reports of Standing Committee: Policy & Resources Committee – 7th March 2024

Council received the Report of the meeting of Policy & Resources Committee held on 7th March 2024 (p7906– p7918).

Page 7911, Minute 97 – Flooding Support

Councillor Robert Waterton advised that all residents that had attended the Council meeting on 25th January 2024 with regards to the flooding at Amy Street, that had left contact details, had been contacted. It had been suggested that a Residents Association be formed as a route to raise concerns and complaints with the appropriate authorities regarding flooding. It was proposed that a meeting be arranged and residents be invited to attend.

Page 7913, Minute 100 – Thorpe Astley Park Culvert

Councillor Richard Forrest queried what progress had been made with regards to the work on the culvert bridge at Thorpe Astley Park.

It was noted that Persimmon Homes had confirmed that remedial work to reduce the height of the fence, cut back shrubs and install solar lighting would be undertaken on 26th March. The work was likely to take 1 – 2 days and the footpath would be closed during the work.

Councillor Christiane Startin-Lorent confirmed that the Environment Agency had recently cleared the brook to allow water to flow better and reduce incidences of flooding.

Page 7917, Minute 108 – Shakespeare Park Management Association

Councillor Richard Forrest queried the current situation with the Shakespeare Park Pavilion and its viability.

Councillor Nick Brown confirmed that if the Management Association became unsustainable then the Town Council would have to take over the management of the pavilion but would then be liable to pay business rates and charge VAT on use. However, there was a clear indication that the members of the Management Association wished to ensure the successful running of the Sports Pavilion themselves.

Councillor Sam Maxwell, who was a Town Council representative on the Committee of the Management Association, felt that recent issues were due to members, who were volunteers, having little experience in managing a project such as this. It was felt that committee members didn't fully understand what the work involved when agreeing to take over the management but were learning as time went on. Support and help was being offered to the Management Association and work was underway to maximise income to help with the payment of outstanding invoices. The Management Association were in the process of applying for charity status to be exempt from business rates. It was noted that the Chief Executive & Town Clerk had attended the last two meetings of the Committee of the Management Association to offer support.

It was moved by Councillor Nick Brown and was

RESOLVED that the report be adopted.

6212 Motions on Notice

No Motions on Notice had been submitted.

6213 Sealing of Documents

There were no documents for sealing.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

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.