

**BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING**

**25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2024 at 8.00PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Tracey Shepherd (Town Mayor), Councillor Paul Kennedy (Deputy Town Mayor) and Councillors Anthea Ambrose, Shabbir Aslam, Sevim Aslan, Nick Brown, Andrew Evans, Richard Forrest, Sam Fox-Kennedy, Rebecca Lunn, Christiane Startin-Lorent, Marion Waterton, Robert Waterton and Mark Widdop.

Councillor Alex Dewinter observed the meeting remotely using Zoom video and audio.

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

Also in attendance was County Councillor Amanda Hack.

There were 42 members of the public present at the meeting.

**COUNCILLOR TRACEY SHEPHERD, TOWN MAYOR, IN THE CHAIR**

**6182 Tribute to former Councillors Roger Berrington and Iris Whailing**

The Town Mayor, Councillor Tracey Shepherd, opened the meeting and recalled that just before Christmas Councillors would have received the sad news that former Town Councillor and Town Mayor, Roger Berrington, had passed away on 17th December 2023 following illness at the age of 84.

Roger was first elected in 1991 and served as a Town Councillor until 2011. He returned to the Town Council following a by-election in 2013 and served until 2019. Roger served as Town Mayor twice in 1997/1998 and 2004/2005.

Roger served the Town by supporting community groups and organisations, including Braunstone West Social Centre, Braunstone Town Community Mini Bus and Braunstone Life. In addition, Roger served the Town as a Blaby District Councillor for a number of years.

The Town Mayor also recalled that earlier this week, Councillors also received the sad news of the recent passing of former Councillor and Town Mayor, Iris Whailing on Sunday 7th January 2024.

Iris was first elected in 1983 and served as a Town Councillor until 1995. She returned to the Town Council in 2011 and served until 2015. Iris served as Town Mayor in 1991/1992.

In addition, Iris also served the Town as a Blaby District Councillor for a number of years.

The Town Mayor invited those present to join in a minute's silence in remembering both Roger's and Iris' contribution to the Town's public life and by

sending the Council's thoughts, best wishes and condolences to the families at this sad and difficult time as they came to terms with their loss.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Nick Brown, recalled Iris Whailing as someone who was community minded and continued to support the community after her service on the Council had ended. Councillor Brown described Roger Berrington as a legend whose service to the Council and community went above and beyond, while not asking for anything in return.

**6183 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Lee, Sam Maxwell, Satindra Sangha and Darshan Singh.

**6184 Disclosures of Interest**

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

**6185 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 42 members of the public present at the meeting, whose concern was recent flooding in the Amy Street, Cyril Street and Gwencole Avenue/Crescent areas of Braunstone Town.

In accordance with Standing Order 3.6a, the residents appointed one representative to make representations as follows:

- a) all attendees lived in the effected streets of Amy Street, Cyril Street and Gwencole Avenue/Crescent;
- b) many residents had lived in the area for decades and had never seen flooding at this level; residents were asking why, all of a sudden, this had happened?
- c) residents were concerned that flooding would reoccur and what would happen with regards to the insurance for their homes;
- d) the flooding had been devastating for residents;
- e) residents were asking what Braunstone Town Council could do to help them?
- f) it was important to involve Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council.

Further questions were raised by residents as follows:

- a) where could sandbags be obtained?
- b) the dyke had not been cleaned out or maintained, it needed to be to prevent future reoccurrences?

- c) Residents had contacted Leicester City Council concerning the dyke on Aylestone Meadows and had received no response;
- d) there had been no answer on 24 hour flood lines; and
- e) communications after the floods had been minimal, there was inconsistency of information, the forms for funding were not available and the information on the website had not been updated since 18<sup>th</sup> January.

Since Leicestershire County Council were the flood authority, the Town Mayor asked County Councillor Amanda Hack (Braunstone Division), who was in attendance, to respond and update residents on the situation.

County Councillor Amanda Hack reported:

- a) 550 homes had been flooded in Leicestershire County, which had never been affected by flooding before;
- b) following a period of flood, there was a legal process to follow and each flooded area had to be assessed independently;
- c) the County Council has submitted a request for emergency assistance for additional capacity in order to get the reviews completed as quickly as possible;
- d) Councillor Hack was a member of the Environment & Transport Scrutiny Committee and she had asked for an emergency report on prevention measures;
- e) prior to the storm key risk areas had been checked by Severn Trent Water and Leicestershire County Council;
- f) rain had landed on saturated ground; the equivalent of January's average rainfall had fallen in 24 hours, putting a lot of water into water courses which contained debris due to the wind;
- g) 8,000 gullies had to be cleansed across the County;
- h) Councillor Hack was picking up individual case work with constituents and she was happy to have separate conversations;
- i) Central Government support would be provided through local authorities for residents and businesses affected;
- j) Prevention of future occurrences was important given the changes in weather; there was a need to look at ways to manage water flows better and therefore, an assessment of how water travels was needed; and
- k) there were different arrangements for issuing sandbags across different areas and there needed to be a consistent approach;
- l) Councillor Hack had raised a question about Road Closures to try and get a process in place to close roads quicker; in order to avoid traffic travelling through floods and causing a wave effect into people's homes.

Responding on behalf of Braunstone Town Council, Councillor Nick Brown acknowledged there had been a change in the last 30 years and the risk of flooding was much higher due to climate change. Councillor Brown added that landowners needed to decide how to manage water more effectively. Braunstone Town Council did not own land in the area and did not have any statutory powers concerning management of water courses and land. However, the Town Council could help by being an advocate for residents when dealing with the relevant authorities.

Therefore, it was moved by Councillor Nick Brown and seconded by Councillor Imran Uddin and

**RESOLVED** that a report be submitted to Policy & Resources Committee setting out options for Braunstone Town Council to

- a) represent residents' concerns to the relevant authorities; and
- b) support and champion the need to take preventative action to avoid repeat occurrences.

*Reason for Decision*

*To ensure that the Town Council could be a voice for residents affected by flooding and that action would be pursued to improve resilience and preparation.*

#### **6186 Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of Braunstone Town Council held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 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 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

#### **6187 Financial Position – Cashbook, Reserves and Short-term Borrowing**

The Council received a summary of the Council's Cash and Reserves for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023; it noted actions taken by the Policy & Resources Committee and Responsible Financial Officer to ensure that the Council had sufficient cash and reserves to function; and considered seeking approval from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for short-term borrowing of £50,000 for the purpose of meeting expenses at the end of the financial year (2023/2024) pending the receipt of revenues in the next financial year (2024/2025) (item 5 on the agenda).

A supplementary report was submitted (filed with these minutes) providing an update on the Council's Cash and Reserves, and the actions taken by Policy & Resources Committee and the Responsible Financial Officer to ensure that the Council had sufficient cash and reserves to function.

It was noted that Blaby District Council's offer of a loan would need formal approval through Blaby District Council's internal decision making process.

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

## 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 it be noted that the *Options for Addressing the Cash Deficit*, as detailed in the relevant section of the report, had been approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024, with delegated authority to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk to determine amounts, timings and arrangements, and were being pursued as follows;
  - a) Blaby District Council have agreed to release the balance of £27,920.44 in Section 106 funding for Thorpe Astley Park to the Town Council,
  - b) Blaby District Council 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, noting that this would be in the form of a loan to Braunstone Town Council (if agreed), and
  - c) an application made to the Cooperative Bank for a short-term overdraft facility on the General Operating Account, with a value of up to £150,000 had been declined;
3. 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 short term loan/overdraft facility of £50,000 in March 2024 for the purpose of meeting expenses in the 2023/2024 financial year pending the receipt of revenues receivable in the 2024/2025 financial year”;
4. that the *Budget and Cash Management and Monitoring* proposals, set out in the relevant section of the report, and approved by Policy & Resources Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024, be noted; and
5. that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Council, scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024, 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 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 would be able to address.*
2. *To take immediate action to ensure the Council had sufficient cash in the short term to function.*
3. *Formal borrowing approval would be required from the Secretary of State for an overdraft facility or any other short term loan to meet expenditure in the current financial year (i.e. before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024), pending the receipt of revenues in 2024/2025 (i.e. from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024).*
4. *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, by 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.*
5. *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 enable Council to debate, discuss and question the context and actions accordingly.*

## **6188 Business Plan 2024/2025**

The Council considered 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).

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

### **RESOLVED**

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) removing 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 Decision*

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*

#### **6189 Capital Plan 2024/2025**

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

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

#### **RESOLVED**

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.*

#### **6190 Budget (including Fees & Charges) and Precept 2024/2025 and future estimates**

The Council considered the budget and precept for 2024/2025, including the approach to raising fees and charges, along with proposed estimates for future years (item 8 on the agenda).

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

#### **RESOLVED**

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 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024) for consideration and approval;
  7. that £50,000 be raised on the precept to cover the predicted cash deficit on 31<sup>st</sup> 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 would 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 were offset against Room Hire income, and*
  - (b) *the Town Watchers Scheme no longer existed 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 would be kept up to date and were robust.*

## **6191 Announcements**

### **a) Town Mayor**

The Town Mayor made the following announcements:

“Thank you to those of you who supported the Christmas Craft Fair on 18th November, particularly Anthea who assisted with my tombola raising funds for supporting Chatty Cafés”.

“On 29th November I had both the privilege and the honour of accepting the NALC Star Council, Council of the Year Award, at a ceremony at the House of Lords”.

“On 18th January, I hosted a Civic Reception to thank our community, our partners, our stakeholders, staff and councillors for their part in helping make Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley a vibrant community and for helping us achieve national recognition for our work and achievements”.

“Braunstone Town Council is the first local council in Blaby District, Leicestershire and in the East Midlands to be awarded Star Council of the Year!”

“On 5th December I formally opened the Civic Centre Changing Places toilet and Civic Community Lounge Café”.

“On 14th December I formally opened the refurbished Play Area at Shakespeare Park”.

### **b) Leader of the Council**

Councillor Nick Brown reported that it had been a pleasant surprise to win the NALC Start Councils Council of the Year 2023 award. The Civic Reception had been an important occasion to thank staff for their hard work along with the community and partners for their contributions. Councillor Brown thanked everyone who had voted for the Town Council. Councillor Brown added that the Council would shortly host a visit by civil servants from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities who were interested in the Council's work.

### **c) Chief Executive and Town Clerk**

The Chief Executive & Town Clerk had no announcements.

## **6192 County and District Councillor Reports**

### a) Leicestershire County Council

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

1. Finance – the County Council was undertaking scrutiny of the budget proposals; this year will need £10 million of reserves to balance the books; the following year £7 million (reduced from previously predicted £12 million due to additional government funding); deficit by year 4 was predicted to be £85 million behind where the County Council needed to be;
2. Financial Pressures in Services included:
  - i. Children’s Special Education, children waiting to be placed, costs by private providers have increased by 25%, and
  - ii. Social Care for the elderly, residents waiting for care packages to be put in place; and
3. Highways Fund – saddened that a wall recently painted has been covered in graffiti, work was ongoing to install double yellow lines and review the location of bus stops, the Belton Road scheme was being modified and new places signs would soon be installed.

### b) Blaby District Council

Councillor Nick Brown, as District Councillor for Braunstone Millfield Ward, reported on the scrutiny of the budget. No major cuts to services were planned and the short fall in funding would be made up from balances. However, there were concerns regarding sustainability in the medium term.

Councillor Robert Waterton, District Councillor for Braunstone Ravenhurst Ward, reported on the Planning Committee’s work. The bus, which members used for site visits crashed, fortunately no one was hurt and the site visit continued using officer’s cars.

## **6193 Questions from Councillors**

No questions had been submitted.

## **6194 Reports of Standing Committees: Community Development Committee – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

Council received the Report of the meeting of the Community Development Committee held on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (p7837-7845).

It was moved by Councillor Anthea Ambrose and was

**RESOLVED** that the Report be adopted.

**6195 Reports of Standing Committees: Planning & Environment Committee – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

Council received the Report of the meeting of the Planning & Environment Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (p7846 – p7859).

It was moved by Councillor Robert Waterton and was

**RESOLVED** that the Report be adopted.

**6196 Reports of Standing Committee: Employing Committee – 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Council received the Report of the meeting of the Employing Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (p7860 – p7861).

It was moved by Councillor Nick Brown and was

**RESOLVED** that the Report be adopted.

**6197 Reports of Standing Committee: Policy & Resources Committee – 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Council received the Report of the meeting of Policy & Resources Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (p7862– p7874).

It was moved by Councillor Nick Brown and was

**RESOLVED** that the report be adopted.

**6198 Motions on Notice**

No Motions on Notice had been submitted.

**6199 Sealing of Documents**

There were no documents for sealing.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.

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.

SIGNED: .....

DATE: .....