

**BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT BRAUNSTONE CIVIC CENTRE**

**THURSDAY 7<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024 AT 7.30PM**

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

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

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

**86. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Imran Uddin.

**87. Disclosures of Interest**

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

**88. 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.

**89. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (item 4 on the agenda) were circulated.

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

**90. Financial Comparisons**

The Committee received Financial Comparisons for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (item 5 on the agenda).

It was noted that the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, would review the comparison reports that could be generated by the Accounts Software with a view to presenting these in a format that would be clearer to understand.

**RESOLVED** that when reporting the End of Quarter Financial Position, the Income and Expenditure Report be included with the Balance Sheet and Financial Summary.

*Reason for Decision*

*To enable Councillors to have a clearer overview of the main areas of expenditure.*

## **91. Financial Position – Cashbook and Reserves**

The Committee received a summary of the Council's Cash and Reserves and received an update on implementation of the actions to ensure that the Council had sufficient cash and reserves to function; along with determining an offer of a short-term loan from Blaby District Council (item 6 on the agenda).

The Responsible Financial Officer provided the following update on the situation with the Council's Cash Flow:

- i. On 1st March 2024 actual cash balances at the bank were £4,785 higher than predicted when the report was published and approximately £20,000 more than predicted at the beginning of February;
- ii. projecting cash flows forward, using the same income and expenditure predictions; a closing balance on 31st March of £10,451 (with all salaries paid) was predicted and a deficit on 25th April of -£59,031;
- iii. projecting income and expenditure in the 2024/2025 financial year on the same basis, the Council would be in credit on both 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the Council risks being in deficit by the end of April 2025 without any action, by approximately -£50k.

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities have been in touch to ask for more information to consider whether to approve the Council's short-term borrowing request up to 31<sup>st</sup> March. They have asked for:

1. Evidence of current levels of reserves (e.g. a bank statement).
2. What mitigating action would need to be taken if the parish council were to face any future financial difficulty in the next 3-5 years?

Items 6, 7 and 8 on the Policy & Resources Committee agenda (7<sup>th</sup> March) set out the proposals to address point 2 above and have been provided.

### **RESOLVED**

1. that *Progress with addressing the Cash Deficit*, as detailed in the relevant section of the report and in the cash flow forecast at Appendix 1, be noted;
2. 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*, be approved;
3. that a further application be made to the Cooperative Bank for a 12 month overdraft facility of no more than £100,000 covering September 2024 and April 2025;
  4. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk to develop proposals, timescales and undertake a consultation with staff to adjust the monthly pay date;
  5. 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 and 3 above, including determining:
    - a) cash amounts to be arranged, within the limits set out in 2 and 3 above,
    - b) timescales, and
    - c) entering into the appropriate legal and contractual arrangements and undertaking the associated administration; and
  6. 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 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 replenishes its reserves to a comfortable position to cover both cash flows and unforeseen circumstances.*
4. *To ease cash flow pressures in April and September each financial year, particularly in April 2025.*
5. *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.*
6. *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.*

## **92. Review of Medium Term Priorities and Financial Planning**

The Committee undertook a mid-year review of the Council's medium-term priorities and financial planning, alongside the Treasury Management, Investment and Reserves Strategies (item 7 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

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; subject to paragraph 26 being amended to read ".....put forward proposals to replenish the general fund reserve in the following financial year"; 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 focusses 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.*

**93. Revenue Savings Projects 2024/2025 and future years**

The Committee considered options for reducing expenditure in 2024/2025, and future years, in order to replenish the Council's reserves quicker and reduce the future impact on taxpayers (item 8 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED**

1. that the *One-off Revenue Savings for 2024/2025*, estimated to total £30,990, as identified in the relevant section of the report, be approved;
2. that the associated budget for the *One-off Revenue Savings for 2024/2025* be vired to the Contingency Fund; and

3. that the proposed arrangements to bring forward potential *Ongoing Revenue Savings for Future Years*, as set out in the relevant section of the report, be approved.

*Reasons for Decision*

1. *To manage cash flow during 2024/2025 to ensure the Council's financial position and resilience would be improved in the short term.*
2. *To adjust budgets accordingly to ensure funds would not be spent elsewhere and to provide a contingency fund for 2024/2025.*
3. *To ensure the Council focusses its activity and spending on its key priorities and objectives given the current financial constraints and future financial uncertainties.*

**94. Climate Change & Environmental Action Plan**

The Committee considered, for approval, an action plan to deliver the Climate Change and Environmental Strategy's Objectives (item 9 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED** that the updated Climate Change & Environmental Action Plan, as amended and attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved for April 2024 to March 2025; subject to the *Reason for Inclusion* of the *Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points at Shakespeare Park and parks depot* including residents and visitors.

*Reason for Decision*

*To set out proposals to deliver the objectives set out in the Climate Change & Environmental Strategy and the Environment & Biodiversity Strategy, along with the recommendations of the Carbon Audit in order to deliver the Council's commitment to make its activities carbon neutral and embed climate and environmental awareness in its decision making. The reason for rolling out electric vehicle charging points should also be to provide fast charging for residents and visitors as well as service users, hirers and staff.*

**95. Review of Fees and Charges**

The Committee considered increasing Community Centre, sports pitches and miscellaneous fees and charges by approximately 5% for implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 (item 10 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED**

1. that the Casual Indoor Bowls facility at the Civic Centre, and the facility for sending and receiving faxes, be removed;
2. that the proposed fees and charges, highlighted in red, be approved as follows:
  - a) Appendix 1 – Civic Centre & Thorpe Astley Hire Charges,
  - b) Appendix 2 – Tennis Court Hire Fees,
  - c) Appendix 3 – Miscellaneous Charges, and

- d) Appendix 4 – documents available under Publication Scheme;
3. that the above be implemented for all new hires/purchases from Monday 1st April 2024; and
4. that an assessment of the impact of the price increases be undertaken following the end of the first quarter.

*Reasons for Decision*

1. *The casual indoor bowls and fax facilities had not been used for several years.*
2. *To avoid a huge jump in prices in subsequent years given the pressure on the precept for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026.*
3. *To set a specific date for timely implementation, allowing time for systems and publicity to be updated, while avoiding undue delay.*
4. *To assess the Price Elasticity of Demand and if there was a fall in income, to determine whether any action should be taken.*

**96. Pitch Allocations 2024/2025**

The Committee considered pitch capacity, fees and the process for allocating sports pitches for the 2024/2025 season (item 11 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED**

1. that the pitch type and capacity, as set out in Table 1 of the Pitch Capacity section of the report, be approved; and
2. that the pitch fees be confirmed and the availability of pitches be advertised, as set out at Appendix 1, with a closing date for applications on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

*Reasons for Decisions*

1. *To ensure a balance between quality of playing surface, the needs of local clubs for provision and the needs of park users.*
2. *To allow suitable time for applications while acknowledging clubs need the certainty by April of a home playing ground in order to participate in the league.*

**97. Flooding Support**

The Committee considered how the Town Council could be both a voice for residents affected by flooding and support action being taken to improve resilience and preparation (item 12 on the agenda).

It was noted that the drop-in information session held at Blaby District Council's offices on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 had been well attended by residents and Leicester City Council officers were also in attendance. Severn Trent would be using cameras to look at the sewage system on Friday and local councillors had been invited to view their work.

**RESOLVED** that Braunstone Town Council, including through Town Ward Councillors, work with the community, other partners and stakeholders and use its offices, powers and influence to:

- a) represent residents' concerns about flooding, including as follows:
  - signposting to support (including financial) provided by other authorities and agencies,
  - supporting Town Ward Councillors to hold meetings and engagement sessions with residents and communities affected by or at risk of flooding, and
  - supporting the community to express its concerns and have a strong voice, including facilitating the establishment of a Residents' Association where support for one existed; and
- b) Support and champion action to prevent flooding, including as follows:
  - signposting and promoting schemes, funding and information relating to flood prevention measures,
  - supporting agencies to hold meetings and engagement sessions with residents and communities affected by or at risk of flooding,
  - supporting communities to take action, including the formation of a Group (e.g. Residents' Association) and taking on volunteer roles (e.g. Community Flood Warden), and
  - action ancillary to the above, e.g. supporting the community/group to develop a Community Flood Plan, hold open meetings and publicise its work and events to residents.

*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.*

**98. Improvements to Walking and Cycling Routes**

The Committee received an update on the timescales for delivery of proposals for improvements to the connections between walking and cycling routes (item 13 on the agenda).

The Chief Executive & Town Clerk reported that the proposed start date of January 2025 for improvement works on Kingsway and Meridian Way was down to the contractor taking on other work in the meantime. Leicestershire County Council were exploring capacity in their in-house highways team to see if there was scope to deliver some of the works in 2024.

**RESOLVED**

1. 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; and
2. that publicity be undertaken to explain the stages of the project and the connecting works, particularly at Aylestone Meadows.

### *Reasons for Decision*

1. *The scheme would provide improvements for pedestrians and cyclists connecting facilities, amenities and communities across Braunstone Town, Meridian and Thorpe Astley.*
2. *Residents had raised questions, following the improvements on Aylestone Meadows, concerning improvements to the links and boardwalk.*

## **99. 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 considered the procurement process (item 14 on the agenda).

### **RESOLVED**

1. that the *Proposals*, set out in the relevant section of the report, be endorsed;
2. that the amended *Timescales*, set out in the relevant section of the report, be approved;
3. that the *Update* on the drawings for the proposed work to the footpaths, set out in the relevant section of the report, be approved;
4. that the tender document for the proposed work to the Impey Close Playground, enclosed at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved; and
5. that funding sources be investigated to help towards the cost of the proposed work.

### *Reasons for Decision*

1. *To provide a framework of the proposals for the tender process.*
2. *To confirm milestones for the delivery of the project.*
3. *To ensure that any proposed works to the footpath was suitably undertaken to prevent any issues with flooding in other areas.*
4. *To invite appropriate contractors to provide plans and quotations for the improvement to the playground at Impey Close.*
5. *To ensure that all sources of funding towards the cost of the project were considered.*

## **100. Thorpe Astley Park Culvert**

The Committee received an update on works to replace the culvert and pedestrian bridge over Lubbesthorpe Brook at Thorpe Astley Park (item 15 on the agenda).

### **RESOLVED**

1. that the update report on progress with Thorpe Astley Culvert be noted;
2. that investigations be undertaken by Blaby District Council to confirm ownership and if there were any planning obligations in place that required



that the culvert bridge was completed and maintained to an agreed standard.

*Reasons for Decision*

1. *To ensure that the Town Council's desire to complete the transfer of Thorpe Astley Park, a significant asset that should be owned by the Town Council, was progressed without further delay and additional cost.*
2. *To ensure that all options for ensuring that the work to the culvert bridge would be undertaken as soon as possible had been investigated.*

**101. Open Spaces & Parks Winter Works Programme – Progress Report**

The Committee received a progress report on the Winter Works Programme 2023/2024 (item 16 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED** that the progress of the Winter Works Programme for 2023/2024 be received and noted.

*Reason for Decision*

*To ensure that, where possible, the winter works tasks were on schedule to be completed before the end of the winter works period.*

**102. Working Time Policy & Procedure**

The Committee considered, following consultation, adopting a proposed Working Time Policy & Procedure (item 17 on the agenda).

It was noted that new legislation surrounding flexible working was due to be implemented in April. The Council's HR Advisor was working through the detail. It may be that minor amendments/adjustments would need to be made to the adopted Policy & Procedure to comply with legislative changes. If these were required a further report would be submitted to Policy & Resources Committee for consideration.

**RESOLVED** that the proposed Working Time Policy & Procedure, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and implemented on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

*Reason for Decision*

*To set out details of how flexible working (including homeworking) requests, working time and annualised hours would be managed to ensure fairness and maintain a work-life balance.*

**103. Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure**

The Committee considered, following consultation, adopting a proposed Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure (item 18 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED** that the proposed Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and implemented on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

*Reasons for Decision*

*To ensure that the Council had a policy in place setting out details of holiday and other types of leave that staff were entitled to, and how leave requests would be managed, to ensure fairness and maintain a work-life balance.*

**104. Local Government Pension Scheme: Review of Employer Discretions**

The Committee reviewed the Council's Pensions Discretions Policy, which sets out how the Council would apply certain discretions that exist within the Local Government Pension Scheme regulations (item 19 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED**

1. that the current Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary policies, attached at Appendix 1, having been restructured and modified as detailed in the report, be approved and adopted; and
2. that as part of the annual update to the Scheme of Delegation, the following delegation be considered to Employing Committee: "To determine whether to waive the provisions set out in the discretionary pensions policies in exceptional circumstances, having considered the business case and foreseeable costs to the Council".

*Reasons for Decision*

1. *To review and publish a statement of policy explaining how the Council would apply certain discretions that exist within the Local Government Pension Scheme regulations.*
2. *Advice from the Local Pensions Administrator was that it was good practice not to rule out in exceptional circumstances waiving a decision not to apply a policy discretion but to consider the specific circumstances and costs.*

**105. Review of Disciplinary Policy & Procedure**

The Committee considered proposed amendments to the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure and to approve these for consultation (item 20 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED**

1. that the proposed revisions to the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved for consultation with staff, Councillors and the Council's HR Advisor, as detailed in the *Timescales and Implementation* section of the report; and
2. that any proposed amendments be presented to the next meeting of Policy & Resources Committee, proposed for 25<sup>th</sup> April 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 changes to the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure to ensure that it would be practical and fit for purpose.*
2. *To ensure that issues relating to an employee's attendance, behaviour, conduct and performance were raised and dealt with promptly and that meetings, decisions and confirmation of those decisions were undertaken in a timely manner.*

**106. 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 reported on the recent meeting of the Committee of the Shakespeare Park Management Association, held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024. The Committee had discussed the number of bookings and the need to try and increase these. Concerns had been expressed with the amount of block bookings for the Bowls Club. Options had been considered to review block bookings and charge for certain uses by the clubs and potentially at peak times.

Discussion had also taken place concerning registration as a charity and more work would be undertaken on this.

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

**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.*

**107. Approval of Accounts**

The Committee considered payments from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 until 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (item 22 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED** that the list of Approved Expenditure Transactions for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 until 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024 be approved.

*Reason for Decision*

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

**108. Shakespeare Park Management Association**

**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 the current position with the Shakespeare Park Management Association, their plans, and support the Council could provide (item 23 on the agenda).

**RESOLVED**

1. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to offer support and enter into discussion with the Shakespeare Park Management Association based on points 1 to 3 set out in the *Potential Support* section of the report and conditioned on suggestions 1, 5 & 6 set out in the *Current Position* section of the report being met;
2. that the Council offers to cover the NNDR Bill, as detailed in the *Charitable Status* section of the report;
3. that approval be given to the Shakespeare Park Management Association to hire out the Clubroom and kitchen to provide a Café Service, subject to the proposed Café vendor registering with Environmental Health and meeting the regulations and that a planning variation was approved by the Local Planning Authority;
4. that in support of 3 above, delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk:
  - a) to give the necessary approvals;
  - b) to approve and submit a planning application;
  - c) meet any other regulatory requirements; and
  - d) recharge the costs to the Shakespeare Park Pavilion Management Association as appropriate.

*Reasons for Decision*

1. *As the owner, the Town Council would be left to pick up the building running costs, debt, and could only hire the facility by charging VAT.*
2. *In the event that the Council took over direct Management, it would be liable for the full National Non-Domestic Rates for the Pavilion.*
3. *To enable the Management Association to generate income and become sustainable; provided all necessary regulations were met and approvals*

given.

4. *To enable detailed arrangements to be put in place to progress the Café proposals and obtain necessary approvals.*

**109. 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 the tender process, timescales and proposed financing for rebuilding the Culvert and carrying out flood alleviation and drainage improvements at Mossdale Meadows (item 24 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 9.50pm.

**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 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024.*

SIGNED .....

DATE .....