

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

16TH JANUARY 2014 AT 7.30PM

Present: Mr N Brown (In the Chair), Miss S Betts, Mrs J Fox, Mrs S Maxwell (to item 9), Mr P Moitt, Mr G Sanders, Mr W Wright.

Officers in Attendance: Mr I Laughton, Executive Officer & Town Clerk, Miss J Leech, Assistant Executive Officer – Admin.

Apologies: Mr S Maxwell.

1. Disclosures of Interest from Members or Officers

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

2. Report of the Meeting held 3rd October 2013

The report of the meeting held on 3rd October 2013 was taken as read and signed by the Chairperson.

3. Publications

DIS 816, 818, 819, 820, 822, 823, – , LRALC Newsletter Sept, Oct, Nov 13, The Clerk Sept, Nov 13, BDC Welfare Reform Impact Committee Agenda, Police & Crime Commissioner's Survey Nov 13, BDC Contact Winter 13, CPRE Field Work Winter 13, Clerks & Councils Direct sept, Nov13, Local Council Review Autumn, Winter 13, Business Issues Oct 13, Nov, Jan 14, Dept for Communities and Local Government Sustainable Communities Act 2007 – consultation with parish councils, Municipal Mutual Insurance Ltd, BB19 Bus Overview & Scrutiny Report, Rural Community Council projects and services, SLCC Notice of AGM.

4. Public Participation

In accordance with Standing Orders 16f and 70 the meeting was adjourned to give an opportunity for members of the public present to raise matters of public interest for the purpose of making representations, giving evidence or answering questions.

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

5. Parks and Open Spaces

a) Winter Works Programme

An update on the Winter Works Programme for 2013/2014 was received and noted. Members were pleased to note that items had been included from the recommendations made by the Citizens Advisory Panel's review of open spaces and parks in 2013.

b) Correspondence from a local resident expressing their satisfaction as to the level of service provided for the maintenance of the open spaces at Thorpe Astley was received. Members were pleased to note that the newly appointed Senior Groundsperson for Thorpe Astley was making a positive impact on maintenance of the area.

- c) **Thorpe Astley Open Spaces – Commuted Sums**
An update from the Executive Officer & Town Clerk regarding the payments for the commuted sums for the Thorpe Astley Open Spaces was received. It was noted that a further £10k had been forwarded to the Town Council in the current financial year. Details of the balances for the Commuted Sums were to be received under the Estimates item of the Agenda.
- d) It was noted that, following recommendations from the Citizens Advisory Panel Meeting held 12th September 2013, information on the Council's open spaces had been included on the Council's website and displays had been put up at the Thorpe Astley Community Centre and at the Civic Centre.
- e) Correspondence from a resident requesting the Town Council's support to create an orchard area on the open space at Hilcott Green was received. The resident had already obtained support of other residents in the area and a more detailed plan of their proposals was being awaited.

RESOLVED

That the Council in accordance with its powers under Section 1(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (General Power of Competence) should incur the following expenditure:-

Mr P Davis, Hilcott Green - £305.92 from commuted sums towards the purchase of 10 x fruit trees, with the usual conditions for tree planting, regarding siting of the trees, to allow for grounds maintenance machinery, and for the Town Mayor to be invited to the tree planting event.

CRIME AND DISORDER Act 1998 IMPLICATIONS

The open space are is overlooked by houses and local residents would like more pride in the area.

6. Thorpe Astley Community Centre – Consultation Rooms

RESOLVED:- *That in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press/public be temporary excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 79 and 84 apply). Reasons for exception – Commercial Interest / Legal Professional Privilege)*

- i) A report from the Executive Officer & Town Clerk on a meeting he had attended with NHS England's Property Surveyor on 7th November 2013, regarding the future use of the consultation rooms at the Community Centre was received and noted. At the meeting the Executive Officer & Town Clerk had re-iterated the Council's concern at the lack of progress that NHS England had made into entering into a Licence agreement with the Council or to encourage the existing health care users to make use of the clinical rooms rather than the free-use rooms within the centres.
- ii) A copy of correspondence dated 9th October 2013 to a doctor not currently covering Thorpe Astley, from NHS England's Medical and Pharmacy Contracts Manager clarifying the criteria for a new GPs surgery was received. It was noted that the doctor would have needed a new contract and would have had to provide evidence for the need for the service. The contract would then have had to have been offered through a procurement process. Also, the correspondence advised that the Thorpe Astley facility as a stand-alone surgery would not be considered by NHS England and they were continue to explore the use of the facility as a branch for an existing contract holder.

- iii) Progress reports from the Executive Officer & Town Clerk following meetings with representatives from the Fosse Medical Centre, were received. Members welcomed the initiative from the Fosse Medical Centre and noted the steps that it was taking to encourage enrolment from Thorpe Astley residents.

RESOLVED

That the Town Council offer Fosse Medical Centre every support and encouragement.

7. Thorpe Astley Community Centre – Hire Charges

The report of the Sub-Committee Meeting held 6th January 2014 to consider the Thorpe Astley Community Centre Hire Charges, was received. It was noted that there were in fact a good level of bookings at the Community Centre and existing hirers' thoughts were that the hire charges were good value for money. The main issue was regarding encouraging the facilities for Children's parties. Following discussion the Sub-Committee had put together recommendations for discount packages for Braunstone Town residents.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations of the Sub-Committee for discount packages for Braunstone Town residents for a six month trial period from 1st March 2014 to 31st August 2014 be approved.

Secondly, that further work be carried out to encourage the use of the facilities to support local community groups.

8. Community Governance Review (CGR) – Braunstone Town Council Parish Wards

The Executive Officer & Town Clerk provided Members with an update on the Community Governance Review to be carried out by Blaby District Council. A report was presented to Blaby District Council on 17th December 2013 in order to consider a request from Braunstone Town Council for a Community Governance Review of Braunstone Town wards. The draft minutes from that meeting showed that the report was withdrawn from the agenda by the Chairman due to Officers receiving late information which needed consideration. Braunstone Town Council had subsequently been notified by Blaby District Council that the report was to be received by Blaby District Council in February.

Members expressed their concern that the process had been delayed and urged in the strongest possible terms that any group or individual wishing to make a contribution to this decision making process should do so in an open and accessible way, not hidden from public scrutiny.

RESOLVED

That the Town Council write to the Chief Executive of Blaby District Council expressing its concerns about how the delay in the process had arisen and to urge that any future decisions be made in a way that was transparent and open to scrutiny. Secondly, to express the Council's dismay at the late notification regarding the removal of the report from the agenda.

9. MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF STRUCTURE

RESOLVED:- *That in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press/public be temporarily excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 79 and 84 apply). Reasons for exception –Personal Information.)*

The Executive Officer & Town Clerk provided Members with a progress report on the Management & Administrative Staff Structure and Job Description review. It was noted that Mrs L Assi had been appointed as Deputy Centres Manager.

10. Equality and Flexible Retirement Polices

- a) As raised at the last meeting as part of the Management & Administrative Staff Structure review, draft Equality and Diversity and Flexible Retirement Policies were received for consideration.

RESOLVED

That, following minor amendments to the Equality and Diversity Policy, that both documents be adopted.

EQUALITY ACT 2010 IMPLICATIONS

An adverse impact on different groups could arise by not having an up to date policy.

- b) **RESOLVED:-** *That in view of the special / confidential nature of the business to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press/public be temporary excluded and they be instructed to withdraw (Standing Orders 79 and 84 apply). Reasons for exception –Personal Information.)*
- i) *That a request for flexible retirement by employee reference 17 be approved with the proviso of discussions following the appointment of the Executive Officer & Town Clerk and for an early termination period within the contract.*

11. Evaluation of Training

The Evaluation of training for Staff and Councillors for the period 1st January 2013 to 31st December 2013 was received and noted.

12. Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils – future delivery of local services

Feedback from the consultation event hosted by the LRALC in November 2013 regarding the devolution of County Council services, was received from Councillor Mr N Brown. The main issue for consideration was the future provision of library services.

13. Notice of Conclusion of Audit for the Year Ended 31st March 2013

Correspondence dated 26th September 2013 from Grant Thornton Auditors along with the copy of the Annual Return confirming the conclusion of the Audit for the Year Ended 31st March 2013, were received. It was noted that no matters had come to the attention of the Auditors.

14. Estimates 2014/2015

- a) Members received and noted the Financial Comparisons for the period 1st April 2013 to 31st December 2013.
- b) Members received and noted the Financial Comparisons for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013.
- c) Members received Guidance Notes for considering the Estimates for 2014/2015 and the Executive Officer & Town Clerk highlighted the following items:-
- i) Possible risk of future capping to Parish and Town Councils
Following representation by NALC it had been confirmed by the Under Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government that a decision on council tax referendums was to be made in February under the final local government finance settlement. The LRALC was advising that parish and town councils should set their precepts on the basis that they were not currently capped or subject to referendums on large increases. If a cap was subsequently introduced they would need to revisit their precept demands.

- ii) It was expected that the Town Council would be required to apply Auto-enrolment of its employees into the Local Government Pension Scheme in August 2015.
- iii) The Guidance report included a prediction on the working balances, including the balance of Commuted Sums for the Thorpe Astley park area for the Year End 2013/2014.
- iv) The current list of capital projects for consideration by the Council, along with the list contained in the Council's Policy 'Proposals & Priorities for Improvements to our Parks & Open Spaces', were received attached to the report.
 - a) The Community Development Committee had recommended the Policy & Resources Committee to consider a budget towards commemoration events to mark the anniversary of the start of WW1.
 - b) A quotation amounting to around £4k for had been received from HSSP Architects Ltd for the completion of surveys on the Millfield Hall roof.

RECOMMENDED

That the above two items be funded via balances rather than including in the Estimates and that the remaining list of capital projects be referred back to individual Committees with the delegated power to make expenditure on lower value items and to reconsider the lists for priority or necessity of items.

- d) Members received a report from the Executive Officer & Town Clerk to consider for making long term financial planning.

Members noted the need to reduce any future impact on the Council Tax Payer by consider the medium term financial risks to the Council by issues beyond its control, such as the Auto-enrolment Pension Scheme, withdrawal of the Council Tax Support Grant and depleting of the Thorpe Astley Commuted Sums, when considering its budgets.

- e) The Draft Estimates for 2014/2015 were received and noted.

RECOMMENDED

- i) *For a 2.8% increase in the Council Tax Band Payments.*
- ii) *That the Estimates for 2014/2015 be adopted and a Net Precept of £463,281 (excluding the Council Tax Support Grant payable to the Town Council of £52,046.00) be requested.*

15. Bad Debts

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Financial Regulation 9.4 that the following bad debt be written off:-

- i) Invoice No. 37340 room hire fee due - £22.30

16. School Places

A letter received 11th November 2013 from Millfield LEAD Academy's Chair of Local Governing Body on the forecasted shortfall in school places was received. It was noted that the Academy would continue to work with the local authority to try and resolve the problems and had asked for the LEAD Multi-Academy Trust to monitor the situation.

17. Housing Strategy and Housing Needs Meeting 6th November 2013

No report of the meeting had been received.

18. Termination of the Meeting

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

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 favorable 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.