

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough

COUNCIL

24 June 2019

commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Johnson (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs Ackerley, Bannister, Bateman, Beadle, Bilbie, Dr Bremner, Mrs Burrell, Dann, Elliott, Fosker, Frenchman, Galton, Golding, Graves, Hallam, Hollick, James, King, Knowles, Mahal, Nunn, Mrs. Page, Rickman, Mrs Robinson, Sarfas, Mrs Simpson, Whelband and Mrs Wood

Officers: B. Jolly, G. Keeping, S. Patel, M. Perris and S. Riley

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Champion, Dunton, Liquorish, McHugo and Modha

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman asked Councillors to join her in remembering Alastair Campbell, formerly President of Market Harborough's Chamber of Trade, who had died recently. When in good health, he had worked tirelessly to support local businesses and community charities; his contribution to the town would not be forgotten.

The Chairman made the following announcements regarding a significant number of events that she had recently attended and participated in, as follow:

- 2 June – Park Run in Market Harborough
- 6 June – Service at Leicester Cathedral to celebrate 75th anniversary of D-Day.
- 8 June – Market Harborough Carnival
- 12 June – First year celebration for charity groups signed up for Harborough Lotto
- 13 June – Unveiling of a Green Plaque in Kibworth Beauchamp honouring the artist John T. Kenney
- 16 June – Gardens in Lubenham, open under the national Open Gardens Scheme
- 18 June – Mounting of a Remembrance Clock, Broughton Astley, funded through HDC's World War One Centenary Fund.
- 22 June – 900-year celebration at Launde Abbey
- 24 June – Flag Raising event in Market Harborough to mark Armed Forces Day

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Hallam and

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 18th March 2019 be received and adopted.

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Hallam and

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Council held on the 30th April 2019 be received and adopted.

REPORT OF THE LEADER

Councillor King, Leader, presented his report, as set out below:

As this is the first Council meeting since Annual Council, I'd like to welcome all members, both returners and those who were elected for the first time on 2nd May to this their first full Council meeting of the new cycle. I look forward to the contributions that you will all make over the next four years in helping shape the district in which we live, work and enjoy our leisure time.

Celebrating Planning Success

Earlier this month the Neighbourhood Plan for Saddington was shortlisted as a finalist in the National Planning Awards. Sadly, we were pipped at the post, but all credit is due to the volunteers in Saddington, their consultant and to HDC in-house team.

Neighbourhood Planning is a truly fantastic success story across the Harborough District; later this week on Thursday 27th June, the Tur Langton Neighbourhood Plan will be voted on in a referendum. If they say yes, then this will become the 21st 'made' plan in the district. There are many more in the pipeline.

I have tasked officers to look at how we can move forward with the stalled Lutterworth Neighbourhood Plan and investigate how we can get one set up for Market Harborough.

Finally, it was truly fantastic to attend the Neighbourhood Planning Conference held at the Three Swans on 6th June. Matt Bills deserves a lot of credit for securing the top speakers in the field to attend as well as 75 delegates from near and far. Our success and events like this places Harborough District Council as the lead authority in the County, as well as one of the top areas in the Country for Neighbourhood Planning.

However, none of this would have been possible without the unstinting contributions made by the many hundreds of volunteers that have taken part in neighbourhood plan making since 2012.

A huge vote of thanks is due to them all.

Lotto 1st Anniversary success

Talking about volunteers, on 12th June this chamber was filled with volunteers from 40 organisations drawn from across the district. In its first year they have managed to raise approx. £35,000 towards their own funds using the Harborough Lotto, making it one of the most successful Council-run lotteries to date. They have also bumped up the amount that the District Council can dish out to other groups via its District wide grants. A true win-win situation for all.

Visit Harborough District launched

Tourism brings in over £125m to the local economy and supports over 1,700 full-time jobs each year. Our Economic Development Strategy seeks to improve this, thus on 14th June, I presented at the launch event of the 'Visit Harborough' tourism guide and website, which was kindly hosted at Nevill Holt Opera by Mr David Ross. Over 50 business representatives attended from across the district and afterwards were treated to a personally guided tour of the magnificent gardens and the award-winning Opera House. A truly great venue in the heart of the Harborough district which has a global reach. The website is now live www.visitharborough.com and booklets are being distributed far and wide to encourage visitors to our area.

Car parks investment

At the last Cabinet meeting expenditure of over £250,000 was approved to be spent over the next 3 years in car parks in Market Harborough town centre, Little Bowden and in Lutterworth. The works include resurfacing, as well as more 'Pop and shop' 30 min free bays in Lutterworth. These enhancements along with the soon-to-be-live 'pay-by phone' ticket app, will help to keep the Harborough district an attractive place for visitors, shoppers and businesses. Improvements have already been completed in a number of car-parks along with the installation of some Electric Charging points, most recently at School Road in Kibworth Beauchamp. Day visitors will also be further encouraged with the addition of new coach-parking facilities in Market Harborough, to add to those already in operation in Lutterworth.

Community cohesion

Over the past few weeks and over the coming months there will be numerous community events being held, all of which depend on the support and generosity of hundreds of volunteers, those unsung heroes who year after year ensure that each event will take place, come rain, wind or shine (or latterly all 3!).

Such events with their teams of volunteers and supporters are critical to providing not just vital funds, but also for the opportunities they afford for communities to work together, to help build bridges between the old and young; the haves and have-nots; the established and our newest residents.

I'm sure that we can all agree that this social fabric is a vitally important aspect of what makes the Harborough District such a great place to live, work and enjoy. It helps provide residents with a true sense of belonging. Over the coming months the District Council will be looking at what more it can do to help develop its offer to support this important work within our communities.

In addition, the Leader drew attention to:

- The good attendance for the Flag Raising event that had taken place that morning;
- The successful renewal of Market Harborough's Fairtrade status, which had been recognised by the presentation of the official certificate to the Chairman prior to the start of the meeting; and
- The County Council's "Have Your Say" consultation which was under way. Councillors were asked to encourage their communities to take the opportunity to respond to this.

Comments on the Leader's report

Councillor Knowles reiterated the good news contained in the report, especially that relating to the Flag Raising event and the renewal of the Fairtrade status. He went on to express concern about procedures for communication with Members, for example in relation to the 'Visit Harborough' guide where he felt that there had been inadequate briefing of Members. the shadow portfolio holder and shadow leader.

In relation to car parks, Councillors raised the following points:

- the provision of electric charging points was welcomed
- the location of coach parking facilities in Lutterworth
- the status of the coach parking in Market Harborough in respect of any planning application or tree preservation orders
- the 30-minute parking period in Lutterworth was not in many cases sufficiently long and some businesses were asking for a return to the one-hour period

Leader's response

With regard to Communications, Councillor King reported that he had already spoken to officers and had stressed that improvement in communications with Members was a main priority. The coach park in Lutterworth was at the Leisure Centre and is coordinated by the Town Council. In relation to the proposed coach park in Market Harborough, the Leader responded that no planning application had been made yet and that, to the best of his knowledge, no tree preservation orders affected the site. With regard to car parking in Lutterworth, 65% of the car park tickets issued in Lutterworth are at the two-hour tariff level and in 2018/19 approximately 90,000 tickets were bought in the town.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

There were none.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

There were none.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON 8th APRIL 2019

1. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2019-2021

The Executive on 8th April 2019 had considered the Communications Strategy 2019 – 2021, which supports the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan by identifying the Council's strategic service priorities and associated key communications actions and provides an overview of key activity across the authority.

The Strategy outlines the key service priorities for the Council, together with messages, audiences, timings and potential risks. Each service priority has been linked to the appropriate corporate priority/priorities to demonstrate the links that needed to be made to ensure clear and consistent corporate messages are conveyed across all activity, albeit tailored for each situation.

To ensure effective communications, this Strategy enables the Council to be strategic in its approach to communications by:

- identifying the risks associated with key activities and plan their mitigation
- identifying opportunities to support corporate messages and plan accordingly
- noting milestones and use these to seek recognition when projects are complete
- considering not just the essential, but also the valuable

Strategic service priorities will be reviewed by the Corporate Management Team and the Communications Team. The Communications Strategy will be updated as appropriate to ensure it remains relevant.

In discussion, Councillors stressed the importance of critical information being fed to all councillors and questioned the degree to which the Communication Strategy would assist with that. Councillor

King responded by pointing out that the Strategy was outward facing and was not, in itself, intended to provide detail on mechanisms for officers keeping members informed on operational issues.

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Hallam and

RESOLVED:

(i) that the Communications Strategy, set out in Appendix A to the Executive report, be adopted, subject to the Strategic Services Priorities entry for Vulnerable People being amended to read “Support to homeless people through the implementation of the Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping”; and

(ii) that authority be delegated to the Joint Chief Executive (NP) to make future changes to the key messages and actions referred to in the Strategy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, only when it is necessary to update the key activities in line with the approved priorities of the Council.

Summary of Reasons

- Residents across the district will be well informed about the Council and its services.
- A proactive approach to communications will ensure information is shared in a timely way and reaching the right audience.
- Planned communication will ensure opportunities to promote the good work of the Council.

2. A STRATEGY FOR HOUSING AND THE PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING 2019 - 2024

The Executive on 8th April 2019 considered the Strategy for Housing and the Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2019-2024 (‘the Housing Strategy’), which combines a traditional five-year Housing Strategy with a five year Homelessness Prevention Strategy and a five year Rough Sleeping Strategy. This approach recognises the complexities within homelessness and the link between homelessness and the supply of affordable homes.

The current Housing Strategy covers the period up to the adoption of the new Local Plan. The Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy is intended to be a core document setting out the Councils approach to meeting housing needs in the Harborough district to 2031. Increasing the supply of housing options, particularly affordable housing is a long-term issue. The current Homelessness Prevention Strategy requires updating to reflect current issues and to set out the Council’s response to the extended statutory duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The Housing Strategy will be reviewed and performance monitored annually through the overview and scrutiny process.

The Communities Scrutiny Panel, on 28 September 2017, had considered a report on the key housing issues as part of the development of this strategy. The key comments from scrutiny included;

- Promotion of new affordable home ownership properties, such as shared ownership units so that local residents are aware of all options.
- The importance of specialist housing in meeting the needs of people with disabilities and health issues.
- Endorsement of the work the Council has undertaken in preparation for the Homelessness Reduction Act. This includes investment in additional staffing and systems that will deliver channel shift and improve the customer experience in applying to join the Housing Register and bid for properties through Choice Based Lettings.
- Effective use of commuted sums to bring forward more affordable housing.
- That consideration be given to the Council purchasing additional properties to use as temporary accommodation – providing a higher quality and cheaper alternative to bed & breakfast.

A public consultation was held on the draft strategy between May and June 2018 and a consultation event with developers and Registered Providers on 27 September.

In response to questions on the affordability of housing for younger people, Councillor King stated that the breakdown of the intended makeup of 40% of new builds that would be defined as affordable was approximately 75% affordable or socially rented and about 25% low cost home ownership products, or a variation on these proportions, justified by the latest assessment of affordable housing need. Officers would be happy to respond in more detail to any further questions.

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Hallam and

RESOLVED that the Housing Strategy, set out in Appendix A to the Executive report, be adopted.

Summary of Reasons

- The Housing Strategy will bring the Councils housing functions together and set out the high level priorities for the district in meeting current and future housing needs.
- The Housing Strategy will support the delivery of housing needs identified in the Local Plan submission.
- The current Homelessness Strategy is due for review to ensure that priorities remain up to date and take account of recent new legislation.
- The Government Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 requires that all local authorities adopt a local Rough Sleeping Strategy by winter 2019.
- There has been a consultation and stakeholder engagement in developing the Strategy. This included the Communities Scrutiny Panel.

REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Hallam and

RESOLVED that the report from the Executive be noted and received.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF ADDITIONAL PENSIONS DISCRETIONS

The Council considered the Recommendation from the Employment Committee meeting held on the 27th March 2019 concerning the Local Government Review of Additional Pensions Discretions.

The Council was advised that the Committee had considered an officer report following the Council being advised of a change to the Pensions regulations by the Leicestershire County Council Pensions Office which have expanded the period in which many deferred members can claim their pension without the need for employer consent. The Committee considered the four options set out in the report and recommended that the Council adopts the proposed Harborough District Council policy revisions/additions to the pension discretions as detailed in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.10 of the report, as set out below:

4.2:

Explanation	Proposed Council Policy	Explanation of the change
<p>The Council has the discretion, under a number of retirement scenarios to waive actuarial reductions on compassionate grounds. The cost of which would fall upon the Council.</p> <p>n.b. "Compassionate grounds" is not defined in the regulations.</p>	<p>In relation to waiving any reduction which may apply on compassionate grounds, the Council may exercise this discretion on a case by case basis if there are exceptional circumstances and there is a clear financial or operational benefit to the Council.</p>	<p>This discretion has been broadened to allow greater flexibility to potentially provide for situations where employees are seeking to take early retirement while maximising their pension benefits.</p>

4.10:

Explanation	Proposed Council Policy	Explanation of the change
<p>A former member who has not attained normal pension age (NPA) but who has attained the age of 55 or over, may elect to receive immediate payment of a retirement pension in relation to an employment if that member is not an employee in local government service in that employment, reduced by the amount shown as appropriate in actuarial guidance issued by the Secretary of State.</p> <p>In these circumstances (other than flexible retirement) the 85 year rule does not automatically apply to members who would otherwise be subject to it who choose to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before NPA.</p> <p>The employer has the discretion to "switch on" the 85 year rule for such a member.</p> <p>If the employer does agree to switch back on the rule of 85, the cost of any strain on the fund resulting from the payment of benefits before NPA would have to be met by the employer.</p>	<p>The Council should not apply this discretion</p>	<p>New discretion –The most recent amendments to the LGPS regulations have expanded the period in which many deferred members can claim their pension without the need for employer consent. Since 2014, members who leave and are over age 55 may claim an actuarially reduced pension benefits if they wish <i>without</i> the consent of their employer. However this ease of access <i>was not</i> extended to those who had already left the pension scheme before 1 April 2014 – until now. It has now been extended to all deferred leavers between 1.4.1998 and 31.3.2014. This new discretion could lead to a capital cost being payable by this Council to the pension fund, so each case would be considered on its merits.</p>

It was moved by Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Hallam and

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the proposed Harborough District Council policy revisions/additions to the pension discretions as detailed in 4.2 and 4.10 of the officer's report (above) be adopted; and
- (ii) That the Head of Paid Service be given delegated authority to consider any cases and determine whether the actuarial reduction should be waived, taking into account the financial position of the Council.

Summary of Reasons

- The Council has been advised of a change to the Pensions regulations by the Leicestershire County Council Pensions Office.
- The new regulations have expanded the period in which many deferred members can claim their pension without the need for employer consent.
- Since 2014, members who leave and are over age 55 may claim an actuarially reduced pension benefits if they wish without the consent of their employer. However this ease of access was not extended to those who had already left the pension scheme before 1 April 2014 – until now. It has now been extended to all deferred leavers between 1.4.1998 and 31.3.2014. This new discretion could lead to capital costs being payable by this Council to the pension fund, so each case would be considered on its financial and any other relevant merits.
- These new or amended discretions could lead to capital costs being payable by the Council to the pension fund, so each case would be considered on its financial and any other relevant merits in accordance with the agreed policy for the individual discretion.

REPORTS ABOUT AND QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE BUSINESS OF JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

There were none, but Councillor King stated that a report would be brought to a future meeting of Council to consider which joint arrangements and external organisations could be included in this section of the agenda and the form that reports could take. It was suggested that such a report should include a list of all the external organisations with which the Council was involved.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Councillor Page presented the Scrutiny Commission report as set out below:

Scrutiny Commission

Since my appointment at Annual Council, the June cycle of Scrutiny meetings has started, with the Scrutiny Commission having met on 6th June.

As well as considering a report on Quarter 4 Performance, the Commission has agreed the framework for the Scrutiny Workplan for the forthcoming year. In doing so, it has reduced the number of regular update reports going to the Scrutiny Panels, so that this time can be devoted to the scrutiny of important items, including:

- Built facilities strategy
- Update on S106 policy
- Building Control partnership
- HDC Commercial Services Ltd
- Planning Enforcement

- Market Harborough and Lutterworth masterplan

In addition, the Commission has agreed to set up a Scrutiny Task Group to inform and consider impact of the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan from the perspective of the Harborough District. Membership and dates for the Task Group will be agreed shortly.

The full Workplan will be made available online on the Council's Committee management system and individual reports will be included on the Combined Workplan, which is circulated to all Members each week.

Future Scrutiny Events

At the time of writing, the following meetings have been scheduled:

- 20 June 2019 Performance Scrutiny Panel
- 27 June 2019 Communities Scrutiny Panel

Training

Training for Scrutiny Commission members took place on 6th June and sessions for Panel members are scheduled to take place before the first Performance and Communities Scrutiny Panel meetings. New Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny has recently been published and copies are being provided to scrutiny members, and the implications of the Guidance covered, as part of their training.

Although there have been no Scrutiny meetings since my last report to Council on 25th February, I thought it would be useful to remind Councillors of forthcoming Scrutiny events.

Future Scrutiny Events

The final cycle of Scrutiny meetings for 2018/19 will start later this week. The Performance Scrutiny Panel will be meeting on 21st March and the Communities Panel on 28th March. As I mentioned in my last report, the Scrutiny Commission will now be meeting two times each year and no meeting is planned for this cycle.

At the time of writing, the following items are planned for consideration - further details are included in the full Scrutiny Workplan, which is available to view in the ["Public Documents" section on CMIS](#).

Performance (21/03/2019):

- Quarterly Financial Performance, Quarter 3
- Performance, End of Quarter 3
- Risk and Opportunity Management, End of Quarter 3
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
- Smarter Services Programme Strategy
- Capital Strategy

Communities (28/03/2019):

- Progress on Neighbourhood Plans
- Harborough District Community Lottery

NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE 11 OF PART 4(1) OF THE CONSTITUTION

It was moved by Councillor Knowles and seconded by Councillor Fosker:

“The Concerns over Climate Change are mounting. What is placed into recycling here in Harborough District today finds its way to many and varied places and facilities across the world.

We are concerned to ensure that what is recycled here in good faith is recycled and that none, though marked as recycling, eventually is simply put into landfill.

We have heard the concerns of the community. We have heard the worries and suggestions of the recent student protest march, the voices of tomorrow must be heard today.

Time is running out and we readily agree that we as a council have a responsibility to the environment and must explore each and every option that will enable us to make a positive change to improve now and protect the planet for generations to come.

HDC must therefore declare an immediate Climate Emergency and in addition set up a cross party working group to explore positive opportunities to make the improvements needed for now and for generations to come. The findings of the working group to be presented to The Cabinet for consideration and implementation”

Councillor Knowles concluded by expressing concern that both this motion and an officer report on substantially the same subject had appeared on the agenda for the same meeting and questioned the timing of the decisions that had led to this occurring.

Councillors thanked the students from Welland Park Academy for the part that they had played in focussing the attention of the Council on the challenge that was faced in respect of climate change.

On being put to the vote the motion was not carried.

DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Council considered the report concerning the declaration of a “Climate Emergency” and the establishment of a working group to develop an action plan for how the Council will work towards a carbon neutral target by 2030.

A number of Councillors spoke in support of the need for the Council to declare a Climate Emergency, with the following points being made:

- the Council’s progress in reducing its carbon emissions by 30% since 2008 was to be commended, but that time was running out and the Council could not afford not to take further action;
- that procurement would play an important part in the Council achieving the goals expressed in the recommendations to the report;
- that the Council should consider proceeding in step with action being taken by neighbouring authorities;
- that the working group should, among other subjects, consider recycling, the use of plastics, and investment in infrastructure;
- that a progress report should be brought back to Council after six months; and
- that Councillors would welcome details of the nature, size and composition of the proposed working group

It was moved by Councillor Bateman, seconded by Councillor King and

RESOLVED that:

- (i) a “Climate Emergency” be declared, with an aim to make Harborough District Council activities as far as practical carbon neutral by 2030;
- (ii) a Climate Change working group be established to develop an action plan to ensure all Council functions and decision-making is in line with the shift to carbon neutral by 2030; and
- (iii) the action plan be brought back to Council within 12 months for approval and implementation.

At the request of a Member, the vote was recorded:

Recorded vote

For: Councillors Mrs Ackerley, Bannister, Bateman, Beadle, Bilbie, Dr Bremner, Mrs Burrell, Dann, Elliott, Fosker, Frenchman, Galton, Golding, Graves, Hallam, Hollick, James, King, Knowles, Mahal, Nunn, Mrs. Page, Rickman, Mrs Robinson, Sarfas, Mrs Simpson, Whelband and Mrs Wood (28)

Against: None (0)

Abstention: Councillor Johnson (1)

Summary of Reasons

- The Council has already demonstrated its commitment to tackling climate change by signing the Climate Local Commitment in 2013 and developing an action plan.
- The Council has already reduced its carbon emissions by 30% since 2008 but recognises that a review and refresh of the action plan is required if the Council is to work toward reaching a carbon neutral target by 2030.
- Declaring a “Climate Emergency” sets out the Councils commitment to looking at all its activities, policies and decision making to ensure they are all aligned to working towards achieving this target.

URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The Meeting ended at 8.18 p.m.