

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

COUNCIL

28th January 2019

commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present:

Councillor Bowles (Chairman).

Councillors: Mrs Ackerley, Bannister, Bateman, Bilbie, Brodrick, Mrs Burrell, Champion, Chapman, Dann, Elliott, Evans, Galton, Hadkiss, Hammond, Dr Hill, Johnson, King, Liquorish, Modha, Nunn, Mrs. Page, Rickman (until 6.49 p.m.), Mrs Robinson, Mrs Simpson, Spendlove-Mason, Tomlin and Mrs Wood.

Officers: B. Murgatroyd, N. Proudfoot, S. Riley and G. Keeping.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Beesley-Reynolds, Dunton, Graves, Hall, Hallam, Holyoak, and Knowles.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that she had recently attended the following events:

- Oadby & Wigston Borough Council Carol Service
- Blaby Borough Council Carol Service
- St. Joseph's School, prize-giving for Market Hall Christmas decorations
- Unveiling of the Suffragette Artwork in The Symington Building
- The Alliance Football Club at the Symington Recreation Ground
- Mulberry Homes, Great Bowden
- Meadowdale School, prize-giving for Market Hall Christmas decorations
- Meadowdale School, launch of the Plastics Pledge

DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

MINUTES

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

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 10th December 2018 be received and adopted.

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

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Council meetings held on 26th November and 18th December 2018 be received and adopted.

REPORT OF THE LEADER

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

Grow on Space

Construction is progressing well and is on target for completion by early October 2019. The steel frame and all pre-cast concrete floors to the upper floors have been installed. Work is progressing on the ground floor slab and fire protection to the external steel frame.

I was delighted to attend the Topping Out Ceremony on 10 January 2019. This was a key milestone in the project with the steel frame now completed. Also, in attendance were representatives of MHCLG & LLEP, our key funding partners, Cllr Hallam and Cllr Knowles and representatives of Willmott Dixon, including the Construction Manager who is a district resident were all present supporting the Ceremony, demonstrating support to the local economy.

We will be able to announce some important aspects of Social Value being delivered through the construction project over the coming months including local spend to support local businesses, support for apprenticeships, work experience and helping long term unemployed residents back in to work.

Mark Perris will arrange some dates for visits over the next few weeks to enable Councillors to view progress. If Members are interested in getting a close view of the project then please email Mark Perris. Also please feel free to suggest names for the new building to Mark Perris who will pass on to the Executive to consider.

Christmas Parking

The free Christmas parking campaign in 2018 ran for each Saturday throughout December.

Whilst there is a cost to the Council over 20,000 transactions were recorded for the free Saturdays across the district so hopefully this will have helped our local retailers during these challenging times, as well as our residents.

Electric charging points

Our first electric car charging pods were installed 30 November in the Commons car park. The two pods are now available for use and will enable four vehicles to be charged at any one time. An additional machine will be installed in the disabled bay on 6 February 2019.

The future sites will be Station Road Lutterworth, Orchard Road Broughton Astley and Kibworth.

Pay by Phone

We want to introduce a scheme to assist both shoppers and retailers to allow car park users to pay for their car park fee by phone - and to top up the fee while out shopping. We have commissioned a tender process which is now underway so we can see if we can introduce this scheme over the next few months.

Local Plan

The Proposed Modifications have now been published (16th Jan) for a 6 week consultation period. Thereafter the Inspector will consider responses as part of finalising his examination report. The Inspector will then send his draft report to officers for factual checking prior to him sending through his final report.

We are hoping the Final Report will be submitted to the Council before Easter and then it will be considered by the HDC Executive and Full Council as part of Plan adoption process. We don't know when these meetings will take place but members need to be aware they may take place during the last week in April when a lot of us will be busy in the District Council elections. However, the Local

Plan is such an important document to this Council that adoption before the 2nd May is highly desirable and all members whether seeking re-election or not really should attend the Council when the Plan comes up for adoption.

Brexit

The Government has been encouraging all Councils to plan for a no deal Brexit so we are currently carrying out some internal planning exercises and taking part in planning exercises with “Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland Prepared” our Local Resilience Partnership to highlight scenarios, analyse risk and discuss mitigation. Members will be updated as work progresses on this area.

Plastics pledge

The Eco Church of Harborough organised a Plastics Pledge encouraging residents to make small changes in how they use and can reduce reliance on single use plastics. If enough people make these changes it can make a real difference. This administration is happy to lend support to this initiative as part of our important Green Agenda.

HDC Officers and Cllrs, LCC (Environmental Campaigns), FCC, a school party along with The Eco Church attended the launch of the Plastics Pledge at an event on the 25th January. FCC, our Environmental Services contractor, donated £500 towards the event and it was clearly a successful launch.

Neighbourhood Plan number 20 to referendum

Our neighbourhood plan programme continues to help Parishes produce robust plans and four Neighbourhood Plans for Saddington, Shearsby, South Kilworth and Burton Overy have successfully passed their referenda on 10th January. These will now be moving through the remaining processes to 'make' these neighbourhood plans. A further neighbourhood plan (the 20th Plan) for Arnesby Parish was approved by HDC Executive at their meeting on 14th January to progress to referendum. It is anticipated that this referendum so take place at the end of February. If it passes the referendum stage it will be the 20th Plan to be produced in the District which is a fantastic achievement.

Business Rates Pilot

I was happy to hear that the Business Rate Pilot bid to Government in the summer was successful – only one of 15 approved nationally. The pilot bid includes all Leicestershire Councils and concentrates on two key areas; promoting housing and economic growth through infrastructure investment and support for Councils in financial sustainability through supporting demand pressures (for example, homelessness and social care). The additional benefit to Leicestershire from being a pilot authority is anticipated to be in the region of £14 million with part of this coming direct to Harborough District to determine their own priorities.

Harborough District has since 2013 been an economic success story with over £5 million of retained business rate growth retained within the District supporting Council services and an additional £4 million contributed to the Business Rate Pool within Leicestershire, retaining monies locally that would have gone direct to Central Government. This success in being awarded pilot status builds on this success

Comedy Festival

As part of the Leicester Comedy Festival, Harborough District Council is bringing some top comedy acts to the district with venues such as Harborough Market, The Angel Hotel, Beerhouse and Duncan Murray Wines in Market Harborough hosting comedy events as part of the 'BIG Weekend' of comedy from 21 February to 24 February 2019.

Acts include in the BIG Weekend include BBC Radio 4 regular & comedy legend Arthur Smith at The Angel Hotel, award winning comedian Tez Ilyas at Harborough Theatre, an open mic night at Beerhouse and Silly Wriggly Readers at Harborough Library and Museum. On Saturday 23 February 2019 at 8pm Harborough Market welcomes the Edinburgh Fringe hit show 'Dad's Army Radio Show'.

I urge residents to take up the opportunity to support these shows. You will have a great night out!

Market Harborough Post Office

I am concerned at the reports that the main Post Office in Market Harborough may close. We have been in touch with Neil O'Brien MP to clarify what the Post Office is doing to ensure the town does not lose its main post office. The Council is also speaking with retailers who might be interested in hosting the Post Office in their shops. I wish to assure Members – particularly the Town Members that this is a matter that we are closely monitoring.

Flooding incident

I am pleased that the Council's efforts in minimising flooding at an incident in Market Harborough last Thursday were publicly well received. Whilst the County Council were contacted they were unable to respond adequately and this highlights the benefits of having local services at a time when centralising service is being discussed within some organisations.

Comments on the Leader's report

Cllr Johnson was pleased to note the Council's support for the launch of the Plastics Pledge, but called for sensitivity in managing its involvement in initiatives arising from community groups. A comment on the Harborough Eco Church's website had expressed the view that the Council had over-emphasised its involvement in the scheme. Is it the intention that the scheme will now be extended to cover the rest of the district?

Cllr Dann joined the leader in expressing his pleasure at the district's twentieth neighbourhood plan progressing to its referendum stage. He exhorted the Council to keep in touch with and support parishes whose Neighbourhood Plans are now approaching the point where updates would be needed.

Leader's response

The Leader agreed that sensitivity was needed and stated that the Eco Church team had approached the Council for its support with publicity for the launch. The Council's waste contractor, FCC, had also been able to make a donation towards the costs of the event. He expressed the hope that the Pledge would be rolled out through the rest of the District.

The Leader thanked Cllr Dann for his comments and anticipated that the number of neighbourhood plans would continue to grow over the next eighteen to twenty-four months.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

There were none.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

There were none.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON 3rd DECEMBER 2018

HARBOROUGH LIFELINE SERVICE: INVESTMENT IN DIGITAL CALL-HANDLING SYSTEM

The Executive on 3rd December 2018 had considered a report to seek approval for plans to upgrade the Lifeline call-handling system including investment and procurement, in preparation for the digital 'switchover' of the national telephone infrastructure.

It was moved by Cllr Rickman, seconded by Cllr King and

RESOLVED that capital expenditure of up to £50,000 in 2019/20 to support the upgrade be approved.

Summary of reasons:

By 2025, analogue telephone services will be switched off as the UK's telecommunications infrastructure is upgraded to digital connectivity.

This 'switchover' has significant implications for assistive technology ('telecare') services as existing analogue telecare alarms that connect to call monitoring services will no longer function; upgrading call monitoring systems to service digital alarms will be necessary if services are to be maintained. A number of larger telecare providers have already installed such systems and are no longer offering or supporting analogue alarms for new customers.

The 'switchover' also offers important benefits to customers: connection of telecare alarms through digital systems is more reliable and therefore safer; customers will benefit from reduced telephone call charges; and they will be able to use their telephone for conversation without affecting the telecare connection.

There are also substantial potential benefits for the Council as a service provider: fewer telephone lines will be required, with a resultant saving; maintenance costs are likely to be reduced; there is potential to change Disaster Recovery arrangements which would increase resilience and reduce costs; and following the upgrade, there is potential for the Lifeline service to be delivered from any secure location, which would increase flexibility and resilience and, in the long term, offer additional options for location of the Control Centre.

Harborough Lifeline provides services under contract to a number of other councils and small housing providers (alms house charities and similar) locally. Most of these 'corporate' customers use relatively old alarm systems which are 'hard wired' and are based on analogue technology; replacement will be a matter for the customer organisations as they own the equipment. However unless Harborough Lifeline has upgraded to a digital call handling system it will be unable to support the new systems that these customers are likely to procure. By upgrading, Harborough Lifeline will be in a better position to secure the relevant contracts and income in future.

The capital cost to the council of the digital upgrade is likely to be approximately £30,000; this will be subject to a procurement exercise.

It will be necessary to replace existing analogue alarms currently provided to customers with modern digital equipment. This will require additional investment, however it is proposed that it should be undertaken on a phased basis over 2-3 years. This would spread the costs, but also ensure that some were defrayed through new installations and scheduled replacement of old equipment. A project plan would be devised and implemented to achieve this.

Charges for the Lifeline service are currently set annually as part of the Council's budget process; it is recommended that the existing delegation to the S151 Officer be used to amend charges outside the budget cycle to manage the phased upgrade of alarms flexibly and in response to changes in costs. This would be undertaken with due regard to customer need, and the affordability and competitiveness of the service.

The market for telecare call handling systems is restricted and the number of providers is limited; it is possible that the value of the contract to be procured will exceed £50,000 in total as revenue costs for on going service will also be included (although they will be budgeted separately). The Council's current contract expires on March 31st 2019, but may be extended. Procurement of a contract of this potential value would normally require a tender; however a quotations process would be more advisable in this case as it would avoid the risk of providers failing to respond. It is also possible that for technical reasons, procurement of a contract with the Council's current provider would mitigate risk of service interruption. It is therefore recommended that an exemption from the procurement SORP is agreed under clause 7.1.7

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON 3rd DECEMBER 2018

FEES & CHARGES

The Executive on 3rd December 2018 had considered a report to approve fees and charges for 2019/20.

Cllrs Mrs Page and Cllr Galton raised questions relating to the level of the charge for disposal of bulky domestic waste. The Council's current charge (£33) was felt to be high and not in line with that of other councils. This could have the negative effect of contributing to levels of fly-tipping. In addition there might be issues relating to how cancellations of requests for collection were being dealt with. It was asked that these issues be looked at in future years.

Cllr Bannister responded that the price depended on the cost of sending out a van and seemed good value, as it was probably cheaper than the householder hiring a van. The matters would be kept under review and it was suggested that Cllr Galton contact Cllr Bateman, the portfolio holder, direct with details of the case that he had referred to. It was agreed that a response on the general policy of refunds would be provided to all Members.

Cllr Galton enquired about the item relating to the failure to produce waste transfer notes. Some fly-tipping is being carried out by tipper trucks that, presumably, ought to have these notes anyway. Setting the level of the fixed penalty notice higher than the current £300 might act as more of a deterrent, although it was acknowledged that the level might be fixed by statute.

Cllr Galton also noted the proposed increase in the level of charges for pre-application planning advice relating to Minor Proposals. Although cost-recovery was important, his concern was that the increase might be discourage applicants from seeking pre-application advice, which could lead to poorer applications and be counter-productive in the longer term.

Cllr Bannister responded that the increase seemed large, but was necessary as this area of work had been underfunded in the past. The effects of the increased charge would be monitored.

Cllr Dr Hill noted that the schedule of charges for street trading licences was identified as a specified daily or annual charge, while there appeared to be a number of approaches for 'markets'. The schedule of charges referred to rates specific to casual stalls, temporary, commercial and non-commercial markets, as well as to register charities. Furthermore, markets on The Square, Market Harborough were also mentioned in the section relating to 'events and promotions', where prices were 'on application'. This approach seemed confusing and it was felt that direction should be given to officers on how these elements should be interpreted.

It was moved by Cllr Bannister, seconded by Cllr King and

RESOLVED that the Fees and Charges, as detailed in Appendix A to the report to the Executive meeting of 3rd December 2018, be adopted from the 1st April 2019.

Summary of reasons:

To formally set the approved fees and charges for services from the 1st April 2019.

REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE

It was moved by Cllr Bannister, seconded by Cllr King and

RESOLVED that the report from the Executive be received.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

There were none.

REPORTS ON THE BUSINESS OF JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

There were none.

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Councillor Dann presented his report, as set out below:

Since my last report to Council we have completed the third Scrutiny cycle of the year, with meetings of the Communities and Performance Scrutiny Panels having taken place on 6th and 13th December respectively.

The minutes from these meetings and those in the second cycle will be available on-line once approved at the following meeting. In the meantime I can summarise some of the outcomes:

Communities Scrutiny Panel

Panel Members received annual reports from Charities and Voluntary Organisations supported by the Council and considered reports on Lightbulb Service delivery, the Council's Empty Property Strategy and the Partnership Register.

Performance Scrutiny Panel

The Performance Panel considered Quarter 2 reports on the Council's financial performance and Corporate Risk and Opportunity Management. There was also an update on RIPA and the Planning Enforcement Protocol.

Future Scrutiny Events

The final cycle of Scrutiny meetings will be start in March. 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.

The following items are currently 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):

- The Council's working arrangements with The Leisure Trust/ Serco
- Quarterly Financial Performance, Quarter 3
- Performance, End of Quarter 3
- Risk and Opportunity Management, End of Quarter 3
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
- Broadband Update

- Property Strategy

Communities (28/03/2019):

- Progress on Neighbourhood Plans
- Harborough District Community Lottery

Finally, at the time of writing the Performance Scrutiny Panel is scheduled to hold its annual budget meeting on Thursday 24th January. As has been the case in past years, all non-Executive members of the Council have been invited to attend and Portfolio Holders will also be there to present budget proposals that were considered by the Executive on 14th January.

After presenting his report, Councillor Dann went on to state that although the Performance Scrutiny Panel meeting had been useful, it had not been well attended. The meeting gives backbench members the opportunity to question The Executive about its budget proposals and it was to be hoped that more members would attend in future.

CONTAMINATED LAND STRATEGY

The Council considered the report and noted that The Environment Act 1995 introduced provisions into the Environmental Protection Act, 1990 to secure the remediation of land identified as contaminated. These provisions came into force in April 2000 and gave district councils the primary regulatory role for dealing with contaminated land. In accordance with its duty under this legislation Harborough District Council published its Contaminated Land Strategy in January 2002.

The strategy was reviewed in 2008 and the Executive, on 12 March 2018, approved the draft revised Contaminated Land Strategy Framework Document for public consultation. One representation was received during the consultation period, from Public Health England (PHE). This response did not materially impact the contents of the document, however the necessary amendments had been made and the final document was included as Appendix A to the report.

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

RESOLVED that the revised Contaminated Land Strategy Framework Document, set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

Summary of reasons:

1. The Contaminated Land Strategy Framework Document provides a framework for the Council to prioritise site investigation and remediation of contaminated sites in the District.
2. The existing strategy was adopted in 2002 and subsequently reviewed in 2008.
3. At the meeting of the Executive Committee on the 12 March 2018, members approved that the draft Contaminated Land Strategy Framework Document as set out in Appendix A should be subject to a period of public consultation running from 30th April to 25th June 2018.
4. One minor representation was received during the consultation period which did not have a material impact on the contents of the strategy.

URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman thanked members for their involvement in the Extraordinary Meeting of Council on 8th January 2019, which had been called to consider the call-in of an application for planning permission. The standard of debate had been good and appeared to have been well received by those members of the public present.

The Meeting ended at 7.07 p.m.