



HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL on

Monday 31 July 2024 commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Held at **The Council Chamber, The Symington Building**, Adam & Eve Street,
Market Harborough, LE16 7AG

Present:

Councillor Elliott (Chairman)

Councillors: Anderson, Asher, Bannister, Bateman, Beadle, Bilbie, Birch, Burrell, Dann, Finan, Gair, Galton, Graves, Hallam, James, Johnson, King, Knight, Knowles, Mahal, Modha, Mrs Page, Rickman, Sarfas, Taylor, Whelband, Whitmore, Woodiwiss, Worrell.

Apologies: Councillors Forman, Grafton-Reed, Hollick and Nunn.

Officers present: D. Atkinson, L. Elliott, S. Hamilton, C. Hartley, S. Manek, C. Mason and E. Newman

J. Richardson- Chief Executive Officer

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Forman, Grafton-Reed, Hollick and Nunn.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Since being elected as Chair on the 20th of May, the Chairman judged the floats for the Harborough Carnival, attended the Harborough Twenty 12 Lions Community Awards Evening, and the Oadby and Wigston's Lions Club Bardi concert at De Montfort Hall. The Chairman attended a meeting with the Lord Lieutenant, and other civic heads from Leicestershire as an opportunity to get to know each other and to share priorities for the current municipal year. The Harborough D-Day flag raising event was attended together with the Service of Commemoration and Remembrance at St Dionysius Church. The Chairman visited the Community Arts wall and "chair arts", Hallaton Museum for the launch of their replica Roman Helmet and attended the Judging of East Midlands in Bloom and met with the wonderful Harborough in

Bloom volunteers. The Chairman attended the classic car show in Market Harborough, visited the Well Charity in Kibworth Beauchamp and attended the High Sheriff's Osprey Cruise in aid of charity Warning Zone at Rutland water.

The Chairman had been supported by the Vice Chair, Cllr James.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL 26.02.2024

In respect of the ordinary meeting of the Council on 26 February 2024 it was :-

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Council held in the 26 February 2024 be received and adopted, subject to the amendments below:

- **Cllr Bateman is not a County Councillor, as detailed in the item on Declarations of Interest.**
- **All the Councillors in attendance at the meeting had not been recorded.**

5. REPORT OF THE LEADER

The Leader presented his report.

Firstly, the Leader informed Council that he had written to the new Prime Minister to request that he calls in the decision by the previous Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to allow the new prison at Gartree to be built. The Leader confirmed that no response had yet been received and a follow up would be sent. The Leader had requested that Ministers would attend to visit the site.

ACTION: Officers to follow up on response from Prime Minister's Office.

The Annual Statement of Achievements for 2023/24 had been shared with Members at Cabinet in July and had been shared again. The Leader thanked Officers for their ongoing dedication and commitment to work. The Council had also published its Productivity Plan.

The Council had invited a Corporate Peer Challenge which would take place in the Autumn.

The Cultural Quarter had reached completion. More eye-catching signage had been added on buildings and shop windows and more waste bins had been installed. The Leader thanked Officers.

The Open Spaces Policy was being reviewed after agreement at Cabinet in July 2024. There would be involvement of Parish and Town Councils in the review which could see the district council stepping in if a Parish or Town Council did not want to adopt an area in Market Harborough, where there was no town council.

The Leader highlighted a few points from the Annual Statement of Achievements. These were as follows:

- 6 million capital investment into the two leisure centres in Market Harborough and Lutterworth.
- A new Housing and Homelessness Strategy had been approved.
- A new Leisure Strategy had been approved to help enhance locality provision.
- New solar panels would be placed on Harborough Innovation Centre, reducing emissions by 16 tonnes of CO2.
- Going ahead with Friendship Park.
- £100K put into the Youth Opportunity Plan delivery including development of a Harborough Youth Council to allow the voice of young people to be heard.
- £1 put into a Town & Parish Council Community Fund, specially created to support local projects across the district and employing two Grants Officers to support parishes in completing the community applications.

Comments on the Leader's Report

Councillor Whelband commented that he did not see much change at the Cultural Quarter except for a few new stickers and one planter. He asked if businesses and residents had been consulted for their thoughts.

Councillor Bateman thanked the Leader for the report and asked if the Opposition would be involved in the Corporate Peer Challenge.

Councillor Mrs Page asked more about the Town and Parish Council Community Fund and when this would come forward. She was happy to see the Cultural Quarter completion. Councillor Mrs Page asked when completion was for Plowmans Yard and why the Market Harborough plans had completed before the Lutterworth plan.

Councillor Bannister asked for reassurance from the Leader that residents would be assisted when open spaces were brought back to standard.

Councillor James had made an observation at the Cultural Quarter that the six seats there were very dirty and needed cleaning. He thanked Councillors and Officers for the work carried out at the Friendship Park.

ACTION: Officers to action cleaning of seats



Councillor King commented that some of the achievements had been achieved because of the previous administration. Councillor King commented on the secured funding across Leicestershire for EV Charging infrastructure with HDC leading the Flex D programme. He commented that there needed to be a clear line of sight of how Members were going to be involved in the Corporate Peer Challenge and that there was some indirect cost to the Council. Councillor King commented that the previous scheme for the management of open spaces had not been affordable, so expectations needed to be managed. Councillor King asked why more Planning Officers were being appointed even though there was not sufficient income being generated and commented on the recent news on the terrible treatment of young people, police officers, and Members of the Armed Forces.

Councillor Rickman thanked the Leader for the early report. He asked when the parish and town councils would be allocated the £40k and how this would make the rural areas feel more valued.

Members were also given the opportunity to ask questions that were not related to the report.

The Leader provided a response to each of these queries and comments.

6. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

No questions were received.

7. PETITIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

No petitions were received.

8. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FROM MEMBERS

The following question was submitted by Councillor Bannister to Councillor Mark Graves, Cabinet Member for Finance:

“Will the Cabinet member for Finance agree that during the previous Conservative administration at Harborough District Council all Business rates were collected properly, and financial contingencies were prudently put in place in the event of unforeseen Business failures for which the Council would have no control over?”

Councillor Graves **responded** that:

“Thank you, Cllr Bannister, for your question. I cannot give an opinion either way about whether, under the previous administration, all the Councils business rates were collected properly and if financial contingencies were prudently put in place in the event of unforeseen business failures. The reason for this is because I have not

asked the Council's s.151 officer to look into this specific issue. However, I trust the officers at the time duly administered and reported any such under recovery of business rates in the usual way, including reporting any writing offs to Cabinet and the setting of appropriate bad debt provisions”.

The following question was submitted by Councillor Mrs Page to the Leader:

“For transparency and to ensure all members and the public are aware, could this Council please receive a timetable and a detailed up-date of the progress made to deliver the Lutterworth Masterplan.”

The Leader **responded** that:

“We have received six tenders for the procurement of a project manager. The inception meeting with the successful applicant is scheduled for the week commencing 29th July.

The next steps involve procuring the principal designer and the design and build contractor. They will utilise the concept plans and incorporate feedback from the consultation workshops and online submissions to collaboratively determine financial feasibility. We anticipate holding a stand-alone meeting with Lutterworth Town Council and relevant members in early September to present the final design.

Additionally, a meeting is scheduled with LCC during the week commencing 29th July to discuss proposed new elements of the Traffic Regulation Order for the Section 278 agreement. This includes additional car parking on Station Road, new disabled bays, and 30-minute waiting limit spaces.

As outlined in the detailed timetable, attached, we are on schedule and committed to ensuring the process is thorough and accurate. Importantly, we are maintaining close partnership with Highways throughout this process”.

The supplementary questions were responded to by Councillor Mark Graves and a written response would be supplied by the Section 151 Officer for Councillor Mrs Page’s supplementary question.

ACTION: Section 151 Officer to respond on the monies received from the sale of the Lutterworth Town Square project.

9. REPORT FROM THE CABINET

The Leader introduced the report. He highlighted the main points of the report.

Council discussed the subject matter presented in the report and asked for clarification on certain points. The Leader responded.

Councillor Bilbie requested information on the Council funding of VCS Organisations.

ACTION: Section 151 Officer to respond.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:
Council receive and note the report.

10. REPORT ON COMMITTEES

The Leader presented the report.

Councillor Sarfas requested information of what provisions were in place for voluntary sports at leisure clubs and societies for people with disabilities.

ACTION: Officers to provide response.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:
Council receive and note the report.

11. REPORT ON JOINT ARRANGEMENTS

The Leader presented this report. He gave an update on arrangements since the last meeting. The Council had established a joint committee for the purpose of administering it's revenues and benefits functions. The joint committee included North West Leicestershire District Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, as well as Harborough District Council. It met 4 times a year and the Council had nominated Councillor Graves and Councillor Beadle as its representatives. The Joint Committee was also attended by the Head of Financial Services, Carolyn Bland.

Councillor Mrs Page commented that she was a Member of the A5 Partnership.

ACTION: Further information required on the A5 Partnership and a response provided to Cllr Mrs Page.

Councillor King asked when Council would see the reports for the MAG meetings and he was informed that the Chairman preferred for these meeting to be kept confidential.

ACTION: Inform Members of when MAG meetings are taking place.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:
Council noted the joint arrangements activity since the last meeting.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

One Notice of Motion, had been received by the Council and accepted in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules.

Councillor King **proposed** the Motion and Councillor Mrs Page **Seconded**:

“Since the emerging local plan Regulation 18 consultation process ended in February 2024, a new government has been elected.

In their first week, they have stated that mandatory minimum housing targets are to be re-imposed on Local Planning Authorities, along with many other changes to NPPF.

At Reg18 this administration consulted on a 29% increase of minimum housing delivery of 16,556, for 2020-2041 versus the current 2011-2031 adopted local plan of 12,800.

But the new Chancellor of the Exchequer has stated that their 5-year minimum target for housing will be 50% more than that of the last government, 1.5 million.

Previously, Harborough has had protection from onshore wind turbine applications. But now we have the news that the new Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, has decided to immediately remove the NPPF restrictions for on shore wind turbines.

From the briefings Councillors have received, hundreds of local residents visited the 5 drop-in consultation events, but very few submitted responses to the Reg 18 consultation.

Much vital evidence and technical information, is yet to be brought forward for evaluation and consideration.

And important issues are yet to be agreed with adjoining authorities or indeed by this one.

The risks to our local plan making are now greatly increased, because of these changes and increased uncertainties.

There are delays in evidence gathering and a lack of time being afforded for evaluation and appraisal by elected members, local residents, and businesses.

The present timetable of publication of draft Reg19 in Nov/Dec this year is now very unlikely to be met.

We therefore propose the following recommendation: -

1. The Council, immediately ‘pauses’ the emerging Local Plan process, whilst it seeks clarifications from the new government of its housing targets, and other changes to planning frameworks etc.

The Leader proposed an amendment to the substantive motion and this was seconded by Councillor Galton. The proposed amendment to the recommendation was circulated to Council. The amendment read as follows:

Our officers have a number of major concerns with any move to implement a further delay to the local plan making process. The major concerns include: potential financial impacts on the Council's budget, the risk of having no defensible local plan leading to a potential for a developers free for all and further unwanted speculative development. New government policy on housing delivery has not yet been released although we are expecting an announcement on the new NPPF imminently.

It would be completely irrational to pause momentum on Local Plan preparation at the current time. Whatever happens moving forward the Harborough District needs a new local plan as quickly as possible to ensure development is delivered in a planned and not a speculative developer-led way. Indeed, we are seeking to prepare this new local plan as speedily as possible.

Rather than HDC instigating a pause, leading to a possible waste of public money and the risk of missing the current submission deadline, we move the following;

1. As soon as government announcements materialise our officers be asked to prepare an urgent analysis of the impact of any changes.
2. Once that is available and depending on the levels of any potential impact then either an all member in-person briefing, a special cabinet, or special full council be called.

It is sensible and pragmatic to keep our options open until we understand the significance of any changes. This approach allows us the flexibility to react without unnecessarily jeopardising our progress so far.

The decision on which meeting option is most appropriate be delegated to the CEO and The Leader. Before the decision is made the Leader will consult with the Cabinet Lead for Planning, Cabinet and the Leader of the Opposition.

Notwithstanding the above assessment and subsequent briefing of members and future decision making on this matter, it is considered that our officers should begin to lobby government for an extension to the June 30th, 2025, deadline for the submission of our new local plan for examination. This will be especially important if higher new home building targets are imposed by government and therefore additional work to prepare the plan may be needed."

A recorded vote was taken on the amendment to become the substantive motion which was supported by the requisite number of Councillors and the result was:

For the motion: Cllrs Anderson, Beadle, Birch, Burrell, Elliott, Finan, Gair, Galton, Graves, James, Johnson, Knight, Knowles, Sarfas, Taylor, Whitmore, and Woodiwiss (17)

Against the motion: Cllrs Bannister, Bateman, Bilbie, Dann, Hallam, King, Mahal, Modha, Mrs Page, Rickman, Whelband and Worrell (12)

There were no abstentions.

The amendment to the motion was therefore **CARRIED** and subsequently became the substantive motion.

Councillor Anderson left the meeting at 8pm.

A subsequent debate then took place on the substantive motion and the Leader and Officers provided responses to each of these queries and comments.

The motion was **proposed** by Councillor Knowles and **seconded** by Councillor Galton. A vote was taken, and the motion was **CARRIED** that the amendment be **APPROVED**.

13. GREAT EASTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Councillor Galton presented the report and set out the main highlights to Council including that Great Easton was one of 63 designated conservation areas within the Harborough District. These conservation areas were last appraised between 2005 and 2007. As such, a programme of appraisal has been put in place to ensure the conservation areas remain up-to-date and supported by appropriate appraisals. Due to the high number of conservation areas this is an on-going programme of work.

ACTION: Councillor King requested a list of the programme of works for the conservation areas.

Councillor Galton **proposed** the motion, and it was **seconded** by Councillor Rickman.

The proposal was **CARRIED**, and it was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

Council adopt the revised Great Easton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, set out at Appendix A of the report.

14. ADDITIONS TO THE LOCAL LIST OF NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

Councillor Galton presented the report and set out the main highlights to Council including the adoption of eight new entries for inclusion on the Local List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets.

Councillor Sarfas asked if the Old Police Station, which was a listed building was being restored back to its original state.

Councillor James asked about designation of assets and a strategy for former banks.

Councillor Galton **proposed** the motion, and it was **seconded** by Councillor Woodiwiss.

The proposal was **CARRIED**, and it was therefore **RESOLVED that:**

Council adopt the addition of the eight new entries to the Local List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets.

URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The Meeting closed at 8:32pm.