

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD AT BRAUNSTONE CIVIC CENTRE

THURSDAY 13th JUNE 2024 AT 7.30PM

PRESENT: Councillor Nick Brown (Chair), Councillor Anthea Ambrose (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Shabbir Aslam, Andy Evans, Leanne Lee, Rebecca Lunn, Sam Maxwell, Gary Sanders, Tracey Shepherd, and Robert Waterton.

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

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

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Christiane Startin-Lorent.

2. Disclosures of Interest

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

3. 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.

4. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2024 (item 4 on the agenda) were circulated.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2024 be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

5. Financial Comparisons

The Committee received Financial Comparisons for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st May 2024 (item 5 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that expenditure for Utilities across all Service Areas be reviewed to ascertain whether the costs were likely to exceed the budgets.

Reason for Decision

The actual expenditure for Utilities (across Service Areas) was over the allocated budget for the period 1st April to 31st May 2024.

6. Managing Cash and Reserves

The Committee received a summary of the Council's Cash and Reserves with the approved actions to ensure the Council had sufficient cash and reserves to function (item 6 on the agenda).

The Chief Executive & Town Clerk reported that Corporate Governance Sub-Committee had considered this item and had noted that an overdraft facility had been declined by the bank. The Sub-Committee recommended that other contingency measures be considered if necessary.

RESOLVED

1. that the position with *Cash Flow*, as detailed in the relevant section of the report and in the cash flow forecast at Appendix 1, be noted;
2. that the *Implemented Measures* be confirmed as sufficient to avoid future reoccurrences of cash at the bank becoming critically low;
3. that the credit reference report be requested from the credit reference agency used by the Cooperative Bank;
4. that consideration be given to other potential contingency measures; and
5. that Policy & Resources Committee consider updated and revised Cash Flow forecasts, and appropriate contingency measures to address any overspend, following the end of the quarter period on 30th September and 31st December 2024.

Reasons for Decision

1. *The position in respect of the Council's cash reserves and overspends during 2023/2024, were all matters that the Council had addressed.*
2. *The Council had implemented mitigating measures for ensuring it had cash reserves during 2024/2025 and beyond.*
3. *To understand why an overdraft facility had been refused.*
4. *While Cash Flow forecasts were no longer showing a predicted deficit in April 2025; the situation may change.*
5. *To review the cash flow position to ensure that short and long term proposals would resolve the issue and, if necessary, further action could be taken to avoid a repeat occurrence.*

7. Internal Audit Report 2023/2024 and Internal Audit Arrangements 2024/2025

The Committee received the Internal Auditor's Report in respect of compliance with relevant procedures and controls in operation during the financial year ended 31st March 2024 and considered the appointment of an Internal Auditor for 2024/2025 (item 7 on the agenda).

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

1. that the Internal Audit Report (attached at Appendix 1 of the report) and assessment of the internal control objectives (attached at Appendix 2 of the report) be received and noted;
2. that the recommendations for improvement, along with the proposed response, as set out in the Internal Audit Improvement Action Plan (attached at Appendix 3 of the report), be adopted; and
3. that the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils Internal Audit Service be appointed to undertake the Town Council's Internal Audit for the Year Ending 31st March 2025.

Reasons for Decision

1. *The Internal Auditor, having tested all the aspects of the Council's internal controls:*
 - i. *noted that in respect of Internal Control Objective D, the level of general reserves at the end of the 2023/2024 financial year was insufficient and did not meet the guidelines laid out in the JPAG Practitioners' Guide 2024 paragraphs 5.31 to 5.39; and*
 - ii. *was satisfied that in all significant respects all other Internal Control Objectives were achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the Council's needs.*
2. *To ensure that the observations of the Internal Audit would be addressed with appropriate and balanced measures.*
3. *To ensure arrangements were in place for compliance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.*

8. Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024

The Committee received a report to enable it to review and ensure sound systems of internal control, including the management of risk and the preparation of accounting statements during the financial year ended 31st March 2024 and to recommend to Council adoption of the Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024 (item 8 on the agenda).

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that the systems of internal control and management of risk, as set out in the report and in the updated Corporate Risk Register at Appendix 1, be approved and confirmed as sound; and that Section 1, Annual Governance Statement 2023/24, of the

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/2024, attached at Appendix 2 of the report, be completed, signed and submitted accordingly

Reason for Decision

Having reviewed the control measures for each of the areas listed on the Annual Governance Statement and also the assessment of risks facing the Council and associated mitigating measures, the Corporate Governance Sub-Committee were confident that to the best of their knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31st March 2024, there were sound systems of internal control and management of risk.

9. Accounting Statements 2023/2024

The Committee received the End of Year Accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2024 and determined whether to recommend to Council adoption of the Accounting Statements 2023/2024 (item 9 on the agenda).

RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

1. that Section 2, Accounting statements 2023/24, of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2024, attached at Appendix 9 of the report, be completed, signed and submitted accordingly; and
2. that it be noted that the Exercise of Public Rights would be undertaken from 1st July 2024 until Friday 9th August 2024.

Reasons for Decision

1. *The Corporate Governance Sub-Committee, having carried out an assessment of the effectiveness of the Council's financial arrangements, concluded that there were sound systems of internal control. The Internal Auditor, having reviewed the annual accounts, found the Accounting Statements to have been prepared on the correct basis and were supported by adequate audit trails to underlying records.*
2. *It was good practice to minute the dates of the Exercise of Public Rights upon approval of the Accounting Statements by the Council.*

10. Revenue Savings Projects

The Committee considered public feedback on options for both one-off savings in 2024/2025 and ongoing savings, to ensure the Council focussed its activity and spending on its key priorities and objectives given the current financial constraints and future financial uncertainties (item 10 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the One-off Revenue Savings for 2024/2025, as detailed in Table 1, be confirmed;
2. that the proposed Ongoing Revenue Savings for Future Years, as detailed

- in Table 2, and at Appendices 1 and 2, be approved and implemented; and
3. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk to determine timescales for implementation of 1 and 2 above; and to consider and implement further measures to reduce expenditure as suggested in the consultation responses in Table 3.

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 ensure the Council focussed its activity and spending on its key priorities and objectives given the current financial constraints and future financial uncertainties.*
3. *To implement the proposed projects as resources and priorities permit. To ensure that any other potential areas for savings could be considered and implemented where practical and viable.*

11. Review of Climate Change & Environmental Strategy

The Committee reviewed the Climate Change & Environmental Strategy, including undertaking a consultation, to ensure that it would be relevant, fit for purpose and that the Council had a framework for delivering its commitments (item 11 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the first sentence of point 7 of Section 2, The Journey to Date, be reworded to read "With current legislation providing for a ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars nationally by 2035, the uptake of electric vehicles is forecast to rapidly increase over the next decade"; and
2. that, subject to 1 above, the proposed revisions to the Climate Change and Environmental Strategy (highlighted red at Appendix 1) be approved for consultation, as set out in the *Consultation* section of the report, with the post-consultation version being submitted to Policy & Resources Committee, scheduled for 12th September 2024, for consideration and recommendation to Council for adoption.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To acknowledge that the legislation may be subject to change.*
2. *The Climate Change & Environmental Strategy provided the framework for the Town Council's response to Climate Change; therefore, it was important to ensure that it was fit for purpose, met the needs and aspirations of residents', and would be deliverable.*

12. Blaby District Council Parish Charter

The Committee considered signing up to the Blaby District Council Parish Charter (item 12 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that Braunstone Town Council support and endorse the provisions of the Blaby District Council Parish Charter, attached at Appendix 1; and
2. that the Town Mayor and Chief Executive & Town Clerk be authorised to sign the Blaby District Council Parish Charter on behalf of Braunstone Town Council.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To enshrine the working relationship and expectations on partnership working between Blaby District Council and Braunstone Town Council, alongside other Parish Councils within Blaby District.*
2. *To formally indicate the Town Council's formal endorsement of the Charter and its principles.*

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

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

RESOLVED

1. that progress on the delivery of proposals for improvements to the connections between walking and cycling routes (as shown at Appendix 1), and detailed in the report and schedule (attached at Appendix 2), be endorsed;
2. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk to act on behalf of Braunstone Town Council in respect of inputting into and agreeing to route signage proposals and post locations; and
3. that suitable information be issued to the public explaining the Council's proposals to address drainage and flooding at the entrance to Mossdale Meadows from Kingsway.

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. *To ensure that the sign posts would be suitably located and that the destinations used on the signs catered for by both longer distance and local pedestrians and cyclists.*
3. *Flood Alleviation works on Mossdale Meadows formed part of a separate Capital Project and had not been funded through Transforming Cities since it was an existing problem. However, residents needed to be informed that the Council had plans to address flooding and drainage at the entrance to Mossdale Meadows car park, given the potential impact on the cycle route.*

14. **ROSPA Reports**

The Committee received a report concerning the annual ROSPA inspections on Parks and Open Spaces and to determined action to be taken (item 14 on the agenda).

The Chief Executive & Town Clerk reported that repairs had been carried out on the Mossdale Meadows Skate Park surface and the Shakespeare Park Rocking Horse footplates.

RESOLVED that it be noted that repairs to the High-Risk items listed in the report be under taken as soon as possible and a work programme for other medium priority items with a risk factor of 9 in Braunstone Town (Appendix 1) and Thorpe Astley (Appendix 2) be approved for completion during the Summer; with medium priority items with a risk factor of 8 and below to be included in the Winter Works Programme 2024/2025.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that all Braunstone Town Council's play areas and parks equipment were maintained to a safe standard.

15. **Review of Grievance Policy & Procedure**

The Committee considered, following consultation, a revised and updated Grievance Policy and Procedure for adoption (item 15 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the proposed Grievance Policy & Procedure, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and implemented on 17th June 2024.

Reason for Decision

To provide a framework to assist employees to raise individual complaints and to have those complaints resolved quickly and fairly, and to guide managers through the process.

16. **Modifications to the Leave Entitlement and Working Time Policies & Procedures**

The Committee considered updating both the Leave Entitlement and Working Time Policies & Procedures following an update to the Terms and Conditions of employment (item 16 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the proposed amendments to the Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure, attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and implemented on 17th June 2024;
2. that the entitlement for Carer's Leave be set at 1 week per annum and that

- the Model Employment Contract be updated accordingly; and
3. that the proposed amendments to the Working Time & Flexible Working Policy & Procedure, attached at Appendix 2 of the report, be approved and implemented on 17th June 2024.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To update the Leave Entitlement Policy & Procedure to include new statutory entitlements, requirements and notice periods.*
2. *To align the entitlement to Carer's Leave with the legislative requirement, recognising that the Council also offered a general Unpaid Leave provision, which could be utilised, if required, subject to agreement.*
3. *To update the Working Time & Flexible Working Policy & Procedure to avoid unnecessary administrative and bureaucratic processes, given the flexibilities introduced into the legislation.*

17. Review of Absence Management Policy & Procedure

The Committee considered proposed amendments to the Absence Management Policy & Procedure and approved these for consultation (item 17 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the following be amended in the consultation document:
 - a) paragraph 15 to include "unless there are exceptional circumstances",
 - b) a new paragraph prior to existing paragraph 20 stating "Having notified the Council of absence, a Manager will call the employee within one working day to check the employee's wellbeing and discuss whether any support is needed", and
 - c) the first part of the third sentence of paragraph 28 reading "Employees will need to contact the Council to advise of any outstanding work.....";
2. that, subject to 1 above, the proposed revisions to the Absence Management 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
3. that any proposed amendments be presented to the next meeting of Policy & Resources Committee, proposed for 16th September 2024 for consideration and approval.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To recognise that:*
 - a) *in exceptional circumstances an employee cannot always telephone the Council or ask someone to do so on their behalf,*
 - b) *Managers contact employees to be supportive and to ensure that everything the Council could do to support them was offered, and*
 - c) *an employee's contact was ultimately with the Council.*

2. *To ensure that staff, Councillors and the Council's HR Advisor could input into the proposed changes to the Absence Management Policy & Procedure to ensure that it would be practical and fit for purpose.*
3. *To set out the Council's approach to managing absence recognising that while employees may be prevented from attending work through ill health, the Council had a duty to maintain service delivery and minimise disruption.*

18. Incident Response – Tuesday 4th June 2024

The Committee received a report on actions taken under the Council's Business Continuity Incident Response Procedure to provide an emergency rest centre for residents affected by the Police Incident on Tuesday 4th June 2024 at The Glade and surrounding streets (item 18 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the Incident declared by the Chief Executive & Town Clerk on 4th June 2024 to provide an emergency rest centre for residents affected by the incident on The Glade and surrounding streets, as detailed in the Background and Incident Response sections of the report, be supported;
2. that the Town Council staff involved be thanked for their contribution and support;
3. that the agencies and the people involved in the response to the wider incident be thanked for their response and hard work; and
4. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, in consultation with Service Managers, to determine whether to offer a one-off additional payment for any extra hours worked by staff supporting the incident on a case by case basis.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To support the action taken to ensure that the Town Council supported the effective response to the incident at The Glade while minimising the impact on service delivery.*
2. *Staff called upon responded and acted swiftly and professionally to provide an efficient and effective response to the incident.*
3. *To recognise the complexities of the incident and that the collaborative approach delivered effective support for residents.*
4. *To ensure that the additional hours worked by staff supporting the Council's response to the incident would not be included in any amounts beyond the limit on the number of additional hours that could be carried over.*

19. Outside Bodies Report

The Committee received reports from members of Outside Bodies:

a) Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils

No Report due to no recent meeting.

b) Shakespeare Park Sports Pavilion Management Association

No Report due to no recent meeting.

20. Approval of Accounts

The Committee considered payments from 17th April 2024 until 4th June 2024 (item 20 on the agenda).

RESOLVED that the list of Approved Expenditure Transactions for the period 17th April 2024 until 4th June 2024 be approved.

Reason for Decision

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

21. Land adjacent to the New M1 Bridge, Thorpe Astley

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 and Legal Advice.*

The Committee received an update concerning proposals for transferring the land adjacent to the new road and bridge at Thorpe Astley to the Town Council (item 21 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the Heads of Terms, attached at Appendix 1, for a proposed transfer of the new parkland adjacent to the M1 Bridge, Meridian Way, Thorpe Astley, be accepted in principle; subject to the *Meridian Way Boundary* and associated works being satisfactorily resolved, as set out in the relevant section of the report;
2. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk to enter into discussions, commission legal advisors, and progress the administrative arrangements for the transfer; and
3. that a risk assessment of the boundary with the Motorway be undertaken and where risks were identified, mitigating actions proposed.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To confirm the Town Council's interest in obtaining the ownership and management of the new parkland adjacent to the M1 Bridge, Meridian Way, Thorpe Astley.*
2. *To progress the transfer arrangements, avoiding delays and additional cost.*
3. *To ensure that the Council assessed the level of risk to public safety and took mitigating action where necessary.*

22. Request for a Wayleave Thorpe Astley Community Centre and Park

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 and Legal Advice.*

The Committee received details of a request for a Wayleave Consent for an underground high voltage cable under Thorpe Astley Community Centre Car Park and Thorpe Astley Park (item 22 on the agenda).

RESOLVED

1. that the principle of entering a Wayleave or Easement for an underground high voltage cable at Thorpe Astley Community Centre and Park be on the basis of the *Proposed Way Forward*, as set out in the relevant section of the report, and subject to terms and conditions; and
2. that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to undertake negotiations on terms and conditions for either a Wayleave or Easement, in conjunction and collaboration with Blaby District Council.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To facilitate proposals for the installation of Electric Vehicle Rapid Chargers at Leicester Forest East Service Station.*
2. *To ensure that the Council delivers its responsibilities to improve and enhance public services at Thorpe Astley.*

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.

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.

SIGNED:

DATE: