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CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD IN ROOM CC021, JAMES FRANCE BUILDING, CENTRAL PARK, LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY CAMPUS ON 19TH JUNE 2023

PRESENT

The Mayor (Councillor Smidowicz)
The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Bradshaw)

Councillor Ashcroft	Councillor Jadeja
Councillor Baines	Councillor Jones
Councillor Blackshaw	Councillor Knight
Councillor Bokor	Councillor Lawrence
Councillor Bottomley	Councillor Lennie
Councillor Bradshaw	Councillor Lowe
Councillor Braker	Councillor Matthews
Councillor Brookes	Councillor Maynard
Councillor Campsall	Councillor Miah
Councillor Charles	Councillor Monk
Councillor Cory-Lowsley	Councillor Needham
Councillor Dent	Councillor Northage
Councillor Forde	Councillor O'Neill
Councillor C. Forrest	Councillor Palmer
Councillor S. Forrest	Councillor Popley
Councillor Fox	Councillor Rattray
Councillor Fryer	Councillor Roberts
Councillor Goode	Councillor Seaton
Councillor A. Gray	Councillor Snartt
Councillor B. Gray	Councillor D. Taylor
Councillor Hamilton	Councillor N. Taylor
Councillor Harper-Davies	Councillor Tillotson
Councillor Haynes	Councillor Westley
Councillor Infield	Councillor Woodward
Councillor Jackson	Councillor Worrall

Honorary Aldermen Day and R Shields

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Hadji-Nikolaou.

Apologies for absence had also been received from Honorary Aldermen Bush, Stott and Tormey.

13. DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON- REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

The following disclosures of pecuniary and personal interests were made:

- i. Councillor Miah – Other registrable interest in respect of item 8.1 on the agenda (Position Statement – Local Plan) as a Member of Leicestershire County Council.
- ii. Councillor Seaton - Other registrable interest in respect of item 8.1 on the agenda (Position Statement – Local Plan) as a Member of Leicestershire County Council.
- iii. Councillor D Taylor – Other registrable interest in respect of item 8.1 on the agenda (Position Statement – Local Plan) as a Member of Leicestershire County Council.

14. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Mayor highlighted that there was an error in the minutes of the previous meeting (minute reference 2, 2023/24). She had been a Governor of Ratcliffe College for 28 years, not 18 years as stated in the minutes.

The minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 22nd May 2023 were then confirmed and signed.

15. ANNOUNCEMENTS

16. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements.

“Armed Forces Day

The Government has announced that the British Armed Forces Day will take place on Saturday 24th June this year. The Day will be an opportunity for the whole nation to show its appreciation for the contribution made by all those who serve or have served in His Majesty’s Armed Forces.

To mark the week leading up to the 24th of June there was a Flag Flying Ceremony at the front of Loughborough Town Hall this morning. I will also be attending the Armed Forces Day event on Saturday 24 June in the Market Place / Swan Street, Loughborough. All are welcome. The event runs from 10 am until 3p.m.

100th Anniversary of the Carillon Tower Service

A Civic Service to mark the 100th Anniversary is taking place on 22 July 2023 at 2p.m. in Queens Park, Loughborough. All are welcome to celebrate this wonderful occasion.

If you haven't already seen the exhibition of the Alexandra bedspread in the sock gallery please take some time to see how the funds to build the Carillon and the background of the people who paid their shilling."

17. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader had no announcements to make.

18. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chief Executive had no announcements to make.

19. PETITIONS

No petitions were submitted.

20. BUSINESS RESERVED TO COUNCIL

21. HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

A report of the Cabinet to consider a recommendation in respect of the housing capital programme for 2023-24, was submitted (item 6.1 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

It was proposed by Councillor Hamilton, seconded by Councillor Miah, and

RESOLVED that virements and slippage on the following schemes exceeding £250,000 (with details as set out in Appendix 1 of the annexed Cabinet report dated 9th March 2023) be approved:

- Z375 Garages
- Z763 Kitchens
- Z764 Bathrooms
- Z765 Electrical upgrades
- Z766 Window replacement
- Z769 Roofing Works & Insulation.

Reason

To improve the Council's housing stock, in line with the Charnwood and Decent Homes Standards.

22. PURCHASE OF ADDITIONAL REFUSE VEHICLES

A report of the Cabinet to consider a recommendation in respect of the purchase of two refuse collection vehicles, was submitted (item 6.2 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

It was proposed by Councillor A Gray, seconded by Councillor Jones, and

RESOLVED that £440k is added to the Council's Capital Programme for the purchase of two new Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs), and that the vehicles are financed through capital plan receipts, thus avoiding interest payments and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

Reason

To ensure that the capital is available for the purchase of the required vehicles.

23. LANDLORD SERVICES CAPACITY

A report of the Cabinet to consider recommendations in respect of increasing the housing revenue account budgets relating to the staffing establishment to continue to improve services to tenants, was submitted (item 6.1 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

It was proposed by Councillor Hamilton, seconded by Councillor Miah, and

RESOLVED

1. That the HRA salary revenue budget be increased by £102.8k on an ongoing basis to fund a new Head of Landlord Services post;
2. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Housing and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Lead Member for Public and Private Sector Housing and the Council's Section 151 Officer or Head of Finance, to draw down from the HRA Financing Fund a sum of up to £500k each year to fund initiatives to meet the challenges arising from a complex operating environment and improve services provided to tenants.

Reasons

1. To provide an appropriate level of senior officer capacity to manage the risks associated with the delivery of landlord services in light of an enhanced regulatory regime; and support delivery of a progressive agenda around asset management including decarbonisation of the Council's Housing Stock and the improvement of sheltered accommodation.
2. To provide timely access to a flexible financial resource which can be deployed on a targeted basis to improve performance around (for example) voids and repairs, and to provide a governance mechanism by which the fund can be spent.

24. CALL-IN REFERENCES

There were no call-in references from Scrutiny.

25. POSITION STATEMENTS

26. LOCAL PLAN

The Conservative Group had given notice of a Position Statement on the Local Plan (item 8.1 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

The following points were raised by Councillors:

Councillor Jadeja introduced the position statement by stating that the Labour Group would support the progression of the current Local Plan. She emphasised the importance of the Local Plan in setting out the vision and framework for planning and guiding developments in terms of scale and quality until 2037. She said that it had addressed needs and opportunities in relation to housing, jobs and community facilities and infrastructure and recognised the changes required to adapt to climate change. She confirmed that the infrastructure needs for future growth were considered and secured in the Local Plan. Councillor Jadeja finished by stating that bringing the Local Plan forward was necessary to ensure that control could be exerted.

Councillor Snartt stated that he had many concerns with the response received from the administration. He said that he believed the electorate of Charnwood had been misled by statements made in the Labour Manifesto. He highlighted that the Local Plan recommended considerably more housing on greenfield land, than on brownfield land. There would be little chance of refusing nearby developments outside of the Council boundaries. Councillor Snartt asked how the administration proposed to refuse any developments outside of the existing boundaries during the current council term? He also asked how the Labour Group would deliver their Manifesto pledge regarding a preference for brownfield sites without compromising the five-year housing land supply? Councillor Snartt finished by asking if the council officers had capacity to deliver the Local Plan?

Councillor Needham stated that there were issues regarding a lack of a five-year housing land supply which meant that developers were able to revisit previously refused applications. She stated that she recognised the importance of adopting a Local Plan to avoid these issues in future.

Councillor D Taylor stated that she believed the electorate had been misled as the response to the position statement referred to a future Local Plan, and that the current Labour Manifesto detailing their planning aims covered 2023 – 27. She stated that there were 1,443 houses proposed in Anstey, all of which were on greenfield sites.

Councillor Baines quoted the Labour Manifesto and asked how the housing aims aligned with the Local Plan? He also quoted the Loughborough Greens response to the Local Plan consultation, which stated the group had concerns over the Local Plan, including the location of proposed housing, the sustainability of developments and the lack of planned facilities and infrastructure.

Councillor Infield stated that the Green Party still had concerns over the Local Plan, but stated that the disadvantages of not adopting a Local Plan were worse. He stated that he hoped that there would be an opportunity to improve some of the aspects of the Local Plan supplementary planning guidance.

Councillor Miah stated that the Labour Group had agreed to adopt the Local Plan which they had inherited. He recognised that many areas of the Borough could not demonstrate a five-year housing land supply if the Local Plan was not adopted. He said that starting the process again would take longer than the four-year council term and that they were keen to deliver a Local Plan. Councillor Miah also highlighted that Leicestershire County Council was required to respond to the Inspectors in order for the Local Plan to be progressed.

Councillor Jadeja finished by stating that she was aware that the Local Plan did have disadvantages, but also that not adopting a Local Plan had further disadvantages. She stated that she would respond to members with regards to the points made.

An appendix to the minutes, addressing questions raised during the consideration of this item, will be published in due course.

27. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

No motions on notice had been submitted.

28. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The questions on notice and the responses of the Leader or his nominee were submitted (item 10 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

29. LANDLORD SERVICES

Councillor D Taylor did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

30. VOIDS IN RESIDENTIAL HOUSING STOCK

Councillor Infield asked about plans to install thermal insulation in council properties? He identified that this was important for climate change and also for affordability.

Councillor Hamilton stated that a programme of thermal insulation instalments was undertaken for around 1,000 homes. He stated that there was a survey being undertaken to identify properties which would benefit from insulation and that the council was looking at applying for grant funding to help with this work. Councillor Hamilton finished by stating that he would provide a written response to Councillor Infield.

31. PUBLIC EV CHARGING POINTS IN CHARNWOOD

Councillor Bokor thanked the Lead Member and officers for the information provided in the response received and asked that the information be made available on the council's website.

Councillor Jones stated that she would speak to officers regarding this.

32. SOLAR PANELS ON NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN CHARNWOOD

Councillor Bokor did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

33. NEW COUNCIL HOUSING

Councillor Bokor stated that the response to her question had not been answered sufficiently and asked when the administration would undertake a feasibility study to deliver their Manifesto promise on council housing?

Councillor Hamilton responded by stating that he was in liaison with officers regarding this and their current focus was to increase the availability of current council housing as this was a quick win.

34. NET-ZERO BY 2023 GOALS

Councillor Lawrence thanked the Lead Member for the response and highlighted that many of the newly elected councillors were not involved in the draft updated Climate Change Strategy and Plan. He asked for members to receive a high-level briefing, outlining the key elements of the Climate Change Strategy and Plan?

Councillor Jones responded by agreeing that members should have sight of the Climate Change Strategy and Plan and said she would speak to officers regarding this.

35. WASTE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Needham did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

36. MINUTE REFERENCES

There were no minute references.

37. URGENT EXECUTIVE DECISIONS EXEMPTED FROM CALL-IN

A report of the Chief Executive to note decisions which were exempted from call-in in accordance with Scrutiny Committee Procedure 11.9, was submitted (item 12 on the agenda filed with these minutes).

38. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

Councillor Miah confirmed that with immediate effect Councillor Goode would be appointed to the Housing Management Advisory Board, replacing Councillor Hamilton, who was not able to sit on the Board as a Cabinet Member.

Councillor Bokor confirmed that with immediate effect Councillor Matthews would be appointed to the Licensing Committee, replacing Councillor Knight.

Note:

These minutes are subject to confirmation as a correct record at the next meeting of the Council which is scheduled for Monday 4th September 2023

Full Council Questions 19 June 2023

Councillor Snartt Questions

How the administration proposed to refuse any developments outside of the existing boundaries during the current council term?

Decisions on planning applications are made within a legal framework which stipulates that decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Every planning application has to be treated on its own merits. Making decisions on planning proposals involves making judgments, balancing the benefits of a proposal against adverse impacts, and, depending upon the planning balance, this can lead to refusal of planning permission.

How the Labour Group would deliver their Manifesto pledge regrading a preference for brownfield sites without compromising the five-year housing land supply?

The draft Local Plan allocates both brownfield and greenfield sites for housing development to demonstrate a five-year housing supply on adoption of the plan. It is not possible to meet the districts housing needs on brownfield sites alone and to therefore demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The Local Plan policies are supportive of future applications to make efficient use of brownfield sites and buildings.

If the council officers had capacity to deliver the Local Plan?

The Local Plan will be delivered within the existing capacity of the Council.

Councillor Baines quoted the Labour Manifesto and asked how the housing aims aligned with the Local Plan?

The draft Local Plan strategy is to intensify and extend existing urban areas to prevent new pockets of development emerging unplanned in the open countryside. There is a focus on limiting the need for greenfield development, preserving greenfield sites as much as possible, however evidence from a number of studies has shown that there are not enough sites on brownfield land to meet identified housing need. The plan will support future applications to make efficient use of brownfield land and buildings and allocates 21 brownfield sites out of 69 sites for housing development. As such the plan provides a range of development site sizes and locations. It also provides thousands of homes which are accessible to employment areas and other services and facilities.

This strategy protects the most environmentally sensitive areas and will protect nearly 279 square kilometres of open countryside, including natural open spaces between settlements and green wedges around the edge of Leicester. There are also policies in place in relation to flood risk and conserving and enhancing Biodiversity and Geodiversity to ensure that development is located in the areas of

lowest risk and ensure that biodiversity, ecological networks and geodiversity interests are protected, restored and enhanced.

To ensure that new housing developments meet the needs of the whole community, the plan seeks 30% Affordable Housing from all major housing developments with the exception of brownfield sites where 10% Affordable Housing will be sought to encourage regeneration. The plan has a clear focus on the need for a range of types and tenures of homes as well as extra care housing to support the ageing population.