
SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
20 MARCH 2019

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor Barnes-Andrews
The Sheriff, Councillor P Baillie
Councillors J Baillie, Bell, Mrs Blatchford, Bogle, Chaloner, Claisse,
Coombs, Fielker, Fitzhenry, Fuller, Furnell, Galton, Guthrie, Hammond,
Hannides, B Harris, L Harris, Harwood, Houghton, Jordan, Kataria, Kaur,
Keogh, Laurent, Leggett, McEwing, Mintoff, Mitchell, Murphy, Noon, Dr
Paffey, Parnell (mins 71 - 79), Payne, Rayment, Savage, Shields, Taggart,
T Thomas (mins 71 - 74), Vassiliou, Whitbread, White and Wilkinson

Apologies were received from Councillors D Thomas, Pope and Streets.

71. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 21st November 2018 and 20th February 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

72. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND LEADER

- (i) The Mayor paid tribute to the tragic terrorist shootings at two Mosques in New Zealand on 15th March 2019 which had left 50 people dead and dozens wounded. As a mark of respect Council stood for a minute's silence.
- (ii) The Mayor announced Francis Benali's forthcoming charity fundraising challenge which would see him hoping to complete seven Ironman-distance triathlons in seven days across the UK and reach his target of raising £1 million for Cancer Research UK. On behalf of the City the Mayor wished him well.
- (iii) The Mayor welcomed Cllr Renyard, new Member for Coxford following the bi-election.
- (iv) The Mayor along with other Members of Council paid tribute to those Members who were not standing for re-election, particularly Cllr's Parnell, Claisse, Wilkinson, Jordan and Don Thomas.

73. DEPUTATIONS, PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Council received and noted a deputation from Ms Vivienne Windle concerning Crime in the City's Parks.

74. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS

The report of the Leader of the Council was submitted setting out the details of the business undertaken by the Executive.

The Leader and the Cabinet made statements and responded to questions.

The following questions were submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.1.

1. Service Users, Carers and Financial Assessments

Does the Cabinet Member have confidence in the procedures for carrying out service user, carers and financial assessments?

Answer

In order to provide assurance on the procedures in place for carrying out assessments for people receiving social care and their carers, the council commissioned an independent desk top audit of 80 case files from the last three years. The council has recently received the report following this audit, which identified areas where practice needed to be improved.

I have had regular briefings from officers on these matters and have confidence in the actions the council is taking to address the issues identified. This includes the implementation of a new client case management system, which will improve record keeping, and providing additional training and supervision for social care practitioners.

Full ownership of the process for carrying out financial assessments returns to the council in July 2019, when the current outsourcing arrangement ends. The council will at this point be able to make improvements to address the issues that people have experienced.

2. Budget for Respite Services

Can the Cabinet Member outline the proposals for the use of £600K figure in the budget for respite services?

Answer

The £600K figure in the 2019/20 budget is earmarked for the provision of respite services at Kentish Road.

The nature of the services will depend on the outcome of the work that is currently underway with carers, people who are living with a learning disability, care providers and disability organisations to agree the vision for the future use of the site at Kentish Road.

The group has met six times since September 2018 and is keen to explore ways of complementing the current respite service with other services for people with learning disabilities, including housing (both supported living and training flats) and life skills services, to promote independence. The group is supportive of these options and an architect, commissioned by the council to provide sketches that illustrate different ways of configuring these services on the site, presented these to the group on 5 March 2019.

The council is committed to continue to provide overnight respite care at Kentish Road in the future and the budget will enable this.

3. Overspend at Care Homes

Can the Cabinet Member advise what measures have been made to reduce overspend at both our care homes and commit that these overspend will not continue into the next financial year?

Answer

Action has been taken to address overspend in both homes and to ensure that this will not continue into the next financial year. There is recognition that the budget set for managing the care homes did not fully account for the full staffing costs and this has been addressed in the budget allocated for the next financial year (2019/20).

There has been a renewed focus on staff wellbeing, with bespoke training planned for staff on manual handling and bereavement and loss, as muscular skeletal issues and bereavement have been identified as common reasons for absence.

The scheme managers have been working with HR to robustly apply the council's sickness absence policy and ensure that guidance is followed. Staff have been reminded of the impact of absence during staff meetings and supervision sessions.

Staff have volunteered to work across both care homes, which means they are now being called on before engaging agency staff.

The staff restructure proposed, subject to consultation and approval, is more resilient, as it includes sufficient staff to cover holiday periods, reducing the need for agency staff and additional management capacity to ensure effective supervision and support. This will also provide a career pathway, the lack of this in the care industry is often cited as a barrier to recruitment.

4. Compass School Funding

Will the Executive commit to re-assessing the funding of Compass School if the council's own assessment of the need for funding is shown to be incorrect?

Answer

The Council's education team has undertaken a careful analysis of the funding provided to Compass school and pupil numbers over time. As a result it has been established that within the usual variation, pupil numbers are currently around or below 100. Therefore the funding will be adjusted to reflect this, as per the budget consultation. If at any stage there is sustained evidence that pupil numbers are higher than our analysis has shown, then the Council will undertake further analysis to address the issue.

5. Green City Charter

In January you pledged to include all Council members, residents and businesses in creating the Green City Charter as “It’s bigger than just politicians” – when did your view on this change?

Answer

My view has not changed and since January following almost 10,000 responses to our air quality consultation we have continued to engage with residents through an online suggestion box situated on the homepage of the council website, a People’s Panel Poll, an engagement session with the Youth Forum, a stakeholder engagement day including representatives from business, academia and community/campaign groups and held an all member briefing on the Green City Charter. We have engaged with over 1,100 people.

6. Pollution Reduction in parts of the City

You have quoted pollution has reduced by 24% in parts of the City as a result of your 2016 Clean Air Strategy on what statistical evidence do you make this claim?

Answer

As stated in the Cabinet report, recent modelling has shown that at the worst point in the city (A3024 Northam Bridge) between 2015 to 2020 there is a 24% reduction shown in the locally modelled NO₂ annual mean.

7. NO_x Emissions

Given your bold and radical plan to reduce NO_x emissions to 25ug/m³ annual mean by 2025 will you rule out congestion charging or work place parking levies as tools you will be using over the next 6 years to achieve this?

Answer

There are currently no plans to look at these tools. The launch the Green City Charter marks the start of a process where with partners we will be developing strategies and action plans to deliver our ambitions.

8. Air Quality

Can the Cabinet Member outline the steps that the Council will take to see air quality fall below 25ug across the City by 2025 and how much revenue and capital funding will be needed on an annual basis to deliver this?

Answer

The Charter represents an opportunity to establish more ambitious improvements through alternative long-term, far-reaching projects which will be developed during Action Planning exercise. This will involve a full assessment of any costs associated with the delivery of the proposed actions that are not covered by

existing budgets, identification of appropriate funding streams (including new grant opportunities) and approvals made in line with financial regulations.

There are a number of existing projects and budgets across the Council that will support the Green City Charter and in particular ongoing improvements in air quality. These will need to be assessed and built into the Green City Action Plan, but are supported by £1.49m revenue and £8.289m capital funding.

9. LATCo

Can the leader advise council the full cost of the abandoned LATCO proposals?

Answer

In evaluating the options around a LATCO the council spent £388,927 on legal, financial, Human resources and commercialism support. In addition the project used £85,088 of existing budgeted internal staff support costs. This has been an investment in the business planning process which Departments are now using to support a greater drive towards commercialisation.

10. Road Repairs

Can the Cabinet Member advise why over 200 roads there were advertised to be repaired by the Council before the local elections in 2018 will now not be repaired?

Answer

The Council and its contracted partner Balfour Beatty are responsible for managing roads maintenance and investment priorities. Part of this process involves publishing, via the Council's website, indicative listings of road locations that are being considered for future works. These indicative listings, which cover more than one financial year of investment, are amended when changes to the roads investment programme are made. Only when an indicative roads delivery programme, typically covering the following 12 months, is confirmed for implementation by Balfour Beatty is there a high degree of certainty of completion for any individual road scheme. The website will be updated shortly with a new indicative listing of roads for the 2019/20 financial year. The website will include clear notes explaining that completion of all roads cannot be guaranteed.

Given the nature of the road network in Southampton, at any time there is likely to be a prospective roads listing running into the hundreds. A reduced listing is produced annually following DfT grant funding settlements and the Council's budget setting process, which identifies the priority roads which can be afforded. The 2018-19 indicative highway programme year had the benefit of being supplemented by a significant additional budget allocation, and these schemes are approaching completion. However, the indicative programme had to be started on the basis of outline designs and approximate budget estimates. As per normal practice, as the true condition of roads became more apparent as a result of removing surfacing and exposing ground conditions, a 'swap-out' of some road locations had to be made. In addition, some roads proved to be

unaffordable and were removed from the indicative 2018-19 programme year. Any that were removed will be considered for inclusion in the indicative programme for future years.

11. Opposition Budget Proposals

Can the Leader advise why he and his Group voted against our budget proposals to keep open our care homes, freeze council tax and invest in our city?

Answer

Verbal response provided at the meeting.

12. Car Parking Machines

Can the Cabinet Member advise the costs of retro fitting our car parking machines across the city to make them accessible to disabled users as a result of the recently introduced new charges?

Answer

Parking Services have estimated that the cost of re-siting Off Street Pay and Display machines that are currently on raised kerbs to accessible locations will be in the region of £6200.

Parking Services are currently discussing the proposal further with the representative from our disabled consultee group, Spectrum. This is to ensure that issues such as accessibility are taken into consideration before the change is formally proposed.

13. Garden Waste

Regarding the recycling of Garden Waste, why are a section of our elderly residents denied the five pound discount due to being unable to apply online?

Answer

No one is denied receiving a discount for their garden waste service if they apply online. This incentive has been in place for some years to reflect the efficiencies associated with online transactions. Anyone who does not have access to the internet can visit their local library where internet access and assistance to apply online will be provided.

14. New Council Homes

To date how many new Council homes have been delivered under Labour since 2012?

Answer

In 2016 - Erskine Court opened providing 54 units of housing with care.

In February 2019 - 6 new homes were completed in Townhill Park and are now occupied. 50 flats are due to be completed by the end of March 2019. There will be a total of 665 new homes delivered as part of the Townhill Park regeneration programme.

Potters Court and Kiln Court are currently under construction in Wimpson Lane, Millbrook this will provide 84 units of housing with care and 15 units of general needs accommodation. This is due for completion in the autumn of 2020.

The Council has also purchased 6 properties in 2018/19 and there are 3 that we are working towards completion by the end of March.

15. Council Properties

How many people have been “decanted” from Council properties since 2012 and how much revenue has been lost by the council in council tax and rental income?

Answer

There have been 147 tenancies that have been moved since 2012. The loss of income from this would be difficult to assess, as while tenants have moved, empty units have continued to be used for homeless families, which has saved the Council revenue in providing temporary accommodation.

16. Empty Council Houses

How many Council houses are currently “empty” in the City? Of this figure how many have been empty 0-90 days, how many 90 days to 1 year and how many over 1 year? How much is this costing in council tax and rental income?

Answer

**Empty Council Properties as at 10 March 2019
(all types of property)**

Number of days empty	Number of properties	Total rent loss for period
0 to 90 days	76	£32,001.49
90 days to 1 year	23	£48,602.08
1 year +	4	£35,476.49
Total	103	£116,080.06

This represents approximately 0.5% of the council housing stock. Approximately 100 council homes become vacant every month.

Of the four over a year, one is being used as a site office to support a tower block improvement programme; one has been re-categorised as a scooter store pending completion of fire safety works in a supported housing scheme; one has required extensive complex specialist maintenance and repair because of its

listed building status; and one has significant subsidence and the council is carrying out an options appraisal as the property is beyond economic repair.

The reasons for remaining vacant from 90 days to 1 year include pest control treatment, significant repair and maintenance issues (with many including asbestos removal) and fire safety improvements.

Council Tax payable on Empty Council Properties (where empty as at 10 March 2019 –Council tax only payable after a property has been empty for 30 days)

Number of days empty	Number of properties where Council Tax bill has been received	Total Council Tax paid where bill has been received
0-90 days	20	£3,244.25
90 days to 1 year	20	£10,420.14
1 year +	4	£8,773.60
Total	44	£22,437.99

In addition, there are 36 vacant properties at Townhill Park following recent decanting. These properties will not be re-let due to the Townhill Park regeneration project.

17. Council's Sickness Rate

Given the council's sickness rate has been raised at the Governance Committee recently, what action has been taken to address the issue and can the leader advise council of the full cost of the councils staff sickness rate?

Answer

Sickness absence is monitored and reported to managers monthly; details of specific cases are discussed by HR Advisors with managers to look at what interventions and work is required and in place to bring people back to work or exit them from the council if they are unable to attend as required. Workshops are held for managers (from Jan 2019 on) to remind all of process and need to manage attendance effectively and undertake correct return to work and any reasonable adjustments to enable return to work and prevent further absence. Task groups have been set up for areas of particularly high absence to drill deeper into reasons and look at what can be done to improve attendance; letters have gone out to staff to remind them of attendance requirements and impact of high levels of absence on service / customers / colleagues. The focus is back on managers to address in line with policy, **ALL** sickness.

Absence costs – average is around £280k a month –this does not include the impact on colleagues covering gaps, management time of addressing actual absence and return to work, Occupational health referrals etc. and any back fill for areas of front line provision.

75. MOTIONS

(a) Councillor Furnell moved and Councillor Shields seconded.

This Council notes with alarm the continuing increase in the rate of recorded crime across the country with a rise last year of 12.8%.

This Council is concerned that this disturbing pattern is mirrored in Southampton with the number of crimes recorded in the city last year totalling 31,859 - a 2.3% increase on the figure for 2016/17 (which represented a 9% increase on 2015/16) and representing 20% of all recorded crime across the Hampshire & Isle of Wight police force area.

Of particular concern are the sharp increases in the following categories:

- Serious Knife Crime (up by 28.9% on the previous year)
- Hate Crime (up by 24.7% on the previous year)
- Robbery (up by 23.9% on the previous year)
- Rape (up by 23.8% on the previous year)

This Council notes that between January 2010 and March 2018 the number of neighbourhood police serving the City declined by a third from 87 to 60 and presently the number stands at 47.

This Council, therefore, welcomes the commitment given by the Police & Crime Commissioner to increase the number of frontline police officers by 210 – as justification for an increase in the police precept element of the Council Tax – and fully expects Southampton to receive its fair share of this additional resource.

This Council calls upon the Police & Crime Commissioner to ensure deployment of a further 25 additional neighbourhood police officers over the coming year to boost the number in each of the City's eight neighbourhood teams and to create sufficient capacity to respond in a timely manner to local incidents without depleting existing local services.

UPON BEING PUT TO THE VOTE THE MOTION WAS DECLARED CARRIED.

RESOLVED: that the motion be approved.

76. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES OR THE MAYOR

It was noted that no requests for Questions from Members to the Chairs of Committees or the Mayor had been received.

77. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

It was noted that there were no appointments to Committees, Sub Committees or Other Bodies.

78. PAY POLICY 2019/2020

The report of the Chief Executive was submitted seeking approval of the Pay Policy 2019/20.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Pay Policy 2019/20 be approved;
- (ii) That the continued implementation of the Living Wage Foundation increase as the minimum hourly rate for NJC evaluated posts from 1st April 2019 be noted; and
- (iii) That the cost of living award was agreed for 2019 as part of the two year pay agreement for NJC evaluated roles and Chief Officer and Chief Executive pay be noted and that implementation of this be delegated to the Service Director HR and OD to be applied for 2019/20.

79. CONNECTED SOUTHAMPTON TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2040

The report of the Cabinet Member for Transport and Public Realm was submitted seeking approval of the Connected Southampton Transport Strategy 2040.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the public consultation feedback had been taken into account by Cabinet and had informed the final Connected Southampton Transport Strategy 2040 be noted;
- (ii) That the Connected Southampton Transport Strategy 2040 as the new Local Transport Plan for Southampton be approved; and
- (iii) That authority be delegated to the Service Director for Growth following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Realm to implement any variations.

80. DELIVERY OF THE LOCAL PLAN TO ACHIEVE EU NITROGEN DIOXIDE COMPLIANCE

The Report of the Cabinet Member for Green City was submitted seeking approval of the delivery of the Local Plan to achieve EU Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That subject to confirmation of an acceptable funding bid, to accept and authorise the spend of external funding anticipated to not exceed £6,423,625 awarded by the Joint Air Quality Unit for the implementation of the Local Plan to achieve EU Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance; and
- (ii) That authority be delegated to the Service Director for Transactions and Universal Services to accept and spend funding awarded to support the Local Plan to achieve EU Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance should this vary from the amounts requested from Government.