

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT THE
COUNCIL OFFICES, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON ON THURSDAY, 6 JULY 2017
COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs Samia Z Haq (Mayor)
Councillor David M Carter (Deputy Mayor)

COUNCILLORS

E R Barr
L A Bentley
G A Boulter
J W Boyce (Leader of the Council)
Mrs L M Broadley
F S Broadley
M H Charlesworth (Deputy Leader of the Council)
M L Darr
B Dave (Leader of the Opposition)
R F Eaton
Mrs L Eaton JP
R E Fahey
D A Gamble
Dr T K Khong
Mrs H E Loydall
K J Loydall JP
R E R Morris
R H Thakor

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs A E Court (Director of Services / Monitoring Officer)
M W L Hall (Chief Executive)
M Hone (Interim Chief Finance Officer / Section 151 Officer)
S Tucker (Electoral Services Manager) (Minutes)

41. CALLING TO ORDER OF THE MEETING

The meeting of the Council was called to order to receive His Worship The Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors G S Atwal, Miss A R Bond, Mrs K M Chalk, Miss M V Chamberlain, J Kaufman and Mrs S B Morris.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs H E Loydall declared a non-pecuniary interest regarding agenda item 4c as Chair of the Senior Citizens Forum.

44. BUDGET OPTIONS 2018/19 AND 2019/2020

The Council gave consideration to the reports and appendices as set out in the first and

second supplementary agenda updates (at pages 1 -29 and 1 - 6) as delivered and summarised by members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) which should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.

The report recommended that the Council review a range of budget options and provide advice and guidance to the SMT to enable production of a robust programme of projects and schemes to be brought forward as part of the budget plans for 2018/19 and achievement of the planned net reduction in spending set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

It was agreed that rather than considering the budget options report as a whole, Members would debate each option individually in the order they appeared within the report, and aim to reach an overall consensus with regard to the future budget direction the Council wished to take, as well as determining which areas required more evidence in order to inform future decisions.

A debate held in open session in relation to each budget option considered by the Council is summarised as follows:

44a. PART I - OPEN SESSION

a) Materials Recycling Facility (MRF)

Members acknowledged that in light of recent decisions by the County Council the operational reality was that this facility would now have to be closed down. It was suggested that in view of this closure, there may be scope to relocate some services to the Bushloe House site, as well as potential for increased waste partnership working with other Boroughs and Districts.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

An options appraisal be brought to Council for consideration as soon as possible, outlining the future possibilities for services currently undertaken at the depot site.

b) Wholly Owned Housing Company

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted by Members.

c) Reducing the Revenue Costs at Brocks Hill, Oadby

Members acknowledged that whilst Brocks Hill since its opening has been and continues to be a highly regarded and valuable community asset, there had been a gradual deterioration of the facilities over a prolonged period of time, and various initiatives to steady financial losses had achieved mixed results. There was a general consensus that the Council was no longer best placed to run the facility and new management was needed in order to secure its future. Of the options outlined within the report, there was a strong interest from Members to look in closer detail at the option of partnership working with Sports Leisure Management (SLM) Limited.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

A full report and presentation outlining SLM's proposal for running the Brocks

Hill centre be brought to the next Council meeting on Tuesday 5 September 2017, covering the key areas of car parking, access and financing arrangements.

d) Potential Closure of Public Toilets

A range of views were expressed regarding whether or not public toilets within Oadby and Wigston should remain open. Some Members commented that they are seldom used, poorly maintained and often subject to vandalism. Other Members disagreed and suggested that in their experience the facilities were situated in convenient locations and had a reasonable standard of cleanliness. It was suggested that rather than a blanket closure of all public toilets, each of the six sites identified in the report needed to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. There was scepticism from Members that the option of a grant scheme to support local businesses in offering their toilet facilities would not receive much take-up.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

That a further report be brought to Council identifying how public conveniences can be delivered and what alternative options exist for running the existing facilities.

e) Potential Introduction of a Charge for Collecting Green Waste

Members acknowledged that the collection of green waste is a discretionary service and therefore had no objection in principle to a charging scheme for providing the service, noting that Oadby and Wigston were one of the few authorities not to currently charge. There were a range of questions from Members regarding whether any charges introduced would be per bin or per household, as it was noted that some large properties in the Borough had more than one bin, whilst smaller properties tended to use bags for garden waste rather than bins. It was clarified that the cost analysis outlining potential revenues contained in the report was based on a charge per bin, but that this was simply one way of charging, and Members could structure the charges differently if they were minded to. There was a consensus that any charges would need to be carefully considered so as not to discourage take-up from residents.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

Consultants be commissioned to provide detailed advice on key matters including costs, take-up rates, different options for charging per household/per bin, and to consider any relevant highway/by-law impacts. Assurance was given that the public would be consulted fully once detailed proposals have been formulated.

f) Potential Changes to the Refuse and Recycling Collection Service

Members of the administration stressed that an undertaking had been given in their manifesto to preserve weekly refuse collections within the Borough and therefore they would not support any move towards the introduction of fortnightly refuse collections. It was suggested however that a move to fortnightly recycling collections would be considered, especially if co-mingling were to be introduced which would negate the need for a separate glass collection service.

Regarding the possibility of issuing households with wheeled bins in order to replace bag collections, Members stated that whilst this would be feasible (and in many cases

welcomed) by larger households with ample storage space for a wheeled bin, it would create difficulties for smaller properties and terraced properties. Concern was also expressed that wheeled bins when full can be difficult to manoeuvre, especially for elderly residents.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

A range of consultants be commissioned to produce a report as soon as possible, outlining the different options for changes to the refuse and recycling collection service. A timescale for the work of the consultants shall be agreed at the Policy, Finance and Development Committee on Tuesday 25 July 2017. Issues to be addressed by the consultants should include frequency of collections, what options exist to accommodate the needs of differing property sizes and locations, the flexibility of the Council's vehicle fleet, health and safety considerations, any relevant highway/by-law considerations and any relevant planning advice for future property development in the Borough. The consultants' findings should be presented to the Policy, Finance and Development Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 31 October 2017, with a public consultation commencing immediately thereafter and completing by April 2018.

g) Potential Charging for Car Parking

Members of the administration also stressed that an undertaking had been given in their manifesto to preserve free car parking for shoppers within the Borough and therefore they would not support charging shoppers for parking. There was however general agreement that a proportion of parking spaces were consistently occupied by non-paying town centre workers for more than three hours, so better enforcement needed to be applied. It was also suggested that enforcement was sporadic across the various car parks in the Borough, which was one possible cause of the falling revenues highlighted within the report.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

That a management plan be produced for all of Oadby and Wigston's car parks which creates a single system that can be properly and consistently maintained. The plan should be cost-neutral in terms of balancing the cost of enforcement versus the revenue generated from car parking. The plan should be presented to the Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 5 December 2017.

h) Potential to Move the Council's Administrative Offices from Bushloe House to a New Location

Whilst there was a general acceptance amongst Members that the Bushloe House offices were not fit for modern day working in their current state, there were differing views as to what future direction should be taken to address the issue. Some Members suggested that the existing building was originally designed for open-plan working and as such it could be converted back to an open-plan setup relatively simply, whilst there were a number of suggestions regarding making better use of the existing site and building, for example by relocating the Council's depot facilities and renting out office space to partner organisations. Other Members suggested that there needed to be a clearer vision of what services the Council would be looking to provide to customers in order to determine what an appropriate Council Offices might look like. The Chief Executive added that the needs of staff were an important consideration in this matter, and urged Members to use their community links to establish dialogue with partner organisations about potential co-

location.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

That the Council's Asset Management Board be asked to produce a report by the end of 2017 which assesses the viability of selling off the depot and relocating the facility to the Bushloe House site, and also outlines the longer-term options for use of the site.

i) Potential to Review the Council's Grounds Maintenance, Parks & Open Spaces Service and Statutory Street Cleansing Services

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted by Members.

44b. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED THAT:

The press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (Exempt Information) during consideration of the item(s) below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the respective paragraph(s) 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and, that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exempt item(s) outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

44c. PART II - CLOSED SESSION

A debate held in closed session in relation to each budget option considered by the Council is summarised as follows:

a) Discretionary Services

Members requested a more detailed breakdown of the costs involved in delivering the discretionary services and what outcomes were being achieved with the financial support from the Council.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

A report covering each of the discretionary services provided be brought to the Council meeting on Tuesday 5 December 2017.

b) Grants

Members stated that they could not make a judgement on the value for money achieved through the grants given to outside bodies based solely on the figures provided within the report and requested further information about what functions these bodies perform and how the grants are spent.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

A politically balanced five-member Working Group be established to look at the

system for awarding grants. Terms of reference for the Working Group shall be brought to the Council meeting on Tuesday 5 September 2017, with a report to be produced by the end of 2017.

c) Review the Vacant Position of Chief Executive

There was agreement from Members that they wished to see the Council retain the position of Chief Executive as paid Head of Service. It was suggested that Oadby and Wigston required a voice to represent the authority at a senior level, and past experience of sharing senior staff with another local authority had not proved to be successful. It was also agreed that now would be the opportune moment to review the structure of the Senior Management Team as a whole, rather than just the Chief Executive's position.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

A five member panel be established to review the Senior Management Team Structure, the role of the Chief Executive and the recruitment process for a successor. After the current Chief Executive vacates the position in September 2017, Mrs Anne E Court to serve as Interim Chief Executive for a period of time to be determined by the panel.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.45 PM



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Mayor
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Tuesday, 05 September 2017
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