

Council
1 JULY 2020

Present: Councillors: Karen Burgess (Chairman), David Skipp (Vice-Chairman), Matthew Allen, Andrew Baldwin, Tony Bevis, John Blackall, Toni Bradnum, Alan Britten, Chris Brown, Peter Burgess, Jonathan Chowen (Deputy Leader), Philip Circus, Paul Clarke, Roy Cornell, Christine Costin, Michael Croker, Leonard Crosbie, Ray Dawe (Leader), Brian Donnelly, Ruth Fletcher, Billy Greening, Frances Haigh, Tony Hogben, Nigel Jupp, Liz Kitchen, Lynn Lambert, Richard Landeryou, Gordon Lindsay, Tim Lloyd, John Milne, Colin Minto, Christian Mitchell, Mike Morgan, Godfrey Newman, Roger Noel, Bob Platt, Louise Potter, Josh Potts, Stuart Ritchie, Kate Rowbottom, Jack Saheid, Jim Sanson, Ian Stannard, Diana van der Klugt, Claire Vickers, Belinda Walters, Tricia Youtan and James Wright

CO/11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CO/12 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

CO/13 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Waste reported that fly tipping was becoming an issue. A camera in Billingshurst had picked up an act of fly tipping and following an appeal to the public, there had been several identical suggestions as to who the perpetrator was. Discussions were in hand with the Police as to how this could be progressed to an appropriate enforcement action.

The Cabinet Member for Local Economy and Parking announced that of the 140 applications for Discretionary Grants that had been made, 86 had been passed for payment and 23 were outstanding. As a number of business had missed the cut off date in June, the scheme would be reopened, and all those who would be appropriate for the grant would be contacted and encouraged to apply. He went on to say that Car parking charges were being reinstated on the 16th June, and the Council was budgeting a £2.4m revenue loss for the current year. There had been an increase in parking transactions over the previous two weeks, but this only equated to the average February pre-Covid period.

Work continued on the economic development front to persuade the public that it was safe to shop, and an EU grant of £128.320 was being used to instigate a district high street recovery programme.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture announced that the children's playgrounds in the district would open on the 4th July. There would not be an opportunity to sanitise them after use, and it was up to the public to be sensible as to how the playgrounds and outside gyms were used. It was intended that the Capitol Cinema would open on the 17th July with a blockbuster film. Live theatre would not be returning in the short term. There was no guidance from Government on the opening of leisure centres and swimming pools.

CO/14 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No questions relevant to the business of the meeting had been received.

CO/15 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON NOTICE**

Councillor Croker asked the Leader of the Council the following question: What changes have been made to the council's structure in response to the climate emergency recognised by this council 12 months ago?

The leader replied that Horsham District Council had always had a strong focus on the environment, and environmental issues, which were a key part of the Corporate Plan. The council now had a Project Officer dedicated to environmental issues, and two new posts were being appointed as part of a Wilder Horsham District initiative in partnership with the Sussex Wildlife Trust. A cross departmental officer group had been established with the purpose of producing a plan for the Council to become carbon neutral.

The Leader went on to outline what had been achieved since the motion had been discussed on the 26th June 2019 and highlighted the following areas:

- The completion of the carbon audit by the council and the Carbon Trust, leading to the appointment of advisors to provide a plan to allow the Council to become carbon neutral. A report would be presented to Cabinet in September.
- The launch of the Wilder Horsham District partnership, the first of its kind in Sussex.
- New environmental grants for community groups and Parish Councils.
- A new piece of work as part of the Local Plan to complete a carbon audit of the whole district, to be followed up by an action plan for the district to become carbon neutral.

In reply Councillor Croker stated that an overview of the council's progress had been provided at the last Environment and Recycling PDAG, but the larger challenge involved motivating and enabling the District's residents to minimise their own carbon footprints. There was currently an Environmental Coordination Manager in post, under the Director of Community Services.

These titles did not suggest the concerned response to the threat of climate change, but he was sure that both officers worked hard to address the issues. He asked that consideration be given to creating a post of Director for Climate Action, a more visible role which would highlight the issues, with a brief to introduce carbon mitigation filter for all of the council's actions.

The Leader responded by saying that the Council was undertaking a great deal of work in this area, and that the Council that had advertised such a post, at a salary of nearly £100k, had yet to fill the position. Adding that financial burden to the council at the present time would not be warranted.

Councillor Milne asked the Cabinet Member for Planning and Development the following question:

'Despite strenuous efforts by HDC, the government has refused point blank to lower our housing target to a level we can practically achieve. As a result, Horsham District is threatened by penalties whether we agree a target or not. Will the Cabinet therefore agree to hold a public debate on this issue, involving all relevant parties and local experts, to consider our full range of options in challenging the proposed target? '

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Development replied that the council had been, and will continue to do, all that it could to challenge the target and bring housing numbers down. Letters had been written to the Government and meetings undertaken with local MPs to set out the issues that were faced.

The government had made it clear that the council must continue with making a plan. If there were no plan in place, then there would be a risk from uncontrolled development across the district that did not provide the required infrastructure.

The second decision is where to accommodate the homes that were in that plan and the recent Regulation 18 draft Local Plan consultation had produced high public input. There had been more involvement than ever before and the information gained from that consultation would feed into the council's decision making process. This was ultimately a councillor decision. More public debate would not change the position or make decisions easier.

Cllr Milne replied and said that one way to change the target was through the exceptional circumstances generated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The changes to the local economy that had resulted were surely enough to challenge the government's targets.

The Cabinet Member agreed with the question, and went on to say that legal advice was being sought on the matter. So far the Council had been informed that Covid-19 did not change the housing requirement.

CO/16 **REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES**

There were no reports from Representatives.

CO/17 **CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION – FINANCE AND CONTRACT
PROCEDURE RULES**

Councillor Andrew Baldwin presented the report and said that it sets out a number of proposed variations to the Constitution. The reason for the proposed changes were that a number of ambiguities had arisen and exist within the Finance and Contract Procedure Rules as a consequence of the introduction of the new streamlined Constitution and subsequent changes in the law that had occurred. The report fully explained the context of this with reference to the New Constitution and recommended changes to address the ambiguities.

RESOLVED

That the proposed amendments to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1, as approved at Governance Committee, be considered.

CO/18 **NOTICE OF MOTION**

Councillor Croker was invited to set out his Motion before the Council.

In response to the ongoing climate emergency recognised by this council in June 2019, Horsham District Homes Limited (HDH) is instructed to only construct new dwellings that meet the Passivhaus standard (as well as current building regulations).

Councillor Croker went on to say that HDH Ltd was owned by the council, and was 'committed to delivering affordable rented homes to households on the Council's housing register.' The Passivhaus standard was a fabric first method of designing and building dwellings that provided a high level of occupant comfort whilst using very little energy for heating and cooling and a low running cost.

Whilst the initial construction cost was higher, this was typically 8% in 2018 and falling. Building Passivhaus standard buildings would enable the Council to recognise that all new dwellings should be built to the standard. The Government had set a target of carbon neutrality by 2050, but had yet to come up with a credible pathway on how to get there. It should also be remembered that the world population had only 10 years of carbon budget left, at the current expenditure rate, before it was globally locked into a minimum of 1.5 degrees temperature rise.

He believed that HDH should build to Passivhaus standards because it would:

- provide affordable, comfortable, future proofed homes for those that can least afford the alternatives
- reduce future obligation to upgrade council controlled housing stock to meet central government targets
- encourage commercial developers to follow suit, driven by the increasing recognition by house purchasers that there is a better way.

Councillor Youtan, Cabinet Member for Community Matters and Wellbeing replied that this was an important issues. The Passivhaus standard was arguably the most rigorous in the world for energy efficient buildings and to achieve the standard it would be normal to use specialist contractors and builders. As the cost premium was around 15%, there were only around one thousand units in the UK at the moment. The aim of the HDH affordable home company was to increase the number of affordable homes in the district. It was necessary to strike a balance between delivering as many homes as possible whilst ensuring the homes were as energy efficient as possible. This was demonstrated by raising the EPC rating from B to A on all homes directly developed by the company.

Councillor Fletcher spoke and made the following points:

- That the Council needed to lead by example when dealing with the climate emergency
- The energy efficiency of homes was one of the most critical issues, and whilst there was a capital price differential between Passivhaus standards and normal house building energy ratings, the differential was dropping all the time.
- The purpose of affordable housing was to be genuinely affordable, and running costs were critical to this.
- Standings Court was a highly successful Passivhaus development in Horsham.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Waste made the following points:

That he felt it was very important to improve the Council's environmental standards, which had been successful in a number of areas, and supported the statement made by the Cabinet Member for Community and Wellbeing.

Following a further discussion, the Notice of Motion was defeated.

CO/19 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm having commenced at 6.00 pm

CHAIRMAN