

Council
19 OCTOBER 2022

Present: Councillors: Ian Stannard (Vice-Chairman), Tony Bevis, John Blackall, Martin Boffey, Toni Bradnum, Chris Brown, Karen Burgess, Peter Burgess, Jonathan Chowen (Leader), Paul Clarke, Michael Croker, Ray Dawe, Ruth Fletcher, Joan Grech, Billy Greening, Tony Hogben (Deputy Leader), Nigel Jupp, Lynn Lambert, Richard Landeryou, Tim Lloyd, John Milne, Colin Minto, Christian Mitchell, Mike Morgan, Roger Noel, Jon Olson, Bob Platt, Josh Potts, Sam Raby, Jack Saheid, David Skipp, Clive Trott, Claire Vickers, Belinda Walters, Tricia Youtan and James Wright

Apologies: Councillors: Kate Rowbottom, Matthew Allen, Andrew Baldwin, Alan Britten, Philip Circus, Christine Costin, Brian Donnelly, Liz Kitchen, Gordon Lindsay, Louise Potter, Stuart Ritchie and Diana van der Klugt

CO/34 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 7 September were approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice Chairman.

CO/35 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Item 13(a) Cost of Living Support: Councillor Tony Bevis declared a personal interest because he is a volunteer at the Citizens Advice.

CO/36 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Ian Stannard, Vice Chairman of the Council, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to Chanctonbury Community Leisure Centre, and thanked the centre's staff for hosting this meeting.

The Vice Chairman paid tribute to Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II, who had visited Horsham twice during her reign, in 1978 and 2003, and led the Council in a minute's silence in honour of her memory.

He then paid tribute to Geoff Lawes, a past-Councillor who had recently passed away at the age of 92. He had first been elected Ward Member for Billingshurst in 1995 and served the community until standing down in 2007. After tributes were paid, Councillor Stannard led a minute's silence in honour of his memory.

Councillor Lynn Lambert, Cabinet Member for Planning & Development, congratulated the Head of Development & Building Control and the Building Control Team for doing so well at the LABC Building Excellence Awards 2022 regional finals. They won Best Partnership, with a local Storrington-based

business, Best Residential & Small Commercial Designer for a scheme in Henfield and Public Service Superstar. They go forward to the national awards in January. The Cabinet Member also announced that the Planning Applications Team had been ranked 37th out of 330 Local Planning Authorities across the country. She thanked the teams for their hard work and commitment in providing high quality services.

Councillor James Wright, Cabinet Member for Environment & Rural Affairs, announced that the Council's carbon emissions had reduced by 46% from the base-line set in 2019. This was largely due to the adoption of HVO fuel for the Council's fleet and also a number of measures taken internally. The ambition was to reduce by a further 25% in the next three years. The Cabinet Member stated these figures were a testament to the work of the Environment Team.

Councillor Toni Bradnum, Cabinet Member for Recycling & Waste, made four announcements:

- The current recycling rate for the district was 53%, which put HDC 50th out of 338 local authorities. However, there was still many recyclable items going into general waste bins, and more needed to be done to raise awareness.
- The Cabinet Member had discussed the rate of fines for littering with her Policy Development Advisory Group and a proposal to increase fines would be brought to Council in due course.
- The purchase of two new electric street sweepers had been approved and should be operating in the town centre early next year.
- The purchase of four electric vans for Zonal Managers to use had been approved. Zonal Managers currently use their own vehicles and the new vehicles will reduce mileage claims by £10,000 a year and reduce carbon emissions.

Councillor Roger Noel, Cabinet Member for Leisure & Culture, made two announcements:

- The Council were working with Horsham and Crawley Samaritans and the Friends of Horsham Park on a project called Bulbs for Lives. Volunteers were sought to plant 6,221 crocuses and 6,221 narcissi over the weekend of 23/24 October. The flowers were to help remember the 6,221 people who took their own lives in the UK in 2021.
- On Friday 22 October at 5.30pm Horsham Museum was launching a re-display of their Medieval gallery. A key artefact on display will be the Shipley reliquary, on loan from Shipley Parochial Church Council. It was one of the most historically important exhibits in the museum and should attract international interest.

CO/37 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

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

CO/38 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET**

**UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION IN 2022/23 AND
MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE 2023/24 TO 2026/27**

Councillor Tony Hogben, Cabinet Member for Finance & Parking, introduced the report on the Council's financial position and how the Medium-Term Financial Planning scenarios and assumptions had changed since the budget was set in February 2022. The level of uncertainty had increased due to a number of factors including inflation, interest rates, world events, the payment settlement, uncertainty on government funding, and how food waste collections would be funded.

Action would be required to prevent a deficit of approximately £1m per year in future years. The Cabinet Member stated that it was not practicable to reduce staffing numbers further and there would therefore be an emphasis on increasing income and revenue. Measures would include: an increase in council tax of £5 per band D equivalent household next Financial Year; a modest increase in the charge for garden waste collection; and an increase in fees and charges of approximately 6%.

Council was asked to note the update. Council was also asked to approve the updated list of rates of hire for community venues, which now included Blackbridge Community Centre following its refurbishment. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Toni Bradnum.

Councillor Martin Boffey, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance, requested that the fees and charges for the hire of community spaces in the district listed in paragraph 3.22 of the Cabinet report be reviewed. The Cabinet Member assured Councillor Boffey that the matter was in hand and if he had concerns about long-term hire to refer the matter to the Head of Property & Facilities who had some flexibility and discretion on this matter under delegated authority.

RESOLVED

- (i) To note the Council's financial position in 2022/23 and the medium term.
- (ii) To approve the updated list of fees and charges in paragraph 3.22 of the Cabinet report.

REASON

- (i) The Council needs to acknowledge the effects that high levels of inflation will have on its financial position both in the short and

medium-term. This has moved the council from what has been a long-term healthy financial position to one with predicted deficits unless action is taken on fees and charges. Given the level of uncertainty in the projections, the economy and proposed Government action, the report does not recommend direct action to reduce expenditure at this stage.

- (ii) To ensure these fees and charges are approved by full Council as per the Constitution.

HOUSING REGISTER AND NOMINATIONS POLICY REVISIONS

Councillor Tricia Youtan, Cabinet Member for Housing & Public Protection, reminded Members of the five overall objectives of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, which was adopted by Council in October 2021. The objectives had been identified to assist in tackling the challenges surrounding housing and homelessness in the district.

Following a review with staff and stakeholders, a number of changes relating to Objective 4 ('to provide and maintain an accessible and fair Housing Register') had been proposed. The Cabinet Member thanked members of her Policy Development Advisory Group for their input and support. There had also been public consultation on the revised policy. The proposal was seconded by Councillor John Blackall.

RESOLVED

That the revised Housing Register and Nominations Policy is adopted.

REASON

To ensure the Council fulfils its statutory responsibility of having a current Housing Register and Nominations Policy.

USE OF 'A' BOARDS AND OTHER ADVERTISING STRUCTURES ON THE HIGHWAY - POLICY, GUIDELINES AND ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURE (THE 'A' BOARDS POLICY)

Councillor Christian Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Horsham Town, stated that the proposed policy and guidelines had been produced in response to growing concerns regarding the impact of 'A' Boards and other structures on the public highway, in particular concerns regarding access, movement and visual impact. The proposal took account of best practice and consultation responses, as set out in the Cabinet report. The Cabinet Member thanked members of his Policy Development Advisory Group for their feedback. It was noted that the policy would benefit towns and villages across the district as well as Horsham Town. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Roger Noel.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that traders would be made fully aware of the policy to encourage compliancy, and the enforcement procedure would be used as a last resort. He also advised that additional staff would not be required and there would be a negligible cost to the Council.

RESOLVED

To approve the 'A' Boards and other Advertising Structures on the Highway - Policy, Guidelines and Enforcement Procedure.

REASON

- (i) To set out the policy and procedure for dealing with items placed upon the highway, (which includes the highway verge, footpaths, paved areas and pavements) and/or attached to highway property.
- (ii) To ensure public safety and the free passage for pedestrians along footpaths and the highway.

FACILITATING APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT AND BIODIVERSITY AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Councillor Lynne Lambert advised that the two advice documents would provide guidance to those involved in submitting and determining planning applications prior to the adoption of the new Local Plan.

If endorsed both documents would be published and used in the consideration of planning applications. Both the Facilitating Appropriate Development (FAD) and the Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note (PAN) were non-statutory planning documents rather than policy, but they would help to improve the quality of development coming forward before the Local Plan is in place and help with advice regarding water neutrality. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Tim Lloyd.

Councillor Mike Croker, Leader of the Green Group, welcomed the reference to sustainable and active modes of transport, in particular the government's Cycle infrastructure design guidance (LTN1/20). Councillor Jonathan Chowen, Leader of the Council, recognised the importance of sustainable travel and stated that he would be discussing the possibility of a sustainable transport network for Horsham with the leader of the County Council shortly, with particular reference to the LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan).

RESOLVED

- (i) To formally endorse the Facilitating Appropriate Development (FAD) and agree to the publication of the document for use as a non-statutory Planning Guidance document.

- (ii) To formally endorse the Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Planning Advice Note (PAN) and agree to the publication of the document for use as a non-statutory Planning Guidance document.
- (iii) To grant the Cabinet Member for Planning and Development delegated authority to agree any necessary minor editorial changes to the documents referenced in (i) and (ii) above.

REASON

To provide clear and consistent planning guidance to aid applicants, stakeholders and those involved in determining planning applications in advance of the adoption of the new Local Plan.

CO/39 **APPOINTMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES & CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

Councillor Chowen introduced the report and recommended that Council appoint Dominic Bradley to the post of the Director of Resources and to the statutory position of Chief Finance Officer. Dominic had successfully held the positions on an interim basis for the last six months. Councillor Martin Boffey, Leader of the Opposition, seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED

- (i) To note the Employment Committee nomination of Dominic Bradley as the Director of Resources and s.151 Officer;
- (ii) To agree the appointment of Dominic Bradley to the position of Director of Resources with effect from 20 October 2022, at a starting salary of £94,270 p.a. up to £101,269 (subject to national cost of living awards);
- (iii) To agree the designation of Dominic Bradley as Chief Finance Officer, s.151 Officer, of Horsham District Council with effect from 20 October 2022.

REASON

- (i) To comply with the legal requirements set out above, to appoint a person responsible for the Council's financial affairs ("s.151 Officer").
- (ii) To appoint to the vacant Director of Resources position.

CO/40 **REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES**

There were none to report.

CO/41 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

- (a) Councillor Mike Croker asked the following question:

“I note that the Environment Agency considers that neither the Adur, nor the Arun, river catchments merit a 'good' Ecological Status, with some tributaries, such as Boldings Brook and Lockbridge, being rated as 'poor'. Does the Cabinet Member consider that Horsham District Council, as Local Planning Authority, should be more pro-active in requiring water treatment companies to explain just how they intend to cater for the increased sewage and wastewater arising from any significant new housing developments, rather than just relying on a simple 'we can provide foul sewage disposal to service the proposed development' statement? The latter clearly is lacking 'without adding to existing river pollution.’”

Councillor Lynn Lambert, Cabinet Member for Planning & Development, replied:

“I agree it is extremely disappointing that the ecological status of the rivers in our district have been rated so low. However, in my opinion this is not through a lack of action on the Council’s part. As part of the work undertaken for the Local Plan Review, we asked both Southern Water and Thames Water about the likely impacts of development on their plans on water quality, and what if any mitigation is needed to ensure that water quality is not adversely affected. Any advice we receive is reflected in the Council’s Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This is a ‘live’ document and is updated accordingly. This work also draws on wider evidence available regarding water quality, and in particular that provided by the Environment Agency.

In addition, officers have also been pro-actively involved in the development of Southern Water’s Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan. In our response to their September consultation we questioned whether their pollution reduction targets were sufficiently challenging and whether they go far enough and fast enough in delivering environmental benefits. We have requested that they, Southern Water, give more consideration to setting and delivering more ambitious targets and do so more quickly.

Ultimately however, Horsham District Council does not have any statutory power in regulating discharges of wastewater treatment into rivers. This is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. They set the discharge limits and they are the regulatory body. As part of the Council’s work on Water Neutrality, officers have challenged the Environment Agency together with OFWAT as to whether their regulatory regime is sufficiently effective and we are challenging them to do better in the future.”

Councillor Mike Croker stated that his initial question had been promoted by the work of the River Trust that made data relating to untreated water discharges easily accessible to the public. This data included nearly 2,200 hours of untreated water discharge along the Adur from the six outlets between Bramber

and Partridge Green in 2021. He expressed his disappointment at this, given the work being done by the Wilder Horsham Programme and the recently announced Adur River Restoration Project. He asked the supplementary question:

“Given the data before us it would seem prudent to reduce discharges, at least at the managed discharge locations, so would the Cabinet Member consider bringing this matter to a future PDAG for further discussions?”

Councillor Lynn Lambert replied that this was an excellent idea.

(b) Councillor Martin Boffey asked the following question:

“At the October 2021 Council Meeting, Council passed a motion from Councillor Louise Potter supporting the inclusion of a minimum quota of Social Rented housing in the forthcoming Local Plan.

A subsequent report to PDAG [Policy Development Advisory Group] in March of this year noted the commissioning of a study to consider evidence to require Social Rented Homes, with the study to be completed in late spring or early summer, with a report on the study findings and officer recommendations to PDAG in early-mid Summer.

As we now find ourselves in mid-Autumn, a year on from the motion being passed at Council and with the next draft of the Local Plan reportedly imminent, please could the Cabinet Member provide an update as to the progress of the Social Rented Homes study, and reaffirm the commitment to a target level of 35% of Affordable Housing being for Social Rent in the Local Plan?”

Councillor Lynn Lambert, Cabinet Member for Planning & Development, replied:

“The work to understand the impact of delivering higher levels of social rented housing and its viability in financial terms was commissioned by officers in the Strategic Planning team. The study was undertaken during spring and summer this year.

It was agreed that these outcomes would be reported to the Planning & Development and Housing & Public Protection Policy Development Advisory Groups. It was on the agenda for 12 September as a joint discussion for members of both PDAGs. As you know, sadly these meetings were cancelled as they fell during the period of mourning following the death of the Queen Elizabeth II. I have asked that this matter be included in the next PDAG scheduled for 7 November, and members of both PDAGs will be invited to attend and other Members will be welcome to attend on request. This will ensure a full discussion and feedback in terms of outcomes and findings.

Please be assured there has been absolutely no loss of commitment in pursuing this work.”

Councillor Martin Boffey asked a supplementary question:

“A commitment was given to a target level of 35% of Affordable Housing being for Social Rent in the Local Plan and I wanted confirmation that that still was the commitment?”

Councillor Lynn Lambert replied:

“What we would like to aim for is more than that. With the Local Plan we’ll be developing fewer homes and we would like more of those homes to be affordable. What we will be doing at PDAG is discussing the outcome of the findings that officers were commissioned to do, [look at] how we can pursue this, where we can pursue it and the financial viability of doing it.”

Councillor Martin Boffey stated that this is one of the most unaffordable districts on the country to live in, particularly with the current cost of living difficulties, and that HDC’s direct experience was that lower rents meant better outcomes for those in need. He believed that promoters were known in some cases to support an element of Social Rented provision and looked forward to seeing this come forward within the Local Plan.

(c) Councillor Jon Olson asked the following question:

“On the 28th of August, Bennett’s Field in Forest Ward Horsham, experienced another incursion by members of the Traveller community.

Recently, the Friends of Bennett’s Field community group held a meeting to discuss the issue. The worry and distress to residents was noted, as well as the impact on local businesses such as requiring extra security or temporary closures.

On behalf of Forest Ward residents I ask when do you expect to replace and enhance the permanent security measures at Bennett’s Field, so as to prevent future unauthorised access to this popular local green space?”

Councillor Roger Noel, Cabinet Member for Leisure & Culture, replied:

“I fully understand the impact that Traveller incursions can have on a local community and totally sympathise with residents that live near Bennett’s Field as well as any others who were impacted by the recent incursion referred to in your question.”

He stated that incursions of this type were less likely in the winter months, when there were less Traveller movements, so there was time to get robust protection for Bennett’s Field in the coming weeks. He outlined the measures that the Parks & Countryside Team were putting in place: the installation of an earth bund along the boundary of the car park that lies along the end of the treeline

and the locked gate (to be created within the next eight weeks, subject to contractor availability); and the installation of bollards or boulders by the park entrance in Brighton Road (to be installed over winter). He also confirmed that there were sufficient funds in the current Parks & Countryside budget to complete this work. He concluded by saying:

“I inspected the site myself yesterday and am very happy that this will present a really effective deterrent. I’ve also spoken to officers today and I know that they will be very happy to discuss these plans in more detail with you if you feel that would be more helpful.”

Councillor Jon Olson said that he appreciated the short timescales for the work, and asked that he and his fellow Ward Members be kept informed on progress. He asked a supplementary question:

“Before the work begins, I would like to ask that officers consult with Friends of Bennett’s Field Group because... they had come up with some alternative and potentially preferred solutions to the bund.”

Councillor Roger Noel replied:

“If you could keep me informed as to when the next meeting [of Friends of Bennett’s Field Group] is I’d be happy to attend personally together with the relevant officers, and I’ll do what I can to help you.”

CO/42 **URGENT BUSINESS**

The following item was submitted under the Special Urgency rules set out in 4g. 22 of the Constitution.

CO/43 **COST OF LIVING SUPPORT**

Councillor Chowen, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which proposed a number of measures to help support those affected by the cost of living crisis. The proposals had been developed following discussions with Age UK, Citizens Advice and Horsham Matters. The £250,000 cost would be funded from the community fund reserve, spread over a two-year period.

The Leader stated that this was made possible by the Council’s prudent approach in recent years, and would be in addition to the £300,000 already committed by the Council to invest in schemes and organisations that support residents struggling with cost of living issues. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Tricia Youtan, Cabinet Member for Housing & Public Protection.

After debate, the Council unanimously agreed to the proposal and it was

RESOLVED

- (i) To enter a partnership agreement with Citizens Advice to provide two new advisors to support residents through the cost of living crisis, costing approximately £160,000 over a two year fixed period.
- (ii) To fund the Low Income Family Tracker for a two year period costing approximately £40,000 in total.
- (iii) To provide an additional £25,000 one-off funding to Horsham Matters to support the Foodbank provision in 2022/23.
- (iv) To agree to a new corporate project to create an accessible directory of services.
- (v) To create a flexible fund of £25,000 to support in year interventions identified through partnership work with community groups and voluntary sector organisations. Use of this fund will be subject to approval by Director of Communities in consultation with Cabinet Member for Finance & Parking and the Cabinet Member for Community Matters.

REASON

It is considered that these proposals will have a significant and valuable impact on Horsham District residents who are being affected by the increases in the cost of living. Making the decision at this meeting will allow support to start to be provided immediately. Full Council must approve budgetary changes.

The meeting closed at 7.56 pm having commenced at 6.00 pm

CHAIRMAN