

Council

Thursday, 01 December 2022

Attendees:

Councillor Tracy Arnold, Councillor Lewis Barber, Councillor Lyn Barton, Councillor Kevin Bentley, Councillor Molly Bloomfield, Councillor Michelle Burrows, Councillor Nigel Chapman, Councillor Helen Chuah, Councillor Mark Cory, Councillor Pam Cox, Councillor Robert Davidson, Councillor Andrew Ellis, Councillor Adam Fox, Councillor Martin Goss, Councillor Dave Harris, Councillor Mike Hogg, Councillor John Jowers, Councillor David King, Councillor Richard Kirkby-Taylor, Councillor Jocelyn Law, Councillor Darius Laws, Councillor Michael Lilley, Councillor Sue Lissimore, Councillor Jackie Maclean, Councillor Roger Mannion, Councillor Sam McCarthy, Councillor Sam McLean, Councillor Patricia Moore, Councillor Steph Nissen, Councillor Chris Pearson, Councillor Kayleigh Rippingale, Councillor Lee Scordis, Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell, Councillor Paul Smith, Councillor Rhys Smithson, Councillor Michael Spindler, Councillor William Sunnucks, Councillor Leigh Tate, Councillor Martyn Warnes, Councillor Dennis Willetts, Councillor Barbara Wood, Councillor Tim Young

567 Prayers

The meeting was opened with prayers from the Reverend Sue Howlett.

568 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Buston, Coleman, Goacher, Hagon, Luxford Vaughan, Naylor and J. Young.

569 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Council)

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2022 and the Special Council meetings of 23 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

570 Have Your Say! (Council)

Steve Kelly addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1) and reminded Council that it was World Aids Day. Cancer was another immune deficiency disease and death rates from cancer had increased significantly over the past century. This was due to several factors including poor nutrition in the face of increasing pollution. A lack of vitamin B could also be a contributory factor and studies had shown that certain cancers could be reduced by half through improved vitamin B. It was vital that resources were directed to address this. Councillors should research these issues with an open mind as much of this information was not easily available and was not publicised.

Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, responded and explained that he had provided a full response when these issues had been raised at Cabinet recently. Vitamin B was a cheap and effective way of combatting the effects of a loss of light. The prime responsibility for addressing this lay with health professionals and the Council could support them in this. Individuals also had personal responsibility, given that vitamin B was cheap and easily available. The Council had not refused a request to fund such treatment.

David Linghorn Baker addressed Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(1). Highwoods residents had been pleased to hear of the plans for the new Community Centre and the previous administration had secured £1.8 million of funding for it. However, matters did not appear to be progressing and there was concern given that capital programmes across the borough appeared to be under threat. Would the Portfolio Holder commit to ensuring that St Marks Community Centre was built and could they confirm whether other community centres, particularly those in Mile End, were under threat from the review of the capital programme.

Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, explained that there was a renewed focus on the capital programme now, given its significant value, and it had been discussed at both Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet recently. The LGA Peer Review had also recommended that the capital programme be reviewed. The programme was therefore halted while the review took place. This had been agreed cross party. The situation had been made worse by issues such as the sharp rise in inflation and the government's mini budget. All projects above a certain value had been halted and this included St Marks Community Centre. He had spoken to several Highwoods residents and the Chair of Myland Community Council about this. Once the review was complete, an announcement would be made about which projects would be taken forward. This was a prudent approach which was supported cross party. Some of the other projects referred to were less dependent on capital funding as they were supported by section 106 funding.

571 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor thanked Councillor Barton for arranging the donations to the foodbank. He highlighted that it was World Aids Day and noted the commemoration events at the Mercury Theatre. The Mayor also highlighted the following forthcoming events;-

- A reading of "A Christmas Carol" by Anthony Roberts in the Civic Suite on 13 December 2022.
- The Civic Carol Service at St Andrew's Church at 7.00pm on 18 December 2022 .
- A Sketch Show in aid of the Mayor's Charities at the Headgate Theatre on 13-14 January 2023.

572 Officer Pay Policy Statement 2023-24

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS) that the recommendation contained in draft minute 706 of the Cabinet meeting of 16 November 2022 be approved and adopted.

573 Nomination for Deputy Mayor 2023-24

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS) that the recommendation contained in draft minute 708 be approved and adopted and accordingly Councillor Scott-Boutell be nominated for election as Deputy Mayor of the City of Colchester for the 2023-24 municipal year.

574 Review of the Council's Ethical Governance Policies

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS) that the recommendation contained in draft minute 337 of the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 22 November 2022 be approved and adopted.

575 Review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUS) that the recommendation contained in draft minute 340 of the Governance and Audit Committee meeting of 22 November 2022 be approved and adopted.

576 Waste and Recycling Services in Highwoods

It was PROPOSED by Councillor Law that Council Procedure Rule 11(2) be suspended to allow the motion on Waste and Recycling Services to be debated and determined at this meeting. On being put to the vote the motion was lost (FOURTEEN voted FOR, SIXTEEN voted AGAINST and ELEVEN ABSTAINED from voting).

A named vote having been requested pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 15(2) the voting was as follows:-

FOR: Councillors Barton, Bloomfield, Burrows, Cox, Fox, Harris, Hogg, Law, Lilley, McLean, Pearson, Ripplingale, Scordis and Warnes.

AGAINST: Councillors Barber, Bentley, Chapman, Davidson, Ellis, Laws, Lissimore, Maclean, Mannion, McCarthy, Moore, Smithson, Spindler, Sunnucks, Tate and Wood.

ABSTAINED FROM VOTING: Arnold, Chuah, Cory, Goss, King, Kirkby Taylor, Nissen, Scott-Boutell, Smith, the Deputy Mayor (Jowers) and the Mayor (T. Young).

It was PROPOSED by Councillor Law that:-

This Council notes:

Highwoods residents have not been formally consulted by the Council on how their waste and recycling is collected since 2016.

Residents have been frustrated by previous local surveys that have not provided an online option to respond.

Highwoods residents deserve to have clean and tidy streets.

Simpler and uniform collection services deliver better value for residents and local council taxpayers, improve recycling rates and reduce waste sent to landfill

This Council resolves:

To give Highwoods residents the option to make their views known on how their waste and recycling collections are delivered in the future.

As the motion related to an executive function it stood referred direct to Cabinet in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11(2).

577 Electoral System

It was PROPOSED by Councillor King, also on behalf of Councillor Fox and Councillor Laws, that: -

This Council notes the Local Government Peer Review recommendation to consider changing our Council electoral system which could create savings in years when there is neither a General, County or PFCC election.

It is essential that this Council has a strategic, long-term approach to policy and decision-making. This can be provided under any electoral cycle, but only if the budget and strategic plans of the budget are robust, sustainable, and supported cross-party.

This Council resolves to explore the alternative electoral arrangements, whether as now or 'All Up', or a variation. The Council will set up a cross party working group to explore all options with the aim to present findings to Full Council in February. Council can then review findings collectively and discuss next steps forward. The Council further commits to securing widespread and cross-party support for the budgets and plans of this Council, as an assurance for residents, officers and our partners.

On being put to the vote, the motion was approved.

578 Questions to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 10

Questioner	Subject	Response
Pre-notified questions		
Councillor Smithson	Could the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste please advise Council:- What contingency plans have been put into place to ensure waste collections are maintained should waste operatives be laid	Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste explained that the service would always try to deliver a full service. Staff communications included reminders on the need to ensure personal hygiene and a clean office environment. A

	<p>low by Covid and/or seasonal colds/flu?</p> <p>What contingency plans have been put in place to ensure the continuation of waste collection should waste operatives take industrial action resulting in withdrawal of their labour?</p> <p>What is the estimated cost of these plans should they need to be invoked?</p> <p>If the contingency plans could be met from the existing budget, did that mean there was surplus in the existing budget?</p>	<p>contingency plan was in place which included detailed reviews of the service daily, or hourly if necessary, taking account of staffing and weather. Decisions to pause services would be a last resort and would be for as short a time as possible. Any revised services would take account of the waste hierarchy. Pre-prepared public communications were in place and Councillors would be kept informed.</p> <p>In terms of industrial action, priority would be given to black bag waste and food waste. Detailed reviews would be undertaken considering staffing levels. Any decision to pause services would be for the shortest time and would take account of the waste hierarchy. Again, pre-prepared public communications were in place and Councillors would be kept informed. Agency staff could be employed if necessary.</p> <p>The service would be delivered within the existing forecasted budget. As with all Council budgets there was pressure on the budget and it was being managed accordingly.</p>
Councillor Sunnucks	Does the administration appreciate the importance of the scoping consultation for the East Anglia Green Environment Statement which has to be	Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, welcomed the question and stressed that the importance and significance of the issue was

	<p>submitted by 5th December? This is about the proposed line of giant pylons from Norwich to Tilbury, cutting across the East Anglian countryside.</p> <p>As a statutory consultee will the Council provide a dry technical response, or will it insist that the reasonable alternative of a full offshore grid is properly explained?</p> <p>Would the administration give officers the confidence to move away from traditional modes of response to provide the type of response that was required?</p>	<p>understood by Councillors and officers. The administration was opposed to the proposal and the way in which it had been brought forward. It was important that members were briefed and kept informed.</p> <p>The Council's response would need to be technical to a degree because it had to respond to the nature of the issues put forward. The response needed to be professional and evidenced so it would be taken seriously and have an impact.</p> <p>The Council was working together with other authorities across East Anglia to oppose the proposals. The emotional impact of what could happen was understood, but the Council had to respond within the scope of what the consultation asked. Officers would be given the space to do their professional duty. The administration would continue to work together with others to give the response that was required.</p>
Oral questions		
Councillor Barber	<p>Did the administration have any plans to devolve services or responsibilities to Parish and Town Councils?</p>	<p>Councillor Cory, Portfolio Holder for Resources, explained this was subject to ongoing discussions. In view of budget pressures, it was necessary to look at partnership working. Whilst there were no direct plans to devolve services, the door was open and he was happy to discuss options and possibilities, perhaps utilising the</p>

		Rural Prosperity Fund, with Town, Parish and Community Councils.
Councillor Harris	Did the administration have a view on the potential merits of reinstituting Neighbourhood Action Panels, where there was an appetite to do so, if they could be introduced at no cost, perhaps using remote technology?	Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities would respond, but the Council was seeking to address its current challenges by working in partnership. Partnership working shared costs and brought in experience. This proposal was in line with that ethos and it could perhaps be explored through the ONE Colchester Partnership.
Councillor Harris	Being in mind the need to act in a respectful manner, he had been pleased to under the training on the new Code of Conduct. Could the Leader of the Council confirm the numbers who had attended one of the sessions?	<p>Councillor King, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, explained that 29 Councillors had attended one of the sessions. A recording of the session had been circulated and Democratic Services would be monitoring uptake by those who not attended one of the sessions.</p> <p>He agreed with the need for respect which began and ended with courtesy.</p>
Councillor Harris	Given the number and profile of the civic events in current municipal year, could the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage provide an update on how the Mayoralty had coped with this period?	Councillor Cox, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage, explained that whilst all Mayoral years were eventful, this year had been particularly so. The Mayor and Mayoress had represented the Council very well at a number of community and civic events, culminating in the meeting for the conferment of City Status on 23 November. Thanks were also due

		to the officers who supported these functions.
Councillor Smith	<p>Did the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste consider that it was right that not for profit organisations doing work that was in line with the Council's priorities were charged at the same rate as commercial organisations for the collection of waste and recycling?</p> <p>Would the Portfolio Holder congratulate Welshwood Park Residents Association for recycling so much material?</p>	<p>Councillor Goss, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services and Waste, explained that the Council needed to be prudent with its finances and could not make a profit from any organisation through over recovery of costs. He would continue to look at these rates, and ensure they were appropriately set to be cost effective both for the Council and Residents Associations, so that they could afford to continue to provide valuable services. It was hoped that recycling credits would cover most of the cost.</p> <p>He was happy to congratulate Welshwood Park Residents Association for their work in the collection and recycling of copious quantities of leaves.</p>
Councillor Pearson	<p>In view of the damage the last Prime Minister had done to the national economy, could the Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation provide an update on any initiatives he had introduced to help the local economy?</p>	<p>Councillor Fox, Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation explained that the local economy was suffering from the impact of inflation and the mini budget. However, it was necessary to remain positive.</p> <p>Town Deal Funding worth £20 million was being invested, which would unlock further investment. This would drive economic activity in the city centre.</p>

		<p>There was a drive to improve digital skills and ultra-fast broadband would be rolled out. In addition, the green energy system at Northern Gateway was being developed as was the new business centre in Queen Street.</p> <p>Local businesses were being supported through organisations such as the North Essex Economic Board, Colbea, BID and the Federation of Small Businesses.</p> <p>The Women's Tour Cycle Race had showcased the wider region on national television and had brought in £1 million to the local economy. This had brought benefits across the city, not just the centre.</p> <p>Small Business Saturday would be held on 3 December. 93% of businesses in Colchester were small or micro businesses and Council was encouraged to support them.</p>
Councillor Law	Could the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage provide an update on planning for the year of events to mark City Status and how the Council would engage with residents across the city.	Councillor Cox, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Heritage explained that in terms of the Year of Celebration, a tourist facing suite of activities would be published shortly. These played to Colchester's heritage strengths. There also be community focussed events. Ideas were bubbling up constantly. These included the unveiling of a plaque to mark the Berechurch Dyke and commemoration of the siege of

		<p>Colchester. She was happy to receive further ideas.</p> <p>In terms of legacy planning, Lindsay Barker, Executive Director, Place, was leading a group looking at this issue and further details would follow. It was appreciated that this was challenging time to undertake such work and that there were serious financial decisions that needed to be taken, but she was confident the Council could do both.</p> <p>In terms of public engagement, the Council had recently conducted a survey to which it had received 1100 responses, which had been looked at in detail by Policy Panel. This had demonstrated the themes that residents were interested in, which included improvements to the historic city centre, sharpening the sense of place and making the most of the Colchester's cultural facilities.</p>
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579 Schedule of Portfolio Holder Decisions

RESOLVED that the schedule of Portfolio Holder decisions covering the period 6 October 2022 – 18 November 2022 be noted.

