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Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 20 January 2025 at 6:00 pm at the Parish Office, 2 Knowle Park Lane, Fair Oak

Present: Cllrs Anderson, Barrett, Bird, Broomfield, Couldrey, Douglas (Chair), Higby, Marsh, Meech & Tennent

Absent: Cllrs Scott & Smith

Apologies: Cllrs Bird, Forfar & Stupple

Officers in attendance: Michelle Leadbitter, Deputy Clerk, Jo Cahill, Finance Officer & Melanie Stephens, Clerk.

115. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Forfar and Higby in Minute No 106.

116. MINUTES (PAPER A)

RESOLVED

(a) That the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 16 December 2024 be signed by the Chair as a correct record; and

(b) That the delegated planning decisions for week ending 6 and 27th December be noted.

117. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was one member of the public present who spoke under item 122 (Tony Oxley, President of Fair Oak Cricket Club).

Two other members of the public attended to observe the meeting.

118. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements: -

Devolution Bid:

Hampshire County Council had agreed to progress a bid for devolution as part of the Government's Priority Programme for Devolution.

Election of Mayor:

Hampshire County Council would be disbanded and replaced with a Combined (high tiered) Authority with an elected Mayor (2026) in charge of strategy to cover such areas as Policing, Health Provision, Planning Strategy). Hampshire Unitary and Borough Councils would be

reorganised into strategic authorities comprising of approximately half a million residents each.

Election Postponement:

Hampshire County Council had expressed a desire for their application to be fast tracked and upcoming Council elections to be postponed leaving current Councillors in position.

Timeline:

Initial proposals for local government reorganisation were expected in March 2025, with final proposals to be submitted later this year.

Public Consultation:

The Government would make further announcements by the end of January and would consult with residents of Hampshire and Isle of Wight in February/March 2025 to gather residents views.

Implementation:

Once the Combined Authority was formed, the reorganisation would begin in 2027 with all authorities expected to be operational in shadow form, and fully operational by 2028.

It was likely that Eastleigh Borough Council would be merged with another local unitary council, making it imperative that the Parish Council work closely with Eastleigh Borough Council regarding transfer of Eastleigh owned assets within the parish safeguarding them for residents.

119. CLERK'S UPDATE

The Clerk gave a presentation, attached at Appendix 1 to these minutes.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the presentation be noted.

120. CRICKET CLUB PROPOSAL: PAVILION ALERNATIONS (VERBAL REPORT)

Tony Oxley, President of Fair Oak Cricket Club delivered a presentation to the Council on the proposed Pavilion Alterations as attached at Appendix 2. After discussion, it was;

RESOLVED:

That the proposed alternations to the Pavilion be agreed in principle, and be fully funded and managed by the Cricket Club without cost to the Parish Council

121. PLANNING CONSULTATION APPLICATION

The Council considered the following planning application: -

Application: O/24/98619 Land South of Mortimers Lane, Fair Oak

Description: Outline application with all matters reserved (apart from access) for the construction of up to 245 dwellings (Use Class C3) and up to 350sqm multi-functional building (Use Class E - commercial, business or service or Use Class F2 - Community), with associated open space and play area, landscaping, SuDS, infrastructure, mobility hub and vehicular access off Mortimers Lane.

Following discussion, it was:

RESOLVED:

The Parish Council **object** to the application on the following grounds:

- Contrary to National Planning Policy Framework,
- Policy 202 – would not conserve or enhance historic environment
- Policies 188 & 192 – puts local habitats and biodiversity at risk
- Policy 147 – does not protect the green belt
- Policy 116 – unacceptable impact on highway safety and road network
- The application is poorly timed in light of EBC's Review of its Local Plan and seeks to circumvent the proper planning processes.
- Density of building – the 250 development, on green belt land will adversely affect local infrastructure network such as local schools, health and roads which are already at maximum capacity.
- Previous planning decisions – the proposal is contrary to comments made by previous local plan inspectors who in 2020 noted that development on Mortimers Lane would impact surrounding roads to an 'unacceptable' level
- Nature conservation will be put at risk– the ecological appraisal as part of the planning application shows veteran oak trees, hedgerow with high ecological value, winter nesting birds and bats of high ecological importance on the site. The current habitat creation strategy has been ranked as poor to moderate further demonstrating lack of thought to the protection of local wildlife and habitats.
- Parking and highway safety – Mortimers Lane is remote from local services and facilities and the size of the development will exacerbate traffic congestion in Fari Oak & Bishopstoke and smaller roads surrounding the South Downs National Park.
- Traffic and noise – as above.
- Effect on listed buildings and conservation areas – support the view of the County's Archaeologist that the site "has potential for archaeological remains" and the site requires an archaeological mitigation strategy.

Action: Clerk

122. BUDGET/PRECEPT 2025/26 (REPORT B)

The Clerk reported on amendment to page 9 in Appendix 1 of the report, namely, that the new code request for Food Waste Collection was an error and that it should read 'Additional Solar Batteries for Woodland Community Centre,' as agreed by the Budget Task and Finish Group on 16 January.

The Council instructed the Clerk to create a social media post explaining Council Tax increase.

After consideration of the report it was:

RESOLVED:

(a) That budget requirement for expenditure of £783,016 for 2025/26 as set out in **Appendix 1** be approved;

(b) That the precept request of £632,716 for 2025/26 financial year be approved;

(c) That the fees and charges set out in **Appendix 2** be approved;

(d) That the Report of the Budget Task & Finish Group as set out in **Appendix 3** be noted; and

(e) That the use of Ear Marked Reserves as set out in **Appendix 4** be approved.

Action: Finance Officer

123. FINANCE REPORT (REPORT C)

The Council considered the report of the Finance Officer.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the contents of the report be noted; and

(b) That the BACs payments be approved.

124. PLAY STRATEGY (REPORT D)

The Clerk read out a statement regarding the Play Strategy submitted by Cllr Bird who was unable to attend the Full Council meeting. In the statement Cllr Bird requested the Council support the need for the strategy and approve a provider.

The Council reviewed the Play Strategy report, along with the submitted quotes and provider proposals, after which it was

RESOLVED:

(a) That Option A (Dialogue Matters) be the appointed Strategy Provider;

(b) That a budget of £15,515 be agreed, from Ear Marked Reserves, to support the development and delivery of the strategy;

(c) That the proposed timetables for the development of the strategy and Upper Barn Copse, as set out in Appendix 2 be noted; and

(d) That the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, have delegated authority to proceed with contracting the chosen provider.

Action: Clerk

125. EBC LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSE (REPORT E)

The Council considered a response to Eastleigh Borough Council's Local Plan Consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the following response be submitted:

Q1: What are the key issues that you want the plan to address, and how?

The key issues the plan should address include:

Prioritising Brownfield Development: Maximise the redevelopment of unused and underused brownfield sites before considering greenfield developments. This approach will help preserve local biodiversity and reduce urban sprawl, aligning with the council's vision of protecting the distinct identity of towns and villages. The Parish can see no evidence of the EBC undertaking thorough investigation of maximising brownfield site opportunities in the Borough, and particular its towns.

Sustainable Development Locations: New housing should be positioned in areas that encourage the use of public transport, walking, and cycling while minimising car dependency. This supports the council's climate change objectives and reduces traffic congestion in Eastleigh, Fair Oak, Bishopstoke, and surrounding areas.

Infrastructure Support: Where greenfield development is unavoidable, robust infrastructure (including schools, healthcare facilities, public transport, and drainage systems) must be provided to support both new and existing communities.

Addressing Local Housing Needs: Ensure new housing is affordable for first-time buyers and renters, focusing on smaller, reasonably priced homes rather than larger luxury executive houses.

By addressing these issues, the plan can meet housing targets while minimising environmental, social, and infrastructure-related challenges.

Q2: We won't be able to build all the new homes we need within urban areas. Where should we develop greenfield sites and why?

If greenfield development is necessary, the EBC should prioritise areas that offer the best opportunities for sustainable growth:

Option D (North of Hedge End Station): This site's proximity to an existing railway station

makes it a promising option for a sustainable greenfield development. It encourages public transport use and limits car dependency.

Options B and C (between West End and Bishopstoke): These options have significant potential due to their connectivity opportunities. They could be integrated with a proposed new station at Allington Lane and enhanced public transport links between Portsmouth and Southampton. Additionally, the potential for a level cycleway connecting Allington Lane to Eastleigh would make walking and cycling more viable.

Avoid Option A (North and East of Fair Oak): Option A poses serious challenges, including traffic congestion, flood risks, and a lack of nearby railway stations. The planning inspector previously dismissed this area due to its adverse impacts on the South Downs National Park and surrounding communities. Furthermore, the Inspector also considered that due process had not been adequately followed by EBC, as disproportionate weight was given to this option as a primary and sole focus, while other Strategic Growth Option (SGO) sites were not investigated with the same level of scrutiny.

By prioritising sites with existing or potential sustainable transport links, the plan can reduce environmental damage, traffic congestion, and infrastructure strain while supporting the council's climate change and housing objectives.

Q3: What do you think we should prioritise when planning new developments?

The following priorities should guide planning for new developments:

Sustainability: Locate housing where it can minimise car use, promote public transport, and support active travel modes like walking and cycling. This helps achieve climate change goals and reduces road congestion.

Infrastructure: Ensure that new developments are supported by necessary infrastructure, such as roads, schools, healthcare, public transport, and drainage systems. Infrastructure should serve both new and existing communities effectively. The current infrastructure, particularly local road networks are under significant pressure and not meeting need.

Affordability: Focus on housing that meets local needs, including affordable options for first-time buyers and renters. This is essential to address the housing crisis and ensure developments benefit the community.

Environmental Protection: Prioritise the use of brownfield sites over greenfield development. Where greenfield development is unavoidable, ensure minimal disruption to biodiversity and local ecosystems.

Alignment with Vision and Objectives: All developments should align with the council's stated vision of protecting the distinct identity of towns and villages and addressing climate change challenges.

Q4: Do you have any wider comments on the plan?

The local plan must strike a balance between meeting housing targets and safeguarding the environment, infrastructure, and community identity. Specifically:

Housing Numbers: The proposed housing numbers exceed the shortfall, particularly with Option A, which offers 4,600 homes – 1,986 above the stated need. This overestimation contradicts the council's vision of protecting towns and villages and should be revised.

Brownfield Development: The Borough should do more to identify and redevelop brownfield sites, including unused industrial and commercial spaces in the town centre(s), before resorting to greenfield development. This would better align with the council's stated objectives.

Climate Objectives: The loss of greenfield land and increased car dependency inherent in some strategic growth options, especially Option A, directly conflict with the borough's climate change objectives. A more sustainable approach should be prioritised.

By focusing on these aspects, the plan can ensure that housing needs are met in a way that is sustainable, equitable, and in harmony with local and environmental priorities.

Action: Clerk

126. ESTABLISHMENT OF DEVOLUTION TASK & FINISH GROUP

RESOLVED:

(a) That a Devolution Task & Finish Group be established to consider devolution impact and proposals consisting of the Chairman of the Council and four other members, with the task & finish group agreeing their terms and reference at their first meeting; and

(b) That Councillors Bird, Couldrey, Douglas, Higby & Tennent be appointed to serve on the group

Action: Clerk

127. WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT F)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

128. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

RESOLVED:

That, under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960, the public and the Press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information which would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature (staffing matters).

129. STAFF SALARIES 2025/26 (REPORT G)

The Clerk provided an overview of the current staffing levels and outlined the upcoming

changes to the staffing structure, pending the resignation of the Senior Admin Officer and a Caretaker as well as the proposed increase in hours for the Grounds Operative from 22.5 to 30 hours per week and Communications and Events Officer from 25 to 30 hours per week from April 2025.

Due to the imminent resignation of the Caretaker and the lack of response to recruitment efforts for this position, Officers were considering contracting cleaning services as an alternative. A full report would be brought to Council at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the staff salaries for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1 to Report G be agreed; and

(b) That the staffing position be noted.

Signed …… Chair.

Dated: …….

This was all the business, and the meeting closed at 19:40 pm.

Attachments: Appendix 1 – Clerk's Update