

Council

Tuesday, 15 October 2024

7.30 pm

Present:

The Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr Daniel Adewale King
The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Jenny Wallace

Councillors:	Derek Ashenden	Alan Metcalf
	Helen Ashenden	Lyn Milner
	Ejaz Aslam	Shane Mochrie-Cox
	Rajinder Atwal	Emma Morley
	David Beattie	Karina O'Malley
	Gurdip Bungar	Leslie Pearton
	John Burden	Tony Rana
	Deborah Croxton	Alan Ridgers
	Lee Croxton	Christina Rolles
	Dakota Dibben	Lenny Rolles
	Aaron Elliott	Peter Scollard
	Emma Elliott	Benjamin Sizer
	Gary Harding	Ektaveen Thandi
	Jo Hart	Narinderjit Singh Thandi
	Baljit Hayre	Frank Wardle
	Leslie Hills	Alison Williams
	Gavin Larkins	
	Jordan Meade	

Stuart Bobby	Chief Executive
Jamie Izzard	Director (Communities & Inclusive Growth) & Deputy Chief Executive
Sarah Parfitt	Director (Corporate Services)
Tom Reynolds	Director (Environment)
Simon Walsh	Assistant Director (Organisational Development & Democratic Support)
Vicky Nutley	Head of Legal Services
Andy Rayfield	Communications Manager
Carlie Simmonds	Committee Services Manager (Minutes)

34. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gurjit Bains, Samir Jassal and Lauren Sullivan.

35. Minutes

The Minutes of the extraordinary and ordinary meetings of Council held on 18 June 2024 were signed by the Mayor.

36. Declarations of Interest

The Chief Executive advised that, in accordance with advice received from the Council's Monitoring Officer, Members only needed to declare interests which had not already been listed within their Disclosable Pecuniary Interests form.

No declarations of interest were made.

37. To answer any questions received from members of the public of which notice has been given under Council Procedure Rule 13

The following question had been submitted:-

Question received from Tina Brooker (on behalf of concerned residents):-

"We are constantly being told that net zero/"green" policies are critical to protecting the planet and the environment, so how is it seemingly being used to enable greedy developers to bulldoze precious green spaces and build carbuncles upon them?"

I use Whitehill green space and Cobham Lodge (the latter, incorporating prime woodland), as a couple of examples of recently approved environmentally destructive planning applications.

I am at a loss to understand how, by any stretch of the imagination this can be sold as environmentally friendly or a biodiversity net gain, which I understand is now a major planning consideration."

So, our question is:

Please could the Council explain to the general public and those people in neighbourhoods whose outlook and quality of life are about to be devastated how the prima facie fraudulent claims of biodiversity net gain used within the planning process are saving the environment?"

Response by Cllr John Burden, Leader of the Council:-

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) introduced by the previous Conservative Government during the earlier part of this year made it mandatory for certain planning applications submitted by applicants to leave biodiversity in a measurably better state than before development took place. The manner in which Biodiversity Net Gain operates and how the metrics are used by Planners and decision makers is mandated by policies set by the previous Government that the Borough Council is required to follow.

Biodiversity Net Gain, has not been introduced to stop development from occurring, but is intended to deliver net gains whilst allowing for the much needed growth our communities and country need to take place.

Biodiversity Net Gain can help mitigate the impacts of Climate Change through the restoration of nature, delivery of more biodiverse environments, providing opportunities to increase climate resilience to extreme weathers, amongst other measures.

This Council made a commitment to tackle climate change. Our ambition is for the Council to be carbon net zero by 2030. As many in this Chamber will be aware, the Council has published a Climate Change Strategy and Corporate Plan that tackles not only the organisation's emissions, but also supports the Borough's residents and businesses to reduce their own. We cannot meet Climate Change goals by standing still, and we can't provide homes for our residents and associated jobs and infrastructure by turning away development. This Council will continue to work with partners to improve biodiversity and the environment locally, whilst tackling the local housing crisis. These aren't unachievable goals.

The question mentions a number of planning applications that have been before Planning Committee, where Planning Committee have reached a decision. It would be inappropriate for the detail of specific applications to be discussed here today, as the regulatory process is delegated to the Director of Environment and Planning Committee and still underway.

38. Minutes of Committees

Motions that proceedings, reports and recommendations of Committees, except those reserved under Council Procedure 5.2(6) as referred to below be received and adopted and where applicable the Orders made by them be ratified and confirmed were duly proposed, seconded and resolved in each case.

- Minutes of the Cabinet held on Monday, 24 June 2024;
- Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee held on Tuesday, 16 July 2024;
- Minutes of the Licensing Committee held on Monday, 2 September 2024;
- Minutes of the Cabinet held on Monday, 9 September 2024;
- Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee held on Tuesday, 17 September 2024;
- Minutes of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 19 September 2024;
- Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 25 September 2024; and
- Minutes of the Cabinet held on Monday, 30 September 2024.

Cllr Jordan Meade, Leader of the Opposition objected to the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 25 September 2024 being ratified and confirmed due to the accuracy of the minutes. It was felt that they were not a fair representation of the substantive points made at the meeting.

It was moved by Cllr Jordan Meade and seconded by Cllr Ejaz Aslam that a recorded vote be taken on the accuracy of the minutes.

In accordance with paragraph 19.4 of Annex 2.1 of the Council Procedure Rules, five Members demanded that a **recorded vote** be taken to request that the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 25 September 2024 were not ratified and confirmed due to the accuracy:-

For the motion	Against the motion	Abstained
Cllrs D Ashenden, H Ashenden, Aslam, Beattie, Dibben, A Elliott, E Elliott, Harding, Hills, Meade, Metcalf, Pearton, Ridgers, Sizer and Wardle.	The Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr Daniel Adewale King. Cllrs Atwal, Bungar, Burden, D Croxton, L Croxton, Hart, Hayre, Larkins, L Milner, Mochrie-Cox, Morley, O'Malley, Rana, C Rolles, L Rolles, Scollard, E Thandi, N Thandi, Wallace and Williams.	None.

The motion was declared to be lost by 15 votes to 21; the minutes were therefore ratified and confirmed as published/set out within the papers.

39. Reserved Minutes

It was moved by Cllr John Burden and seconded by Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox that:-

- the reserved Minute of Cabinet (Climate Change Update) held on Monday, 9 September 2024 be ratified and confirmed;
- the reserved Minute of Cabinet (Land Purchase - Lower Range Road) held on Monday, 9 September 2024 be ratified and confirmed; and
- the reserved Minute of Cabinet (Arts Council England Place Partnership Bid) held on Monday, 30 September 2024 be ratified and confirmed.

40. Finance and Audit Committee - Annual Report

The Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee, Councillor Gavin Larkins, presented the Council with a report which provided information on the work of the Finance and Audit Committee during the year 2023/24.

Resolved that the Annual Report presented at Appendix 1 of the report be endorsed.

41. Changes to Committee Memberships September 2024 - For Information Only

The report informed the Council of an urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive on 9 September 2024, in consultation with both Group Leaders, in relation to changes to Committee Memberships following the outcome of the General Election held on 4 July 2024.

Councillor Lauren Sullivan officially resigned from her role as Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure with Councillor Deborah Croxton being appointed to that position. This change therefore resulted in a number of changes needing to be made to Committee Memberships.

The report was noted.

42. To consider questions from Members of the Council of which notice has been given under Council Procedure Rule 14.

No questions had been received.

43. To receive the Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor invited the Deputy Mayor to announce the Mayor's upcoming charity events.

The Deputy Mayor advised that the Mayor's charities for 2024/25 were Ellenor, Alzheimer's and Dementia Support Services and Waterside Parent's Centre.

The Deputy Mayor stated that the Boundary Walk had taken place over the weekend of 12/13 October 2024 and thanked all those that supported and sponsored the walk particularly Cllrs Deborah and Lee Croxton and John Caller for helping with the organisation of the walk/weekend.

The Deputy Mayor invited Members to attend the Mayor's Charity Chinese Meal at Twin Dynasty on 14 November 2024, Sunday Lunch at Cobham Hall on 9 February 2025, a Coffee Morning in the Kent Room on Thursday 6 March 2024 and Dinner with the Mayor at The Woodville on Friday 25 April 2025.

The Mayor wished a Happy Diwali to all those celebrating.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm.