

NUNEATON AND BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**FINANCE AND PUBLIC SERVICES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

21st September 2023

A meeting of the Finance and Public Service Overview and Scrutiny Panel was held on Thursday, 21st September 2023 in the Council Chamber, Town Hall Nuneaton. The meeting was recorded for publication on the Council's website.

Present

Councillors C. Watkins (Vice - Chair)

Councillors: R. Baxter-Payne, L. Downs, B. Hammersley, J. Kennaugh, K. Kondakor, M. Tromans, M. Walsh (substituting for Councillor D. Brown) and Mrs D. Ross.

Apologies: Councillors D. Brown and S. Harbison.

PART I – PUBLIC BUSINESS

FPS10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Public Service Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 8th June 2023, and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 28th June 2023 were submitted for approval.

RESOLVED that

- a) the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair; and
- b) the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 28th June 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

FPS11 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Baxter-Payne declared he has changed employment. As Councillor M. Walsh was a substitute Councillor for this meeting, his declarations were not detailed in the Schedule attached to the agenda.

RESOLVED that the declarations of interest are as set out in the Schedule attached to these minutes, with the addition of the Declarations of Interest for Councillor M. Walsh.

FPS12 Questions to Cabinet

Councillor S. Markham (Portfolio Holder for Public Services) was in attendance to answer questions from members of the Panel. Councillor S. Croft (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate) was unable to attend the meeting, and it was agreed that any questions would be forwarded to him, with a request for a written response which would be shared with Members.

Councillor K. Kondakor asked a question for the attention of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate:

I think it's important to know what is happening with the Bridge to Living Scheme where we've actually bought up the shops along Bridge Street opposite Wilko's and Debenhams. We've actually got rid of the tenants, or getting rid of the tenants there, and that's obviously putting a cost pressure on the Council because we're either paying the business rates for empty shops, or those business rates now are not being collected. In which case we lose the business rate income, so I would like Councillor Croft to tell us what's happening in terms of the revenue budget from the delay to that project.

Councillor Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Public Services:

Firstly, about the Physical Activity Centre. As you, Cabinet Member, you've changed the project to make it more affordable, to reduce the cost of 30 million, but it looks like you're sort of kicking the can down the road by actually going for a retendering in various processes now, so actually it won't move forward till the next administration. But I really do not believe we'll still be able to, we haven't got the 30 million yet, the housing developments in particularly Bedworth Woodlands wouldn't like to happen, the ones in Albury are going to be running late with the economic situation. So can I ask a Cabinet member is there a plan C which actually builds the new pool on the existing site rather than do the costly dual running, and maybe taking it down to six lanes rather than eight. Thank you.

The Portfolio Holder for Public Services responded:

It won't be going to the next administration. We're hoping that it's going to be going to Planning either January or February, back to Planning because it has to go back to Planning because they've altered it, and that's why they've had to get it redone. As soon as it's gone back to Planning, if it's approved at Planning, then we're hoping to get it underway soon after. So we're not trying to wait until after the next administration, we are trying to get it done this time, you know, early next year. And your other the question was about the money?

Councillor Kondakor then asked:

Obviously the funding, a bit of that is from our Section 106 that we have already got, but a lot of the other Section 106 is either going to be very late or highly dubious. I mean we keep promising people we won't build on Bedworth Woodlands. But that Section 106 is still in the funding package for the pool, so some clarity about that will be useful.

The Portfolio Holder for Public Services responded:

The funding side of things it obviously isn't mine, but if it goes ahead it will be signed off by our finance lady, so she will be able to answer those questions. But they won't let it go ahead if we haven't got the money to do it.

And the other question that you asked was could we, put in other words, knock the other one down and then build it on the same site. I don't think that's an option because we'll be without a baths for two or three years while it's being built, and I don't think it's cost effective.

Councillor Kondakor asked the Portfolio Holder for Public Services:

The recycling overspending. Coventry has put their charges up, and can you give us some background as to what actually they're charging extra for,

because the level of service in my view is not very good. We get lots of caddies going in the back of lorries, and I'd love to change the contractors anyway. But can you explain why we've had this hike and what we can do about it, because we can't just have contractors hiking charges on us.

The Portfolio Holder for Public Services responded:

The increase that we received was the cost of living increase. Instead of giving us it with notice, they actually dropped it on our toes in February which was after we did the budget. And that's why the actual increase for the recycling that we've got now, again is down to cost, to contamination and what have you. But the actual costs that Coventry gave to us at the beginning of the year was an inflationary hike.

Councillor Kondakor then stated:

I've had issues at our house with the caddy being put in the back of the recycling lorry, and quite a few other residents have. Talking to Officers it seems that when people recycle a lot of paper the staff actually said it's too heavy to lift, just leave the caddy in the bin and then put the bin in the back, rather than give feedback to residents, and we've had lots of contamination issues. We don't seem to have a mechanism to claw back contamination caused by the operators from Coventry City Council. So the worse job they do, the less people recycle, and there's no sort of financial loop to actually get compensation for when they're not actually either doing their job, or if they're not able to do their job, putting a tag on the bin saying it's too heavy, rather than just letting the bin contaminate the rest. So I know things are going to change with the new contract but we do need to get on top of these contracts where poor performance can actually contaminate our loads and then we get less money for our recycling.

Councillor Watkins then added:

We could just mention for the public as well when we do go to co-mingle, so just to get the message out there again.

The Portfolio Holder for Public Services responded:

Yes, the reason we haven't said that yet is because of the change that we're having next week, and we didn't want it all to sort of get lost. We have spoken to Coventry, because we know that some of the operatives at Coventry have actually told residents that we've already started with the co-mingling, and that's why they've taken the caddy. So we've had that fed through to us, and we have actually spoken to Coventry and that's in hand at the moment. The co-mingling is still, we're going to put it out in about three weeks, because it's not until the end of October we go live. So we want to get this embedded first with the new rounds before we start talking to people about mixing the recycling together, because if we do it too soon they're just going to do it all together.

Councillor K. Kondakor asked a question for the attention of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate:

The road renaming outside the Council House, obviously a costly and pointless thing to do. Can we get Councillor Croft to confirm that stupid plan has now been scrapped? Thank you.

FPS13 Integrated Performance Report – First Quarter 2023-24

A report of the Risk Management and Performance Officer. The Panel were presented with a report which seeks to provide appropriate performance measures, budget information and risk data for service areas within the scope of the Panel. The report has been adapted to reduce the volume of data (as previously reported under the former scrutiny panel arrangements), whilst still providing the Panel with sufficient information to monitor results to address issues arising.

The Panel asked a number of questions and discussed a variety of issues including:

- Member Enquiry Forms – the figures given were for the first quarter, and non were Fol related.
- Risk Register – two risks in particular were discussed including Finance (effectively managing Council finances) and the change of IT systems (including the website).
 - The Council's financial situation needs to be monitored and reviewed, looking at the challenges the Council is facing and the risks this can bring.
 - Cyber security is a concern and risks around IT migration are being considered and monitored.
- Risk Assessments – look at what mitigations have been brought in to reduce the risk, and review regularly.
- Reduced outcome from parking and the bus depot – more clarity was requested in relation to how much has been lost for each area.

RESOLVED that

- a) the contents of the report be noted; and
- b) information on the new website (and risks) be brought to a future Scrutiny Panel Meeting.

FPS14 Managing Attendance of the Council's Workforce

The Head of People and Culture presented the Panel with a report detailing the 2022/23 end of year performance for Sickness Absence, in order for Members to scrutinise the work activity and trends relating to the Attendance Management of the Council's Workforce, and to consider the additional initiatives that have been used in an effort to improve attendance.

The Panel discussed and asked questions on the following:

- More information on the numbers of staff in each Authority to allow for easier comparison.
- Each Authority provides different services so benchmarking and comparison is not always 'like for like'. Details of the services offered can be looked into.
- There is anecdotal evidence that people (which will include NBBC staff) are waiting longer for treatment and operations, which impacts on recovery times and attendance figures.
- NBBC offer counselling and physio to employees where there is evidence it could improve return to work times.
- Risk Assessments are carried out in the workplace and work related accidents reported. However it is not always clear if some absences are fully work related or personal.

RESOLVED that

- a) the information contained within the Appendices be noted; and
- b) that feedback and comments for consideration be given to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate.

FPS15 Forward Plan

The Forward Plan showing the key decisions that will be made in the four months commencing 1st October 2023, was provided to the Panel for information.

It was suggested that it would be useful to get an Officer to talk through the Capital Programme if the Portfolio Holder is not available to attend the Scrutiny meeting. An update relating to the Capital Fund would be welcomed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

FPS16 Draft Work Programme 2023/24

The Draft Work Programme for the Finance and Public Service Overview and Scrutiny Panel was submitted for approval.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Work Programme be noted; and
- b) the Work Programme suggestions agreed on 8th June 2023 be added to the document.

Chair

Finance and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel - Schedule of Declarations of Interests – 2023/2024

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
	General dispensations granted to all members under s.33 of the Localism Act 2011			Granted to all members of the Council in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing matters - Statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 - An allowance, payment given to members - An indemnity given to members - Any ceremonial honour given to members - Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 - Planning and Licensing matters - Allotments - Local Enterprise Partnership
	R. Baxter-Payne	Employed by Vinci Construction Major Projects UK Ltd (VCMP UK Ltd); County Councillor - WCC	Spouse: Self-employed childminder Member of the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Midlands Combined Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee • Warwickshire Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (substitute) 	
	D. Brown	Employed by H.M Land Registry	Regional Coordinator, Ragdoll Rescue Charity. Representative on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhall Education Foundation (Council appointment). 	
	L. Downs	River Bars Limited; Coventry Plus Beyond the Plane Little Caesars Donuts Limited NBBC Council Contract for market pitch	Member on the following Outside Body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hammersley, Smith and Orton Charity 	
	B. Hammersley	County Councillor – W.C.C.	Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hammersley, Smith and Orton Charity 	

	Name of Councillor	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Other Personal Interest	Dispensation
	S. Harbison	Self Employed	Member of Conservative and Unionist Party. Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Astley Charity 	
	J. Kennaugh	County Councillor W.C.C. Employed by FedEx Express UK Ltd	Member of the W.C.C. Regulatory Committee Member of the Conservative Party Member of UNITE the Union Member on the following Outside Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQUIP 	
	K.A. Kondakor	Electronic and Embedded Software Design Engineer (self-employed)	Unpaid Director of 100% Renewables UK Ltd Green Party (E&W)	
	M. Tromans	Warwickshire County Councillor (Galley Common) Share in a rental property in Hydes Pastures, Nuneaton	Member of WI Member of the Conservative Party	
	C.M. Watkins	Employee of Nutri Pack	Representative on the following outside bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Enterprises Ltd. (NABCEL) 	