

BASSETLAW DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 27th September 2012 at Worksop Town Hall

Present: Councillor I J Campbell (Chair)

Councillors	W Barker	A Mumby
	A Battey	J W Ogle
	H Burton	G A N Oxby
	R B Carrington-Wilde	C Palmer
	D Challinor	D G Pidwell
	A Chambers	D Potts
	P Douglas	J Potts
	C Entwistle	Mrs M W Quigley
	J Evans	T Rafferty
	G Freeman	A Rhodes
	M T Gray	J B Rickells
	S A Greaves	J M Sanger
	M Gregory	Mrs A Simpson
	B Hopkinson	M Storey
	K H Isard	Mrs K Sutton
	Mrs S Isard	T Taylor
	G Jones	S Toms
	J A Leigh	Mrs C Troop
	R Leigh	C Wanless
	S May	J White

Officers in attendance: L Dore, M Hill, M Ladyman, N Taylor, R Theakstone and S Wormald.

Others present: Messrs N Carpino and D Phillips – Audit Commission

The Chairman welcomed all present and read out the Fire Alarm/Evacuation Procedure.

37. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B A Bowles, H M Brand, F Hart, D R Pressley, J C Shephard and G J Wynne. Councillor S Fielding was absent from the meeting but her apologies were not made known until after the meeting had concluded.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

(a) Members

There were no declarations of interest by Members on matters to be discussed at the meeting.

(b) Officers

There were no declarations of interest by officers on matters to be discussed at the meeting.

39. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28TH JUNE 2012 AND THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 31ST JULY 2012

Councillor Ogle queried the resolution of Minute 35(a), Bassetlaw Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Declaration under Planning Act 2008, Section 212 (4) and (5), as he considered the “consultants had obtained an unrepresentative sample of house sales in the east sector on which to base the excessive £50 per square metre charge”.

The relevant officer was not present at the meeting therefore response was deferred until the next Council meeting.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th June 2012 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 31st July 2012 be approved as a correct record subject to possible amendment to Minute 35(a) deferred until the next Council meeting.

40. COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman's Communications

The Chairman congratulated all the participants who had taken part in the Bassetlaw Games and also thanked Councillor J A Leigh and everyone else involved in making them such a success.

The Chairman advised that he and the Leader had signed the White Ribbon Pledge as part of the White Ribbon Campaign which condemns violence against women and encouraged everyone else to do so.

Chief Executive's Communications

The Interim Chief Executive advised that one of the recommendations from the recent Scrutiny report on “Pride in our District” was that an update should be provided on recent local achievements that contributed to pride in Bassetlaw. The Interim Chief Executive announced he was pleased to report on three such achievements.

For the first achievement he informed Council that Bassetlaw’s entry for its work in the regeneration of Bridge Street, Worksop has been shortlisted for one of the 2012 Regeneration and Renewal Awards in the “Boosting High Street Vitality” category of a competition endorsed by the Homes and Communities Agency. The inspection had considered improvements to Worksop’s market since the move and the opening of the cinema. Bassetlaw is competing against schemes from London Boroughs with a decision from the judges expected in November.

For the second achievement, he commented on the plans to merge the current Worksop and Retford scouting Districts into a single Bassetlaw District early in 2013 which will mean all Cubs, Scouts, Beavers and Explorers will have a new “Bassetlaw District” badge. While this is mainly an administrative change which does not affect any of the individual pack names, it will create a defined identity within Bassetlaw.

For the third achievement, he commented on how young people are a source of pride to any community and that the provisional figures for 2012 show that schools in Bassetlaw have seen the greatest increase in the percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and Mathematics in Nottinghamshire: 62.5% of students achieved these grades, an increase of 13.6% from 2011.

The Chairman thanked the Interim Chief Executive for his communication and in addition thanked Members who had made a £10 contribution towards the new badge for the new Bassetlaw District scouting badge.

Leader's Communications

The Leader informed Council that he and the Interim Chief Executive had met with senior officers of Nottinghamshire Police to discuss issues relevant to Bassetlaw and that there would be further meetings in the coming weeks.

Discussions had also taken place with neighbouring authorities to secure support for improvements to the railway station at Retford which sits on the East Coast main line.

The Interim Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader had also met with the Clerk to the Justices for Nottinghamshire regarding the future of Courts in Bassetlaw. The necessity for local courts in Bassetlaw had been stressed strongly to the Clerk to the Justices.

The Leader outlined the work being undertaken to try and tackle the problem of youth unemployment through the establishment of a local youth unemployment task force.

41. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

There were two questions by the public of which notice had been given in accordance with Rules of Procedure Number 10.

From Mr L Duveen:

"According to the Empty Houses Agency, in 2010 there were 1898 empty houses in Bassetlaw. When asked about this last year, Councillor Rhodes responded with some fine words. However, the same Agency reported that in 2011 there were some 2,013 empty houses in the District, in percentage terms the second worst figure in the County. When will the Council begin to turn their fine words into actions and start turning empty houses into family homes?"

Reply by Councillor A Rhodes

"I have examined the number of empty properties detailed in the question and I have a few issues with how these numbers have been established. The figure the authority concentrates on is the number of properties which have been empty six months and over. In 2010 this figure was 775. In 2011 the figure had risen to 816. The vast majority of the increase was within the private sector which clearly reflects the economic climate we are currently living and working within.

However, this authority is addressing this very difficult and national situation and we are working with partners and private sector landlords. This includes initiatives in leasing back private sector houses with our ALMO being the marrying agent.

This is a difficult issue and the Council will fulfil its obligations in respect of empty properties."

From Miss E Race:

"I am Emily Race, I am 12 years old and I am from Worksop and part of the Worksop Harriers. I would like to have the chance to represent Great Britain in the heptathlon at a future Olympics as I am amongst the top young athletes in the country.

At the moment I and my friends have to do our training mainly on grass or we have to travel out of Nottinghamshire. We want to see a new athletics stadium in Bassetlaw and I want to know if the Council will help me and other young athletes with our vision?"

Reply by Councillor S A Greaves

"Thank you for your question – you may well be the youngest person to ask a question at Full Council and it was a pleasure to meet you a few moments ago. Emily – we share your vision. For young and old alike, sport is a powerful unifying force. Through sport young people can build their self-confidence, develop their skills in teamwork and communication as well as focus their ambitions and broaden their horizons. You can even keep yourself fit and healthy. One of the greatest resources we have in Bassetlaw is our young people. However, at present athletes are forced to travel far and wide to both train and compete, for example to Halifax, Sheffield and Loughborough – I do not think that is good enough.

Here in Bassetlaw we have young athletes such as yourself who have massive potential. We also have a fantastic network of sporting clubs. I recognise that the athletes of tomorrow need the training facilities for today. Emily, we succeed by helping you to succeed. But just like you, we cannot do it all by ourselves. This Council has a commitment to increasing participation in sport and leisure. The Worksop Harriers have a blueprint for a sports athletic track and share your vision. The plans are impressive and ambitious and Bassetlaw is already working with the Worksop Harriers and discussing the plans and proposals. Options are being considered to help develop solutions and drive down costs.

Sport England, UK Athletics, the Lottery, the Government and other local authorities had best sit up and take note. We may be a small District Council but we are deadly serious about improving Bassetlaw for the better and we will be asking for support and help to make this happen.

I am going to be asking officers to form a specific working group to help move things forward and I want Bassetlaw to do what it can to make our shared vision a reality. Along the way as you work towards your vision, you are going to come up against those people who say 'No you can't', 'Don't be silly', 'You'll never make it', 'We know better', 'Why bother?'. All I will say is this: stick to your guns. You have the drive, the determination and the ambition – and you are going to make it."

Additional/Supplementary Question from Miss E Race

"How good would it be for Bassetlaw to have an athlete representing Britain at the next Olympics? I feel this will only be achieved by being given the correct training facilities. Due to the lack of facilities in Bassetlaw, I along with many other people have to train by running around the streets to improve my fitness levels, with this I have to try to avoid pedestrians, cars and not trip and fall on the pavement.

The provision of specific facilities would benefit people in Bassetlaw of all ages by allowing them to train in a safe and secure environment. Well-equipped training facilities would allow athletes young and old to train properly and develop to their maximum potential.

By enabling Bassetlaw to become a centre of excellence for athletics training and coaching it will put us on the national map and we would gain the reputation and credibility that goes with it."

Reply by Councillor S A Greaves

“We have some excellent athletes and it is right that we should encourage them to be the best they can be even if local training facilities might not currently be the best available. We will do what we can to bring about a solution.”

42. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman proposed that Agenda Item No 10(a) – The Audit Commission Annual Governance Report and Statement of Accounts for 2011/12 be brought forward on the Agenda to facilitate the District Auditors present.

43. REPORT(S) OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

(a) The Audit Commission Annual Governance Report and Statement of Accounts for 2011/12 (Key Decision No. 320)

Members' approval was sought for the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report and the Statement of Accounts for 2011/12. Mr D Phillips, District Auditor, introduced himself and commented that within the summarising key messages which were positive overall, there had been some slight adjustments to the accounts but there was no change to the Council's financial position.

The District Auditor added that value for money remained a key consideration for the Council and he was content that arrangements in place were sound and had worked well. He acknowledged that within the current agenda of making spending reductions, the Council had difficult decisions to make.

The District Auditor stated that, subject to receiving a signed Letter of Representation from the Council, he planned to issue an audit report including an unqualified opinion on the financial statements and an unqualified value for money conclusion for the financial year 2011/12. The Annual Governance Report was appended to the report.

N Carpino thanked all the staff in the Finance Unit for all their hard work and assistance given to the Audit Commission.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Property added her thanks to the Finance Unit for their work and also thanked the Audit Commission representatives.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report for 2011/12 be approved.
2. The Audited Statement of Accounts (incorporating the Local Code of Corporate Governance and the Annual Governance Statement) for 2011/12 be approved.
3. The Head of Finance and Property, as the Council's Section 151 Officer, be approved to sign the Letter of Representation on behalf of Bassetlaw District Council.

(Messrs. Carpino and Phillips left the meeting.)

44. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

The Agenda contained three questions, notice of which had been given by Members, in accordance with Rules of Procedure Number 11.

From Councillor J White:

“What is the Council’s commitment to the provision of sandbags to local residents when there is flooding?”

Reply from Councillor S A Greaves:

“It is the responsibility of all homeowners and residents to protect their own property. Sandbags are issued on a priority basis – a situation that I don’t necessarily agree with.”

Supplementary question from Councillor J White:

“This week’s weather has seen Britain’s towns once again ravaged by flooding. Bassetlaw people who suffered in 2007 and during this summer will have been watching the weather and remembering those bad times. Councillor Burton has advised me that Parish Councils have flood resilience plans and sand bag schemes in place. However I am concerned about our towns and town centres where the transitional nature of the residents and low levels of income mean that many do not have house contents insurance. Additionally, since the Focus store has gone in Retford people no longer have access to a DIY store. A flood for these people is a very difficult disaster to recover from. Can you please confirm that you share these concerns and will quickly put a scheme in place?”

Reply from Councillor S A Greaves:

“I agree that a clear policy that protects those in need of most assistance is required and I will be asking further questions and for a review of the existing policy and arrangements.”

From Councillor M T Gray:

“It is my understanding that payment of £3,250 was made to the Industrial Communities Alliance (2011 to 2012). What tangible benefit has this achieved for the Council?”

Reply from Councillor S A Greaves:

“The Industrial Communities Alliance was formed in 2007 to represent local authorities in the industrial areas of England, Wales and Scotland. The Alliance brought together the Coalfields Communities Campaign and SteelAction and has continued to build upon the successful lobbying of its predecessors extending back to the 1980’s. The aims of the Alliance are to articulate the needs of Britain’s traditional industrial areas, to attract resources for regeneration, to press for balanced growth within and between regions and to provide a framework for information sharing between member authorities.

One area of on-going work being carried out by the Alliance is the highlighting of the lack of equality in the distribution of Lottery funding. They have demonstrated that certain areas of the country are missing out on millions of pounds of Lottery funding, while other areas get much more than their fair share. For example, Bassetlaw gains only 38% on the national average of Lottery funding. Pressure is being brought upon the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Lottery distributors to explain this inequality in funding with a cross-Parliamentary debate being proposed in the future.

The Director of Community Services along with Councillor Barker recently attended the Alliance's National Conference in Glasgow. Areas of debate and action included the extensive review of European Funding which if agreed, will have a huge negative effect upon this area in regards to the availability of EU funding, good practice in the promotion of apprenticeships and the official launch of the Alliances 10 point plan for re-building the economy of Britain's Industrial Communities."

Supplementary question from Councillor M T Gray:

"The decision made and approved to join the Alliance was to leaver in more financial services to the District. What benefit has there been?"

Reply from Councillor S A Greaves:

"You have to be in it to win it."

Question from Councillor R B Carrington-Wilde:

"Would the relevant Cabinet Member inform me if there is a programme to improve existing sporting facilities in Bassetlaw, particularly after the great success of the Olympics?"

Reply from Councillor J A Leigh:

"The inspiring success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games has been a credit to Britain and the British people and the outstanding success of the Bassetlaw Games has shown how important sport and leisure is to the people of Bassetlaw. With over 55,000 attendances at Bassetlaw Games events we have seen how we can generate enormous interest from local people.

In this 'legacy' phase we will continue to work with local clubs and organisations in these difficult financial times to see if we can assist in improving the facilities infrastructure in the District. We will also continue to support coaches and club administrators in their valuable work as any sportsperson will tell you, top class coaching and support is as important as top class facilities."

Supplementary question from Councillor R B Carrington-Wilde:

"In Costhorpe, the Council maintain to a high standard three playing surfaces: a bowling green, football pitches and a cricket field. All of these are well used by people of all ages participating in recreational and competitive sport, alas the parking and changing facilities are basic or none existent. Would the authority explore and support efforts to build a multi-sport changing facility for the benefit of the sporting enthusiasts and the local community as a whole?"

Reply by Councillor J A Leigh:

"Following the enormous success of the Bassetlaw Games and increased levels of sports participation we have found that local people are increasingly asking for more and better sports and leisure facilities in addition to those we already provide. This, of course, comes at a difficult financial time for the entire country and organisations are required to ensure that they gain the maximum benefit from any expenditure.

We are intending to create a group to look at an improvement programme for Langold Country Park and its neighbouring open spaces and we will be engaging all the local clubs to ensure that we support the aspirations of as many of the local

residents as possible. I acknowledge the excellent work of Firbeck Cricket Club and the other clubs, and will ensure they can be fully represented during consultations.”

45. MOTIONS

The Agenda contained four motions, notice of which had been given in accordance with Rules of Procedure Number 12.

(a) Proposed by Councillor A Simpson and seconded by Councillor Mrs M W Quigley:

“This Council recognises that any alteration, once again, to housing management for Council tenants should be taken with their full participation, as stated by best practice issued by the Government. Therefore, this Council will ensure that all of the electorate who live in A1 housing will be given the opportunity to vote for their future housing option.”

Councillor A Rhodes proposed an amendment to the motion:

“This Council recognises that any alteration to housing management for Council tenants should be taken with their full participation. This Council will ensure that all Tenants will be given the opportunity to participate in a ballot if there are any proposals made to change the current Arm’s Length Management Arrangement for local Council Dwellings in Bassetlaw.”

This was seconded by Councillor G A N Oxby.

Councillors A Rhodes, Mrs M W Quigley and A Simpson spoke to the amended motion.

RESOLVED that the amended motion be supported.

(Councillor D Pidwell arrived during consideration of this Agenda item).

(b) Proposed by Councillor T Taylor and seconded by Councillor M T Gray:

“There have been instances in the past when some councils have been unable to provide their council house residents with simple and transparent questions when balloting on housing option changes. This Council will provide an independent tenant adviser for its tenants, and will use the Electoral Reform Services again to establish a fair, open and transparent question option for all its A1 housing electorate.”

Councillor A Rhodes proposed an amendment to the motion:

“This Council will ensure that any Tenants Ballot concerning any changes to the current Arm’s Length management Arrangement for Council Dwellings in Bassetlaw will be independent, fair, open and transparent.”

This was seconded by Councillor G A N Oxby.

Councillor A Rhodes spoke to the amended motion.

RESOLVED that the amended motion be supported.

(c) Proposed by Councillor K H Isard and seconded by Councillor J W Ogle:

“The Council takes steps without undue delay to rectify the inequity within the Members’ mileage allowance scheme. This Council should at the same time reduce the maximum payment per mile to 45p in line with HMRC’s tax free figure.”

Councillor J Evans proposed an amendment to the motion:

“This Council takes steps to undertake a review of the mileage allowance scheme and as part of the review consideration will be given to reducing the maximum payment per mile to 45 pence.”

This was seconded by Councillor S A Greaves.

Councillors K H Isard, D Challinor, J W Ogle, A Simpson and J Evans spoke to the amended motion.

RESOLVED that the amended motion be supported.

(d) Proposed by Councillor S May and seconded by Councillor D Potts

“This Council strongly objects to the Government’s welfare reforms which will bring poverty to many children, disabled, unemployed and low-waged people living in Bassetlaw, and will write to the Prime Minister, relevant Ministers and local MP’s to register these concerns.”

Councillors J W Ogle, Mrs K Sutton, R B Carrington-Wilde, A Mumby, P Douglas, G A N Oxby, A Simpson, J Potts, J A Leigh, C Troop, A Rhodes, B Barker, T Rafferty, S A Greaves, D Potts and S May spoke to the motion.

Voting for the proposed motion:

- FOR Councillors B Barker, A Battey, I J Campbell, R B Carrington-Wilde, D Challinor, A Chambers, P Douglas, C Entwistle, J Evans, G Freeman, S A Greaves, M Gregory, B Hopkinson, G Jones, J A Leigh, R Leigh, S May, A Mumby, G A N Oxby, C Palmer, D G Pidwell, D Potts, Potts, T Rafferty, A Rhodes, J M Sangar, M Storey, S Toms, Mrs C Troop and J White.
- AGAINST Councillors M T Gray, K H Isard, J W Ogle, J B Rickells, Mrs A Simpson, Mrs K Sutton and C Wanless.
- ABSTAINED Councillors H Burton, Mrs S Isard, Mrs M W Quigley and T Taylor.

RESOLVED that the motion be supported.

(Councillor G A N Oxby left the meeting).

46. REFERRALS

(a) Audit and Risk Scrutiny Committee – 21st June 2012 – Minute No. 17(a) – Annual Governance Statement 2011/12 and Action Plan 2012/13

RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement 2011/12 and Action Plan 2012/13 be approved.

(b) Audit and Risk Scrutiny Committee – 21st June 2012 – Minute No. 17(b) – Local Code of Corporate Governance

RESOLVED that the Local Code of Corporate Governance be approved.

- (c) Cabinet – 4th September 2012 – Minute No. 41(a) – Community Right to Challenge (Key Decision No. 342)

RESOLVED that the Community Right to Challenge be approved and adopted.

- (d) Cabinet – 4th September 2012 – Minute No. 43(a) – Food Safety Service Plan 2012/13 (Key Decision No. 345)

RESOLVED that the the Food Safety Service Plan 2011/12 be approved and adopted.

- (e) Cabinet – 4th September 2012 – Minute No. 43(b) – Health and Safety Service Plan 2012/13 (Key Decision No. 346)

RESOLVED that the Health and Safety Service Plan 2012/13 be approved and adopted.

47. REPORT(S) OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

- (a) Health and Safety Prosecution - Update

Members were presented with an update on the progress of the Health and Safety Prosecution proceedings issued against the Council in November 2011.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

- (b) Appointment to Outside Committees/Panels

Members were advised of an invitation to nominate a District Council representative to sit on the Nottinghamshire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that:

1. The appointment of Councillor J Evans to the Nottinghamshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee be approved.
2. Feedback from this Committee be provided through the Members Information Bulletin.

48. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

Agenda item No. 11, Report(s) of the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, had been withdrawn and as there was no other business the Chairman closed the meeting after thanking everyone for their attendance.