

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 31 MARCH 2010

Attendance:

The Mayor (Councillor Mrs Searle) (P) (In the Chair);

Councillors Allen (P), Mrs Bailey, Ms Ballard (P), Beavis, Bradley (P), Burgess (P), Carter (P), Champion, Mrs Cully (P), Cully (P), Dickson (P), Edgar (P), Edwards (P), Mrs Forder (P), Forder (P), Foster-Reed (P), Geddes (P), Gill (P), Hicks (P), Hook (P), Hylands (P), Kimber (P), Langdon (P), Mrs Mitchell-Smith, Mrs Mudie, Murphy (P), Philpott (P), Smith, Ward, Miss West and Wright (P).

Also in attendance: Honorary Aldermen O'Neill and Searle.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Bailey, Beavis, Champion, Mrs Mitchell-Smith, Mrs Mudie and Ward and Honorary Aldermen Mrs Bailey, Foster, Lucas and Train.

MINUTES

COUNCIL RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Ordinary and Extraordinary meetings of the Council held on 3 and 22 February and 8 March 2010 be confirmed and signed.

MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

(A) FAIRTRADE TOWN STATUS CERTIFICATE

The Mayor reported that in November 2006 Gosport Fairtrade Action had held its inaugural meeting in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall. In January 2008 the achievement of Gosport as a Fairtrade Borough was celebrated. The Mayor accordingly welcomed Michael Heaps and Sarah Hirom, Chairman and Honorary Secretary respectively of Gosport Fairtrade Action to the meeting in order for them to present to the Council the Fairtrade Town Status Certificate.

The tireless work given to achieving this certificate by the Group was very much appreciated not only by this Council but also by the many people in poorer countries who benefited from their work. Gosport Fairtrade Action Fortnight this year exceeded all expectations by getting local people to swap their normal products for Fairtrade products; 2053 swaps had been made. This made a big contribution to the 1 million and one target throughout the country.

Fairtrade Action were always looking for volunteers to join them, so if anyone is interested in joining the Group Councillor Mrs Cully would be happy to talk to them.

Mr Heaps came forward to present the Mayor with the Fairtrade Town Status Certificate. He thanked the Mayor for the co-operation shown by the Council to the Group.

(B) UPDATE ON 33 FIELD HOSPITAL FREEDOM PARADE (23 APRIL)

Councillor Edgar advised Members that everything was up to speed for this special event. Everything was in place including the required internal organisation. Portsmouth University's Creative Technical Department would be undertaking a DVD in order to give comprehensive coverage of the event under the supervision of the Council's Press and Public Relations Officer. Most of Gosport's schools would be coming to the event. Educational presentations on 33 Field Hospital would be taking place in the Discovery Centre; troops not in the Parade on 23 April would be in the Discovery Centre to explain their work.

Councillor Edgar stated that the Senior Officers Dinner had been an annual event for many years; being a successful partnership Dinner with 30 Officers in attendance. Such an event he felt united everybody with tremendous support for events like the 33 Field Hospital Freedom Parade. It was feared that the Submarine Service would not be represented at the Freedom Parade however the Commodore HMS Sultan advised at the Dinner that there would be a detachment from the Submarine Service at the event. He hoped all members would support the event on Friday, 23 April. He thanked the Head of Central Services and the Mayor's PA for their hard work in helping to arrange the event.

QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 3.4

(A) Question No 1 standing in the name of Councillor Philpott on the matter of Conservative Councillor's attendance at this year's annual Senior Officer's Dinner was answered by the Chairman of the Policy and Organisation Board.

(B) Question No 2 standing in the name of Councillor Philpott on the matter of Liberal Democrat Party literature being found on the Council's photocopying machine was answered by the Chairman of the Policy and Organisation Board.

(C) Question No 3 standing in the name of Councillor Kimber on the mileage between 51 Russell Street, Gosport and the Town Hall was answered by the Leader of the Council.

PART II MINUTES

COUNCIL RESOLVED: That the following Part II Minutes be received.

Policy and Organisation Board: 17 March 2010
(Minute Nos 67 – 73)

Housing Board: 3 March 2010 (Minute Nos 49 - 53)

Members noted that the above Policy and Organisation Board meeting was the last one to be attended by Councillor Cully. Councillor Wright stated that this was a sad day and thanked Councillor Cully for the work he had done on this Board over many years. He felt it was sad for the Council and for Gosport that he would not be standing again for the Council; he had served the people of Gosport and Bridgemary as a Borough Councillor for 23 years. Councillors Carter, Gill, Edgar and Hook joined Councillor Wright in paying tribute to Councillor Cully for his service to the Council.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(A) CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2009 – 10

Councillor Forder, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, introduced his report. He reported that the Committee on 25 March 2010 had supported this Annual Report coming to this Council meeting.

Councillor Forder advised that the Committee had completed the following reports:

- Post 16 Vocational Education in the Borough of Gosport

- Recruitment and Succession Planning

The following annual reports had been received and debated:

- Performance Indicators and Council Performance
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Disability Equality Scheme
- Race Equality
- Gender Equality

A panel had been formed with terms of reference designed to consider ways of improving Councillors' understanding of budget issues and make recommendations as to how the presentation of budget issues could be improved. In consequence some changes had been made to the way documentation is presented and a training session had been organised.

A presentation and report on the Maintenance of Ann's Hill Cemetery had been received and debated.

The Committee had received a report from the Borough Solicitor on new and emerging legislative issues, including the Sustainable Communities Act, 2007; Councillor Calls for Action; Petitions; and The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill. These are issues to which it is likely the Committee would return in the next twelve months.

Following the adoption of the Committee's 2008-2009 Report on 'Older People and the Issues of Loneliness and Isolation' a well-attended Conference had been held in October. The conclusions of the Conference were now being taken forward by a Stakeholders' Steering Group.

The Chairman, another Committee Member and a Democratic Services Officer had attended the inaugural meeting of the Hampshire Scrutiny Network in January. At the meeting Councillor Forder was elected Chairman of the Network and he hoped that this would benefit Gosport by giving the Borough access to examples of good practice throughout Hampshire and access to the expertise of scrutiny officers at County Hall

COUNCIL RESOLVED: That the Annual Report be noted

(B) POST 16 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SCRUTINY REPORT

Councillor Forder, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, introduced the above report which had received the support of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 March for consideration tonight. He advised that this was a substantial report with a substantial amount of evidence. In his and the Committee's view this was an important topic which had produced a lot of discussion and some progress.

Councillor Forder recounted that the possibility of the Committee scrutinising Post-16 Vocational Education in the Borough was first raised at its meeting of 11 June 2009. The argument was made that provision was inadequate to meet actual and potential demand. At this meeting it was resolved that representatives from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) be invited to meet with the Committee to provide information on education provision for post 16 year olds and to respond to Members' questions. In the event, LSC representatives chose to be accompanied by representatives of the Local Education Authority (LEA) as their responsibilities were soon to transfer to the LEA. This meeting took place on 12 October 2009.

At the conclusion of the 12 October meeting it was agreed to extend the scrutiny by inviting the Heads of the Borough's three secondary schools to a further meeting together with the Principal of St Vincent Sixth Form College to give evidence to the Committee. This meeting took place on 15 December 2009 with the following in attendance:

- Bridgemary School represented by Mr Richard Carlyle, Vice Principal and Acting Head
- Bay House School represented by Mr Ian Potter, Headteacher
- St Vincent College represented by Mr Steve Wain, Principal

Brune Park School was unable to send a representative but the Principal, Dr. Ian Johnson, submitted written evidence.

Reports by Gosport Borough Council's Head of Economic Prosperity and on a visit by Members and Officers to South Downs College on 4 February were appended to the report.

On 17 February Councillor David Kirk, Executive Lead Member of Children's Services, Hampshire County Council gave evidence to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He had been asked to explain changes in the governance of education in Hampshire from 1 April 2010 and to respond to a document summarising the Committee's initial findings.

The report's main findings were outlined in eight detailed paragraphs. It was found that in the Borough, educational achievement is substantially below county and national norms for all age groups. Although the Committee was initially persuaded that there was no evidence that educational under achievement in the Borough reflected on the performance of the Borough's Secondary providers 11 – 16 contextual value added (CVA) data suggested that two of the Borough's three 11-16 schools were performing below national average.

The Committee noted the key gaps in provision and the lack of vocational and occupational provision from entry level to level 3 identified by the LSC. The Committee was concerned that all three Secondary Schools had argued that

gaps in provision worked to encourage disengagement from education. The document submitted by the Head of Economic Prosperity dealt with industrial perspectives and painted a disturbing picture of the adequacy of vocational education in the Borough. This transmitted to a negative impact on the Borough's economic prosperity.

As the scrutiny progressed the Committee became increasingly aware of the difficulty of examining Post-16 vocational education in isolation from educational provision in general and 14-19 vocational provision in particular. One consequence was that when taking evidence the Committee found itself involved with aspects and phases of education other than Post-16 Vocational Education. This may suggest other areas for scrutiny in the future.

The report concluded that the Committee had noted that amongst witnesses there was considerable consensus about what the problems are (the diagnosis); however solutions had proved elusive. For this reason the Committee believed that there is an urgent need for action and leadership. Secondly with the transfer of responsibility for the planning of post-16 vocational education from the LSC to the LEA, the Committee believed that an opportunity existed to address the issues and therefore the Committee had put forward two recommendations for Council to consider.

COUNCIL RESOLVED: That:-

a) the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive engage in discussion with the Hampshire County Council Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and County Officers with the purpose of finding ways of addressing issues identified in this Report; and

b) the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive report back periodically to the Borough's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, in particular, advise the Committee as to the new Governance and financial arrangements that will be put in place for Post-16 Education after 1 April 2010 as soon as these are available.

RETIRING COUNCILLORS

The Mayor referred to the retirement of Councillors Champion and Ward at the forthcoming Municipal Election in May. She thanked them for their contribution to the Borough and wished them well in the future.

The Mayor made special reference to Councillor Cully's retirement at the Municipal Election, with whom she had grown up with in Gosport. They had both

pursued their politics in the Labour Party and helped one another out on many occasions. Councillor Cully had been an excellent Ward Councillor in Bridgemaŕy and he would be missed on the Council. The Mayor wished him well in his retirement.

Councillor Cully responded to the Mayor's best wishes and recounted his experiences and beliefs as a Councillor over the last 23 years and his pride in serving the Borough Council and the people of Bridgemaŕy.

VOTE OF THANKS

The Leader of the Council on behalf of the Council thanked the Mayor and the Mayor's Consort for the excellent way they had served the Council throughout the last Municipal Year.

The meeting ended at 7.28pm