

Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council Meeting
Tuesday 28th March 2017
Sutton Coldfield Town Hall
7pm

Present

Cllrs Hodivala, Pears, Allan, Allen, Bennett, Cairns, Ellis, Griffin, Hewett, Horrocks, Jenkins, Mackey, Mosson, Parry, Passey, Perks, Pocock, Puri, K Ward, S Ward and Wood.

In Attendance

Olive O'Sullivan – Acting Town Clerk, Janet Eustace - LGRC and Mary Watkins – Finance Assistant.

There were 24 members of the public, one member of the press and three officers from Birmingham City Council present.

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited questions or comments from the public.

Several residents spoke in support of continuing a Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Centre library service. Jonny Mayner asked the Town Council to consider supporting a Friends of Sutton Coldfield Library Group to create events and shape library services. Melissa Jones invited everyone to attend the Town Centre library's 80th anniversary celebration on 31st March 2017.

A member of the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group asked the Town Council to consider restoration of Royal Sutton Coldfield history archives and creation of a historical cultural hub for their security and display.

Other questions included how the Town Council would engage with residents on future spending priorities and details around the proposed car parking charges in Sutton Park.

181 Apologies for Absence

The Clerk had received apologies from Cllrs Ives, Long and Okello.

Resolved to accept the apologies received.

182 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Parry, Puri and Pocock declared a non-pecuniary interest as supporters of the Library Lobby. Cllr Wood declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 189, as Chairman of Wylde Green Neighbourhood Forum. Cllrs Parry, Cairns and Passey also declared non-pecuniary interests as non-executive members of Boldmere Partnership and Cllrs Puri and Pocock declared pecuniary interests as executive members of Boldmere Partnership. Cllrs Pears and Mackey declared a non pecuniary interest in item 187 as members of the Sutton Park Advisory Committee.

183 Mayors Announcements

The Mayor updated the meeting on her recent engagements at Halfords, Le Bistro Pierre and Cookes Furniture Store and reported her delight in the opening of new businesses creating jobs in and for the residents of Royal Sutton Coldfield. The Mayor reminded Council that the YMCA are running a Sponsored Sleep Easy Event on 31st March at the Gracechurch Centre and that all were welcome to take part.

184 Mayor's Challenge

The Mayor reported that a Junior Council session had taken place on 17th March where nominated children from 18 Primary Schools across Sutton Coldfield had attended to share their ideas for improving the Town.

The three recommendations from the session were:

- Trim Trail - a nature and exercise trail that would get the whole family activities be free to use and encourage residents to learn about their wonderful parks and exercises to keep them fit and healthy.
- Benches, Plants and Living Walls - more benches, plants or living walls throughout parks or shopping centers to brighten up the town.
- Helping the Homeless - a fact sheet for local organisations and schools containing information about homelessness and how you can help the homeless.

The Mayor thanked all the children who had taken part in the Mayor's Challenge 2016.

Resolved that the Town Council support the implementation of the three recommendations and that further details and costings will be reported to Finance and General Purposes Committee.

185 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Cllr Wood asked for a name amendment from Mr. Adam to Mr. Ludlam in the public question time section of the minutes.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting or Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council held on Tuesday 21st February 2017 (previously circulated) be signed as a true record of the meeting with the correction as above.

186 Matters Arising

None to report.

187 Introduction of Car Parking Charges in Major City Parks

Steve Hollingworth from Birmingham City Council (BCC) reported that due to continuing pressures on BCC budgets, BCC is looking to maximise returns on assets and create new streams of income. This is to mitigate against further cuts to BCC budgets that could result in cuts to services.

It was stated that Sutton Park is in need of investment to its roads and infrastructure, that BCC is committed to Sutton Park and will:

- Review contracts
- Review possible grant income
- Attract new businesses
- Create new income streams

Mr. Hollingworth acknowledged that the parking charges would be unpopular but that they would help to sustain the park as all income generated would be ringfenced and reinvested into Sutton Park. He stated that BCC would be looking at car parking schemes and enforcement to address the issue of visitors parking in residential areas outside of the Park. The consultation process would include Sutton Park Advisory Committee and local resident groups with a final decision in the summer.

Several Councillors spoke against the proposals. Cllr Pears acknowledged investment was needed but thought this could be obtained from other means. Cllr Wood raised concerns around nuisance parking and if the income proposals would be achieved; Cllr Wood also noted that Sutton Park was gifted to Sutton Coldfield residents and they should have free access. Cllr Hewett asked why the proposed annual park charge (£50) was higher than some other local Parks and if visitors to businesses on the site would have to pay to park. Cllr Cairns was concerned that it would restrict residents access to open spaces and reduce health and wellbeing. Cllr Mackey asked if the decision had already been made and for some more information around the consultation and Cllr Perks asked what the arrangements would be for people attending for short periods when dropping off and collecting Scouts. Cllr Pocock stated that it was a reality that money needed to be raised to support the Park but urged BCC to be more creative and look at commercial opportunities to make the Park more self-funding instead of taxing car users.

Mr. Hollingworth confirmed that the main cost of the scheme would be the pay machines and that BCC were liaising with businesses on site to see if they would be offering any concessions for customers. He stated that current income from Park businesses did not fully cover the staff costs for running the Park and that the net cost to BCC of running the Park is about £300,000.

193 Notice of Motion

Cllr Pears stated that following the information shared in the last agenda item he would like to amend the wording of his proposal as published on the agenda to include “that if a decision is made to proceed with charging for cars in Sutton park”.

Cllr Pears clarified that the 1974 scheme allowed residents of Royal Sutton Coldfield to apply for a sticker for their car windscreen that allowed them to park for free.

Resolved that this Town Council proposes that if a decision is made to proceed with charging for cars in Sutton park Birmingham City Council works with Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council to develop a proposal for residents of Royal Sutton Coldfield to have subsidised parking in Sutton Park, to explore the possibility of introducing a scheme similar to the one in operation prior to 1974 and for any funding provided by the Town Council towards such a scheme to be ringfenced for Sutton Park.

188 Transport Model for Royal Sutton Coldfield

John Myatt and Phil Edwards from Birmingham City Council (BCC) Growth and Transportation proposed that Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council (RSCTC) and BCC work together to produce a detailed transport model for Royal Sutton Coldfield. The benefits of such a model would be:

- Bring in investment and information to form Business Cases
- Identify traffic hotspots and resolutions
- Make RSCTC a consultee on future planning applications.

After Councillors questions, M. Edwards confirmed that:

- the model would cost around £160,000 and that RSCTC would be asked to contribute a third of the costs. The remaining balance would be funded by BCC and other agencies.
- The benefits already proved by similar schemes was an increase of local growth funds and investment.
- Pinch points could be reported by the public via district engineers, City Councillors and to BCC officers.
- The Transport Model would be a shared resource for RSCTC and BCC
- The transport Model would be a computer simulation that produced graphical output.
- The timescale to produce would be around twelve months.
- The model would be valid for five years but would be refreshed every 2 years to keep it live.
- The income generated would be used towards big schemes and public transport rather than Sutton Park.

Resolved that Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council will under LG and RA 1977 s29 commit £53,000 from the Making a Difference Fund towards Birmingham City Council producing a Transport Model for Royal Sutton Coldfield.

Resolved that the budget will remain under Planning and Highways budget but will be reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

189 Minutes of Committees

a) Planning and Highways held on 7th March 2017.

The Acting Town Clerk informed Council that due to an administrative error the resolution on the draft minutes was stated as £16,250 but should have read £16,500. This will be amended at the next planning committee meeting.

Resolved that 25 schools in Sutton Coldfield are approached to engage with School Keep Clear Campaign and that funding of £16,500 be allocated to the project from the six pillars budget approved for Road Safety Measures (code 301). This allocation can be funded under the LG and RA 1977 s30.

b) Amenities, Leisure and Community Services held on 14th March 2017.

The Acting Town Clerk informed Council that a replica flag of the former borough of Sutton Coldfield had been commissioned using her delegated powers and would be kept as part of the Civic Regalia. Council were also updated on the Defibrillators which have been commissioned through Community HeartBeat Trust.

Resolved to approve the Summer Florals 2017 with an amendment that the flower towers in Mere Green are removed from the scheme and the £1,800 budget to be allocated to Beeches Walk.

Resolved to approve the Community Grants of £8,500 for Friends of Jones Wood, £1,540 for Royal Sutton Coldfield Community Directory, £7,875 for Special Olympics Sutton Coldfield and £10,000 for Sutton Coldfield Adventure Unit in accordance with its powers under sections 137 and 139 of the LGA 1972.

Due to their pecuniary interests Cllrs Puri and Pocock left the meeting at 20:23 whilst the Community Grant for Boldmere Futures Partnership was discussed.

Resolved to approve the Community Grant of £4,830 for Boldmere Futures Partnership Unit in accordance with its powers under sections 137 and 139 of the LGA 1972.

Cllrs Puri and Pocock returned to the meeting at 20:23.

190 Reports and Updates from Working Groups

a) Town Hall

Cllr S Ward reported that a meeting had taken place with John Clancy, leader of Birmingham City Council (BCC) and that BCC, Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council and Sutton Coldfield Arts and Recreation Trust (SCART) would be working together to moving forward. SCART will be commissioning a report of the building condition within the next six weeks.

b) Community Awards

Cllr Perks thanked The Observer for its coverage of the Community Awards and urged all present to nominate Local Heroes so that they get the recognition they deserve.

c) Britain in Bloom

Cllr Wood stated that the group had met to discuss plans for Royal Sutton Coldfield's entry into the 2018 Britain in Bloom, a community gardening campaign to improve the environment. He stated that the cost to the Town Council would be minimal as they were seeking business sponsorship.

d) Staffing

Cllr Pears informed Council that the advert of an Assistant Town Clerk had now been advertised. The closing date for applications is 13th April and it is anticipated that the successful applicant will be in post by July.

Resolved that Town Council note the reports from the working groups.

191 Sutton Coldfield Library

Cllr Pears updated Council on the result of several meetings that have been held with Birmingham City Council (BCC). He stated that BCC had plans to carry out a ceiling inspection and roof survey but have not yet identified a budget for the works. It was reported that a potential tenant for the top floor had been identified but BCC had not answered questions relating to the cost of the

marketing to attract new tenants, the costs of repairs and the likely income if the top floor is leased out. Cllr Pears asked Council to be 'firm but fair' and consider allocating £30,000 from the library contingency budget so that investigations could continue.

Cllr Pocock asked Council to allocate the full £150,000 to honour the agreement to continue services after April 2017. A vote was taken and the amendment was not carried.

Cllr Mackey stated that since the meeting in December with Ian Ward of Birmingham City Council (BCC) no budget had been found for the repairs necessary and BCC had not done any of the work that was asked of them. He raised concerns that committing the £150,000 could still mean BCC closing the library in August 2017. Cllr Horrocks reminded Council that a long term solution was needed and Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council is not withdrawing its commitment to a Town Centre library but BCC were not holding up their side of the bargain.

20:43pm - Cllr Pears proposed that in accordance with Standing Orders the meeting be extended up to a period of one hour.

Resolved that the meeting be extended for a further hour.

Several Councilors spoke in support of the £30,000 allocation. Cllr K Ward stated that BCC had started the process of repair and the £30,000 allocation would be RSCTC starting the process of funding. He stated that he had taken a local business seeking an office space to the library and was surprised that BCC had not contacted them as part of their marketing of the space. Cllr Puri accused RSCTC of 'playing chicken' with BCC. Cllrs Pears reiterated that this would be a staged payment to ensure BCC's commitment.

Resolved that Town Council allocate £30,000 to Birmingham City Council for a continued Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Centre library service in accordance with its powers under sections 137 and 139 of the LGA 1972.

192 Notice of Motion

Cllr S Ward read out his motion and stated that Birmingham City Council (BCC) was not working for Royal Sutton Coldfield and asked Council to consider a different way of working. He suggested adopting a more efficient model, work with neighbouring authorities and develop locally relevant powers. Cllr S Ward stated that the residents of Royal Sutton Coldfield were at the heart of this motion and deserved better.

Cllr Perks stated that this was a significant move and would define how Royal Sutton Coldfield operated in the future. He claimed that Royal Sutton Coldfield was a 'cash cow' for Birmingham development and that this motion would allow Royal Sutton Coldfield to be a master of its own destiny.

Cllr Pocock ask Council to consider an amendment to the original Motion to:

"That this Council shall explore, with our MP and City Councilors alternative options for local Government for Royal Sutton Coldfield. We will use necessary resources, legally available to us to explore what alternative Local Government models are available to Royal Sutton Coldfield. Following which we will consult with our residents."

Cllr Pocock encouraged Council to get results by working with BCC, using mutual trust and respect to get an agreement and leave 'Party Politics' out of the motion. He stated that the only way powers could be devolved is with BCC's agreement.

Cllr Hodivala stated that this could also be achieved through an Act of Parliament.

The amendment to the motion was not passed.

Cllr Horrocks stated that the original motion was standing up for the rights of residents. Cllr Hewett stated that BCC is too big and a scheme of Local Control would be better. Cllr Bennett spoke of her disappointment at the tone and content of the debate. Cllr Parry ask all Councilors to work together and stated that this motion was too soon for the Town Council, which is too young and immature, without a proven track record.

Resolved that Labour run Birmingham City Council has repeatedly expressed contempt for our Royal Town and the wishes of our residents, most recently in regard to decimating our Library Services, destroying, our Greenbelt and now seeking to charge Royal Sutton Coldfield residents to enter our own Sutton Park.

This is a fundamental breach of Birmingham City Councils democratic covenant with Royal Sutton Coldfield. It is therefore incumbent on this Council to look to take further powers from Birmingham City Council; to strengthen local accountability and deliver efficient and appropriate local government. Any devolution of powers and services must be accompanied by the associated funding.

This Town Council will support our MP Rt. Hon Andrew Mitchell and our City Councillors, in addressing the needs of our residents whose wishes have been ignored and belittled by Birmingham City Council for too long.

That this Council shall explore, with our MP and City Councillors alternative options for Local Government for Royal Sutton Coldfield.

We will use necessary resources, legally available to us to explore what alternative Local Government models are available to Royal Sutton Coldfield. Following which we will consult with our residents.

194 BMet Art College

Cllr Pears asked Council to consider applying for the Old Arts School Building on Lichfield Road to be designated an Asset of Community Value to enable the viability of the building as a heritage/cultural/civic hub to be explored. The Acting Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Council would make the application and if successful any Community Group would be able to submit a plan.

Resolved the Town Council apply for the Old Arts School Building on Lichfield Road to be designated an Asset of Community Value.

195 BCC Proposals for Public Car Parking Charge Increases

Cllr Pears proposed that Standing Orders were suspended to allow Cllr K Wood from Birmingham City Council (BCC) to update the Council on BCC's proposals to increase car parking charges.

Resolved that standing orders be suspended.

Cllr K Wood stated that the original documents suggested an average increase on car parking charges of 2% across Birmingham. The cabinet paper stated 5% and the actual proposals are for an increase of up to 150% across Royal Sutton Coldfield's car parks. He stated that consultation with the Town Council had been lacking and Cabinet Members had responded that legally they did not have to consult.

Standing orders were re-instated at 21:25.

Cllr Pears stated that Royal Sutton Coldfield's car parking increase should not be more than that of other areas in Birmingham.

Resolved that Acting Town Clerk expresses the dissatisfaction of Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council (RSCTC) at the increased car parking charges due to be applied by Birmingham City Council (BCC) from April 2017. RSCTC requested that parity with other areas of Birmingham on car parking charges and the time period that charges are applied. RSCTC also requested that BCC recognise RSCTC as a consultee.

196 Accounts for Payment

Resolved to approve the payments and appoint Cllr S Ward and Cllr D Allan to approve the online payments and any other further payments required before the next Town Council meeting.

197 Use of Town Clerk's Delegated Powers

Nothing to report.

198 Risk Assessment Policy and Assessment

Cllrs Pears noted the policy had been supported by internal audit and asked that the Assessment be reviewed at least every 6 months. Cllr S Ward asked that the Assessment be renamed Risk Register.

Resolved to adopt the Risk Assessment Policy

Resolved to adopt the Risk Register, to be reviewed every 6 months by Finance and General Purposes Committee and annually by Full Council.

199 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 25th April 2017.

Meeting closed at 21:33