

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 29 January, 2009

PRESENT:

Councillors I.T.W. Fletcher (Speaker), D.G. Allen, G. Ashcroft, D.W.D. Ashley (Deputy Speaker), R.K. Austin, R. Aveley, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, R.G. Chaplin, E.A. Clare, G.J.L. Davies, J.A. Dixon, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade (Leader), V.A. Fletcher, J.A. Francis, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, R.E. Groom (Mayor), P.A.E. Homer, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, G.P. Hossell, S.M. Kelly, R.T. Kiernan, A. Lawrence, L. Lomax, A.A. Mackenzie, C.N. Mason, A.D. McClements, A.A. Meredith, J.C. Minor, C.P.R. Mollett, R.A. Overton, H. Rhodes, U.E. Sambrook, J.M. Seymour, C.F. Smith, A.J. Stanton, E.M. Swift, M.J. Smith, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, V. Tonks, R.M. Tyler, D.R.W. White, A.G.P. Williams, H.J. Williams and D.G. Wright

61. PRAYERS

The Reverend. Father Alban Greenwood, Priest of St. Patrick's Wellington, said prayers.

62. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 11 September, 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Speaker.

63. HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES AND MONITORING OFFICER

The Speaker welcomed Jonathan Eatough, the Council's new Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, who had taken up the post in early January.

64. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Y.C. Hicks, F.R. Picken and K.S. Sahota

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

66. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor, Councillor R.E. Groom, presented the Mayoral Engagements report and Members noted those undertaken between 26th November 2008 and 23rd January 2009. He highlighted his tour of the Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering (DCAE Cosford) on 26 November and paid tribute

to Air Commodore Gammon, who was due to retire in March 2009. Members agreed that the Mayor should write a letter to Air Commodore Gammon offering the Council's best wishes on his retirement. The Mayor also highlighted his visit to the Royal Lancastrian Yeomanry on 23 January, 2009, which he had found valuable, and hoped that arrangements could be made for other Members to visit.

67. CHANGE OF CABINET ASSISTANT

Councillor E.J. Carter, Cabinet Member: Regeneration gave a verbal update and informed Members that Councillor G.P. Hossell was to be the Cabinet Assistant for Regeneration.

68. REPORTS OF LEADER AND CABINET

(a) Report of Leader

Councillor A.J. Eade updated Members on the Credit Crunch Advice Centre. He reported that the Council had been unable to reach agreement on the rental and service charge for premises in the Town Centre and that various options were now being explored, with Telford Library being the most likely option. Negotiations were currently taking place and the Leader expected to be able to set an opening date in the near future.

The Leader also informed Members that figures published recently in the local press were inaccurate and that the Council's total expenditure on Public Relations was lower than the reported figure. Costs had in fact been reduced by £90,000 in this area.

(b) Report of Cabinet

The report of the Cabinet, setting out the matters determined on the 8th December, 2008 and the 12th January, 2009 was received. Individual Cabinet Members reported on some of the key areas of work currently being undertaken by their Portfolio and on issues affecting the Borough. Councillor E.J. Carter, Cabinet Member: Regeneration updated Members on regeneration plans for the Borough towns. Councillor S.P. Burrell, Cabinet Member: Children & Young People, reported on the Borough's best ever GCSE results and on the consultation process regarding the co-location of Three Oaks and Stirchley Primary schools.

Councillors then asked a number of questions. Councillor U.E. Sambrook asked when building work would begin at Randlay Centre and Councillor E.J. Carter agreed to provide a written answer.

Councillor U.E. Sambrook asked Councillor S.P. Burrell whether the problems caused by parents parking around the new school at the beginning and end of the school day would be considered when the new school was designed and Councillor Burrell confirmed that this would be considered.

Councillor Sambrook asked Councillor M.B. Hosken, Cabinet Member: Environment whether he and the Leader of the Council would consider suspending the £15 bulk collection charge and Councillor Hosken agreed to provide a written answer.

Councillor R.A. Overton asked Councillor A.J. Eade if he would consider using outlets in the Borough Towns, rather than the Town Centre, for the Advice Centre. Councillor Eade replied that the scale of resources required meant that diluting the service around the Borough would negate the effectiveness of the service.

Councillor Overton asked Councillor E.J. Carter when the St. George's area would benefit from regeneration. Councillor Carter replied that it was not possible to prioritise all areas of the Borough but that proposals would be considered in due course.

Councillor W.L. Tomlinson asked Councillor S.P. Burrell whether all Members could be sent the GCSE results that had recently been published in the local press and Councillor Burrell replied that the results would be sent to Members both for their ward and for the Borough overall.

Councillor A.D. McClements expressed concerns to Councillor E.J. Carter as to whether funding for the Wellington regeneration project would be available. Councillor Carter responded that he was confident that funding would be found and that the regeneration work in Wellington would go ahead.

Councillor E.J. Carter in response to a question from Councillor A.A. Mackenzie confirmed that the Councillor would be kept informed of any significant events regarding the regeneration of Sutton Hill.

Councillor A.G.P. Williams asked Councillor E.J. Carter whether the Civic Offices would be relocated to Dawley. Councillor Carter stated that the site would be decided after consultation and consideration of the options available. Members would be informed when any decision had been made.

Councillor R.K. Austin asked Councillor A.J. Eade whether talks were taking place for the Council to work in partnership with Hark & Apollo over the development of the Town Centre and whether the Growth Grant would be directed to dealing with Social Housing needs and addressing homelessness in the Borough. Councillor Eade confirmed that he had met with Hark & Apollo earlier in the week and that he was committed to moving the project forward and to creating jobs for local people. He stated that details of budget proposals would be contained in the future budget presentation.

Councillor D.R.W. White, referring to the regeneration plans for Woodside, asked Councillor E.J. Carter whether the Parish newsletter could be used to inform local residents of regeneration plans. Councillor Carter replied that, if Councillor White wrote to him with details, he would contact officers and request that they used this method to communicate with residents.

Councillor D.G. Allen asked Councillor A.J Eade whether he would take a personal interest as to the reasons why there were delays in the Town Centre regeneration. Councillor Eade confirmed that he was interested in all issues affecting the Borough.

RESOLVED – that the Cabinet report be noted.

69. SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2009/10

Councillor Adrian Lawrence, Cabinet Member: Resources presented the report of the Head of Finance which requested Council to determine the Council Tax Base for General and Special Fund purposes for the financial year 2009/10.

In order to determine the appropriate Council Tax levels for the borough it was necessary for the Council to determine the tax base for its area or part of its area. The budget requirements of the various precepting authorities were divided by this figure to arrive at the Band D equivalent level of Council Tax.

The determining of the tax base had to be set between 1st December and 31st January in relation to 2009/10 as prescribed by the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 as amended. The figures used for the tax base allowed for the continuation of the resolutions in respect of reducing the discounts for empty properties and second homes agreed last year.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the calculation of the tax base for 2009/10, as shown at paragraph 5.6 and Appendix 1 of the report, be approved;
- (b) That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount calculated for Telford & Wrekin Council Tax Base for 2009/10 for its special fund area shall be as per the appropriate parish amounts detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

70. MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The Council received for noting the minutes of the Plans Board of 19th November and 10th December 2008, the Licensing Committee of the 2nd and 16th December 2008, the Standards Committee of 18th December 2008 and the Scrutiny Leadership Board of 5th January 2009.

71. QUESTIONS

The following Questions were asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10:

- (a) Councillor Charles Smith had submitted the following question:

How many tons of household rubbish has been sent to landfill during this financial year and how much has this cost in landfill tax.

Councillor M.B. Hosken, Cabinet Member for Environment informed Councillor Smith that 33,800 tonnes of household waste were sent to landfill between the 1st April 2008 and the 30th November 2008. This had cost approximately £1.1 million.

- (b) Councillor Joy Francis had submitted the following question:

Does the Leader agree that, in view of the Credit Crunch and the local economic situation, it is absolutely necessary that this Council plays a leading role to ensure that as much help and advice as possible is available to local residents and businesses?

The Leader responded that it was vital that in the uncertain market conditions the Council did all it could to lead the way.

- (d) Councillor Sean Kelly had submitted the following question:

Does the Leader believe that the proposals now being developed and put forward under the Borough Towns Initiative are fundamental to the future prosperity of the Borough as a whole and complement the development of Telford Town Centre?

The Leader responded that the Borough Towns Initiative was fundamental to the prosperity of the Borough as a whole. The viability of traditional communities was vital and focusing on the Town Centre alone would fall short in helping the Borough as a whole.

- (e) Councillor Rosemary Chaplin had submitted the following question:

Does the Leader agree that councillors who change affiliation should put themselves forward to the community they represent for a fresh mandate?

The Leader responded as follows that this was a matter of conscience but in these circumstances he believed that councillors should stand for re-election by the people who elected them.

- (f) Councillor Roger Aveley had submitted the following question:

Due to the withdrawal of the private sector developer from the restoration of the burnt out Shopping Centre in Leegomery, does the Leader think it is now time to take matters into our own hands and do it ourselves?

The Leader responded that the recent announcement in the local press had demonstrated the will of the Council to deal quickly and

authoritatively with these issues and that the people of Leegomery would welcome the news that work would start in mid February.

(g) Councillor Graham Hossell had submitted the following question:

Does the Leader agree not enough has been done in Sutton Hill in previous years and, regardless of political differences, that full support should be given by all members of this Council to the plans being developed by this administration to regenerate the area?

The Leader responded that the administration had inherited some regeneration issues but had started to tackle the problems. The regeneration of Sutton Hill was a priority for the administration and he looked forward to receiving the support of all Members.

(h) Councillor R.K. Austin had submitted the following question:

Will the Leader give Council an unequivocal commitment to look seriously at the regeneration of Dawley by taking up the Labour Group's suggestion of re-location of the Civic Offices there?

This would give a substantial boost to the local economy of Dawley

The Leader responded that the site would be decided after consultation and consideration of the options available, Issues such as costs and traffic management would need to be considered. Members would be informed when any decision had been made but no decision had yet been made on the re-location of Civic Offices.

72. MOTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11 Councillor C.F. Smith moved the following Motion, seconded by Councillor L. Lomax:

'This Council agrees to investigate ways by which the collection and recycling of small batteries and low energy light bulbs can be increased. The objectives being;

- 1) To make proper disposal easier for all residents.
- 2) To reduce the amount of hazardous waste going to landfill.

A report to be available to Council by October this year (2009)'

The Motion having been proposed and seconded, the Speaker referred the matter to Cabinet under rule 11.6 of the Council Procedure Rules.

The meeting ended at 7.51 p.m.