

## **BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN**

### **Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Tuesday, 2 June 2009 at 7.00 pm at Civic Offices, Telford**

#### **PRESENT:**

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

#### **20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors P.A.E. Homer, L. Lomax, A.D. McClements, H. Rhodes, U.E. Sambrook and K.L. Tomlinson.

#### **21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

#### **22. FUTURE DIRECTION OF TELFORD**

Councillors R.K. Austin, G.M. Green, D.G. Allen, E.A. Clare and C.F. Smith had, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1, requested an Extraordinary meeting. The contents of the request were:-

'This meeting is to discuss the single issue of the concerns expressed in an article on the front page of the Shropshire Star (local press) on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009 by a prominent businessman, Graham Wynn "Concern over Town Future" questioning the future direction of the future of Telford'.

'We being Members of Telford & Wrekin Council are concerned that leading business people have this view of the Council's position. This comes at what is a critical time for us all and indeed one that we ought to be as one, about the future direction of the town with business, industry, commerce and the general public as to the way forward.

We also believe that Council need to debate this as a matter of extreme urgency in order to alleviate such concerns as those that have been expressed and prevent the escalation of such views and perceptions'.

Councillor R.K. Austin, opening the debate, told Members that the Council must work in partnership with others to ensure the success of the local economy. He asked what was being done to address the perception of disengagement with the local business community. There needed to be a clear vision and

commitment for the future of Telford and the views of local people and the Council's partners should be taken in to account during this process.

Councillor G.M. Green felt that it was right for Council to debate the concerns of local business leaders. Councillor R. Aveley pointed out that one person did not represent the local business community; he felt that local businesses were happy with the Council. Councillor V. Tonks asked Members whose views were being represented by Mr. Wynne. Councillor E.A. Clare was disappointed that some Members were dismissive of the debate and felt that all Members should be talking to each other and moving forward together. Councillor E.J. Carter Cabinet Member: Regeneration explained that the Council would never neglect the business community and pointed to innovations such as the Enterprise HQ facility that supported local business people. He felt that local business people were happy with the work being done by the Council.

A number of Members raised concerns about the requirement for the meeting and were concerned about the cost of the meeting. Councillor R.A. Overton told Members that the Council were strategic partners and should be working with the business community. Councillor S.M. Kelly did not feel that an Extraordinary meeting should have been requested as the newspaper article leading to the debate lacked any substance. Councillor C.M. Smith told Members that the meeting had been called to debate how the town of Telford should go forward. He felt that all Members should be involved in shaping the future direction of Telford. Councillor A.A. Mackenzie felt that the business community had faith in Telford following the efforts made by the Council in previous years. Councillor W.L. Tomlinson told Members that the Council should focus more effort on keeping the Local Strategic Partnership and local businesses informed.

The Leader, Councillor A.J. Eade, responded by telling Members that he did not recognise some the perceived concerns raised by Councillor Austin. He pointed out that the Council had the support of the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and local businesses. He added that his administration was working for the good of the whole community. He told Members that the satisfaction levels of the local community were vitally important. A consultation survey of 5000 local businesses was being prepared that would explore local priorities in the Borough. Councillor D.R.W. White raised concerns over a lack of consultation with the owners of the Town Centre and felt that press criticism was as a result of inadequate communication.

Summing up, Councillor R.K. Austin said that he wanted the Council to move forward together. He reminded Members that his administration had started a lot of the local regeneration work. In response to Members who had concerns over the cost of the meeting, he told Members that the democratic process had a cost but was worthwhile. He had raised the issue as it was potentially damaging to the town and to the Council.

The meeting ended at 8.19 pm

**Speaker**.....

**Date** .....