

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 3 May, 2012 at 6.30 p.m. at the Civic Offices, Telford.

PRESENT:

Councillors M.J. Smith (Mayor), R.K. Austin, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, N.A. Dugmore, E.A. Clare, S. Davies, B.H. Duce, A.J. Eade, C.B.A. Elliott, A.R.H. England, N.A.M. England, R.C. Evans, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, R.T. Kiernan, A. Lawrence, J. Loveridge, A.A. Mackenzie, C.N. Mason, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, A.A. Meredith, J.C. Minor, C.P.R. Mollett, L.A. Murray, R.A. Overton, F.R. Picken, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota (Leader), J.M. Seymour, R.J. Sloan, C.F. Smith, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

96. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 1 March, 2012, be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

97. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors D.G. Davies, I.T.W. Fletcher, V.A. Fletcher, K.R. Guy, M.G. Ion, A.S. Jhawar, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, R.G. Scammell and A.J. Stanton.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors E.A. Clare and C.F. Smith both declared a personal interest in question b), the question relating to the closure of Wrockwardine Wood Arts College.

99. COUNCILLOR DAVE DAVIES – REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Mayor moved that a leave of absence be agreed for Councillor D.G. Davies who was receiving treatment for a serious illness. The motion was seconded and Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendation.

RESOLVED – that in accordance with section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor D.G. Davies be granted leave of absence from his Council duties for a period of six months effective from 3 May 2012.

100. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Telford & Wrekin Health and Safety Award – Road Safety Team

The Leader presented the Telford & Wrekin Health & Safety Award to Gavin Ashford and Andrew Davies from the Road Safety team for the development and delivery of the 'Drive for Work' workshop sessions which had been attended by 150 employees in recent months. The team had raised levels of awareness of the

hazards of driving for work and provided support in the development of future health and safety policy guidance.

b) Leader's Report

The Leader told Members that a number of leading businesses would be trading from the new Southwater development by the end of 2014, providing 260 jobs for local people. A Telford and Wrekin delegation has had an "extremely positive" meeting with the Under Secretary of State for the Department for Transport to discuss proposals for a motorway link to be built from the M54 to the M6 North and the M6 Toll road. If the government could be persuaded to support the proposed link the local economy would be boosted and further inward investment would follow. A delegation from Telford & Wrekin had recently met with the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury to press for the retention of Telford as a key location for support staff employed by Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs Service (HMRC). A small business loans fund had recently been launched in order to provide assistance to local businesses; this was a further example of the Council's Co-operative working. Vacant office accommodation had recently been purchased at Addenbrooke House as part of arrangements to accommodate staff after Civic offices was vacated.

101. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor briefly updated Members on his recent engagements.

102. CABINET DECISIONS MADE SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Members received the report on the Cabinet decisions made since the last meeting of the Council on 1 March, 2012.

Councillor R.A. Overton, Deputy Leader, referred Members to the NHS Transformation update report that had been to Cabinet on 29 March. The report had provided a further update on the health transformation agenda for local NHS services and the implications for the Council. A Members information seminar was due to be held on this topic on 14 May and Members were urged to attend this session. Councillor E.A. Clare, Cabinet Member: Adult & Social Care commended the report on the Adult Social Care Account which had been considered by Cabinet on 29 March. The report had illustrated what Adult Care and Support were doing to improve people's lives in Telford and Wrekin.

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery referred to the report on Accommodation Investment and Acquisition of Property which had been approved by Cabinet on 29 March. The report detailed investment in office accommodation and acquisition of property as part of the accommodation strategy. Councillor McClements pointed to an £800k saving this year compared with previous plans to build a new Civic offices. A further £1.85m would be saved in the following year and £1.2m in the year after. The planned borrowing for a new Civic offices was over 40 years; the current administration's plans would save £47m over the 40 year period by not building new Civic offices. Councillor A.J.

Eade, referring to the purchase and refurbishment of Addenbrooke House, asked whether millions would be spent on making accommodation habitable. He was critical of administration's accommodation policy and the inefficiencies arising from spreading employees around the Borough and asked whether proposals would cost around £10m. In response, Councillor McClements confirmed that the current administration's plans would save £47m over the 40 year period by not building new Civic offices.

Councillor N.A. Dugmore asked why Addenbrooke House had been purchased with a 999 year lease. Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development responded that the lease could easily be sold on with the property should the Council sell the building and that the freehold could be purchased at any point. This was, in fact, a cheaper form of lease.

103. CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL COMMISSIONS'

The Council was pleased to welcome Mr I. Dosser of CapGemini to the meeting in order to present a report which set out the work which both the Co-operative Commission and Employee Commission had been engaged in shaping and moving forward the delivery of the Co-operative Council.

The members of the Co-operative Commission had brought a wealth of experience and skills from all parts of the local community, and had given over 750 hours of their own time to develop this initiative. Mr Dosser stated that he had found it a very rewarding process, and a good opportunity to contribute to the future direction of the Borough. The Commission brought key partners together, and there had been a clear commitment and passion to work together to agree recommendations on the way forward. The recommendations in the report related to five main themes – Employment, Skills & the Economy; Commissioning Service & Procurement; Volunteering; Image of Telford & Wrekin; and Co-operative Values & Commissioning. Mr Dosser added that he did not see this as a short-term process, and that the Commission would re-convene in September 2012 to review progress. The recommendations had been presented to and endorsed by Cabinet on 29 March 2012

Councillor S. Davies, Cabinet Member: Environment, Co-operative Council & Partnerships commended the report to Council. The Leader of the main opposition group had been invited to take part in the work of the Co-operative Commission but had not attended; Councillor Davies asked that all Members support the work of the Commissions' and invited all Members to take part. He highlighted a number of projects that were representative of the work of a Co-operative Council which included:

- Regeneration of Brookside
- The doubling of the number of apprenticeships at the Council
- Co-operative Parish Council action teams
- Your Money Your Projects

A number of Members welcomed the report of the Commissions, and the opportunity this gave for new ways of working to address the enormous challenges facing the Authority. Councillor E.J. Carter pointed out that the previous

administration had worked with partners and helped to ensure a strong voice for Telford through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

A vote of thanks to Ian Dosser and the other Commissioners was proposed, seconded and unanimously supported.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

104. PROPOSED CHANGES TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE 2012/13

The Chairman of Scrutiny Management Board presented a report which proposed recommendations for a revised Scrutiny Committee structure for 2012/13. The current Scrutiny arrangements had been in place since Annual Council in May 2011. Throughout the year, the Scrutiny Management Board, Scrutiny Chairmen and Scrutiny Members had formally and informally evaluated the efficiency and effectiveness of the Scrutiny Committees. Two key areas had been identified for improvement which related to duplication in the work programmes and interests between the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees; and the absence of a Scrutiny Committee with a remit which covered key areas of the Council's work, specifically housing, economic development, regeneration, environment, transport and (where relevant) planning. These areas had, therefore, been covered by the Scrutiny Management Board's work programme but had subsequently limited its capacity to play a full strategic role or to conduct reviews requiring in-depth or follow-up work.

Following consultation with Scrutiny Assembly Members, it was proposed to merge the Health and the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees into a Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee and establish a Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee. The remit of this latter Committee would include scrutiny of housing, economic development, regeneration, environment, transport and (where relevant) planning matters. In addition, proposals relating to the involvement of Town & Parish Councils with Scrutiny were under consultation with Scrutiny Members and Town & Parish Councils until 10 May 2012 and a further report would be made to Council regarding any consequent changes to the Scrutiny arrangements.

Councillor N.A. Dugmore welcomed the report but had one point which was regarding the remit of Scrutiny on Planning policy. He referred to recommendation 2.4 of the report which set out the remit of the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee. This remit included, where appropriate, Planning matters. Councillor Dugmore suggested it would be more appropriate for the remit to cover 'Planning policy' and not Planning matters'. It was unanimously agreed that the recommendation be amended to include the words Planning policy.

RESOLVED – that Council notes the following changes to the Scrutiny Committee structure for the 2012/13 municipal year:

- (a) The merger of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees into the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee.**

- (b) That there will be eight elected Members on the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee.
- (c) That the Co-optees on the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committees will automatically become co-opted members of the Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee, and that the Co-opted members of the Health Scrutiny Committee who also sit on the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee will remain the same.
- (d) The establishment of a Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee. The remit of the Committee will include scrutiny of matters relating to housing, economic development, regeneration, environment, transport and where appropriate planning policy.
- (e) That there will be eight elected Members appointed to the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee.

105. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT & NEW ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

The Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection and Monitoring Officer presented a report which set out the recommendations of the Standards Committee for a future ethical standards regime at Telford & Wrekin in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. The proposed new arrangements included a new Standards Committee and a new Code of Conduct for members.

A transitional period was currently in place where local authorities were expected to resolve all outstanding complaints and the current planned date for implementation of the new system was the 1st July 2012. However, regulations to support the principle legislation were still awaited and accordingly the Council had to be prepared for the possibility of a further delay in the timetable.

The Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection and Monitoring Officer told Members that it was specifically required that a Code of Conduct be adopted. The recommendation at 2.3 of the report would need to be amended to allow delegated authority to make necessary changes to the Guidance of Interests accompanying the Code of Conduct and not the Code itself. The amendment was moved, seconded and approved.

RESOLVED – that:-

- (a) The Council creates a politically balanced Standards Committee comprising of 7 members of the Council including at least one member of the Executive and a Hearings Sub Committee, (membership to be determined by the Standards Committee) (approving the terms of reference as set out in Appendix 1 to the report) which will come into effect on 1st July 2012 or as may otherwise be specified by regulation made pursuant to Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011;
- (b) Subject to (c) below, the Council approve the draft Code of Conduct for adoption (as attached at Appendix 2 of the report) as the Council's

Code of Conduct which will come into effect on 1st July 2012 or as may otherwise be specified by regulation made pursuant to Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011;

- (c) Council delegates to the Monitoring Officer authority to make necessary amendments to the Guidance on Interests that accompanied the Code of Conduct on page 2 of the report in consultation with the Deputy Leader to accommodate the provisions of Regulations that may be made pursuant to the Localism Act 2011; and**
- (d) The appointment of the independent person is brought to the first Council meeting after completion of the recruitment process.**

106. MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Council noted the resolved minutes of Boards and Committees:

Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee	2 February
Audit Committee	31 January & 27 March
Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee	5 January & 1 February
Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee	26 March
Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee	2 February & 21 March
Licensing Committee	13 March
Plans Board	10 & 18 January, 22 February, 7 & 28 March and 11 April
Scrutiny Management Board	9 January & 5 March
Standards Committee	8 February

107. QUESTIONS

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

- a) Councillor B.J. Thompson had submitted the following question:

“Can the Leader outline the position with regard to accommodation of the Council staff and explain the amount this plan will save each year compared to that of the last administration?”

Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader of the Council, referred Councillor Thompson to his announcements and to the discussion that had taken place earlier in the meeting where the Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery had stated an £800k saving this year compared with previous plans to build a new Civic offices. A further £1.85m would be saved in the following year and £1.2m in the year after.

b) Councillor S.P. Burrell had submitted the following question:

“Cabinet has been celebrating its decision to close Wrockwardine Wood Arts College and cull over 400 secondary education places within the Borough: Can the lead member for C&YP explain this decision in the light of increasing birth rates and growing pressure on primary school capacity?”

Councillor P.R. Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families replied that the decisions made were about sustainability and that new schools for Telford was a positive story. Previous estimates of school numbers had been based on unreliable housing growth figures. Secondary school numbers would remain low for at least 6 years.

Councillor S.P. Burrell then asked what amount of money would be kept in reserves to allow for future expenditure when numbers rose.

Councillor Watling replied that there was a 3% surplus of school places.

c) Councillor A.J. Eade had submitted the following question:

“Can the Leader of the Council specify how many responses the Council received in support of his 2.5% Council Tax increase?”

Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader of the Council, replied that there had been 844 responses in favour of a 2.5% increase and 595 in favour of a 3.5% increase from a total of 2287 responses

d) Councillor E.J. Carter had submitted the following question:

“Will the Leader congratulate the previous Conservative administration on their vision to invest in Wellington and deliver a new bus station, Play area, Library, Leisure facilities, toilets, shopping centre re-paving and the new Civic Complex and agree that all of these will have huge economic benefits for the Borough Town?”

Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader of the Council, replied that Councillor Carter might wish to refer to a Cabinet report from 12 March 2007 which had been produced prior to the previous administration. Wellington regeneration had been approved by Cabinet in January 2005, prior to the election of the previous administration.

Councillor Carter then asked what economic benefits losing 650 school places would bring to Wellington.

Councillor Sahota deferred to Councillor Watling who responded that a new Charlton school would be built, something that was not in the previous administration's plans.

e) Councillor A.A. Meredith had submitted the following question:

"Does the Leader recognise and support the huge regeneration projects in Dawley undertaken by the Conservative Administration in particular locating the new Phoenix school in the heart of the town and at the heart of the community?"

Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader of the Council, referred Councillor Meredith to his previous response to question d) raised by Councillor Carter.

108. NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) Councillor A.J. Eade, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, moved the following Motion:

"This Council welcomes the forthcoming review of electoral arrangements in the Borough of Telford and Wrekin that commences during September of this year.

Consequently, in the interests of strengthening the Councillor's role, clearer accountability, and significantly reduced costs, this council resolves to request the LGBCE to undertake a review that will include the following principles:

- a) A reduction in the number of Borough Councillors by a minimum of 25% (14 Elected Members)
- b) Abolish multi-member wards and create larger single member wards across the Borough."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor J.M. Seymour.

Councillor Eade told Members that his proposals would serve to modernise and streamline the authority. Reducing the numbers of councillors who would represent single member wards would serve to enhance the accountability of individual councillors. Moreover, savings could be realised in the face of difficult economic times for both the Council and the taxpayer.

Councillor R. A. Overton, speaking against the motion, told Members that the motion would override the work of the Council's Boundary Review Committee. The Committee should be allowed to perform its role and a report should come to Council for consideration in due course. It was important that all Members had the relevant information before making a decision on this matter. Councillor R.J. Sloan, speaking against the motion, told Members that the Boundary Review Committee

had been set by the previous administration specifically to consider Boundary matters.

Councillor J.M. Seymour, seconding the motion, told Members that significant savings could be generated on allowances and costs by the proposals. As much as £250k per year could be saved by reducing the number of councillors by 20%.

A vote was taken and it was:

RESOLVED – that the motion not be approved

The meeting ended at 8.16 pm

Mayor:

Date: