

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a Meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday 19 January, 2012 at 6.30 pm at Civic Offices, Telford

PRESENT:

Councillors M.J. Smith (Mayor), R.K. Austin, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, E.J. Carter, E.A. Clare, S. Davies, B.H. Duce, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade, C.B.A. Elliott, A.R.H. England, N.A.M. England, R.C. Evans, I.T.W. Fletcher, V.A. Fletcher, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, K.R. Guy, T.J. Hope, A.S. Jhawar, 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, R.A. Overton, F.R. Picken, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota (Leader), J.M. Seymour, R.J. Sloan, C.F. Smith, A.J. Stanton, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

71. PRAYERS

The Reverend Andy Smith, Ecumenical Dean of Telford, led Members in prayer.

72. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24th November, 2011, be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors S.P. Burrell, D.G. Davies, M.G. Ion, L.A. Murray and R.G. Scammell.

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 the 2011/12 Financial Monitoring report, containing recommendations from Cabinet.

75. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor briefly updated Members on his recent engagements.

76. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Leader's Report

Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader of the Council, drew Members attention to the budget consultation exercise. This was the widest ranging budget consultation undertaken by this Council, residents' views were being sought on the budget and on the setting of Council Tax.

Work on Oakengates regeneration was due to start in February whilst plans had been submitted for the £2.3m redevelopment of Hadley Centre. New offices in Wellington would open in March and £6m was also being invested in Brookside.

The excellent new Abraham Darby Sports & Leisure facility and the Woodlands Primary school had both opened recently .

The Council's first Managing Director was due to be appointed later in the meeting. This post represented a £16k saving when compared against the previous post of Chief Executive. The new role was more operational and fitted well with the aims and values of a Co-operative Council. In closing, Councillor Sahota asked Members to join with him in wishing Councillor G.C.W. Reynolds a very happy 21st birthday. Councillor Reynolds was the youngest of the Borough's 54 councillors.

b) Announcements

The Leader presented Keith Osmund-Smith, with a certificate of achievement in recognition of the contribution to the community of the Telford Street Pastor service. The service commenced in July, 2011. The presence of street pastors helped to reduce crime and injury and incidents of anti-social behaviour. Street pastors were volunteers and worked a minimum of one night a month, usually from 10pm to around 4am. The scheme was a good example of the council, police and the community all working together. He paid tribute to the dedication of all of the street pastors, many of whom were in attendance at the meeting.

Keith Osmund-Smith told the meeting that the service was proving a great success. Most work so far had been in the Town Centre but from 20 January mobile patrols would also be working in the Wellington area. The street pastors received warm applause from Members.

Richard Partington, Managing Director Designate, left the room for the duration of the next item.

77. APPOINTMENT OF MANAGING DIRECTOR

The Leader presented the joint report of the Head of Governance and the Human Resources Manager which recommended the appointment of the Council's first Managing Director.

At full council on 24 November 2011 it had been resolved to create and appoint to a new post of Managing Director, Head of Paid Services, Returning Officer & Electoral Registration Officer as part of a restructuring of Council Senior Management to support the Co-operative Council model. Personnel Board had undertaken a recruitment and selection process in line with Council procedures, the process concluded with a full day of assessment tests and interviews in December 2011. The Personnel Board concluded unanimously that Richard Partington had performed very strongly in all of the selection procedures and met the job requirements determined by Council and that he should be recommended for appointment to the role as advertised.

This was a very challenging position and the Leader was encouraged that an individual within the organisation had demonstrated the skills and determination to take on this role. Cabinet and those closely associated with the selection process

had full confidence that Richard Partington would perform very strongly in the job and recommend confirmation of his appointment to the post of Telford & Wrekin's first Managing Director. The salary grade attached to the post means that there was a saving of £16,400 on the previous Chief Executive role.

Councillor R.A. Overton seconded the proposal.

A vote was taken and it was

RESOLVED – That Richard Partington be confirmed as Managing Director, Head of Paid Services, Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer

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

Members received the report (Appendix D) on the Cabinet decisions made since the last meeting of the Council on 24 November.

A number of questions were raised relating to the following Cabinet decisions

a) Scrutiny report – First Point for Business

In response to a question from Councillor E.J. Carter, Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development, confirmed that the Council was engaging with the Chamber of Commerce on this issue as well as the Federation for Small Businesses.

b) Service & Financial Planning

Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher addressed a question to Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, asking for clarification of how the figure quoted of £40m cuts could be substantiated.

Councillor McClements responded that the £27m cash cuts to grants (ie reduction from 10/11 original position) started with £3m in year in 10/11 and would run through to 14/15. The Council would normally be receiving increasing grants over this period rising in line with inflation, population increase and other service pressure indicators. By the time an allowance was made for these factors on the total 10/11 grants of around £110m which were being cut, the true/real terms impact over this period was more around £40m.

c) Financial Monitoring 2011/12

A question was raised by Councillor A.J. Eade regarding the Council's waste strategy. This question arose from the removal of £4m from the capital programme which related to plans for a bulking station. The bulking station could provide potential income and reduce ongoing liability for Landfill Tax.

Councillor S. Davies, Cabinet Member: Environment, Co-operative Council & Partnerships, replied that the waste strategy was currently under review.

Councillor A.R.H. England, Cabinet Member: Leisure & Well-Being agreed to provide a written response to Councillor S. Bentley who had asked why there had been a virement of £21k from the Playbuilder 2 project.

Councillor P.R. Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families replied to a question from Councillor E.J. Greenaway regarding contingencies for dealing with the £1.5m overspend in the Safeguarding service. Councillor Watling replied that the Council took its Corporate Parenting responsibilities very seriously and that preventative work was being undertaken and that new opportunities for partnership working in this area were emerging.

d) Service & Financial Planning 2012/13 – 2014/15

Councillor E.J. Clare, Cabinet Member: Adult & Social Care, responded to a question from Councillor J.M. Seymour who asked about the proposed cap to the costs of domiciliary care packages and the implementation of a Personalised Model of service delivery. Councillor Clare replied that all care packages would be professionally assessed and costs compared with any viable alternatives.

Councillor W.A.M. McClements responded to a question from Councillor E.J. Greenaway who asked whether the proposed £250k saving for 2012/13 for Safeguarding could be delivered when there was currently a £1.5m overspend in this area. Councillor McClements acknowledged that identifying savings would be challenging in this area.

79. SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2012/13

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report (Appendix E) of the Head of Finance which requested Council to determine the Council Tax Base for General and Special Fund purposes for the financial year 2012/13.

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 2012/13 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 previously.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the calculation of the tax base for 2012/13, as shown at paragraph 6.6 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 2012/13 for its special fund area shall be as per the appropriate**

parish amounts detailed in Appendix 1 for the parishes listed in paragraph 6.7 of the report.

80. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET

22 December, 2011 Cabinet

a) 2011/12 Financial Monitoring Report

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report (Appendix F) of the Head of Finance which showed overall revenue spending projected to be within approved budgets and provided an update on progress on capital programme spending. The report also highlighted some new capital allocations, virements and slippage which required formal approval by Council.

RESOLVED – that the changes to the Capital programme, shown in section 1 of the report be approved.

81. MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Council noted the following resolved minutes.

Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee	23 rd November.
Boundary Review Committee	19 th December
Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee	15 th November
C&YP Scrutiny Committee	20 th October and 7 th December
Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee	9 th November and 1 st December
Health Scrutiny Committee	14 th November
Licensing Committee	29 th November and 12 th December
Plans Board	16 th November and 14 th December
Scrutiny Management Board	7 th November and 5 th December

82. QUESTIONS

The following questions were submitted under Council procedure rule 10.

- a) Councillor E.J. Carter asked the following question of Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader of the Council.

Would the leader of the Council agree with Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls' statement to the Fabian Society last Friday, stating "I accept every spending cut being made by the Coalition and endorse George Osborne's public sector freeze and accept it might have to continue beyond the end of the current parliament ?

Councillor Sahota replied that he had read a full transcript of the speech and that the Shadow Chancellor had not actually said what had been quoted. He valued, and would work to protect, both public and private sector jobs in this area.

- b) Councillor S.A.W. Reynolds asked the following question of Councillor A. R.H. England, Cabinet Member: Leisure & Well-Being.

I note, with concern, that a Petition to wind up Planet Ice was presented by the Commissioners of HM Revenue and Customs on 14 December 2011. Bearing in mind that they were the sole bidders for the refurbishment of the Telford Ice Rink and therefore if we had complied with the previous Tory Administration's decision/request to give the Ice Rink contract to the private sector, could the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Wellbeing please tell us where we would be now if this Council had gone ahead with the contract to Planet ice?

Councillor England replied that firstly he wanted to register his concern for employees of this company who might lose their jobs. He asked Members to note that press reports indicated that 8 venues were at risk and that if the Council had placed the contract with this company then Telford's facility might well have been lost. Officers had fortunately identified the possible risks of such an arrangement and the Council had worked to keep the Ice Rink as a Council facility.

By way of personal explanation and in response to Councillor England's answer, Councillor A.J. Eade noted that the previous administration had made no final decision on the operation of the Ice Rink. Furthermore, information made available to the administration at that particular time had not identified any major concerns. He was interested to know why the Council had not looked for another private operator for the Ice Rink.

- c) Councillor V.A. Fletcher asked the following question of Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader of the Council.

Would The Leader and The Council go on record, in Congratulating All The Children in Redhill Primary School, Priorslee Telford and Makololwe Primary School, Kenya.

who contributed to 'The World in Our school Charity Cook Book'. Profits from the sale of which, will be split between The East Africa Drought Appeal and our Partner School, Kenya to help them build new hygienic latrines and install a fresh water supply for their children.?

In reply, Councillor Sahota responded that he was more than happy to record his congratulations to both schools and to Councillor Fletcher for her contribution to this project.

In response, Councillor Fletcher asked whether the Annual Fairtrade report would be brought before Members at a Council meeting. The Leader was happy for this to come to Cabinet or Council in the next few months.

83. NOTICES OF MOTION

- a) The following motion had been submitted by Councillor A. Lawrence and seconded by Councillor C.P.R. Mollett.

“This Council notes the benefits to the community in having the lowest unitary Authority Council tax in the Midlands and 4th lowest in the country and welcomes the £1.4m grant offered by the Coalition government to freeze Council Tax for the second successive year as a way of helping to relieve financial pressure on households in the Borough.”

Councillor Lawrence, proposing the motion, told Members that he welcomed the government's initiative as it would keep tax down and benefit residents. At current inflation rates a freeze on Council tax was effectively a reduction in charge. He believed a small number of Councils may choose not to take up the offer of a government grant. He was concerned that the Council might turn down the grant for ideological reasons and believed the only reason for not accepting the grant would be that the Council was planning to increase Council Tax.

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, told Members that the Council was very mindful of households budgets. He pointed out that the growing population of the Borough was being underestimated by government and that this, combined with the government's 'damping' mechanism meant that the Borough was significantly underfunded. In addition, the current administration had inherited a funding gap from the previous administration who had taken £9.2m from reserves in the previous year. Residents of the Borough were being consulted and provided with 3 options on Council Tax levels. The offer of a £1.4m grant needed to be considered against the backdrop of funding cuts that were above the average. It appeared that the Borough was effectively being penalised for having the lowest Council Tax in the Midlands. He would trust the views of the Borough's residents and awaited the results of the consultation exercise.

Councillor C.P.R. Mollett, seconding the motion, noted that information available indicated that the consultation exercise equated to the views of 1.2% of the Borough's population. He was surprised that the Council, after lobbying government for extra funding, might turn funding away. It was unfair to impose extra taxes on residents of the Borough.

A number of Members spoke both for and against the motion.
A vote was taken and the motion was defeated.

RESOLVED – That the motion not be approved

- b) The following motion had been submitted by Councillor C.P.R. Mollett and had been seconded by Councillor E.J. Carter.

"This Council notes with great concern the lack of action and any consideration whatsoever within the current Labour administrations budget proposals to meet urgent obligations to its community in Ironbridge and beyond to prevent a catastrophic collapse of the gorge into the River Severn and potential major flooding of the river valley.

Also, following the funding refusal by the previous government, this Council welcomes the unique offer by the Coalition Government to meet 60% of the £20 million cost of stage 2 of the scheme in recognition of the potential danger to the community and World Heritage Site this major risk proposes."

Councillor Mollett told the meeting that the Gorge, a World Heritage site, was the jewel in the Council's crown. He asked whether the Council could afford not to act to stabilise the area and wondered why there was no budget allocation for this matter. He preferred to think that perhaps this had been an oversight and that the work would be urgently funded.

Councillor R.A. Overton, Deputy Leader with special responsibility for Borough Town development & Policy, thought that the motion was disingenuous. The Council and the Member of Parliament for Telford were in discussions with DCLG on how to take this forward. He asked why the £6m previously invested in stabilisation had not been considered by government. £8m was a hugely significant amount of money in a time of significant funding cuts and budget pressures. The Council would continue to work with DCLG and were committed to do all that could be done to see the works carried out.

Councillor W.L. Tomlinson believed that this was a serious issue and that negotiation on grant funding should continue. If this item was not in the Capital spend for the following year perhaps a contingency might be included in the capital budget. This would enable negotiations to continue but allow work to commence.

A number of Members spoke both for and against the motion. Some members believed that the motion was designed to cause alarm to residents of the area. Members were united in their agreement on the importance of stabilisation works to protect The Gorge but differed in their views on the wording of the motion.

Summing up, Councillor Mollett told Members that his motion was based not on speculation but on an engineers report. The loss of a potential £35m revenue attracted by the area outweighed the £8m required to stabilise the area. The Council might perhaps want to consider prudential borrowing to enable the work to be undertaken.

Following completion of the debate Following a debate a recorded vote was requested in accordance with section 15.4 of the Council's Procedure Rules. The voting was as follows:

For: 15

Councillors: S. Bentley, E.J. Carter, NA Dugmore, AJ Eade, ITW Fletcher, VA Fletcher, EJ Greenaway, TJ Hope, MB Hosken, RT Kiernan, A Lawrence, AA Meredith, CRP Mollett, JM Seymour, A Stanton.

Against: 33

Councillors: R.K. Austin, K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, E.A. Clare, S. Davies, B.H. Duce, C.B.A. Elliott, A.R.H. England, N.A.M. England, R.C. Evans, G.M. Green, K.R. Guy, A.S. Jhavar, A.A. Mackenzie, C.N. Mason, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, J.C. Minor, R.A. Overton, F.R. Picken, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota, R.J. Sloan, C.F. Smith, M.J. Smith, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

Absent: 1

Councillor J. Loveridge

RESOLVED – That the motion not be approved

The meeting ended at 8.51 pm

Speaker.....

Date