

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 22 November, 2012 at 6.30 p.m. at the Civic Offices, Telford.

PRESENT:

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

42. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of Council Meeting held on 13 September 2012, be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors R.K. Austin, K.T. Blundell, B.H. Duce, C.B.A. Elliott, E.J. Greenaway, A.A. Meredith and K.L. Tomlinson,

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Bentley, Evans, Green, Hope, Hosken, Lawrence, Loveridge, Overton, S. Reynolds, Sahota and M. Smith all declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 10, the Council Tax Support Scheme.

45. COUNCILLOR KEITH AUSTIN – REQUEST FOR 6 MONTH LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The Mayor moved that a leave of absence be agreed for Councillor R.K. Austin who was recovering from 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 R.K. Austin be granted leave of absence from his Council duties for a period of six months effective from 22 November 2012.

46. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Presentation of Certificate of Merit to Olympian Kelly Edwards and Paralympian Mickey Bushell

Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader of the council, paid tribute to the Borough's Olympians and paralympians who had performed magnificently at the summer Olympic Games.

In particular, he paid tribute to Kelly Edwards who had represented team GB at Judo. Kelly and her family were in attendance and were warmly welcomed by councillors. The Leader also paid special tribute to the achievements of Telford's Paralympic gold medallist, Mickey Bushell who, due to illness, was not able to attend to receive his certificate.

b) Recognition of Borough carers – Shropshire Care awards

Councillor E.A. Clare, Cabinet Member: Adult & Social Care asked members to recognise the achievements of the Borough's carers who had been successful at the recent Shropshire Care awards. Many of the successful carers were in attendance and received a warm tribute from councillors.

c) Leader's Report

The Leader asked members to note that this would be the last council meeting taking place at Civic offices as the building would be vacated by mid December. This was part of the council's rationalisation of buildings, reducing office space by one third and saving £1.5m. A copy of the minutes of the first Full council meeting at the venue was tabled for members' interest. The meeting took place on 14 July 1976 and two of the councillors present at that meeting were at the current meeting. They were Councillors M.J. Smith and M.B. Hosken.

The Leader drew members' attention to White Ribbon day on Sunday 25th November which recognises the global campaign to ensure men take more responsibility for reducing the level of violence against women.

The Leader also drew members' attention to an item later on the agenda, the Council Tax Support scheme.

Amongst a number of items the Leader also asked members to note:

- Southwater development which was due to complete November 2013
- Ice rink reopened following £4m investment
- All council spending over £100 now published as part of the council's commitment to openness and transparency
- Snow wardens had been recruited

47. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor drew members' attention to the forthcoming Lantern Parade on 21 December and the signing of the Military Covenant which would take place on 14 December. He drew particular attention to his attendance at the return to its Donnington base of 174 Provost Company, 3rd Regiment Royal Military Police. The company of 115 men who had been serving in Afghanistan were the only full time frontline service unit still based in the Borough.

48. 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 13 September, 2012.

49. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET

18 October 2012 Cabinet

i) **Financial Monitoring 2012/13**

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report of the Head of Finance, Audit & Information Governance which sought approval for slippage, virements and new allocations which were identified at Appendix 3 of the report.

RESOLVED - That the slippages, virements and new allocations identified at Appendix 3 of the report be approved.

Prior to discussion of the next agenda item the following councillors left the room.

Councillors Bentley, Evans, Green, Hope, Hosken, Lawrence, Loveridge, Overton, S. Reynolds, Sahota and M. Smith

50. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Customers & People which outlined options and recommendations for a Council Tax support scheme from April 2013.

The government had announced, as part of the 2010 spending review, that it would localise support for Council Tax from 2013/14, with an expectation that expenditure would be reduced by 10%. Every authority was required to introduce a scheme by 31 January 2013. A formal consultation had taken place with residents and stakeholders between 28 August and 26 October. Councillor McClements noted that government estimations assumed a reduction in claimants, whereas under current economic conditions claimants were increasing. Estimates did not allow for inflation and the scheme would be costly to administer. The effects of inflation, increasing numbers of claimants and the likely impact on collection levels meant an estimated funding shortfall of £3.1m in 2013/14. The proposed scheme would meet the funding gap through a combination of changes to exemptions which were detailed in the report, and by applying a percentage global reduction in support given to less vulnerable claimants. This would mean an estimated 21% reduction in council tax support for working age non-vulnerable claimants. £65k was proposed to be earmarked for the award of discretionary discounts in cases of extreme financial hardship.

DCLG had announced funding for one year to support authorities; the council could apply for £336k of this transitional grant. Although this would reduce the funding gap to £2.8m the limitations and criteria imposed for the design of the support scheme would result in a funding shortfall of £680k in 2012/13 which would have to be met through savings elsewhere across the council. Also, as funding was for one year only, the budget shortfall would increase to just over £1m in future years. It was therefore recommended not to apply for transitional grant funding. Reports were attached from the joint Co-operative & Communities and Budget & Finance Scrutiny committees recommending approval of the Council Tax support scheme and recommending that additional transitional funding not applied for.

RESOLVED:-

- a) That the Council Tax Support scheme policy for 2013/14 be approved.
- b) That the decision not to apply for the additional transitional funding for 2013/14 be approved.
- c) That the principles of the Council Tax Support Exceptional Hardship Policy be approved.
- d) That the reports from the joint Co-Operative and Communities and Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committees (see Appendix A and B) recommending approval of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme and the recommendation above not to apply for the additional transitional funding be considered and noted by council.
- e) That council note that the approval of this policy is dependent upon the approval of the recommendations regarding the empty property exemptions and charges that will be contained in the Setting of the Council Tax Base report presented to Cabinet January 2013
- f) That council delegate authority to the Benefit Service Delivery Manager to undertake all functions, except approval of policy, relating to Council Tax Support under the Local Government Finance Acts 1992 and 2012 and Regulations made there under and as amended.

Prior to discussion of the next agenda item the following councillors returned to the room.

Councillors Bentley, Evans, Green, Hope, Hosken, Lawrence, Loveridge, Overton, S. Reynolds, Sahota and M. Smith

51. FURTHER ELECTORAL REVIEW – FURTHER SUBMISSION ON COUNCIL SIZE

Councillor R.J. Sloan, Chairman of Boundary Review Committee, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection which sought approval for the Boundary Review Committee to meet to determine an appropriate

further submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for a council size of 54 councillors.

Full council in September approved that a submission be made to LGBCE for a preferred Council size of 54 councillors by the Boundary Review Committee. The main opposition group made a separate submission in support of a council size of 44 and based on a return to the 'Committee system'. LGBCE considered both submissions and decided to consult on both numbers from the end of October. Consultation on council size would close on 3 December.

RESOLVED: -

- a) **That the Boundary Review Committee meet to determine, if appropriate, whether a further submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for a Council size of 54 councillors**
- b) **That the Assistant Director Law, Democracy & Public Protection in consultation with the Chairman of Boundary Review Committee be delegated with ensuring that any further submission is made to LGBCE by 3 December.**

52. BUDGET CONSULTATION TIMEFRAME

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Finance, Audit & Information Governance which noted that there was currently considerable uncertainty over the date that the Government would announce the provisional local government finance settlement. The settlement could not be announced before the Chancellor's autumn statement which was scheduled for 5th December but had to be announced on or before 31st December. The Council's constitution required the Cabinet to publish its budget and policy proposals before the end of December. If the provisional settlement were to be announced very late in December, which was quite possible, it would mean that proposals could not be issued by this deadline. The report asked members to note that if the provisional settlement was received later in December; proposals would need to be published outside the constitutional timeframe.

RESOLVED – that members noted the current uncertainty over the date that the Government would announce the local government finance settlement and agree that proposals could, if necessary, be published outside the constitutional timeframe.

53. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2011/12

Councillor D.R.W. White, Chairman of Scrutiny Management Board presented the Annual Scrutiny report for 2011/12. He told the meeting that it had been a year of change for scrutiny. The effectiveness of the scrutiny structure had been assessed. Health and Adult Social Care had been brought together as one committee, putting scrutiny in a good position to work with the Health & Well-Being Board. The

Housing, Economy & Infrastructure committee had taken on dedicated scrutiny of key service areas from Scrutiny Management Board. Links had been strengthened with Town & Parish councils with the recruitment of 6 Town and Parish councillors to scrutiny committees. Two call-ins had been considered by Scrutiny Management Board, neither had been upheld but the process had demonstrated rigorous challenge from scrutiny and feedback from had been positive. The current year's work programme was focussed on fewer issues, allowing resources to be targeted more effectively.

Key achievements had been:

- Continued oversight and challenge provided by Joint Health Overview committee to hospital reconfiguration plans
- Budget & Finance committee worked hard on scrutiny of budget proposals.
- Co-operative & Communities committee had made recommendations to Cabinet on changes to leisure concessions policy, single point of contact for businesses to council services and management of Community centres.

RESOLVED – That the 2011/12 Annual Scrutiny report be noted.

54. ANNUAL AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT 2011/12

Councillor R.J. Sloan, Chairman of Audit Committee presented the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & Public Protection which provided an annual report of the operations of Audit Committee for 2011/12.

RESOLVED – That the Audit Committee Annual Report 2011/12 be noted.

55. MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Council noted the resolved minutes of Boards and Committees:

Audit Committee	25 September
Boundary Review Committee	23 August
Licensing Committee	5 September
Plans Board	22 August, 12 September, 3 October & 24 October
Standards Committee	19 September
Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee	31 July
Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee	18 September
Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee	8 August
Scrutiny Management Board	4 July

56. QUESTIONS

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

- a) Councillor G.C.W. Reynolds asked the following question of Councillor P.R. Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families

Can the Lead Member for Children, Young People & Families please update the Council on the changes to the Early Intervention Grant?

Councillor Watling replied that early indications suggested that national government's Early Intervention Grant which funds a number of vital preventative services across the Council would be cut by over £2.234m (27%) in 2013/14. This was in addition to a cut of £2.665m [25%] in 11/12.

In response, Councillor Reynolds asked what effect the grant change would have on the most vulnerable people of the Borough,

Councillor Watling replied that

This grant funded a number of services including children and family centres, youth work, positive activities for young people, short breaks for children with disability, connexions for youth, support for children in care and other preventative service for some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

Faced with further national government cuts in grant allocation the Council was currently identifying proposals for making savings to offset this particular loss of grant. Every effort would be made to minimise the impact of this cut on front line services, this was becoming increasingly difficult given the substantial savings already made in response to previous cuts.

- b) Councillor Steven Bentley asked the following question of the Leader of the council, Councillor Kuldip Sahota.

Will the leader agree with me that this nation owes our armed services personnel a debt of gratitude which can never be repaid, and whenever possible this borough, and the nation as one should join together to protect or honour any individual who has selflessly performed their duty, when called upon in the name of freedom and democracy."

Councillor Sahota replied that he agreed with those sentiments completely and that he supported the armed forces.

In response councillor Bentley asked what would be being done to raise awareness of the 100 year anniversary of the beginning of the 1st World War.

Councillor Sahota referred Councillor Bentley to the signing of the Military covenant which was due to take place in December.

57. NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) Councillor W.A.M. McClements, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, moved the following Motion:

Telford & Wrekin Borough Council notes the comments made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer about offering all Councils the option of taking a 1% grant to freeze Council tax for 2013/14.

The Council is also aware that the Government is likely to announce further funding cuts in its December statement to Parliament.

The Council agrees to consider contingency budget plans but wait to finalise its proposals when the details of the Local Government Finance Settlement are available. The Council agrees to fully consult the residents of the Borough about options and its proposals before putting the final budget plans to Full Council in March 2013.

The motion was seconded by Councillor R.J. Sloan

RESOLVED – that the motion be approved

Councillor S. Bentley moved, in accordance with Council procedure rule 11, the following motion:

This Council will pursue an approach, and do all in its power, to ensure that the Crudgington Creamery site is utilised as a centre for rural employment within the Borough should the creamery be ultimately closed.

The motion was seconded by Councillor A.J. Eade

The motion was moved and seconded and was then referred, without further discussion, to Cabinet under section 11.6 of the Council procedure rules.

RESOLVED – that the motion be referred to Cabinet

The meeting ended at 8.38 pm

Mayor:

Date: