

## **BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN**

### **Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 8 May, 2014 at 6.30 p.m. at Telford College of Arts & Technology, Wellington, Telford.**

#### **PRESENT:**

Councillors R.K. Austin, S. Bentley, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, S. Davies, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade, N.A.M. England, A.R.H. England, I.T.W. Fletcher, V.A. Fletcher, E.J. Greenaway, K.R. Guy, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, M.G. Ion, A.S. Jhavar, 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 (Mayor), R.A. Overton (Deputy Leader), F.R. Picken, J. Pinter, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota (Leader), R.G. Scammell, J.M. Seymour, R.J. Sloan (Deputy Speaker), C.F. Smith, M.J. Smith, A.J. Stanton, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

The Mayor opened the meeting, and reported that, in the continued absence of the Speaker through ill-health, the Deputy Speaker would be chairing the remainder of the meeting.

#### **93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, E.A. Clare, D.G. Davies (Speaker), R.C. Evans, C.B.A. Elliott and G.M. Green

#### **94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

#### **95. SUPERMARKET DEVELOPMENT IN NEWPORT**

In accordance with the Constitution, five members of the Council submitted a request to the Deputy Speaker to arrange an urgent extraordinary public meeting of the Council with a single item of business – a motion concerning supermarket development in Newport. The Deputy Speaker had agreed to the request, and he called on Councillor A.J. Eade (Leader of the Conservative Group) to move his Motion.

Councillor A.J. Eade moved the following motion:

“This Council calls on the Cabinet to cease any further High Court action associated with its plans for a supermarket development in Newport and demands a public apology from the Leader of the Council, or his Deputy, and acceptance that the current Administration was ultimately responsible for the waste of up to £1.5m of public funds.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor N.A. Dugmore.

Councillor Eade welcomed the decision that had been announced earlier that the Council was abandoning its flawed decision to pursue further legal action in relation to the planning permission granted for a supermarket on land at Audley Avenue, Newport. However, he deplored the loss of £410,000 of taxpayers' money on pursuing fruitless legal challenges from which the Council had nothing to show. There was also the potential for further costs to be incurred if the Council continued with its plans for a supermarket on the Station Road site. All of this brought into question the competence of the current Administration and its ability to run the Council, and a public apology was needed from the Leader of the Council for such a waste of public funds. Further questions he would like answering were whether the Station Road supermarket application was now going to be withdrawn, and whether the Council had considered another retail survey for Newport.

In responding to the Motion, the Leader confirmed that, having considered all the facts and advice after the most recent High Court judgment, a decision had been made not to pursue any further legal action in relation to the Audley Avenue site. However, this did not impact on the Station Road application, which would be kept under close review in conjunction with St Modwens – the development partners for the site. A decision would be made at the appropriate time and in the interests of all taxpayers in the Borough. He did not consider that he had anything to apologise for, as the Administration had only been concerned with securing best value from a Council asset and in creating new jobs and growth in the Borough. A majority of the costs referred to were forced on the Council through having to defend challenges to the Station Road application. He reminded Members that the supermarket scheme at Station Road was initiated by the previous Conservative administration, and that Councillor Eade had deceived and misled the public and media about his involvement.

Opposition Members gave examples of the uses to which the alleged £1.5m of "lost" money could have been put, and further questioned the economic competence of the Administration. A number of members from the ruling Labour Group highlighted evidence that showed that the previous Conservative administration had signed agreements with a developer to market the land at Station Road for a supermarket, and that the current Administration had merely carried on with contracts that were already in place. The Council had challenged the Planning Inspector's decision in respect of Audley Avenue based on advice from barristers and in view of the significant additional costs that the Council could be faced with as a result of the development of that site. It was right to defend taxpayer's assets and to seek best value in realising those assets for the benefit of Newport and the rest of the Borough.

In summing up, Councillor Eade stated that he was disappointed with the response of the Leader, and that it was not a secret that his Administration had looked at the Station Road site for a smaller scale development that would have been subject to extensive public consultation in Newport.

Following a full debate on the Motion, a recorded vote was duly requisitioned in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.3. The voting on the Motion was as follows:

**For: (17)** Councillors Bentley, Burrell, Carter, Dugmore, Eade, I Fletcher, V Fletcher, Greenaway, Hope, Hosken, Kiernan, Lawrence, Meredith, Mollett, Scammell, Seymour and Stanton.

**Against: (28)** Councillors Austin, S Davies, A England, N England, Guy, Ion, Jhawar, Loveridge, Mackenzie, Mason, A McClements, W McClements, Minor, Murray, Overton, Picken, Pinter, G Reynolds, S Reynolds, Rhodes, Sahota, Sloan, C Smith, M Smith, Thompson, Turley, Watling and White.

**Abstentions: (2)** Councillors K Tomlinson and W Tomlinson

The Motion was declared lost.

The meeting ended at 7.38pm.

**Mayor:** .....

**Date:** .....