

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 22nd January, 2015 at 6.30 p.m. at The Place, Oakengates, Telford

PRESENT:

Councillors R.K. Austin, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, E.A. Clare, S. Davies, N.G. Dugmore, A.J. Eade, C.B.A. Elliott, A.R.H. England, N.A.M. England, R.C. Evans, I.T.W. Fletcher, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, K.R. Guy, M.B. Hosken, M.G. Ion (Speaker), A.S. Jhavar, R.T. Kiernan, J. Loveridge, A.A. MacKenzie, C.N. Mason, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, J.C. Minor, L.A. Murray, R.A. Overton (Deputy Leader), J. Pinter, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota (Leader), R.G. Scammell, P.J. Scott, J.M. Seymour, R.J. Sloan (Deputy Speaker), C.F. Smith, M.J. Smith (Mayor), K.M. Stringer, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

40. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 27th November 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

The Speaker noted that the meeting on 27th November was the last to be attended by Roy Picken before his resignation as a Councillor for personal reasons. He paid tribute to former Councillor Picken and all his work as an elected Member for Telford & Wrekin over the last 17 years.

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors V.A. Fletcher, A. Lawrence, A.A. Meredith and C.R.P. Mollett.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors J.C. Minor and D.R.W. White stated that, as they were members of the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee looking at the NHS's review of acute care provision in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, they would not speak or vote on the Notice of Motion at agenda item 12.

Councillor J.M. Seymour stated that, as a member of the Health & Wellbeing Board, she would not speak or vote on the Notice of Motion at agenda item 12.

43. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader reported on a number of initiatives and success stories for Telford & Wrekin, including:

- the Council had been shortlisted in two categories of the Local Government Chronicle Awards. The change in the council's culture to become a Business Winning, Business Supporting local authority with an emphasis on growth, jobs and inward investment has been recognised by judges in the

Driving Growth category, and the Telford After Care Team was bidding to win the LGC Public Health Award.

- Economic growth in the Borough was outstripping that of the rest of the region and UK by 50%, with youth unemployment in the Borough halved;
- The Council continued to invest in regeneration of residential and employment areas in the Borough through its Pride in the Community programme
- The new kerbside recycling service introduced earlier in the year had resulted in a 14% increase in the household recycling rate;
- A decision was still awaited on the future of MoD Donnington, but the Council had done all it could to make the strongest case for the future location of the Ministry's logistics operation at the Donnington site and to safeguard hundreds of jobs.

44. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported on a number of engagements that he had attended since the last meeting of the Council, and thanked Members for their support at various functions. He had spent three days last month going round the Council's offices promoting the Christmas Charity Raffle, which raised around £500. Staff were thanked for their support. Reference was also made to a visit to Wrockwardine Wood CE Junior School, where they had been made to feel very welcome by the pupils. He had just received a cheque for £500 from the School that had been raised for the Mayor's Charity Appeal, and would be writing to thank them.

45. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Speaker reported that no questions from the public had been received.

(Councillor I.T.W. Fletcher arrived at the meeting at 6.55pm)

46. 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 27 November 2014.

Service & Financial Planning 2015/16 – 2017/18 – Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise provided an overview of the Cabinet's draft budget proposals that were currently out for consultation.

Wellington Town Centre Regeneration – in response to a question, Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns, stated that a lot of money had been given to Wellington in recent years and that the regeneration of other areas of the Borough was separate to the initiatives in Wellington.

Housing Investment Programme – Business Case. A number of questions and comments were made relating to the proposals for the setting up of a Wholly Owned Company (WOC) to develop and manage around 420 new homes for rent on Council owned land. Concerns were expressed by members of the main Opposition Group that the spending of £40m on this Programme represented a

significant risk in terms of the return to the Council, and that such a scheme would be better delivered by the private sector at less risk to the Council. There were also concerns at the capacity/expertise within the Council to run a WOC. Councillors S Davies, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills, and W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, made the following points arising from discussion on the Housing Investment Programme.

- For an investment of Council-owned land valued at £6.7m, it was projected the Council would generate income of nearly £80m over a 30 year period;
- Private sector options would leave the Council 25% worse off, and there had been little interest from the private sector in developing the sites in this programme;
- Right to Buy would not apply to the homes managed by the WOC;
- The new homes would provide much needed decent quality housing for local people;
- The construction of the new homes would provide jobs and employment for local people.
- There was every confidence in Officers to be able to establish the WOC.

47. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET

i) Council Tax Support Scheme 2015/16

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, presented the recommendations from Cabinet regarding approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme Policy for 2015/16 and for the continuation of the Council Tax Hardship Policy in 2015/16.

It was recommended that the same local Support Scheme that was implemented in 2013/14 be retained for 2015/16, except for the technical and legislative amendments necessitated by Government. This had the full support of the cross-party Scrutiny Committees that had been consulted. The Hardship Policy had been invaluable over the last two years in helping the most financially vulnerable customers and it was proposed that it continue for a further 12 months with a budget of £30,000. Reference was made to the reductions in the funding of Council Tax Support (CTS) from the Government, but nevertheless the Council would continue to pass on some of this subsidy funding to town and parish councils.

Concern was expressed that smaller rural parishes were now not receiving any subsidy support, and that there should be an equal distribution with larger town and parish councils. The Cabinet Members for Finance & Enterprise and Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills stated that the formula for the distribution of CTS was agreed three years ago by the Parish Forum. The cuts in government funding of the scheme had been applied equally across all parishes, but those areas with low numbers of people on council tax benefit were now falling out of the system. Reference was made to Shropshire Council, who had withdrawn all CTS subsidy to parish and town councils.

RESOLVED –

- a) that the Council Tax Support Scheme policy for 2015/16 be approved.
- b) that the Council Tax Hardship Policy and fund of £30,000 continues in 2015/16
 - ii) Financial Monitoring 2014/15

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise presented a report which provided an update on the progress relating to the capital programme, and which contained recommendations for approval.

RESOLVED

- a) that the transfer of £0.750m to the Capacity Fund be approved;
- b) that the new allocations, virements and slippage relating to capital spend and receipts be approved, together with the funding changes to the capital programme;
- c) that a further £150,000 of expenditure to develop the site at Donnington for use as a MoD fulfilment centre be approved.

48. SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2015/16

Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise presented the report of the Assistant Director: Finance, Audit & Information Governance which set out the calculation of the tax base for 2015/16 for approval.

The tax base for 2015/16 was based on the valuation list of 71,374 properties, which was an increase of 858 on the same time last year. The council tax income that would be received from these properties was equivalent to a 2% council tax increase. Appended to the report was a table showing the Council Tax Base for each parish area (Band D equivalent).

RESOLVED –

- a) that the calculation of the tax base for 2015/16, as set out in paragraph 5.6 and Appendix 1 of the report, be approved;
- b) that, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012.2914), the amount calculated for Telford & Wrekin Council Tax base for 2015/16 for its Special Fund Area shall be as per the appropriate parish amounts detailed in Appendix 1 for the parishes listed in paragraph 5.7 of the report.

49. MINUTES OF BOARDS & COMMITTEES

Council noted the resolved and draft minutes of the following Boards and Committees:

Boundary Review Committee	18 th December 2014
Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee	17 th September 2014
Health & Wellbeing Board	10 th December 2014
Planning Committee	26 th November and 17 th December 2014

50. QUESTIONS

The following Questions were asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7:

1. Cllr A.D. McClements asked Cllr S. Davies the following question:

"I am delighted to hear the good news that the University of Wolverhampton is to open a new centre based on the top floor of Southwater One. Could the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills please give me an update on the progress so far?"

Cllr Davies reported that the heads of terms for the rent had been agreed with the University, and it was hoped to finalise the lease by the end of February. The University had agreed that part of the floor would be used by the Community Focus team as well as other services. This would be a fantastic facility for Telford, with students being able to access postgraduate and undergraduate qualifications – both academic and vocational. In response to a further question, Cllr Davies confirmed that the Southwater One building would remain as a community hub for the benefit of all local people

2. Cllr K.R. Guy asked Cllr S. Davies the following question:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Employment and Skills update the Council on what reply, if any, he has received from the Minister for Employment following the motion on Youth Unemployment?"

Cllr Davies reported that he had received a reply from Esther McVey, Minister for Employment, who had declined to support the Council's initiatives to reduce youth unemployment. The only support available was if the Council used a profit-seeking private provider such as Serco. The implication was that Councils couldn't be trusted to run such schemes, but there was evidence that in London the Mayor was backing local authorities to be involved in such work.

3. Cllr N.A.M. England asked Cllr S. Davies the following question:

"Can the Cabinet Member responsible for Parish and Town Councils please confirm that this Council proposes to pass on the grant to Parish and Town Councils from the Council Tax Support Grant and not take the approach of Shropshire Council?"

Cllr Davies confirmed that the grant had been passed on to Parish and Town Councils. The parish and town councils in Telford & Wrekin were doing a fantastic

job, and the Council would continue to work co-operatively with them. It was a shame that Shropshire Council had taken a different approach and not passed on the grant. In response to a further question, Cllr Davies advised that the grant helped to fund the Parish Environmental Teams. These had been a great success, and had provided employment for 10 apprentices.

4. Cllr G.C.W. Reynolds asked Cllr P.R. Watling the following question:

“Can the Cabinet member for Children, Young People and Families comment on the performance of primary schools in Telford and Wrekin in 2014?”

Cllr Watling reported that it had been a hugely successful year for primary schools. 78% of pupils had achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths – a four points increase on the 2013 results. This put Telford & Wrekin two points above the West Midlands average and on a par with the national average for the first time. The gap to the national average had also been closed in a number of other measures, such as pupils making at least two levels of progress. All the schools, staff, parents and pupils were to be congratulated. In response to a further question, Cllr Watling stated that he believed the key to this success was local solutions and a trust in local services, and that there should be less top-down interference from central government.

5. Cllr R.J. Sloan asked Cllr K.S. Sahota the following question:

"Can the Leader confirm to Council that there is no “back door” or “front door” deal currently being done to merge with Wolverhampton City Council?"

The Leader confirmed that there was absolutely no plan for Telford and Wrekin Council to merge with Wolverhampton City Council.

6. Cllr P.J. Scott asked Cllr S. Davies the following question:

"In the recent Newport Town Plan, the residents of Newport are asking for improvements in their recycling offer following on from the closure of the Newport Recycling Centre. There are issues with bulk collection which means that Newport residents currently have to travel to the Granville site to get rid of large waste items. Are there any future plans to improve this situation?"

Cllr Davies advised that as part of the Pride in the Community programme, those over 65 and/or disabled could get one annual free bulk collection, with discounts in the cost for other groups. This had been looked at again and it was proposed to offer as a pilot in Newport a free bulk collection for all residents on top of the existing offers. If re-elected, the Administration was looking to improve the provision of Community Recycling Centres and increase their opening hours.

7. Cllr A.S. Jhavar asked Cllr W.A.M. McClements the following question:

“Could the Cabinet Member for Finance & Enterprise update Council on the position regarding the bid for the Logistics Hub at MOD Donnington?”

Cllr McClements reported that the decision on the location of the Logistics Hub had been delayed again, and it was now likely to be in February 2015. He was still

confident that Donnington would be successful, and urged the Government to make an announcement as soon as possible. In response to a further question, Cllr McClements detailed the amount of work that had been undertaken with the bidders with extensive support from Officers, and the positive support that had been provided by parish councils, local businesses, residents and David Wright MP.

8. Cllr G.C.W. Reynolds asked Cllr W.A.M. McClements the following question:

“Could the Cabinet Member for Finance and Enterprise give an update on negotiations on Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) land in Telford?”

Cllr McClements reported that there had been a series of meetings since the beginning of the year, and negotiations were still continuing. The shape of the offer had changed now that negotiations were being carried out with the HCA directly. The Treasury would have a final say on any offer/agreement, but it was not clear whether this would be before or after the General Election in May. In response to a further question, Cllr McClements highlighted the amount of land in Telford & Wrekin held by the Government.

51. NOTICES OF MOTION

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

“This Council sincerely thanks the hard work of doctors, nurses, paramedics, health care assistants and all support staff at A&E PRH who are having to deal with the ongoing crisis caused by the Government’s £3bn top down re-organisation. Government cuts to local government, together with slashing preventative funding, clearly demonstrates the need for Telford Princess Royal Hospital to remain a full 24 hours, 7 day a week A&E Department.

This Council therefore calls on David Cameron to take immediate action to ease pressure on A&E by helping families see a GP, getting more nurses answering calls to NHS 111, halting the closures of walk-in centres and recruiting former nurses back into the NHS to help deal with staffing pressures”.

The motion was seconded by Councillor R.A. Overton.

Following a debate in which a number of Members spoke, a recorded vote was requested and voting was as follows

For: (45)

Councillors R.K. Austin, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, E.A. Clare, S. Davies, 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, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, K.R. Guy, M.B. Hosken, M.G. Ion, A.S. Jhavar, R.T. Kiernan, J. Loveridge, A.A. Mackenzie, C.N. Mason, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, L.A. Murray, R.A. Overton, J. Pinter, G.C.W Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota, R.G. Scammell, P.J. Scott, R.J. Sloan, C.F. Smith, M.J.

Smith, K.M. Stringer, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling

Abstentions: (3)

Councillors J.C. Minor, J M Seymour, D.R.W. White

RESOLVED – that the motion be agreed.

(NB: Having previously declared an interest, Councillors Minor, Seymour and White did not speak on the motion and abstained from voting)

The meeting ended at 8.22 pm.

Mayor:

Date: