

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 21 November, 2013 at 6.30 p.m. at The Refectory, TCAT, Wellington, Telford.

PRESENT:

Councillors S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, E.A. Clare, D.G. Davies (Speaker), S. Davies, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade, C.B.A. Elliott, A.R.H. England, R.C. Evans, I.T.W. Fletcher, V.A. Fletcher, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, K.R. Guy, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, M.G. Ion, A.S. Jhawar, A. Lawrence, C.N. Mason, A.A. Mackenzie, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, J.C. Minor, C.P.R. Mollett, L.A. Murray (Mayor), R.A. Overton, F.R. Picken, J. Pinter, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota (Leader), R.G. Scammell, R.J. Sloan, 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.

43. TRIBUTES TO FORMER COUNCILLORS BILL MILLER AND MARGARET HOBBS

The Speaker told the meeting that two former councillors had sadly passed away since the last meeting of the council. Councillor Bill Miller, formerly Borough councillor for Hadley, had also been a Hadley & Leegomery Parish Councillor. He was very active in the local community and was Treasurer of Haybridge Hall Residents Association, Vice President of Hadley United Services Club and Vice President of Hadley & District Orpheus Male Choir. Councillor Malcolm Smith led the tributes to Councillor Miller with a number of other councillors adding their tributes.

Margaret Hobbs had served on Wrekin District council and been Wellington Town council's first female Mayor and a great supporter of the town of Wellington. Councillor Miles Hosken led the tribute to Councillor Hobbs with a number of other councillors adding their tributes.

The meeting observed one minutes silence to mark the passing of Councillors Miller and Hobbs.

44. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12 September 2013, be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Keith Austin, Nathan England, Terry Kiernan, Jackie Loveridge, Adrian Meredith and Jacqui Seymour.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rob Sloan declared an interest in Agenda item 12 b) the motion on work capability assessments. The Speaker noted that Councillor Sloan would leave the

room prior to this item being debated. Councillors Arnold England and Mike Ion declared interests in agenda item D the Youth Justice Plan. Councillor Stephen Burrell declared an interest in question 3 on Adult Social Care.

47. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) ESF Equal Opportunities Mainstreaming Leader Award 2013

Councillor Kuldip Sahota, Leader of the council, presented the award to Karen Harrison, Richard Shaw and Mark Purcell from the Skills team. The award recognised work completed on the Turnaround project which provided essential life skills to 16-18 year olds.

b) Leader's Report

The Leader told the meeting that the council had been working with the MoD for nearly two years to look at how the Donnington site, which employs more than 1,000 people, could be developed to meet the requirements laid down for MoD's National Defence Gateway logistics base. As a result, in the next few weeks the council would be submitting a major planning application for buildings of about one million square feet on land next to the Donnington site to show that it can deliver the MoD's requirements.

This was another example of the council's business-winning approach which had allowed the council to provide an excellent value solution to the MoD for their future national logistics requirements and would provide a real boost for the economy. If the bid was successful and planning permission gained, the Telford base could again become a main centre for the MOD's logistics operation in the UK. This would not only protect existing jobs at Donnington but also attract new jobs to the Borough.

The first phase of the Southwater development was nearing completion. Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had recently visited the development and he had been very impressed by the unprecedented level of investment.

Unemployment was falling in the Borough but youth unemployment remained above both the regional and national average. The administration had committed to freezing council tax for the next two years in order to help the hard pressed taxpayers of the Borough. A new waste contract would commence in 2014 with Veolia which would provide better value and increase the level of recycling in the Borough. A massive £450m investment had been made in the Borough's roads with work starting on improvements to the Town centre box road. The Leader apologised for the short term impact of this work but believed that improvements to the road network would deliver growth for the town.

48. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements

Members received the report of Mayoral engagements undertaken since the last meeting of the council on 12 September 2013. The Mayor, Councillor Leon

Murray, told the meeting that he had enjoyed a very good day at the West Midlands Ambulance Service Awards, He also noted his attendance at a number of Macmillan coffee mornings, including a foster carers event. He had particularly enjoyed his visit to the Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation Annual Conference and Exhibition at Telford International Centre.

49. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No valid questions received.

50. 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 12 September 2013.

In response to a question on item 2.1.1 of the report, relating to the Solar Farm project, Councillor Bill McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise confirmed that the recent changes to government subsidies would be considered as part of any feasibility work on this project.

In response to a question on item 2.2.2, Councillor Bill McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise did not believe that rural areas of Telford received less support than those in Shropshire for the provision of high speed broadband. Two years earlier the council had looked at a proposal to join with Shropshire in providing rural broadband. Proposed costs had been prohibitive and the joint project had not gone ahead.

In response to a question on item 2.1.8 of the report, relating to Scrap Metal Dealers Act (2013) Councillor Richard Overton, Cabinet Member: Public Health & Public Protection agreed that there was a balance between recovering the full administration cost and pricing to make sure that the market was competitive in Telford.

In response to a question on item 2.1.6 of the report, Councillor Paul Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families, confirmed that all options on access to the Telford Co-operative Academy would be considered. However, the BSF budget was limited.

51. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET

a) Youth Justice Plan

Councillor Paul Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Family & Cohesion Services which sought approval for the annual Youth Justice Plan.

The plan set out how youth justice services across West Mercia were structured and identified key actions to address identified risks to service delivery and improvement.

Following a vote it was:

RESOLVED – that the Youth Justice Plan be approved

b) Financial Monitoring 2013/14

Councillor Bill McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise presented the report of the Assistant Director: Finance, Audit & Information Governance which sought approval; to changes to the capital programme.

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

52. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

(a) 17 September Audit Committee

Speak Up Policy

Councillor Rob Sloan, Chairman of Audit Committee, presented the recommendations from the meeting held on 17 September 2013 in relation to revisions to the Speak Up Policy

RESOLVED – that the revised Speak Up Policy incorporating the changes outlined in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.3 be approved

c) 7 November Council Constitution Committee

Councillor Malcolm Smith, Chairman of Council Constitution Committee, presented the recommendations from the meeting held on 7 November 2013 in relation to changes to terms of reference of Health & Well Being Board and Audit Committee and to changes to functions of the Chief Financial Officer, Policy Framework, Budget Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations.

RESOLVED : –

- (a) That the terms of reference of the Health and Wellbeing Board, as shown at Appendix 1a of the report, be approved,**
- (b) That the amendment to the terms of reference of the Audit Committee, as shown at Appendix 2 of the report, be approved;**
- (c) That the Functions of the Chief Financial Officer, the Policy Framework and Budget Procedure Rules, and the Financial Regulations be approved;**

53. MINUTES OF BOARDS & COMMITTEES

Council noted the resolved minutes of Boards and Committees:

Audit Committee	17 September
Boundary Review Committee	4 & 26 September
Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee	3 September
CYP Scrutiny	15 August
Health & Adult Care Scrutiny Committee	12 August
Health & Wellbeing Board	18 September
Housing Economy & Infrastructure Committee	1 November
Licensing Committee	18 September
Planning Committee	4 & 25 September & 16 October

54. QUESTIONS

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

- a) Councillor John Thompson asked the following question of the Leader of the Council

“Can I ask the leader of the council if he is aware of the possible cuts of nearly two million to the Shropshire Fire service? “

The Leader confirmed he was aware of the very difficult budget situation facing the Fire Authority. He believed the funding problem was partly caused by the county of Shropshire being predominantly rural and receiving less funding as a result. The Leader was fully supportive of lobbying to protect the fire authority’s budget.

- b) Councillor Amrik Jhawar asked the following question of the Leader of the council

“Can the Leader give an update on the Council’s campaign against potential closure of 24 hour Accident & Emergency at Princess Royal Hospital and whether he has heard from the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt MP?”

The Leader replied that all three group leaders had written to the Health Minister asking for a guarantee that services would be protected. He had received no response and had written again in October but no response had been received.

Councillor Jhawar asked a further question.

“How long does it normally take to receive a reply from a Minister?”

The Leader did not know in this case as he awaited a reply.

Prior to the next question Councillor Stephen Burrell left the room.

c) Councillor Jane Pinter asked the following question of Councillor Arnold England, Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care.

“Would the Cabinet member for Adult Social Care report on measures to combat the funding shortfall from the CCG in the provision of Adult Social Care in the Borough?”

Councillor England replied that there were very significant financial pressures with a budget reduced from £13.9m to £2.3m in three years, £8.5m of costs transferred to the council. The position was not sustainable and it was disappointing that the CCG did not recognise the position. Adult Social Care was poorly funded in Telford & Wrekin, adults and the elderly got a poor deal from the NHS. The council would make representations to Westminster if the Borough did not receive adequate funding. In Telford & Wrekin 17 people per 50,000 of population received Continuing Health care support from the NHS The average UK figure was 57 per 50000 and Shropshire’s figure was 66 There was no evidence that adults were 3 times fitter in the Borough than the national average. The position was a scandal.

Councillor Pinter asked a further question

“What are the wider impacts of the CCG underfund in Telford & Wrekin?”

Councillor England replied that Care providers accounted for 77% of budgets. People were living longer. Every care package was being reviewed in order to look to reduce costs. Spending was being reduced due to CCG funding.

Prior to the next question Councillor Burrell returned to the room.

d) Councillor Stephen Bentley was due to ask the following question of Councillor Shaun Davies, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services Employment & Skills.

Can Councillor Davies confirm that as part of the new waste arrangements, he intends the further closure of recycling centres in addition to those he has already shut in the Borough, which will reduce community access and increase car journeys across Telford and Wrekin?

Councillor Bentley withdrew this question

e) Councillor Stephen Bentley was due to ask the following question of Councillor Charles Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Town Development.

Can Councillor Smith tell us how he intends to fill the planning void when Council’s policies, as stated in the Development Control Framework, expire in 2016 and explain why more progress has not been made over the past two years?

Councillor Bentley withdrew this question.

- f) Councillor Andrew Eade asked Councillor Kuldip Sahota, Leader of the council the following question:

“Can Councillor Sahota confirm his support for full Accident & Emergency provision at both hospital sites following confusion within the Labour Group at the last Council meeting? “

Councillor Sahota replied that the motion had been clear and supported unanimously.

Councillor Eade asked a further question.

“Would the Leader inform us of his stance on the recently published Keogh report, whereby proposals would drastically affect the provision of Accident & Emergency services in Shropshire?”

Councillor Sahota re-iterated the council’s commitment to retaining A&E services within Shropshire.

55. NOTICES OF MOTION

- a) Councillor Kevin Guy moved, in accordance with Council procedure rule 11, the following motion:

“This council recognises the unique contribution that British Nuclear Test Veterans and their families, including residents of Telford & Wrekin, have made to the defence of the country. The Council calls on the government to officially recognise the sacrifice of the veterans and families impacted by nuclear tests conducted between 1952 and 1967, the establishment of a benevolent fund and enduring recognition of their service by the creation of a medal, or award, for participants of the test programme”.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Chris Turley

RESOLVED – that the motion be approved

- b) Councillor Derek White moved, in accordance with Council procedure rule 11, the following motion:

“This council calls on the Government to scrap the Work capability Assessments (WCA) with immediate effect and replace it with a safe and rigorous system which does not cause harm and distress to some of the weakest and most vulnerable residents of Telford and Wrekin.

Atos Healthcare, the private health firm who are responsible for carrying out the assessments, have been the subject of widespread criticism from the British Medical Association and many charities.

The Government are paying Atos Healthcare £110 million per year to carry out assessments on behalf of the Department of Works & Pensions. So many of the decisions are appealed that a further £60 million of public monies is being spent on administering these appeals.

We believe that these Work Capability Assessments are not fit for purpose, causing distress and anxiety to vulnerable people, with over 10,000 people having died shortly after undergoing the Atos WCA test, having been incorrectly assessed and told to return to work.”

The motion was be seconded by Councillor Richard Overton.

Councillor Derek White, proposing the motion, told the meeting that Atos were tasked with getting people off benefits. He believed that some of the reports concerning the approach used by Atos was very concerning and that he could not support the persecution of disabled people. Councillor Arnold England Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care had carried out his own internet research and was extremely concerned with some allegations concerning Atos. Councillor Andrew Eade believed that there was something wrong with the process of work capability assessments: The process should be fair and even handed to claimants and funded appropriately. Councillor Richard Overton Cabinet Member: Public Health & Public Protection knew of a number of cases where problems had occurred. People were suffering anxiety and stress due to a process that was not fit for purpose.

Following a recorded vote where all members voted unanimously in favour of the motion it was:

RESOLVED – that the motion be approved

- c) Councillor Andrew Eade moved in accordance with Council procedure rule ,the following motion.

“This Council welcomes the policy ‘u turn’ indicated by the current Administration’s promise to freeze council tax for the following two years in order to help hard pressed council tax payers in the Borough. However, this council also condemns the Labour Administration’s refusal to accept Government grants over the previous two years which would have kept £2.0 m in the pockets of our local community.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Nigel Dugmore

Councillor Eade, proposing the motion, believed that the administration’s previous refusal to accept to accept government grants to freeze council tax had let down the local community. Councillor Bill McClements Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise replied that the government had now consolidated the grant in base funding and that the council was now in a position to cover £350k additional funding to freeze council tax. He believed that it was the government had taken money from the pockets of local residents. Councillor Angela McClements pointed

out that the government’s previous funding proposals were one-off funding with no guarantee that they would be available for future years. Councillor Bill Tomlinson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat/Independent group believed that previous government funding had not been guaranteed and that the administration had no real choice but to make the decisions they had done. Councillor Adrian Lawrence believed that increases in council tax caused hardship for residents and businesses. Following a vigorous debate a recorded vote was taken:

For: (13) Councillors Bentley, Burrell, Carter, Dugmore, Eade, I Fletcher, V Fletcher, Greenaway, Hosken, Lawrence, Mollett, Scammell, Stanton

Against: (34) Councillors Blundell, Bould, Clare, D.Davies, S.Davies, Elliott, England, Evans, Green, Guy, Ion, Jhawar, Mason, Mackenzie, A McClements, W McClements, Minor, Murray, Overton, Picken, Pinter, G Reynolds, S Reynolds, Rhodes, Sahota, Sloan, C Smith, M Smith, Thompson, K Tomlinson, W Tomlinson, Turley, Watling, White

Absent: (1) Councillor Hope

RESOLVED – that the motion not be approved

d) Councillor Stephen Bentley was due to move, in accordance with Council procedure rule 11, the following motion.
“This Council applauds the Governments proposed multi million pound funding package for the vital work undertaken in the Gorge at Ironbridge.”

The motion was to be seconded by Councillor Andrew Eade

The motion was withdrawn by Councillor Bentley

56. ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING 2014

The European Parliamentary Regulations had recently been published and confirmed that the date for these elections will also be 22 May. It was proposed that Annual council be moved back by 1 week to 29 May 2014 and that the programme of meetings be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED – that the Annual Council meeting be held on Thursday 29 May 2014 and the programme of meetings amended accordingly

The meeting ended at 8.41 pm

Mayor:

Date: