

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 23 January, 2014 at 6.30 p.m. at The Refectory, TCAT, Wellington, Telford.

PRESENT:

Councillors R.K. Austin, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, S.P. Burrell, E.A. Clare, D.G. Davies (Speaker), S. Davies, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade, N.A.M. England, 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, R.T. Kiernan, A. Lawrence, J. Loveridge, C.N. Mason, A.A. Mackenzie, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, A.A. Meredith, 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), J.M. Seymour, 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.

57. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 21 November 2013, be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

58. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Eric Carter, Clive Elliott and Roy Scammell.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Keith Austin declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 (i) the Community Partnership Safety Plan.

60. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Leader's Report

The Leader, on behalf of the council, wished Police & Crime Commissioner Bill Longmore a speedy recovery from his recently diagnosed illness. Government grant reductions meant that the council needed to make a further £22m in savings on top of £51m already saved since 2010. Services would be affected. Two thirds of the council's expenditure was in Adult Social Care and Children & Young People. Cuts to service users would be minimised with only £1.8m of proposed £10.5m cuts in the Adult Social Care budget directly affecting service users. The Leader urged people to take part in the ongoing budget consultation process. Proposals included plans to freeze Council Tax for two years.

Economic activity in the Borough had increased by 3.7% according to ONS figures; this was double the West Midlands average. The administration had made youth unemployment a priority and a Partnership for Jobs Fair was due to take place in

March. Pride in our Community would increasingly become a priority, improving the Borough's environment, including regeneration activities targeting town and district centres across the Borough. Youth unemployment and Pride in our Community were the two key investment priorities for the budget and would benefit from £15m one off funding. The solar farm exhibition had recently taken place successfully and been well attended. Two major planning applications had been submitted which could give Telford the opportunity to become the defence gateway for the Ministry of Defence logistics operation. The Minister for Health had recently acknowledged the Council's campaign to maintain round the clock Accident and Emergency cover at the Princess Royal Hospital. The Leader would continue to press for a full response on this matter.

61. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements

Members received the report of Mayoral engagements undertaken since the last meeting of the council on 21 November.

The Mayor began by asking Members to note that it was the first anniversary of the first live broadcast of Full Council meetings by members of the community who run the local website Lightmoor Life. On behalf of all members the Mayor thanked the team for their work. The Mayor asked Members to note his attendance at recent events. He drew attention to a number of events that he had particularly enjoyed.

62. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The following public questions had been received under Council Procedure Rules 7.11 and 7.12.

- a) Mr. Mike White, on behalf of Haygate Residents Group, asked the following question of the Leader of the council:

"Why has the Council not been proactive in its approach to the planning of housing over the last year, and what specifically will the Council do within the next 3 months to protect the vulnerable green field sites across the Borough from speculative development?"

Councillor Sahota replied that council's across the country were finding difficulties with this issue but that it was unfair to say that the council was not proactive in its approach. The government had changed the rules because it wanted to increase the supply of new homes. There was a presumption in support of sustainable development and Planning officers made recommendations with government guidelines.

- b) Mr Stuart Parr asked the following question of Councillor Arnold England, Cabinet Member: Leisure & Wellbeing:

“Without Social Services’ support, many carers will be unable to continue to care for loved ones at home. The planned cuts to the adult social care budget will result in more adults needing full time professional care in care homes at the council’s expense.

How much is care home use expected to rise and what is being done to ensure there is adequate provision?

Councillor England replied that following £50m cuts in government funding, reductions were having to take place in every part of the council. The council had no option but to make reductions in care expenditure but wherever possible not directly affecting the service to care users. Efficiencies were being sought in what the council paid to care service providers. The Clinical Commissioning Group were being lobbied to provide an increased contribution to continuing healthcare. Unless more funding was provided then the council would have less to spend on residential care or care for people in their homes.

- c) Lucy Allan asked the following question of Councillor Kuldip Sahota, Leader of the Council:

Telford is a great place to live with fantastic quality of life; I’m proud of my community.

Please could the Leader explain why the Council is to make £22m of cuts in services for the most vulnerable, but at the same time spend £14m on the aesthetics of the town?

Councillor Sahota replied that reductions had been forced by government budget cuts. Only 8% of these cuts would directly affect vulnerable service users. Neighbouring Shropshire council had been faced with the same stark budget reductions and had been forced to make cuts to Adult Social Care budgets. The Leader agreed Telford was a great place to live and pointed to budget plans for a £15m investment in environment and residents. This investment aimed to make the Borough an even better place to live for the whole community and would help to attract businesses and investment in to the area.

63. 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 21 November 2013.

Councillor Bill Tomlinson asked whether ward councillors had been consulted on item 2.1.7 (Disposal of land) of the Cabinet report. Councillor Bill McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery confirmed that ward members had been consulted.

A series of questions were asked of Councillor Charles Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development on item 2.2.6 (Shaping Places) of the Cabinet report. A number of questions asked about progress of the local development plan and the level of development in the Borough. Councillor Smith responded that there would be a finalised Shaping Places local plan in place by 2015.

64. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET

a) Community Safety Partnership Plan

Councillor Hilda Rhodes, Cabinet Member: Transport & Community Protection, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Family & Cohesion Services. The report outlined the requirements for a plan and a draft plan was attached.

Following a vote it was:

RESOLVED – that the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2013-2016 be approved.

b) Council Tax Support Scheme 2014/15

Councillor Bill McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Customers & People which set out the 2014/15 Council Tax support scheme.

Following a vote it was:

RESOLVED – that

a) the Council Tax Support Scheme policy for 2014/15, which remains unchanged from the scheme approved by Full Council on 22 November 2012, with the exception of the technical and legislative amendments that are necessitated each year by Government, be approved; and

b) the carry-forward of the remaining funds in the Council Tax Support Exceptional Hardship Policy be approved, to allow it to operate for a further year.

c) Financial Monitoring 2013/14

Councillor Bill McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Finance, Audit & Information Governance (CFO) 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, slippage and virements which required council approval.

Following a vote it was:

RESOLVED – that the new allocations, virements and slippage relating to capital spend and receipts be approved.

65. SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2014/15

Councillor Bill McClements, Cabinet Member: Resources & Service Delivery, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Finance, Audit & Information Governance (CFO) which determined the Council Tax Base for general and special fund purposes for the financial year 2014/15.

In response to a question from Councillor Ian Fletcher, Councillor McClements agreed to provide a copy of the detailed parish calculations.

Following a vote it was:

RESOLVED – that:

- a) the calculation of the tax base for 2014/15 as at paragraph 5.6 and Appendix 1 be approved; and
- b) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012:2914), the amount calculated for Telford and Wrekin Council Tax base for 2014/15 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.

66. MINUTES OF BOARDS & COMMITTEES

Council noted the resolved minutes of Boards and Committees:

Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee	22 October
CYP Scrutiny Committee	23 September
Health & Wellbeing Board	13 November
Licensing Committee	1 November
Planning Committee	6 November, 4 December, 11 December & 18 December
Standards Committee	19 November

67. QUESTIONS

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

1. Councillor Andrew Eade asked the following question of Councillor. Kuldip Sahota, Leader of the council.

Could Councillor Sahota advise the council if he intends to repeat the T-Live Party/T Party event or similar event in the Town Park this year?

Councillor Sahota replied that yes there would a similar event.

Councillor Eade asked if Councillor Sahota was aware that the true cost, including spend of a government grant, was £121k and did he think this was good value?

Councillor Sahota replied that he was aware of the cost and that the event had generated £600k additional spend in the local economy. 8000 people had attended the T Party and 3200 T Live. The event had further promoted Telford and the image of the town to potential visitors.

2. Councillor Stephen Bentley asked the following question of Councillor Charles Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development

Will Councillor Smith explain the timetable leading to the adoption of the Council's development policies as specified in "Shaping Places" and concede it was a severe error of judgement to abolish the DPSG who were at the time working towards a set timetable?

Councillor Smith replied that a Shaping Place local plan would be in place by 2015. Consultation and engagement were taking place and so far 2000 responses had been received. Regarding the Development Plan Steering Group (DPSG) Councillor Smith noted that the previous administration had removed cross party representation on this group. The current process of taking reports to Cabinet and Council was more transparent.

Councillor Bentley asked if Councillor Smith would take personal responsibility.

Councillor Smith replied no.

3. Councillor Stephen Bentley asked the following question of Councillor Hilda Rhodes, Cabinet Member: Transport & Community Protection.

Would Councillor Rhodes agree that transport and accessibility in the Borough are key factors and essential to the success of our Borough economy?

Councillor Rhodes replied yes.

4. Councillor Stephen Burrell asked Cllr. Kuldip Sahota, Leader of the council the following question.

Would the Leader confirm the average saving for each Council Tax payer as a result of the Administration's decision to accept the grant from central Government allowing the welcome freeze in Council Tax for local residents over the coming two years?

Councillor Sahota replied that he would defer this answer to Councillor Bill McClements who had responsibility for Finance.

Councillor McClements replied that this would be £1.45 per month next year and £3 per month for the second year.

Councillor Burrell asked why, by not previously freezing council tax, £2.2m had been taken from the pockets of local council tax payers.

Councillor McClements replied that the government's policy on freezing council tax had been poorly planned and it had not previously been clear whether funding would be ongoing. The government had finally confirmed the situation this year. £1.8m funding for Adult Care was in place that would not be available if council tax had been frozen.

5. Councillor Stephen Bentley asked the following question of Councillor Charles Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Regeneration & Economic Development.

As our Rural areas and green space throughout the borough are now under severe threat and diminishing because of a lack of Council planning policies, would you agree that we need to directly support local communities?

Councillor Smith replied that there was no lack of policies and that the current situation resulted from the government's National Planning Policy Framework which had taken control away from local councils. This was a national issue not a local one.

Councillor Bentley then asked if a levy per unit would be introduced to benefit the local community.

Councillor Smith replied that this issue was not related to the original question.

- 6 Cllr Gilly Reynolds asked the following question of Cllr Shaun Davies:, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills

Can the Cabinet Member for Employment and Skills inform the council what actions the council are taking to reduce the number of young people out of work, education or training

Councillor Davies referred to the apprenticeship agenda, with over 150 places at the council. A Jobs fair was planned for March and Baron Grocott was heading a task force.

Councillor Reynolds then asked about Job Junctions in Oakengates and Ketley

Councillor Davies confirmed that this service was doubling from February with new outlets across the Borough.

7 Cllr Amrik Jhawar asked the following question of Cllr Shaun Davies:,
Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills

Can the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services confirm what capital costs are associated with the new waste contract?

The 30 minutes for questions had elapsed before this question was addressed. The Speaker advised that a written answer would be provided or that the question would be re submitted at a future meeting.

68. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion received.

The meeting ended at 8.05pm.

Mayor:

Date: