

## **Borough of Telford & Wrekin**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 27 February, 2014 at 6.30pm in the Haybridge Refectory, TCAT, Wellington, Telford**

**PRESENT:** Councillors R.K. Austin, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, F.M. Bould, 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, I.T.W. Fletcher, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, K.R. Guy, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, M.G. Ion, A.S. Jhavar, R.T. Kiernan, A. Lawrence, 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), R G Scammell, J.M. Seymour, R.J. Sloan, C.F. Smith, A.J. Stanton, B.J. Thompson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

#### **69. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 23 January 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

#### **70. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillors Stephen Burrell, Nathan England, Rae Evans, Veronica Fletcher, Jackie Loveridge, Malcolm Smith and Karen Tomlinson.

#### **71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Andrew Eade declared an interest in agenda item 8 (Service & Financial Planning 2014/15 -2015/16) in respect of his wife being employed by the council. He had been granted a dispensation by the Standards Hearing sub-committee to take part in the debate and vote on this matter.

#### **72. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader thanked all staff for their work in dealing with the recent flooding. Telford had recently achieved the status of a 'white ribbon' town, amassing 1100 pledges by men to not use violence against women. A ceremony was due to take place in March. Recent government guidance had advised that a recorded vote should be held when approving council budgets. The Leader told councillors that the council was already open and transparent and that he could not personally recall when a recorded vote had not been taken when approving the council's budget.

#### **73. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members received the report of Mayoral engagements undertaken since the last meeting of the council on 23 January 2014.

#### **74. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

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

(a) Mr R Munt asked the following question of the Leader of the council:

“In view of the fact that you have been accused of scaremongering regarding the PRH, can we have your assurance that you will not be intimidated but continue your campaign on behalf of the people to keep our A&E open 24/7 with no downgrading”?

Councillor Sahota replied that he had not been scaremongering, merely fighting for local people. There was no guarantee in place for the future of the Princess Royal Hospital. He had again written to the Secretary of State asking for a guarantee that 24 hour seven day Accident & Emergency services would be retained at the site.

(b) Ms L Allan asked the following question of the Leader of the council:

“Telford's new ASDA has scrapped parking charges and residents are delighted. Will the Council be supporting a campaign by local residents to get parking charges scrapped at the Princess Royal Hospital”?

Councillor Sahota replied that this was an NHS issue and was affecting people all over the country. He noted that in 2009 Andy Burnham, Labour Health Secretary, had promised to scrap fees. The current government generated around £200m from fees but as far as he knew they had no plans to scrap them.

#### **75. 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 23 January 2014.

Councillor Tracy Hope left the room before consideration of the next agenda item.

#### **76. SERVICE & FINANCIAL PLANNING 2014/15-2015/16**

Prior to discussion of this item the Managing Director reminded Members that section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 placed limitations on voting on the setting of Council Tax for the forthcoming year by any Member who was at least 2 months in arrears in the payment of outstanding Council Tax. Any Member in this situation would also be required to disclose the fact that this section of the Act applied to them. No disclosures were made by Members.

Councillor Bill McClements, Cabinet Member for Finance & Enterprise, presented a series of reports of the Managing Director, the Assistant Director: Finance, Audit & Information Governance (Chief Financial Officer) and the Assistant Directors for Development, Business & Employment and for Neighbourhood & Leisure Services. The reports, detailing the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, the Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and the Formal Council Tax resolutions,

formed the Council's overall Medium Term Service & Financial Planning framework, and identified the service priorities and budget for 2014/15 as well as savings proposals to be delivered over the next two years, and a medium term capital programme. The proposals had been considered by Cabinet on 20 February 2014 and recommended to Council for approval. He thanked Officers for preparing the budget against a backdrop of such financial constraint, and thanked all those people who had taken part in the budget consultation exercise.

The Overview and Revenue Budget report set out the pressures facing the Council, including projected grant cuts of around £52.9m in real terms over the last five years, further reductions in spend of £22m over the next two years to meet further cuts in Government grants, reduced income from having a relatively low council tax, increasing numbers of older people needing adult care services and the loss from "grant damping" of £1.6m per annum.

Following the publication of its draft budget proposals in early January, and a one month consultation period, Cabinet had confirmed its key budget strategy proposals for 2014/15 as:

- Freezing Council Tax for the next two years – as agreed as part of its Strategy by Cabinet on 14 November 2013;
- Winning and supporting jobs and investment;
- Minimising cuts to priority services for vulnerable adults and children as far as possible, against a backdrop of unprecedented cuts in government funding, through generating income from growth in the Borough and from selling surplus assets;
- Investing in Safeguarding Children from harm and neglect, including the creation of an additional budget of £1.2m to be drawn down as required to meet demand;
- Investing in facilities for disabled people - to help people to remain living independent lives in their own homes rather than moving into residential care;
- Investing in communities – some one-off investments of £8m capital funding and £1.6m revenue funding over two years could be proposed as a result of the planned early delivery of ongoing savings and effective treasury management. This would fund environmental and infrastructure improvements and help to ensure that the Borough was an attractive place for people that wanted to come to live and locate businesses;
- Investing in roads – a commitment to a programme of £2m per annum to maintain the road network for the next 3 years over and above the funding allocated by Government for this purpose;
- Tackling youth unemployment - £1.3m of revenue funding over two years to deliver a range of pledges and actions to tackle youth unemployment;
- Destination Telford – an investment of £0.1m to promote Telford as a place to visit, live, work and invest in.

Attached to the report were a number of appendices, including savings proposals, a Safeguarding and Early Help Cost Improvement Plan, Impact Assessments of the savings proposals, the Capital Investment Programme, and details of Reserves and Balances.

Since the draft budget proposals were approved for consultation, the Government had issued the final settlement for 2014/15. The net impact resulted in a gain of £0.01m for the Council, which would be transferred to the inflation provision. For 2014/15 the CCG had confirmed funding of £2.73m would be made available to the Council to support existing care commitments, which was an increase to the funding available in the current financial year.

The forecast budget gap of £11.428m for 2014/15 was highlighted, and that, with 90% of the Council's budget spent on Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Neighbourhood & Leisure Services, it was inevitable that savings in these areas would be needed as a result of the cuts in Government funding. The Council had worked hard to protect Adult Social Care, but in order to deal with a current in-year overspend of over £4m, and to make a contribution to the overall cuts that the Council needed to make, a total of £10.5m savings would need to be found from Care & Support budgets by 2015/16.

In terms of council tax, the consultation on the budget strategy had indicated a high level of support for the proposal to accept the council tax freeze grants for the coming two years, given the Government's change in approach in base-lining them.

Councillor McClements thanked the council's finance team for their work on the budget and the people of the Borough who had responded to the budget consultation. Economic conditions nationally were showing some improvement but households were significantly worse off than prior to the financial crisis. Growth in Telford had bucked the national trend as the council continued to work hard to bring business investment to the Borough. £52.9m had been saved so far with a further £11.3m in savings to be found this year. The workforce had been reduced by 1,075 posts, senior management costs had been halved and office accommodation had been significantly reduced. Significant projects had been undertaken despite financial constraints, these included the Southwater development, building of new schools, regeneration of local centres, the Solar Farm and stabilisation work in The Gorge. Youth unemployment, roads and the disabled were all priority areas.

Councillor McClements commended the Budget to the Council, and moved all the recommendations in appendices D1 to D5. This was seconded by the Leader who noted that the council was still spending over £40m on Adult Social Care at a time when government grant had been cut by 50%.

Councillor Andrew Eade, Leader of the Conservative group, told the meeting that the requirement for further savings should sharpen the focus on where scarce resources were spent. He agreed with much of the budget, particularly the 2 year freeze of Council Tax. However, he believed Council Tax charges could have been frozen earlier to provide some respite for local tax payers. Job losses continued at the council, a reduction in costs could help to enhance job security for staff. The proposed spending on Highways would only serve to deliver a sub standard infrastructure. He disagreed on the proposals for growth; development was unsustainable across rural areas. The investigation of the possibility of more joint working with neighbouring councils was sensible. Cuts in Adult Social Care were too deep and being made too quickly. He believed that support for the elderly and the

vulnerable should take priority over spending on the environment. Debt was now at a new high of £124m.

Councillor Bill Tomlinson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat/Independent group, welcomed the Council Tax freeze. He was pleased that residents could now pay their Council Tax bill over 12 monthly instalments rather than the normal ten monthly instalments. The budget consultation had been good but he had some concerns that the question of whether residents wanted to protect Adult Social Care was not part of the process. The £10.5m Adult Social Care cuts could have been reduced if spending on infrastructure projects had been reduced and he was concerned that reserves were at a very low level.

Councillor Adrian Lawrence, on behalf of the Conservative Group, moved an amendment to the budget in the form of his group's alternative budget which had been circulated as a separate appendix with the budget papers. Councillor Lawrence told the meeting that his group agreed with some of the budget proposals but that they had made different choices in key areas. The proposed cuts of £10.5m were very concerning; his group's alternative proposals put a further £2.3m in to the Adult Social Care budget to protect the vulnerable. The alternative budget proposed an investment of £7.1m in Highways over 5 years in order to return roads to a high standard. Alternative budget proposals included:

- Freezing Council Tax for 2 years
- Additional £2.3m invested in Adult Social Care
- £7.1 m invested in Highways over 5 years
- Review of employee terms and conditions to generate ongoing savings of £1.8m per annum
- Savings from further partnering with adjacent authorities
- Review of non essential posts
- Cancellation of proposed increase in car parking charges

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Nigel Dugmore.

A number of other Members spoke both for and against the proposed budget and the proposed amendment.

Councillor McClements, in response, stated that had Council Tax been frozen earlier then a further £6m of cuts would now need to be found. In terms of the proposals for Adult Social Care he believed that the huge cuts in government grant were the main issue and that the main opposition group should be lobbying the government to provide fair levels of funding. He reminded the meeting that the previous administration had actually cut £9m from the Adult Social Care budget when they were in control of the council.

**A recorded vote was taken on the main opposition group's proposed alternative budget and this was defeated. Voting was as follows:**

**For: (14)** Councillors Bentley, Carter, Dugmore, Eade, I Fletcher, Greenaway, Hosken, Kiernan, Lawrence, Meredith, Mollett, Scammell, Seymour and Stanton.

**Against: (32)** Councillors Austin, Blundell, Bould, Clare, D Davies, S Davies, Elliott, A England, Green, Guy, Ion, Jhawar, Mackenzie, Mason, A McClements, W McClements, Minor, Murray, Overton, Picken, Pinter, G Reynolds, S Reynolds, Rhodes, Sahota, Sloan, C Smith, Thompson, W Tomlinson, Turley, Watling and White.

**Absent: (1)** Councillor Hope

Further debate on the substantive recommendation, the council's proposed budget, then took place. A number of other Members spoke both for and against the proposed budget.

Councillor McClements concluded in response that the Borough had not been treated equitably. There had been an 80% cut in spending power in the Borough when compared with the neighbouring Shropshire council. There had been a stark choice between the competing demands of Adult Social Care and Environment. 80% of complaints received related to Environmental issues or requests for services. The council continued to fight for a fair deal for Telford & Wrekin. A great deal of work had been done to bring the Ministry of Defence's logistics hub to Telford. If successful this would bring £50m-£60m per year to the local economy. Full 24 hour 7 day Accident & Emergency provision at the Princess Royal Hospital remained a priority. In term of proposals raised by the main opposition group, Councillor McClements told the meeting that the administration would not give the Borough council to Shrewsbury

**A recorded vote was taken on the council's budget proposals and the budget was carried. Voting was as follows:**

**For: (29)** Councillors Austin, Bould, Clare, D Davies, S Davies, Elliott, A England, Guy, Ion, Jhawar, Mackenzie, Mason, A McClements, W McClements, Minor, Murray, Overton, Picken, Pinter, G Reynolds, S Reynolds, Rhodes, Sahota, Sloan, C Smith, Thompson, Turley, Watling and White.

**Against: (14)** Councillors Bentley, Carter, Dugmore, Eade, I Fletcher, Greenaway, Hosken, Kiernan, Lawrence, Meredith, Mollett, Scammell, Seymour and Stanton.

**Abstentions: (3)** Councillors Blundell, Green and W. Tomlinson.

**Absent: (1)** Councillor Hope

## **RESOLVED –**

### **(i) Service & Financial Planning**

- (a) that the base budget summarised by Service Delivery Unit in Appendix 9a be approved;**
- (b) that the feedback from consultation summarised in Appendix 5 and from scrutiny in Appendix 6 be considered;**
- (c) that the freezing of council tax levels in 2014/15 and 2015/16 be approved;**

- (d) that the creation of a one-off £1.2m drawdown budget held centrally available to Childrens' safeguarding in 2014/15 to offset anticipated pressures in the safeguarding budget be approved;**
- (e) that the 2014/15 net savings package of £14.133m detailed in Appendix 3 and the savings proposals set out in the appendix for future years be approved;**
- (f) that the change in the methodology of calculating Minimum Revenue Provision set out in Section 10.4 of this report and the backdating of this change in approach to create a one-off provision which will be used to fund the debt charges associated with the Pride in Your Community initiative be approved;**
- (g) that the revenue investment of £1.608m over two years for the Pride in Your Community initiative be approved;**
- (h) that the revenue investment of £1.305m over 2 years for a programme of initiatives to tackle youth unemployment be approved**
- (i) that the revenue investment of £0.1m one-off funding for Destination Telford initiatives be approved;**
- (j) that the revenue investment of £0.03m ongoing to fund a doubling of the care leavers' grant be approved;**
- (k) that the policy framework for Reserves and Balances outlined in Appendix 11 be approved;**
- (l) that the revenue implications of the medium term capital programme for the period 2013/14 - 2016/17 set out in the Capital Programme report also on this agenda be noted;**
- (m) that the Impact Assessments contained in Appendices 4a – 4c be noted;**
- (n) that the Safeguarding and Early Help Cost Improvement Plan contained in Appendix 2 be approved;**
- (o) that, as detailed in section 10.5 of the report, any final underspend at the end of 2013/14 be used to supplement the Invest to Save, Capacity and Severance Funds to support the delivery of future ongoing savings; and**
- (p) that provisions be created during 2014/15 to fund the second year of the "Pride in Your Community" and Youth Unemployment initiatives. (Given that the whole of the two year programme will be funded from the early delivery of savings in 2014/15, the**

provisions will be created during 2014/15 from the funding that is not required until 2015/16).

**(ii) Capital Programme**

- (a) that the report and associated capital estimates for 2013/14 and 2014/15 – 2016/17, which incorporates the Capital Strategy, the Capital Programme (Annex I), the Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Annex II), and Asset Management Plan (Annex III) and the three year Highways and Transport capital investment programme (Annex IV) be approved; and**
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Employment to deliver the planned programme of works within the Asset Management Plan and to the Assistant Director: Neighbourhood & Leisure Services the Highways and Transport capital investment programme in line with the approved budgets with any variations or changes to schemes in these programmes, that remain within overall approved budgets, after consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Members.**

**(iii) Treasury Management**

- (a) that the treasury management activities for the first half year be noted;**
- (b) that the Treasury Management Policy Statement, as shown at Appendix A of the report, be noted; and**
- (c) that the Treasury Strategy, including the Annual Investment Strategy for 2014/15, together with the associated Treasury prudential indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, be approved.**

**(iv) Prudential Indicators**

- (a) that the prudential indicators for 2014/15 to 2016/17, as set out in the report, be approved.**

**(v) Council Tax Formal Resolution**

- (a) that the formal resolutions to determine the levels of Council Tax for 2014/15 as detailed in the report be approved.**

Councillors Mackenzie and Bould left the meeting before discussion of the next agenda item.

**77. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND – ELECTORAL REVIEW OF TELFORD & WREKIN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Councillor R.J. Sloan, Chairman of the Boundary Review Committee, presented an update on progress of the review of ward boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC). LGBCE had now completed their review of electoral arrangements for Telford & Wrekin. Telford & Wrekin Council currently had 54 councillors elected from 16 single-member, 13 two-member and 4 three-member wards. The LGBCE's final recommendations for Telford & Wrekin were that the Council should have 54 members, with 12 single-member wards, 12 two-member wards and 6 three-member wards. No ward was forecast to have an electoral variance of greater than 10% by 2018. In making these final recommendations LGBCE had taken account of submissions received during consultation on their draft recommendations. As a result, they had also proposed boundary amendments to draft recommendations for the Dothill, Edgmond & Ercall Magna, Hadley & Leegomery, Haygate, Park, Priorslee, Shawburch and St Georges wards.

The next step was for an Order to be laid in Parliament which would provide for the new electoral arrangements coming into force at the next elections for Telford & Wrekin Council in 2015.

The full report was available to download from the Council's website.

**78. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARDS & COMMITTEES**

Councillor K.S. Sahota, Leader and Chairman of the Personnel Committee, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Law, Democracy & People Services. The report outlined the content of the Council's updated pay policy for 2014/15 and a copy of the Pay Policy Statement was attached to the agenda.

Following a vote it was:

**RESOLVED – that the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15, as amended, be approved for publication on the Council's website on 1 April 2014.**

**79. MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

Council noted the resolved minutes of Boards and Committees:

- (a) Audit Committee – 28 January
- (b) Boundary Review Committee – 3 February
- (c) Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee – 7, 21 and 27 January
- (d) Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee – 26 November
- (e) Health & Wellbeing Board – 22 January
- (f) Licensing Committee – 14 January
- (g) Personnel Committee – 10 February
- (h) Planning Committee – 15 January and 5 February
- (i) Scrutiny Management Board – 15 November

## 80. QUESTIONS

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

- (a) Councillor Gilly Reynolds asked the following question of Councillor Shaun Davies, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills

*“Can the Cabinet Member for Employment and Skills please set out what response he has had from government in respect of the £1.3m fund to tackle youth unemployment in Oakengates and Ketley and the Borough as a whole?”*

Councillor Davies replied that Matthew Hancock, Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise, had been too busy to deal with the matter. Esther McVeigh, Minister for Employment, had suggested exploring opportunities with SERCO.

In response, Councillor Reynolds asked *“What effect on apprenticeships would there have been as a result of the alternative budget proposals?”*

Councillor Davies replied that 7 apprentices' posts would go if the alternative budget proposals had been adopted.

- (b) Councillor Amrik Jhavar asked the following question of Councillor 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?”*

Councillor Davies replied that there were nil up front costs and that £8m had been saved by not building the previously proposed bulking station.

- (c) Councillor Andrew Eade asked the following question of Councillor Kuldip Sahota, Leader of the Council

*“Would Councillor Sahota confirm his support for our Borough towns and tell us what he has done to promote and ensure prosperity on their High Streets?”*

Councillor Sahota replied that he supported Borough towns and referred to the benefits from the Telford Loyalty card and to the recent initiative providing a pop-up shop to support fledgling businesses in Wellington. £5.2m had been invested in local centres and markets had opened in various parts of the Borough. Parking remained free for local centres.

Councillor Eade, in response, asked *“Why is this council insisting on Aldi not giving £10k to the Town team in Newport and have instead we have asked them to provide works of art?”*

Councillor Sahota replied that this was a Section 106 Planning issue and that he would provide a written response.

Councillor Bould returned to the meeting before the following question.

- (d) Councillor Stephen Bentley asked the following question of Councillor Hilda Rhodes, Cabinet Member: Transport & Community Protection

*“Will the Cabinet Member confirm or deny if the decision to raise car parking fees in the Borough has any correlation to the projected loss of revenue due to slippage in delivering the new Multi Storey Car Park at Southwater?”*

Councillor Rhodes replied that the issues were not related.

- (e) Councillor Angela McClements asked the following question of Councillor Paul Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families

*“Can the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families update the Council on the timetable for the new Ercall Wood School?”*

Councillor Watling replied that work would be complete before the Summer holiday period. The school would pack up and move during the Summer break. The old school would be demolished and the site landscaped by December.

## **81. NOTICES OF MOTION**

Councillor Andrew Eade moved, in accordance with Council procedure rule 11, the following motion:

*“This Council calls on the national Leaders of the three main political parties to give the Electorate in Telford & Wrekin and the country an unequivocal undertaking for an “in or out” referendum on membership of the EU before the end of 2017. This council further undertakes to write to both Members of Parliament whose constituencies cover the Borough to formally request their help in achieving this goal”.*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Nigel Dugmore.

A recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

**For: (17)** Councillors Bentley, Blundell, Carter, Dugmore, Eade, I Fletcher, Green, Greenaway, Hosken, Kiernan, Lawrence, Meredith, Mollett, Scammell, Seymour, Stanton and W Tomlinson.

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

**Absent: (2)** Councillors Hope and Mackenzie.

**RESOLVED – that the motion not be approved**

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** .....