

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 1 May, 2014 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.C. Carter, E.A. Clare, 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, M.B. Hosken, M.G. Ion, A.S. Jhavar, 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 (Deputy Leader), F.R. Picken, J. Pinter, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, 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 absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker would be chairing the remainder of the meeting. Members conveyed their best wishes to the Speaker.

82. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

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

83. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors D.G. Davies (Speaker), C.B.A. Elliott, K.R. Guy, T.J. Hope and K.S. Sahota (Leader)

84. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

85. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Leader, on behalf of the Leader, referred to the success of AFC Telford Utd in winning the Football Conference North title the previous weekend. He extended congratulations to the players, management and everyone involved with the club, and commented that its success reflected the optimism in the Borough and what could be achieved by working together. A number of other Members also spoke to offer their congratulations and support. Three of the club's directors were in attendance with the championship trophy, and the Chairman, Mr Ian Dosser, expressed his thanks on behalf of the football club.

The Deputy Leader then referred to the Council's plans for a solar farm on the northern edge of the town, which had just received planning permission. This would create green energy, as well as generating income to protect services from the worst effects of Government cuts. The Telford Loyalty Card, which was introduced just over a year ago, had been a tremendous success, with 57,000 residents now registered and over 200 businesses signed up. Creating growth and tackling unemployment (particularly youth unemployment) continued to be key priorities for the Council. The Jobs Fair at the International Centre in March had been very successful, and it was planned to hold another one next year. Through the 'Job Box' initiative, local residents would be able to access the skills and opportunities to make their career in Telford & Wrekin. The new Southwater development would be open in a couple of months, and would provide more new jobs as well as revitalising the Town Centre. Finally, the Pride in the Community initiative was well under way in bringing improvements to the environment and wellbeing of local communities. A £1m Community Pride Fund would be launched shortly to which local groups could bid for funding for buildings and equipment.

86. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members received the report of Mayoral engagements undertaken since the last meeting of the council on 27 February.

The Mayor drew attention to a number of events that he had particularly enjoyed, including the Fairtrade Fortnight Recipe Winners Presentations at Windmill Primary and Newport Girls High Schools, and a visit to the University of Wolverhampton to learn about the research being carried out into brain tumours in children. The Mayor thanked everyone who had attended his Charity Caribbean Night on 25 April. There had been 172 guests, with £3,000 raised from the event. This took his Charity Fund to nearly £14,000 so far for the year.

The Mayor then presented a Commendation from the Managing Director to Helen Morris from the Family & Cohesion team in recognition for her ongoing work in supporting young people at risk of sexual exploitation.

Councillors V.A. Fletcher, Fairtrade Champion, and G.C.W. Reynolds, Lead Member for Fairtrade, referred to the recent Fairtrade Recipe competition, and the Recipe Cookbook that had subsequently been produced. Thanks were extended to Louise Stanway and colleagues from the Co-operative Council & Commercial Delivery team for all their work in promoting Fairtrade across the Borough and as part of the Shropshire Fairtrade Alliance.

87. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

Katrina Gilman asked the following question of the Deputy Leader of the Council:

"The MP for the Wrekin was going to write to the District Auditor to complain about Council spending on the Audley Avenue, Newport appeals. Can the Leader of the

Council please inform me what exactly is the true cost of these appeals to Council taxpayers, and has the District Auditor looked into this or not?"

The Deputy Leader provided the following response:

"The Council has spent £157,000 on appeals at Audley Avenue. In addition the Council has incurred costs as a result of the actions of others. The Secretary of State chose to call in the Station Road application and a member of the public sought to declare Station Road as a "village green".

As Local Planning Authority this Council, like all other Councils, incurs costs in processing and determining planning applications, in this case in and around Newport. This is the "day job" and such costs are unavoidable and necessary to manage development in the local community.

With regard to the role and views of the District Auditor I can confirm that the Council's Auditors KPMG reviewed the Council's actions and expenditure in relation to Station Road in 2012-13. KPMG concluded that the Council had acted appropriately and maintained sound governance. Since 2013 KPMG has been provided with information relating to the latest position in Newport in order that the District Auditor can perform its role in relation to the work of the Council".

88. 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 February 2014.

Councillor S.P. Burrell referred to the Review of Post-16 SEND Provision, and asked what measures would be put in place to mitigate against the potential impact on students arising from the transfer of provision from the Bridge School to Telford College of Arts & Technology (TCAT). Councillor P.R. Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families, advised that these proposals were still being consulted upon, but that the children and their needs would be at the heart of the final decision-making. It was believed that the proposal would provide better provision, and, if it went ahead, there was agreement for a senior Leader from Bridge School to be seconded to the new facilities at TCAT in order to provide continuity and reassurance for parents.

Councillor N.A. Dugmore referred to the Development of a Logistics Hub at MoD Donnington and to the Disposal of Land off A518, Muxton – and asked whether there was any update on when a decision would be taken by the MoD on the former, and whether some of the receipts from the latter would be used to improve infrastructure in Muxton. Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, advised that a final decision by the MoD on the location of the Logistics Hub was some months away. The assets realised from the sale of land at Muxton would be used to benefit all residents of the Borough. However, road improvements at Muxton were subject to a bid for funding via the Local Enterprise Partnership.

89. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET – 24 APRIL 2014

Shaping Places – Consultation on Proposed Housing and Employment Sites

Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Planning Specialist. A copy of the full consultation document was enclosed with the agenda.

Following public consultation in 2013 on the Shaping Places Local Plan Strategy & Options document, comments received had been used to inform the emerging Local Plan including the identification of proposed sites for future housing and employment development. The proposed sites balanced growth with the protection of green space, and were distributed across both the urban and rural areas of the Borough. The Plan would protect and enhance the green open space and landscape features to ensure that Telford & Wrekin continued to be an attractive place in which to live, work and invest. The proposed consultation document included the following sections:

- Growth Strategy – proposal for c20,000 additional homes to be built over the Plan period (2011-2031) of which 11,885 were already committed or had been identified in an adopted development plan. A detailed target had yet to be confirmed for the quantity of employment land required.
- Location of Development – previous consultation showed there was broad support for Option 3 – ‘Growth Hub’, which proposed a focus for development in the urban area with some development on the urban fringe and a low level in the rural area.
- Selection of Housing Sites – the starting point for assessment of housing sites was the Strategic Housing Number Assessment (SHNA) and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The sites were assessed against a list of criteria and in consultation with Council Officers. The process had been assisted by the availability of a substantial number of developable sites within the Borough, many of which were brownfield and in public ownership.
- Selection of Employment Sites – this had been based on an assessment of sites identified in the Employment Land Review. In addition five potential Strategic Employment Areas had been identified to satisfy the requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework for strategic sites for attracting local and inward investment.

The proposals would address the delivery of local priorities and opportunities, and provide greater certainty to developers and investors enabling the delivery of growth which was key to the Council’s overall strategy for prosperity and providing a supply of new homes. Subject to ratification by Council, the document would be available for comment during a six week consultation period from 6 May 2014. There would be engagement with Scrutiny members, Parish & Town Councils, Young Persons Forum and via various social media.

During the ensuing debate, a number of Members commented on what were described as unacceptable delays in the production of the Local Plan, the disregard of views from previous consultations, and the fact that planning applications were already coming forward on sites in the rural areas of the Borough even before potential housing sites were being consulted upon. The Cabinet

Member stated that the Council had an adopted Core Strategy that was valid until 2016. What had changed was that the current Government had introduced the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012, which introduced the need for local authorities to demonstrate that a five year supply of housing land was deliverable. This meant that committed housing that had not yet been built (largely due to the recession) could not be counted as part of the 5 years supply. Many local authorities now found themselves unable to meet the target figure. The views of rural communities would be listened to, but at present the effect of the NPPF was over-riding the wishes of local people. In terms of Shaping Places, the consultation was an opportunity for all residents and communities to have their say on future housing and economic development in their area. The new Plan would be produced on time, and Members were assured that it was being produced as quickly as any development plan in the country.

A vote was then taken, and it was

RESOLVED – that the Shaping Places Local Plan: Proposed Housing and Employment Sites document be approved for public consultation.

90. MINUTES OF BOARDS & COMMITTEES

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

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee	27 January
Health & Wellbeing Board	12 February and 12 March
Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee	18 February
Licensing Committee	12 March
Planning Committee	26 February, 5 March & 19 March

91. QUESTIONS

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

(a) Councillor A.D. McClements asked the following question of the Deputy Leader, Councillor R.A. Overton

“Can the Deputy Leader tell me when the decision was actually taken to sell the land at Station Road, Newport to the food store supermarket?”

The Deputy Leader replied that the developers, St Modwens, were appointed to initiate the development of the Station Road site for a new supermarket in February 2011. On 31 March 2011, a process was initiated to seek tenders to secure a supermarket retailer for this site. Both of these dates and decisions were before the 2011 Council elections.

Councillor McClements asked a supplementary question as to whether there was any documentary evidence from that time to show that there was an intention to hold a public ballot or referendum of Newport residents on the proposed supermarket development? The Deputy Leader replied that there was no mention of a public ballot or referendum.

(b) Councillor S.P. Burrell asked the following question of Councillor C.F. Smith (Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns)

“What changes have been made to the Council’s planning policy as a result of the Planning Practice Guidance issued by the Government on the 6th March this year?”

The Cabinet Member replied that the Government’s on-line Planning Practice document (PPG) published in March 2014 did not change national or local planning policies. It was the National Planning Policy Framework which set out how the Government expected policies to be applied. This document had not been altered, and the PPG provided guidance to “help achieve sustainable development” within the Policy Framework. The Council, as Local Planning Authority, had been following the approach required by Government and would continue to do so. The new Shaping Places Local Plan would set out how growth and development would be achieved locally as well as protecting the green environment.

Councillor Burrell then asked a supplementary question relating to proposals for housing development in his ward, and whether the PPG would be applied in this case? The Cabinet Member advised that he could not comment on specific planning applications.

(c) Councillor S. Bentley asked the following question of Councillor C.F. Smith (Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns)

“Would the Cabinet Member inform Members how many acres of allotment land have been disposed of for development since 2011?”

The Cabinet Member replied that the Council had not disposed of any allotment sites since 2011. There were currently 15 allotment sites in the Borough – two were managed by Telford & Wrekin, with the remainder operated by Town and Parish Councils. Working in partnership, the Council had transferred the Randlay allotments to Hollinswood & Randlay Parish Council, and, with Lilleshall, Donnington & Muxton Parish Council, had provided new allotments in Donnington and Lilleshall.

Councillor Bentley asked a supplementary question about the amount of allotment land that had been lost to housing developments. The Cabinet Member responded that he could only comment on Council owned allotments, and that the Council had no control over what happened to privately owned allotments. No allotment sites were proposed for housing or employment development in the Shaping Places consultation document.

(d) Councillor S. Bentley asked the following question of Councillor C.F. Smith (Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns)

“Can the Cabinet Member tell the Chamber how many residents the Borough has waiting for allotments?”

The Cabinet Member replied that the Council only had up-to-date information for the two sites that it managed. At the present time there were 6 people waiting for allotments in Wellington and 10 people waiting in Brookside. The data for Town and Parish Councils was held by those Councils.

(e) Councillor S. Bentley asked the following question of Councillor C.F. Smith (Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns)

“Can Cllr Smith enlighten the Chamber as to how evidence has been collated to support his administration’s assumption that I-54 would service the employment expectations of Borough residents?”

The Cabinet Member replied that I-54 and the major new Jaguar Land Rover engine plant was just 12 minutes from Telford, and was attracting some of the biggest names in advanced manufacturing. Telford & Wrekin already had Tier 1 automotive suppliers like Stadco, Denso, Mahle and Johnson Controls. The impact of I-54 on the supply chain could already be seen with the recent announcement of expansions at Stadco and Denso, leading to new jobs for the Telford workforce. There were over 600 acres of employment land ready for development, and 2013 saw a greater take-up of employment land in the Borough than at any time over the last 10 years.

92. NOTICES OF MOTION

Councillor A.J. Eade moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, the following motion:

“This Council believes that this Borough is best served by retaining its own council and by not merging with Shropshire”.

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

In responding to the motion, the Deputy Leader moved an amendment which added the words “key posts and vital services” after the word “council” and the words “who have transferred some of their services to IP&E” after the word “Shropshire”. The amendment was seconded by Councillor S.A.W. Reynolds, who advised that the amendment was intended to clarify the motion. There then followed a debate on the amendment, at the conclusion of which it was

RESOLVED – that the amendment be approved.

The subsequent substantive motion was then debated, at the conclusion of which it was unanimously

RESOLVED – that this Council believes that this Borough is best served by retaining its own Council, key posts and vital services and by not merging with Shropshire, who have transferred some of their services to IP&E.

The meeting ended at 8.35pm.

Mayor:

Date: