

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday 6 October 2016 at 6.00pm at Telford College of Arts & Technology, Haybridge Road, Telford

PRESENT:

Councillors J C Ashford, S L Barnes, S Bentley, K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, S P Burrell, E J Carter, L D Carter, E A Clare (arrived at 6.10pm), G K Cook, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, I T W Fletcher, V A Fletcher, J A Francis, C A Furnival, E J Greenaway, M B Hosken, J Jones, J Loveridge, N C Lowery, R T Kiernan, A D McClements, A A Meredith, J C Minor, L A Murray, T J Nelson, R A Overton, J Pinter, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, S J Reynolds, H Rhodes, K S Sahota (Leader), P J Scott, J M Seymour, R J Sloan, C F Smith, M J Smith, B D Tillotson, K L Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, P R Watling and D G Wright

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors C P R Mollett and C N Mason

(Councillors K R Guy and A Lawrence were also absent from the meeting.)

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Boylan declared an interest in minute number 47 due to his position as Director at Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin and indicated that he would withdraw from the meeting.

Councillor A J Burford declared an interest in minute number 47 due to his position as joint Chair of the Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and indicated that he would not take part in the debate and, on legal advice, would abstain from the vote.

Councillor V A Fletcher declared an interest in minute number 47 due to her Membership of the Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and indicated that she would withdraw from the meeting.

Councillor R J Sloan declared an interest in minute number 47 due to his Membership of the Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and indicated that he would not take part in the debate and, on legal advice, would abstain from the vote.

47. RECONFIGURATION OF HOSPITAL SERVICES

In accordance with the Constitution, five members of the Councils had submitted a request to the Speaker to arrange an urgent extraordinary public meeting of the Council with a single item of business – a motion relating to the reconfiguration of hospital services in the County as set out in the agenda papers.

The Leader, Councillor S Davies, moved the following Motion:

“This Council deplores the recent recommendation by the NHS Future Fit programme’s non-financial review of hospital services to move the new £28m state of the art Women & Children’s Unit and the Accident & Emergency unit from the Princess Royal Hospital (PRH) to Shrewsbury.

It makes no sense to move the very successful Women & Children’s Unit only two years after it opened and reverse the proven clinical case for this unit being based in Telford.

We call on the Secretary of State for Health to immediately intervene and put a permanent halt to this flawed plan and fund Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin’s health economy sufficiently to ensure we can maintain two properly resourced A&Es and retain the Women’s & Children’s Unit at the PRH.

Full Council also supports the Cabinet in taking all necessary steps to keep health services in Telford and Wrekin, including launching a judicial review if necessary.”

In supporting the motion, Councillor Davies thanked the Defend Our NHS group, Officers and Members for their support and hard work in taking the issue forward. He referred to the protest organised by Defend Our NHS which had taken place the previous weekend during which hundreds of people from across the county had demonstrated their feelings by marching in adverse weather from the centre of Wellington to PRH. Councillor Davies had been privileged to speak at the event alongside a number of other passionate speakers. He opined that it did not make sense to move the £28m Women’s and Children’s Unit and that a growing town in terms of population, business and industry needed a local hospital with an Accident and Emergency Department, and it was reasonable to seek two hospitals for a county 19 times the size of Birmingham. Councillor Davies considered that the process did not make sense, and that the Non-Financial Appraisal Panel did not have the tools to make a formally informed decision. He went on to call for NHS colleagues to engage in constructive dialogue outside of the Courtroom and noted that he had asked Jeremy Hunt for a pause in the process to seek a way to keep both hospitals and Accident & Emergency Departments in the County. Councillor Davies considered that Judicial Review as a last resort and noted that the CCG had deferred making a decision for 28 days but he considered that subsequent comments made by the Chair, David Evans about the delay, were contemptuous. He further went on to remind Councillors and residents that the delay in the process did not mean that the threat to the closure had dissipated and he noted that the Council would not be fooled by alternative labels for Services. Councillor Davies sought cross-party support for the Secretary of State to intervene and asked that the Chamber sanction Cabinet to pursue Judicial Review if necessary and as a last resort.

The motion was seconded by Councillor A J Eade.

Councillor W L Tomlinson welcomed the motion and cross party support for an important issue and thanked officers and campaigners for their efforts and continued

support. He commented on the business case which saw the Women's and Children's Unit located in Telford and questioned the clinical evidence which now suggested it should be moved. He lamented the fact that the NHS was under-funded and considered that the plans for a single A&E for the County and Planned Care on another site would be unacceptable in terms of journey time and for deprived families to attend or visit relatives.

A number of Members spoke in support of the proposal, citing their own personal experiences and those of local residents in requiring emergency treatment at PRH or treatment at the Women's and Children's Centre. Members noted the fervent local feeling for the retention of the A&E Department and the recent £28m expenditure on providing a Women's and Children's Unit in Telford following a robust business case. Some Members were critical of the evidence used to support the proposals due to bias in the non-financial appraisal process and reflected upon the inclusion of Welsh counterparts.

Some Members expressed caution against a lengthy and expensive Judicial Review process and urged Cabinet to consult the Chamber before such a step was taken. Some Members noted the fragility of clinical safety at the two A&Es and that the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee still had a significant role to play in the consultation process despite the leaked documents from the non-financial appraisal which had led to the submission of the Motion.

Councillor A J Eade, who had reserved his right to speak, reflected upon the historic campaigns to bring and retain hospital services to the borough and the new PRH4Me campaign. He believed it was essential for the Council to present a united front and that the non-financial appraisal process was seriously flawed. He also cautioned against proceeding to Judicial Review and sought assurances that all Councillors needed to be privy to relevant advice, cost estimate and chances of success before such action was taken.

Councillor S Davies expressed his thanks for a robust debate; he welcomed cross party support for the Motion and thanked those who shared personal anecdotes. He noted some seemingly conflicted views from the main opposition benches but agreed that Judicial Review should be a last resort. He urged cross-party support and support from MPs to lobby the Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, for the retention of two A&E departments in Shropshire.

A vote on the Motion was taken, which resulted in the motion being carried (46 for and 2 abstentions for the reasons set out in minute number 46).

The meeting ended at 7.03 pm

Mayor:

Date: