

## BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

### Minutes of the Meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 20 September 2018 at 6.00pm at The Place, Oakengates, 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, G K Cook, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, , J A Francis, C A Furnival, E J Greenaway, K R Guy, M B Hosken, J Jones, A Lawrence, N C Lowery, C N Mason, A D McClements, R Mehta (Mayor), 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, P J Scott, J M Seymour, R J Sloan, C F Smith, M J Smith (Speaker), B D Tillotson, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, P R Watling and D G Wright

#### **32. Prayers**

The Reverend Keith Osmund-Smith said prayers.

#### **33. Apologies for Absence**

Councillors I T W Fletcher, V A Fletcher, R T Kiernan, J Loveridge and A A Meredith

#### **34. Declarations of Interest**

None.

#### **35. Minutes of the Council**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 July 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

#### **36. Leader's Report & Announcements**

The Leader referred to recent reports that enforcement action was being taken by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) against Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust (SaTH) following recent inspections. He considered that there was poor leadership at SaTH and that hard working NHS Staff deserved better. He considered that the Trust required urgent help to increase resources.

#### **37. Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor commented upon the engagements he had attended since the meeting on 26 July 2018 and the launch of his charity appeal "Building Bridges".

The Mayor was also delighted to announce that the winner of the Big Green Vote was Judy Moore who had won a Garden Wildlife Hamper sponsored by CJ Wildlife. Ms Moore would be receiving her prize in her favourite green space – Dale End Park.

Councillor R A Overton spoken on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Leisure, Green Spaces & Parks noting that the Big Green Vote had proved to be a big success, he was delighted that so many people had taken part in the initiative and expressed congratulations to the winner.

### **38. Public Questions**

- (i) The following question to Cllr L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services & Economic Development was submitted by Carol Scott MBE:

“I refer to my January question and subsequent reply from Councillor McClements. Can I be assured, as indicated, that the member for Finance will consider concessionary travel for the cohort of 1950’s women still waiting their State Pension in the next round of budget setting, suggestions in my covering email?”

Councillor Carter responded that the Cabinet was in favour of expanding concessionary travel to a number of groups including WASPI women and continued to look at ways to do this sustainably. However, there were some fundamental obstacles. Firstly, any expansion of the concessionary scheme would need to be funded from the revenue budget which had been cut by £117m by the government since 2010 with a further cut of nearly £30m over the next two years. The cuts programme had continued despite evidence that an increase in adult social care and children’s safeguarding costs alone were spiralling year on year. Secondly, to compound this, the government were seeking to transfer responsibilities to local government but were refusing to transfer the required funding to take on those extra responsibilities. Thirdly, there was monopoly by the private companies running bus services. Profit motives were leading to the rationalisation of existing services including vital rural services in the borough. Councillor Carter cited the recent moves to cut the 519 service on Saturdays. However, the Cabinet would consider funding for a scheme as part of the budget round and continue to look for alternative external resources, if and when they arose, and continue to lobby the government to provide a solution to this and the wider WASPI cause.

### **39. 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.

#### Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle Strategy

Councillor M B Hosken sought assurance that the Council’s fleet vehicles would be ultra low in a quick and timely manner to comply with the policy.

The Leader noted that the Council’s ambition to roll out green and electric energy, however, when the government continued to make extensive cuts to funding, there were unfortunately some things the Council was unable to do. However, the policy position was ambitious and the Council would work with government, the LGA and other authorities.

*Councillor N C Lowery sought confirmation of the work that was being done to ensure hydro and electric cellular vehicles were included in the strategy.*

The Leader responded that all technology was being considered and referred to government policy with reference to diesel vehicles.

*Councillor W L Tomlinson welcomed the report but asked whether there was a commitment to support the use of bicycles to get to work and sought a commitment to bring a report at a later stage.*

The Leader gave this commitment.

#### Procurement Update

*Councillor N A Dugmore questioned the inclusion of a double entry of a £100m contract and the cost to the Council of £35,000 to pay for a fire alarm at an academy school and also asked for an explanation as to why the Council was spending £20,000 on physiotherapy services for selected staff and £100,000 on this year's panto.*

Councillor L D Carter advised that he would respond in writing.

#### **40. Political Balance**

Councillor S Davies, Leader, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning which informed Members of changes in the Council's political balance. He drew attention to the revised political balance calculation and nominations to the Combined Fire Authority which had been tabled together with nominations for all Committees and Boards.

#### **RESOLVED – that**

- (a) the change to the Council's political balance be noted;**
- (b) the corresponding changes in the number and allocation of seats on the Council's Committees/Boards be endorsed; and**
- (c) the Committees/Boards, Chairs, Vice Chairs and membership thereof, as tabled at the meeting be appointed for the remainder of the 2018/19 Municipal Year.**

#### **41. Questions**

The following questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 6.2.2:-

- (i) Councillor Andrew Eade asked the following question of Councillor Shaun Davies, Leader

“Will the current Council Leader give me the full costs and a complete breakdown of officer and Member time, preparation, transport, accommodation, dinner, drinks etc incurred as part of the recent APSE awards and any other similar awards process over the past 3 years?”

The Leader responded that it had been a great privilege to be nominated for many awards over the previous year and only recently had been a finalist in the APSE Council of the Year award. Whilst the Council did not win that award, it did scoop a prize for its collaboration with regard to the land deal. He noted that the vast majority of individuals who represented the Council at awards evenings were staff in recognition of the hard work. Over the last three years, £4259 had been spent on attending the APSE awards.

Councillor Eade sought a breakdown of costs for similar events but the Leader felt that this element of the question was ambiguous and that he would provide a written answer if further clarification was received.

(ii) Councillor Andrew Eade asked the following question of Councillor Shaun Davies, Leader

“Will the current Council Leader tell me how much has been, or will be paid, to the performing group Collabro, and how much of this has been recouped or is outstanding following the recent cancellation.”

The Leader noted that this detail was commercially sensitive and the subject of current legal proceedings against the management company for breach of contract; an answer would put the litigation at risk. However, he was able to advise that ticket holders had been reimbursed.

Councillor Eade considered that litigation would escalate the costs involved and that there was a risk of not being successful. He asked whether there would be a limit to the legal costs.

The Leader responded that the litigation would take place under civil procedure rules involving pre-litigation conversations. He praised the hard work of the staff involved who were working to ensure the public purse was protected and noted that not pursuing litigation would be a risk that would attract criticism from the Council's auditors.

(iii) Councillor Andrew Eade asked the following question of Councillor Shaun Davies, Leader

“Will the current Leader of the Council give me a full breakdown of the costs incurred with events associated with, and including the big top at TTP. This to include a separate list of refunds/compensation due to cancellations, removal of booked seats, weather integrity or any other cause?”

The Leader responded that the Big Top events had been a fantastic attraction, with 14 big shows attended by over 10,000 people. It had been central to the Telford @ 50 summer celebration event project and had been the first time such a bold offering had been made. Telford Shopping Centre had provided sponsorship of £10,000 in addition to the £50,000 grant.

10% of people attending the Big Top events had never been to the theatre and there had also been a big boost in secondary spend with fantastic feedback on the

events. Refunds had amounted to just over £2000 but the majority had been happy to receive this in theatre vouchers, protecting income.

Councillor Eade expressed disappointment that a full breakdown was not provided.

(iv) Councillor Andrew Eade asked the following question of Councillor Richard Overton, Communities, Housing and Enforcement

“Could the relevant Cabinet Member inform me how no conflict of interest will occur with planning decision making and consultation as a result of the privatisation of services via APT Group in the Council Planning Control Team.? Could he also make available a copy of the Council’s mitigation strategy regarding this issue.”

Councillor Overton responded that there was no privatisation involved and therefore none of the action mentioned was required.

(v) Councillor Stephen Bentley asked the following question of Councillor Lee Carter, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development

“In what areas does the Council owned solar farm provide energy?”

Councillor Carter responded that energy generated by the solar farm was sold through a power purchase agreement, basically a contract between the Council as a generator and a customer when the electricity was wholesale in a single block. This was currently the best financial option for the Council, however, this would be kept under review.

Councillor Bentley asked how this was reflected in household energy bills?

Councillor Carter advised that the Council sold energy into the grid and generated £1.4m net income for the Council, £4.4m to be generated over the lifetime of the facility, 15.8% return on investment, 14.4 gigawatt hours of renewable energy, 3000 home equivalent supplied to and 7200 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide emissions. The income generated supported front line services.

(vi) Councillor Stephen Bentley withdrew this question.

(vii) Councillor Stephen Bentley asked the following question of Councillor Lee Carter, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development

“What support, either current or historical, does the Gower Project in St Georges have with this Council?”

Councillor Carter noted that the Gower Project focussed on the site of the school building which had been used for a variety of purposes over the years and was an important part of the area’s history and heritage. Freehold ownership sat with Telford & Wrekin Council. In 2014 the Council and a group of local people who later became the Gower Heritage and Enterprise Foundation carried out a consultation on the use of the building, which indicated that local residents wanted to see the

building returned to some form of community use. In 2015, the Council set aside £650,000 to support this vision and the Cabinet agreed the Council would support the project and that capital funding would be set aside for the refurbishment and that it would be released subject to an appropriate business plan. Since 2015, the Council had worked with the Gower Heritage and Enterprise Foundation to develop the project, the Council's support had included advice guidance and the financial support previously mentioned. This had resulted in the Gower Heritage and Enterprise Foundation submitting an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund with a letter of support from the Council in August this year. It was anticipated a decision would be made on the first stage application in December 2018.

Councillor Bentley asked if this Authority had had any influence on any managerial appointment for the project and whether any remuneration for the post came from this Authority.

Councillor Carter responded "no".

(viii) Councillor Jane Pinter asked the following question of Councillor Lee Carter, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development

"Can the relevant Cabinet Member please give members an update on progress towards the establishment of the local Independent inquiry into CSE since the last meeting of the cross party member advisory panel on 20 June 2018."

Councillor Carter responded that Members were aware that agreement to go out to tender for the commissioning body to oversee the appointment of an independent chair and the setting of the terms of reference in full consultation with survivors was done on 20 June 2018. The process was being deliberately set up to ensure double independence in delivering an Inquiry in order to maintain confidence of the public and survivors. This process was arrived at as a result of Councillors or Council Officers setting the terms of reference being totally unsatisfactory to the survivors given the experience of Rotherham which appointed its own Chair and terms of reference. This stage of the process had been delayed slightly as members of the advisory group had unanimously agreed that the involvement of survivors should take place at stage one not at stage two as originally suggested. This had taken the form of a survivors committee who represented survivors and their families (at least 15, but the number was growing). At stage two of the process – the commissioning of an independent body – an ambitious timetable for the recruitment and selection of the commissioning body was set that would have seen it established by this point. However, there were two main reasons this had been extended – firstly it was established in conversations with survivors that there were concerns about some of the detail of the process, including the fact that survivors felt they were not being sufficiently consulted at the stage of the process when the terms of reference would be set. It was also recognised that they needed some independent legal support which the Council agreed to fund. Ongoing conversations were proving fruitful and what had originally been proposed was being changed in some significant ways to suit the survivors. Survivors had said that they would rather the process was delayed and it was right rather than hurried just to meet an arbitrary timetable. The second reason for the extension of the timetable was feedback from potential bidders that the timetable over the summer holiday period was too tight. Having considered this alongside survivors wishes, it was obvious that a longer timetable

would be better in order to secure well considered bids from serious credible organisations. Councillor Carter hoped this demonstrated how seriously the Council was taking the process; if the process was being rushed it would be right for questions to be raised but the process was being done collaboratively and thoroughly with survivors at the heart.

Additionally, there were several other things relating to the setting up of the inquiry. The Council had supported the establishment of the Holly Project and had been working with survivors and the voluntary sector to commission support for the longer term resulting in an immediate extension of funding to March 2019 with a longer term package of £200,000 in place. The Council continued to invest in the Children Abused Through Exploitation (CATE) team who provided the frontline approach to this issue. The Council was investing £100,000s more in this area than when the administration came into office in 2011, despite the fact that central government cuts had been made to the funding which provided these services. The Council also continued to apply for funding from government which to date had not been forthcoming. Councillor Carter was pleased to report that he was meeting with the MP for Telford to brief her on the process and other information.

When beginning this task on behalf of the Cabinet, Councillor Carter had set some tests for each of the actions taken. Firstly, 'does what we do meet the terms of the mission we set out collectively as a Council in terms of the independent inquiry'. Secondly, 'does what we do help progress the cause of survivors'. Thirdly, 'does what we do meet with the approval and agreement of survivors'. He was more than confident that the Council continued to meet all of those three basic tests.

#### **42. Notices of Motion**

(i) Councillor P R Watling formally moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:

"The motion proposed by the Member and Deputy Member of Youth Parliament is for the council to endorse the policy that age of enfranchisement should be reduced from 18 to 16. This would apply in all national and local elections as well as referenda.

We strongly believe this issue would benefit the young people of Telford and Wrekin as the current deprivation of representation in the decision of major issues means that many young people will be living in a society that they do not agree with and have no capacity or right to change. Reducing the voting age would mean that politicians needed to create policies that appealed directly to young people instead of allowing their pressing needs to fade into obscurity. At 16 already, you can begin training to serve for our country, leave home and bring another human being into the world by legal sex but have no say in the country this child will grow up in. Many have argued that age and supposed lack of education can lead to impulsive decisions. However, in this age of readily available information it is increasingly easy for anyone to find out about current politics and for this age demographic to make an informed decision as well as older citizens. Senior conservative ministers as well as the Labour and Liberal Democratic Parties already back this motion. There are a number of organisations led by young people with the aim of stimulating political literacy (e.g. the Telford and Wrekin Young People's Forum). We would hope to see

the council amongst the other innovative local authorities leading the charge for this issue. This year marks the centenary of the passing of the historic motion causing the extension of democracy to including millions of women. We believe it is time for a similar event, to make sure that democracy is a service for the masses so that leadership can properly relay the views of the people. ”

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor R A Overton.

At the discretion of the Speaker, Councillors Watling and Overton deferred their speeches to Amar Bhandal, Member of the UK Youth Parliament for Telford and Wrekin, and Tom Rowe of the Young People’s Forum. Samantha Smith Deputy Member of the UK Youth Parliament for Telford and Wrekin also addressed the meeting.

During a robust debate, the young people were praised for the eloquent speeches that they had delivered. Whilst some Members considered that granting of the right to vote could not be undertaken in isolation and that there would be far reaching implications, the debate was largely welcomed and supported by the majority.

**RESOLVED - that the motion be approved**

- (ii) Councillor A D McClements moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following altered Motion:

“This year we reaffirm being a White Ribbon Town for 5 years, which is about raising awareness, understanding and providing services in order to reduce the incidence of domestic violence across our town. The White Ribbon Towns programme holds at its heart the importance of engaging with men to challenge beliefs and attitudes and to be advocates against domestic violence.

This Council believes that we, as Councillors, have a duty to play a part in that and believe that anyone who holds public office who in the past, present or future who admit or have been convicted of domestic abuse should be barred from holding public office.

This Council also notes the important fact that domestic abuse is suffered by not only women but also men.

We therefore call on the government to review its policy on this and urge our MPs in Telford and The Wrekin to join us in lobbying government for this change.

Only by standing up and being counted can we hope to end all domestic abuse.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor G C W Reynolds.

A robust and lengthy debate ensued which recognised that Telford had been a White Ribbon Town for 5 years, and reflected on statistics which demonstrated the prevalence of domestic abuse and that women and children were disproportionately affected. Whilst the government had engaged in a consultation at the end of 2017 on the updating of the disqualification criteria for local authority members, it was asserted by the proposer of the Motion that the consultation had been inadequate by

not considering the inclusion of domestic abuse as a disqualification criteria. It was further noted that domestic abuse was perpetrated as a means of exercising control and power over another individual and that such behaviour was fundamentally connected to the role of conduct in public office.

However, some Members considered that the Motion had been poorly crafted and would be difficult to transfer into legislation; this had led to an amended Motion being tabled but it was not proposed during the debate:-

“This year we reaffirm being a White Ribbon Town for five years, which is about raising awareness, understanding and providing services in order to reduce the incidence of domestic violence across our town. The White Ribbon Towns programme holds at its heart the importance of engaging with men to challenge beliefs and attitudes and to be advocates against all forms of violence against women.

This Council notes the current disqualification criteria for any individual to serve on a Local Authority if they have incurred a conviction and jail sentence in excess of 3 months over the previous 5 year period.

However, this Council believes that this disqualification period is now insufficient and should be extended further in time. Disqualification should also apply to any conviction that incurs a jail sentence of any term.

This Council also notes the important fact that domestic abuse is suffered by not only women but also men.

We therefore call on the government to review its policy on this and urge our MPs in Telford and The Wrekin to join us in lobbying government for this change.

Only by standing up and being counted can we hope to end all domestic abuse.”

Some Members also lamented that the Motion did not take account of the role of rehabilitation in the criminal justice system. The strength and bravery of all those who came forward to report domestic abuse was commended.

At the conclusion of the debate, a recorded vote was taken on the motion put forward by Councillor Davies which was CARRIED, the voting being as follows:

For: 47

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, G K Cook, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, , J A Francis, C A Furnival, E J Greenaway, M B Hosken, J Jones, A Lawrence, N C Lowery, C N Mason, A D McClements, R Mehta, 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, P J Scott, J M Seymour, R J Sloan, C F Smith, M J Smith, B D Tillotson, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, P R Watling and D G Wright

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

**RESOLVED - that the motion be approved**

(iii) Councillor T J Nelson moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:

“This Council expresses deep concern at continuing slow progress with the commissioning of an independent inquiry into historical and current instances of CSE within the Borough since the Council EGM of 10 April 2018.

Also, and in order to assist and support victims in the Borough, this Council further calls on the present Administration to extend funding for the Holly Project for the duration of the Inquiry and accept that current funding arrangements of six months are inadequate.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor S Bentley.

Councillor L D Carter, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for oversight of the inquiry, read a statement from the Survivor’s Committee, in light of which, he urged the Motion to be withdrawn:-

*“We (the Survivors committee) are in contact with around 15 local survivors and their families in relation to the inquiry. They have unanimously agreed that getting the inquiry right is far more important than rushing through the process.*

*Some people have waited 40+ years for answers and feel that waiting a few additional months to make sure the inquiry is carried out without error is the correct way to do things. The slowing down of the process to ensure that the inquiry is carried out properly is a direct result of survivors input.*

*The Holly Project is not part of the inquiry and is a separate entity. The Holly Project is there to offer and provide support to anyone that needs it, whether they are involved with the inquiry or not. The Holly Project aims to secure long term funding that continues beyond the inquiry. They are grateful for all the help and support received from various parties in getting this project up and running, and are pleased that they are being listened to.”*

The debate focussed on some members’ views that it was important to maintain momentum in the commissioning of the Inquiry and the opposing view which supported the stance of the Survivors Committee. Members also noted and welcomed additional funding which had been awarded to the Holly Project.

At the conclusion of the debate, a recorded vote was taken on the motion put forward by Councillor Nelson which was LOST, the voting being as follows:

For: 14

Councillors, S L Barnes, S Bentley, S P Burrell, E J Carter, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, J A Francis, M B Hosken, A Lawrence, N C Lowery, T J Nelson, J M Seymour, B D Tillotson, and D G Wright

Against: 29

K T Blundell, A J Burford, L D Carter, G K Cook, S Davies, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, J Jones, C N Mason, A D McClements\*, R Mehta, J C Minor, L A Murray, R A Overton, J Pinter, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, S J Reynolds, H Rhodes, K S Sahota, P J Scott, R J Sloan, C F Smith, M J Smith, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, P R Watling

Abstentions: 3

J C Ashford, M Boylan, and C A Furnival

*\* Councillor A D McClements stated that her vote was based on the wording of the motion and having considered the statement of the Survivors Committee. A number of Members joined Councillor McClements in these sentiments.*

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

The meeting ended at 8.55pm

**Mayor:** .....

**Date:** .....