

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Tuesday, 10 April 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, G K Cook, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, R C Evans, I T W Fletcher, V A Fletcher, J A Francis, C A Furnival, E J Greenaway, K R Guy, M B Hosken, J Jones, R T Kiernan, A Lawrence, J Loveridge, N C Lowery, C N Mason, A D McClements, R Mehta, 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 (Mayor), H Rhodes, K S Sahota, P J Scott, J M Seymour, C F Smith (Speaker), M J Smith, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, P R Watling and D G Wright

84. Apologies for Absence

Councillors E A Clare, S Davies, N A M England, R J Sloan and B D Tillotson

85. Declarations of Interest

None.

86. Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Telford & Wrekin

Councillor A J Eade moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8.12, the following altered Motion:-

“This Meeting requests that the Cabinet of Telford & Wrekin Council approve the commissioning and implementation of a ‘non-statutory’ Independent Inquiry into all aspects of historical and current instances of CSE within the Borough.

This Meeting also requests the Cabinet to instruct Council Officers to commission such an Inquiry immediately.

This Meeting also notes that such a ‘non-statutory’ Inquiry will allow the opportunity for victims and survivors to give evidence in private and free from any other pressures or interference. Such arrangements will hopefully also encourage other victims to come forward.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor N A Dugmore.

A robust and lengthy debate then ensued. Whilst all speeches supported the Motion, some notes of caution were emphasised about the limitations of a Council commissioned inquiry as opposed to the much broader powers of the government sponsored national Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) as set out to Cabinet on 29 March 2018 in the report ‘Tackling CSE Together’. It was particularly noted that a local inquiry would have no power to compel external agencies to give evidence or for witnesses to provide evidence under oath and that the historic nature of potential cases pre-dated this Council and, again, a local inquiry would have no power to

compel former employees to take part. These limitations suggested, therefore, that a local inquiry may not be able to deliver the answers that victims, survivors and their families deserved. Despite this apprehension, there was a strong voice of unanimity that “any inquiry is better than no inquiry”. Some Members also exercised the view that, whilst the imminent arrival of the Truth Project (which sought to record the experiences of victims and survivors as part of IICSA) was welcomed, a local inquiry would report at a much earlier stage and would ensure that victims and survivors would get the support they deserved at an earlier stage. Some Members also levelled criticism at any agencies or individuals who failed to engage with a local inquiry.

During the debate, some Members reflected on their understanding of CSE and the experiences which had been shared with them personally, in their role as Ward Councillors or as Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee. The Speaker also allowed a statement written by a local survivors group about the horrific abuse endured by victims and the reasons why a local inquiry was being called for to be read out.

Attention was also drawn to the nationally acclaimed efforts that were currently taking place to protect children at risk and prosecute perpetrators, particularly through the work of the Council’s Children Abused Through Exploitation (CATE) Team and several Members commended the dedication of the Team.

Victims, survivors and their families were urged to engage with both the local Inquiry and the Truth Project.

At the end of the debate, a vote was taken on the Motion which was unanimously CARRIED. In accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 9.5, a recorded vote on the motion was taken, the voting being as follows:

For (49):

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, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, R C Evans, I T W Fletcher, V A Fletcher, J A Francis, C A Furnival, E J Greenaway, K R Guy, M B Hosken, J Jones, R T Kiernan, A Lawrence, J Loveridge, N C Lowery, C N Mason, A D McClements, R Mehta, 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, P J Scott, J M Seymour, C F Smith, M J Smith, 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.

The meeting ended at 7.20pm

Following the conclusion of the meeting, the Speaker provided an opportunity for the public to address the meeting and Lucy Allan MP for Telford took the floor to applaud the campaign efforts of local CSE survivor ‘Holly Archer’ (a pseudonym) and thanked the meeting for the outcome.

Mayor:

Date: