

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on
Thursday, 2 March 2017 at 6.00pm at The Place, Oakengates, Telford**

Present:

Councillors J C Ashford, S L Barnes, S Bentley, K T Blundell, 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 (Mayor), I T W Fletcher, V A Fletcher, J A Francis, E J Greenaway, K R Guy, M B Hosken, J Jones, R T Kiernan, A Lawrence, J Loveridge, N C Lowery, 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 (Speaker), M J Smith, B D Tillotson, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, P R Watling and D G Wright

76. Prayers

Reverend Keith Osmund-Smith said prayers.

77. Apologies for Absence

Councillors M Boylan, C A Furnival, C N Mason, and A A Meredith

78. Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minute Number 84 the Speaker 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.

Councillors A J Burford, V A Fletcher, and R J Sloan declared an interest in Minute Number 88(ii) due to their Membership of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to Minute Number 85(e) Councillor K S Sahota declared that his wife owned the Market Cafe in Wellington.

79. Minutes of the Council

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

80. Leader's Report & Announcements

The Leader highlighted the Council's work to support and invest in the borough and its future despite severe budget cuts imposed by government. Investment and

income generation helped to support key services providing support for vulnerable children and the elderly. Responsible investments helped create a new asset base for the Council, generated income and created jobs. By 2020 the Council would have just three sources of income: Council Tax - and this Council had the second lowest Council Tax in the Midlands; Business Rate retention; and the income generated by the Council itself. He noted that Shropshire Council was seeking to replicate the commercial services at this Council. Responsible investment ensured the return would be greater than outlay: examples included NuPlace, the Solar Farm, and the Growth Fund investing in business. These three examples would generate £3m by 2019/20 for investment in 150K care hours, looking after children and keeping streets clean. Without this investment a further £1m would need to be cut from the budget. The Council was also involved in projects where its involvement would not be immediately obvious at the T54 Technology Park, Magna and Polytech factories. Southwater was also generating £700K pa. He also commented on the budget which included increases for Adult Social Care and Children's Safeguarding.

He reminded the Chamber that his number one priority upon being elected leader was to protect A&E services at the Princess Royal Hospital and retain the Women's & Children's Unit in Telford. The PRH4Me campaign had attracted over 25K pledges and he urged all residents to sign up in support.

81. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor thanked Councillor L A Murray and his wife for organising a concert in support of her charity and reminded those present that the Vintage Charity Ball was taking place on 17 March 2017. Finally, she advised that a further event was taking place on 31 March 2017 – "A Evening with Tim Stimpson" – and she thanked New College for their management of the arrangements for this event.

82. Public Questions

- (i) The following question to Cllr R A Overton, Cabinet Member: Housing, Leisure & Health was submitted by Mr R Felton:

"Does the Council support the green spaces between Muxton and Lilleshall?"

Cllr R A Overton responded that the Council supported the protection of green spaces between Muxton and Lilleshall. The green space was of high landscape quality and was important in planning terms to prevent Muxton from sprawling into the village of Lilleshall. The Council sought to protect the space by establishing the Lilleshall Strategic Landscape in the new Local Plan and would resist planning applications which would encroach into the area and was currently fighting a number of planning appeals in the area. The council had allocated some land on the edge of Muxton and Donnington in the new Local Plan to help Telford grow but had made clear that any new homes must be set back substantially from Breton Park so that residents of the park could continue to enjoy their open outlook.

- (ii) The following question to Cllr S Davies, Leader, was submitted by Mrs T Wood:-

"The Council is responsible for ensuring that all Councillors promote and maintain high standards of conduct, scrutiny and honesty. Therefore do you support any reported incidents of non-compliance by a regulatory body being fully investigated to ensure the Council's responsibilities and authority in decision-making are being upheld."

The Leader responded that he did and thought it was important to be very clear that Councillors and Council Officers had very clear, distinctive and separate roles. The Council had a transparent governance framework whereby Councillors set Council policy and the Budget Strategy and Officers were responsible for implementation.

The Council was governed by a Constitution, financial regulations and a raft of other policies. It was the legal responsibility of the Managing Director, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer to ensure adherence to them. Officers had responsibility for managing day to day Council services and money.

Externally, the Council had external auditors and any complaints about the Council and its activities could be referred to the Independent Local Government Ombudsman. Complaints about Councillors' conduct could be referred to the Council's Standards Committee which monitored the Members' Code of Conduct.

In all circumstances, any issue or incident which led to the consideration or investigation by a relevant person or body would be on its own merits in terms of whether any action was required. It was incumbent on all Members to co-operate and work with regulators in those circumstances.

83. 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.

2016/17 Financial Management Report

Councillor N A Dugmore asked why borrowing to fund the solar farm remained the same - £3.7m – through to 2020 when the likelihood of increasing interest rates suggested there would be increases?

Councillor L D Carter responded that he would be happy to provide a full explanation of the borrowing undertaken in respect of the solar farm and that the solar farm continued to generate £200K profit per year which was reinvested into vital services the Council provided.

Re-designation of Attendance Areas

Councillor N A Dugmore noted the delegation "to take all required actions and exercise all the Council's relevant powers to enable the re-designation of attendance

areas". Thus out of area children had a higher priority than borough children to attend Telford & Wrekin Schools in direct conflict of this Council's statutory duty. How did the Cabinet Member expected to legally defend this duty.

Councillor G C W Reynolds stated that the Council had on the day of the meeting written a letter with cross-party support to the Secretary of State about this issue. The letter stated that the Council needed to ensure fairness was right across the board and as a result of the Cabinet report the Council was ensuring local students had access to their local schools and the letter to the Secretary of State asked for his support for this position. Unfortunately, the Council could not change the law and it was up to MPs to lobby on the Council's and residents' behalf. She hoped for a positive response from the Secretary of State.

Councillor E J Greenaway noted from the report that Lawley had a shared attendance with Ercall Wood and Telford Langley. Ercall Wood was accessed via the Dawley Road from Lawley to Wellington and there were increasing concerns about the state of the route. The Dawley Road was subject to a 50mph speed limit and there had been a fatality along the stretch of the road. The footpath suffered from encroachment from the embankment and could not accommodate a pushchair or mobility vehicle. She had grave concerns about the safety of pupils and she called upon the Cabinet Member to require an evaluation of the route at the earliest opportunity and to fund the £17K to improve the footpath to the required standard of safety.

Councillor G C W Reynolds noted that during the consultation detailed in the report there was an 88% approval rating for the shared attendance. She went on to say that concerns regarding safety of routes in Wellington and Muxton would be investigated and options considered to see what could be done ahead of September 2018 when the changes came into force.

Councillor T J Nelson sought clarification on where good faith and trust was to come from in light of new Muxton residents' disappointment that they had been let down on catchment areas after bringing their skills, energy and dynamism to the borough in support of business-winning aims. Councillor T J Nelson noted that 85% of Telford & Wrekin parents were allocated their first preference of school in the latest admission round compared to 95% of Shropshire parents.

The Leader responded that the Council had applied national guidance in setting catchment areas and as Muxton grew, the need for a review was really important. In terms of business winning, business supporting aims, the Council maintained its stance and had purchased Audley Avenue Industrial Park and would continue to lobby companies to come to and stay in Telford – Telford was open for business.

Councillor G C W Reynolds echoed the Leader's comments urging belief in the borough. The redesignation of catchment areas was about fairness and allowing local children to go to local schools. She stated that the Council should be supporting all its schools because Telford Priory was serving 1000s of pupils and it was a disservice to the school, its pupils and their parents to criticise the school. She stated that it would achieve for current and future students.

Procurement Update

Councillor V A Fletcher asked whether all ethical standards, including the purchase of fair-trade products, were included in all procurement activities whenever possible.

Councillor L D Carter would check the position and respond in writing.

84. Service & Financial Planning 2017/18 to 2019/20

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Council Finance, Partnerships & Commercial Services, presented a series of reports from the Managing Director, the Chief Financial Officer, the Director for Customer, Neighbourhood & Wellbeing Services and the Assistant Director: Customer & Neighbourhood. The reports, detailing the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators, formed the Council's overall Medium Term Service & Financial Planning framework, and identified the service priorities and budget for 2017/18. Most of the savings required in 2017/18 were approved by Council in March 2016 as part of a two year strategy. However, the report included details of some additional savings proposals and investments for 2017/18 and set out the Cabinet's approach to developing the further savings that would be required through to 2019/20.

The Overview and Revenue Budget report set out the severe financial challenges facing the Council. By the end of this financial year, the Council would have made savings of £96m per annum, meaning that every year there was now £1,300 less to spend delivering services to each household in the Borough. The Council had sought to do this in ways that protected front line services as far as possible and where services to the public were affected to do this in as compassionate a way as possible.

However, despite the financial challenges, the Council was continuing to invest to create jobs and promote growth in the Borough, in line with the Administration's key priorities, whilst seeking to protect priority front-line services and working co-operatively with residents and partners to deliver these.

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 2017/18 as:

- Managing a further reduction of 25.9% to the Revenue Support Grant from Government the following year.
- Dealing with the reduction in Revenue Support Grant from Government whilst maintaining the Cabinet's commitment to continue its existing policy of transferring grant to Town & Parish Councils in respect of Local Council Tax Support.
- A Council tax increase for 2017/18 of 1.2% in line with the medium term strategy agreed the previous year.
- To again implement the Government's assumed "Adult Social Care Precept" in line with the Government's original plans, equivalent to a further council tax increase of 2%.

- To continue implementing the package of savings and efficiency measures agreed in March 2016 but with the additional savings and efficiency measures for 2017/18 set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- To develop detailed savings proposals for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to cover the expected budget shortfall of £15 - £20m over this two year period. The approach was explained in more detail in sections 10.2- 10.4 of the report.
- An updated proposed medium term capital programme (2016/17 to 2019/20) totalling over £280m was included in the Capital Programme report which detailed proposed capital investments.
- Use of funding from a rigorous review of one-off resources to fund some one-off investments of a revenue nature, including investment in the Pride Programme, making available additional funding of £4.959m for Children's safeguarding in 2017/18 compared to what was originally planned and making available £2.122m more funding in 2017/18 than originally planned for Early Help & Support services to help phase in the cuts that the Council was forced to make. Funds of £2.5m had been set aside to provide a "draw-down budget" for Early Help and Support services in 2017/18 through to 2019/20 to protect and support vulnerable adults.
- Investment of £275,000 one-off resources over 2 years starting in 2017/18 in Destination Telford initiatives.
- £500k of one-off resources would be added to £195k previously identified to create a new £695k Partnership Capacity Fund to support the extension of new approaches to joint working with voluntary sector and other community groups aligned to the achievement of ongoing savings.
- In addition £1.5m of one-off resources would be transferred to supplement the Invest to Save/Capacity fund.
- £250k of one-off resources would be earmarked to fund organisation development initiatives.
- The Council contribution to the Food Bank was now budgeted on an ongoing basis rather than from time limited funding recognising the critical support that this organisation provides to many local people.

Attached to the report were a number of appendices, including savings proposals, Impact Assessments of the savings proposals, the Pay Policy Statement 2017/18, analysis of base budget movements, and details of Reserves and Balances.

As the majority of savings for 2017/18 were agreed in March 2016 the focus of the Cabinet's consultation activity this year related to communicating and seeking views on priorities, such as protecting front-line services to vulnerable adults and children, helping residents to become healthier, feel safer and develop more skills to get better jobs. The consultation also sought feedback on investments in infrastructure, community funding and vulnerable adults and children and implementation of the Adult Social Care precept. The communication and engagement plan outlined in Appendix 13 to the report provided more detail on the first phase of budget engagement during January and February 2017. Opportunities for people to give their views included attendance at a variety of forum meetings such as the Parish Forum and Senior Citizen's Forum, on-line and paper based surveys to the wider community and community panel, and communication via social media. Direct email communication was sent to a wide range of partners and information including a budget 'video' was included on the Council's website. As outlined in paragraph 10.2

of the report, this was the first phase of engagement in relation to the financial strategy for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

The Council's Chief Financial Officer was required to give a view on the robustness of the Council's financial strategy, including the use of balances, and this was appended to the report. This had concluded that the Council was pursuing a sound financial strategy in the context of the most prolonged and challenging financial position it had ever faced due to the combined effect of Government grant cuts and increased service pressures.

The report on the Capital Programme presented the Council's Capital Strategy for 2016/17 – 2019/20 and later years and a capital programme of £281.740m that included the proposed investments contained in the overall budget strategy. It also set out the Council's Asset Management Plan and planned building maintenance programme, particularly focusing on 2017/18, and the three year Highways and Transport capital investment programme.

The report on the Treasury Management Strategy detailed the Treasury Strategy to be adopted for 2017/18. The Strategy was set within the parameters of the latest guidance and accounting standards. It was expected the Council would borrow up to £39.8m in 2017/18 based on the current capital programme plans, and would adopt a flexible approach to borrowing. The report also provided an update on the treasury management activities during 2016/17. The weighted average return on internal investments at the end of December 2016 was 0.29% compared to a benchmark return for the period of 0.24%. The report also included the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement, which had been updated to state the exact policy in use for each borrowing type and would apply from 2016/17. Overall the policy was broadly in line with that previously agreed, however it was being extended to include the purchase of investment properties. There would be a lower MRP charged on investment properties for 2017/18 onwards to reflect the nature of the asset.

The report on Prudential Indicators sought approval of the prudential indicators for 2017/18 to 2019/20 required under the Prudential Code of Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

Having been moved by Councillor Carter, the budget proposals were seconded by the Leader of the Council, Councillor S Davies.

Councillor A J Eade, Leader of the main opposition group, responded to the budget proposals and moved an amendment in the form of his group's alternative budget proposals which had been circulated as a separate appendix with the budget papers. He paid tribute to the Council's Finance and Scrutiny Teams for their hard work during the budget process but he was critical of what he considered to be a partisan approach taken by some members of the Finance & Enterprise Scrutiny Committee.

The alternative proposals focussed on reducing levels of debt and borrowing by proposing disposal of assets and making efficiency savings by joint working with Shropshire. The alternative proposals also earmarked £250K to fund an investigation into Child Sexual Exploitation in the Borough and a further £250K for a

review of population growth and future demand for secondary school places at pressure points across the Borough.

Councillor A Lawrence seconded the proposals, summarised on page 16 of the alternative budget papers, which included a strategy to dispose of non-core activities in order to reduce the council's debt burden, bring forward the introduction of a £9 per hour Living Wage, funding to finance a capital programme for highways improvements, £500K one off investment to commence the process to follow the Welsh example on recycling, £250K for an urgent review of population growth and future demand for secondary school places, one-off sum of £375k in 2017/18 and an additional £100kpa from 2017/18 onwards to improve environmental maintenance in the Borough, reinstatement of £233K to fund joint working with AFC Telford United, and proposals to reduce borrowing levels to safer and more sustainable levels.

Councillor W L Tomlinson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat/Independent group commented that whilst he was not supportive of the alternative proposals as a whole, there were some points of merit: the proposed review of rights of way and top-up financial support to the street pastors. However, on balance, the alternative proposals were largely about debt and he felt the administration's borrowing was to make an investment to get a return. With regard to the administration's proposals relating to the purchase of assets, he was supportive of pump-priming through commercial properties to give the Council an income and encourage investment in the borough and he also supported investment in housing stock in parcels of land which private developers had refused to develop. He noted these investments were already showing a return and would make over £2m in three years' time. He was less concerned about funding for Pride in the Community than in previously years due to the level of reserves. His group supported the approach to Council Tax Support, the Council Tax increase and the adoption of the Adult Social Care precept.

A number of members spoke both for and against the proposed budget. Those in favour strongly opposed alternative budget proposals to dispose of projects that were generating income, including the Solar Farm and Nu Place projects. In particular, a number of speakers emphasised that the budget proposals were to protect services in the longer term. Members speaking against the budget proposals raised concerns over proposed borrowing and associated risks, and emphasised a determination to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation, retain the mobile library for the rural area and increase recycling targets,

Councillor Carter responded at the end of the debate on the amendment and a vote was then taken on the amendment (alternative budget proposals). The amendment was defeated and a further debate took place on the substantive motion to approve budget recommendations in reports D1-D5.

A vote was taken on the budget proposals in reports D1 and D4 and the proposals were carried.

In accordance with legal requirements and Council Procedure Rule 11.5 a recorded vote was taken to approve recommendations in report D5 (Council Tax setting).

Voting was as follows:

For (33)

Councillors S Bentley, K T Blundell, A J Burford, S P Burrell, L D Carter, E A Clare, G K Cook, S Davies, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, K R Guy, J Jones, J Loveridge, 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, and P R Watling

Against (2)

Councillors J C Ashford and S L Barnes,

Abstentions (15)

Councillors E J Carter, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, I T W Fletcher, V A Fletcher, J A Francis, E J Greenaway, M B Hosken, R T Kiernan, A Lawrence, N C Lowery, T J Nelson, J M Seymour, B D Tillotson, and D G Wright

RESOLVED

(i) Overview and Revenue Budget 2017/18 – 2019/20

- (a) that the feedback from consultation summarised in Appendix 14 and from Scrutiny in Appendix 12 be considered**
- (b) that the Impact Assessments contained in Section 23 and Appendices 2 and 15 of the report be noted**
- (c) that the overall service and financial planning strategy set out in the report and the base budget in Appendix 7 of the report be approved**
- (d) that a Council Tax increase of 3.2% for 2017/18 (including the new 2% Adult Social Care precept assumed by the Government) and a medium term strategy of increases at the same level for the two years from 2018/19 to 2019/20 to match the period of the CSR and 4 year settlement be approved**
- (e) that the additional savings and pressures detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be approved**
- (f) that the commitment to continue to work with partner organisations, including Town & Parish Councils and Voluntary Sector and Community Groups to seek to identify ways to mitigate the impact of some of the cuts to services that we can no longer afford and the creation of the £695,000 Partnership Capacity Fund approved by Cabinet on 5 January 2017 be noted**
- (g) that in order to support the discussions with partner organisations, the transfer of £1.5m to the Invest to Save/Capacity Fund approved by Cabinet on 5 January 2017 which will provide further transitional funding for a Partnership Support Programme in line with the**

delegations and principles approved by full Council in March 2016 be noted.

- (h) that the policy framework for Reserves and Balances outlined in Appendix 9 of the report be noted.
- (i) that the revenue implications of the medium term capital programme for the period 2015/16 - 2018/19 set out in the Capital Programme report be approved.
- (j) that the Managing Director be authorised after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services to allocate funding from the Destination Telford and Organisational Development reserves.
- (k) that the Pay Policy for 2017/18 shown at Appendix 3 of the report and which has been recommended by Personnel Committee be approved
- (l) that the Assistant Director Business, Development & Employment be authorised to agree the final details of the Telford Land Deal – including agreement of the Transfer of Liability/Residual Land package after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services.
- (m) that the Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning be authorised to execute all necessary contract documentation including the affixing of the common seal of the council as appropriate to enable the Council to finalise the Telford Land Deal – including documents required to give effect to the agreement for the transfer of HCA liability/residual land, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services.
- (n) that the Assistant Director: Finance & Human Resources be authorised to action any virements required following the final allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant and other related Grants as long as they are within the budget and policy framework.
- (o) that the Assistant Director: Early Help & Support be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care, to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006 (as amended).
- (p) that the Assistant Director: Governance, Procurement & Commissioning be authorised to execute all necessary contract documentation including the affixing of the common seal of the council as appropriate to enable the council to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006.

- (q) that a further £2.9m of available one-off resources be transferred to the one-off contingency fund approved by Cabinet on 5 January 2017 to provide a total amount of £9.8m.
- (r) that should any late changes be announced as part of the final Revenue Support Grant settlement, authority to adjust the level of the £9.8m contingency fund to compensate be delegated to the Chief Financial Officer after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services.
- (s) that this suite of service and financial planning reports serve as the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2017/18 to enable new capital receipts generated in the three year period starting 1 April 2016 to be used to fund the revenue costs of reform as assumed throughout these reports.
- (t) that the CFO's robustness statement contained at Appendix 11 of the report be noted.
- (ii) **Capital Programme**
 - (a) that the report and associated capital estimates for 2016/17 and 2017/18 – 2019/20, 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
 - (b) that the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Employment be authorised to deliver the planned programme of works within the Asset Management Plan and that the Assistant Director: Neighbourhood & Customer Services be authorized to deliver 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) **2016/17 Treasury Strategy and Treasury Update**
 - (a) that the treasury management activities for the first half year be noted;
 - (b) the Treasury Management Policy Statement as shown at Appendix A of the report be noted; and
 - (c) the Treasury Strategy, including the Annual Investment Strategy for 2017/18 together with the associated treasury Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, which will apply from 2016/17 onwards be approved.
- (iv) **Prudential Indicators**

- (a) that the prudential indicators as proposed in the report as part of setting the budget for 2017/18 be approved.
- (v) Council Tax Formal Resolution
- (a) the formal resolutions to determine the levels of Council Tax for 2017/18 as detailed in the report be approved.

85. Questions

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

- (a) **Councillor P J Scott asked the following question of Councillor G C W Reynolds, Cabinet Member: Education, Employment and Regeneration**

"The Alternative Budget by the Conservative Group suggests that there is a pending crisis on secondary school places in parts of our borough. Is there a pending crisis and if so, what is being done by the administration to combat it?"

Councillor G C W Reynolds responded that there was not a pending crisis of secondary school places and, in fact, latest figures showed a surplus with 11% of places unfilled (which equated to 1387 places), mainly in the North of the borough where recent house building had taken place. The School Organisation Team were responsible for monitoring data on birth rates, proposed housing development and other influencing factors, in order to ensure that places were sustainable in coming years. She was disappointed at the lack of confidence in the team demonstrated by the alternative budget proposals which earmarked funding in the alternative budget for a review of population growth and future demand for secondary school places which she considered would have been better invested in making a difference to young people. She also commented on the proposals in the context of education budget cuts made by central government which equated to £1m. Councillor Reynolds offered reassurance that the Council would continue to monitor pupil places and worked with local schools to address pressures. She welcomed dialogue with organisations seeking to develop educational opportunities within the borough.

Councillor Scott asked whether the Cabinet Member agreed it was important that this message was disseminated via local media outlets?

Councillor Reynolds responded that she did and that a report would be made to the Cabinet outlining school places in Telford & Wrekin and the surplus.

- (b) **Councillor E J Carter asked the following question of Councillor E A Clare, Cabinet Member: Culture, Sports, Parks & Green Spaces**

"Could I ask the Cabinet Member for Culture, Sports, Parks and Green Spaces whether she believes credit should be given to members who bring forward initiatives for consideration by the Council whatever their political persuasion?"

Councillor Clare responded affirmatively.

Councillor Carter asked a supplementary question in light of a recent unsatisfactory experience as to why members should not arrange for their own press releases to be made.

Councillor Clare commented that a press release had not been made in the situation referred to.

The Mayor took the Chair for the following item of business

(c) Councillor R Mehta asked the following question of Councillor Shaun Davies, Leader

“I note that Shropshire Council recently decided not to take a rise in their councillors’ allowances. Could the Leader confirm that we are still committed to freezing our councillors’ allowances and inform us what savings in allowances and expenses have been made since the Labour administration came into power in 2011?”

The Leader responded that since 2011, the Cabinet had voluntarily reduced their Special Responsibility Allowance by 10% with one Cabinet Member not taking any special responsibility allowance at all. This had resulted in a saving of £137,128 to date. The administration had also reduced the number of other special responsibility allowances and had not sought to increase members’ allowances in accordance with the scheme which had resulted in a further saving of £105,614. During the course of this administration, a total saving to date of £242,742 had been made.

Councillor Mehta asked what the savings had been used to fund and whether the Leader would give a commitment to maintain the voluntary reduction?

The Leader reiterated that almost £0.25m savings had been made to fund Council priorities. He stated that the Cabinet had pledged that the freeze would continue and over the Summer it was intended to launch a bursary scheme for the achievement of sporting and educational excellence by children and young people funded through the savings made in relation to special responsibility allowances.

The Speaker returned to the Chair.

(d) Councillor J Pinter asked the following question of Councillor P R Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Communities

“Further to the excellent work that the Mayor of Telford & Wrekin has done this year to raise awareness of domestic abuse by supporting West Mercia’s Women’s Aid and Refuge, could the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Communities please confirm that the administration will continue to tackle domestic abuse by continuing to raise awareness through the White Ribbon Campaign and a multi-agency approach across Telford & Wrekin to ensure that we do all that we can to protect and support victims of this unacceptable and inexcusable abuse.”

Councillor P R Watling responded by applauding the Mayor’s campaign to raise awareness of domestic abuse. The administration demonstrated its ongoing commitment to raise awareness of domestic abuse by supporting the campaign and

the Borough had now been a White Ribbon Town for three years. This involved men wearing a white ribbon as a symbol that domestic abuse was not acceptable and should not be tolerated especially those men in position of influence and could raise awareness to other men. The campaign was a multi agency approach to ensure that agencies did all they could to protect and support victims of abuse. The campaign promoted existing services to victims and worked directly with local communities to raise awareness and worked to reduce the number of incidents. Councillor Watling confirmed the administration would continue to raise awareness through the white ribbon campaign and multi agency approach across the borough.

Councillor Pinter asked what more Councillors could do to move the agenda forward?

Councillor Watling pointed to the prominent position of local Councillors which enabled them to champion the campaign. Male Members could act as role models for all men by wearing the White Ribbon with pride. Political parties could lobby MPs to back legislation such as the Istanbul Convention.

(e) Councillor K S Sahota asked the following question of Councillor P R Watling, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Communities

"I would like to thank the Leader and Cabinet on the way they worked with West Mercia Police, residents and business in the lead up to and on the day of the march of Britain First."

Can I ask Cllr Paul Watling, if he will continue to do all in his power to keep such marches away from our Borough - which does nothing more than divide our community and damage the local economy."

Councillor Paul Watling noted that the right to protest was enshrined in law and public bodies had a duty to facilitate such protests, including the use of their properties to hold assemblies. He recalled the detrimental impact that the EDL march in 2011 had on Wellington traders and he had been determined it would not happen again. Working in partnership with the Police, it had been possible to keep the march away from Wellington as well as supporting the Police by providing a more compact centre of operations in Telford Central. The administration had been working hard to create a town that was a safe place to work and live but sadly recent press reports and public debates had attracted interest from far right groups, unconnected to the borough to target the town. He applauded the planning process as an excellent example of partnership working between the Council, West Mercia Police, the community and other agencies. He particularly thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner, John Campion, Assistant Chief Constable Chris Singer, Superintendent Tom Harding and Inspector Keith Gee for their co-operation and leadership on this issue together with all Council staff on duty on the day.

Councillor Sahota asked what could be done to ensure that such marches did not return to the borough?

Councillor Watling stated that it was not possible to make sure they did not return but it was incumbent on all politicians to be aware that playing 'political football' with

sensitive issues resulted in knock on effects, including the funding of police and staff difficult events.

(f) **Councillor N A M England asked the following question of Councillor G C W Reynolds, Cabinet Member: Education, Employment and Regeneration**

“Please could the Cabinet Member for Education, Employment and Regeneration update the Council on the most recent youth unemployment figures, and the action we are taking to help local young people be work ready within Telford & Wrekin?”

Councillor G C W Reynolds responded that the latest figures for youth unemployment (residents aged 16 to 24), released in January 2017, related to the period October 2015 to September 2016 and showed that rates had fallen by 500 individuals, equal to 23.8%. This compared favourably to the 7% fall nationally and the 3.65% regional increase. At the current time, youth unemployment in the borough stood at 12.3% compared to the regional figure of 15.9%. Since September 2013, numbers of local young people aged 16-24 out of work had fallen by 66% compared to 34% nationally. This was a real testament to what the Council had achieved for young people in the borough through the Job Box. She commented on the feedback received from young people and advice from the Team. She considered that the key to this success was the Council’s ability to link local services to provide the support required and demonstrate a sense of faith in young people who were deserving of achieving their ambitions and that Telford was a place where young people could succeed. Councillor Reynolds noted that this support included one to one support through the mentor system and through the 11 job junctions in the borough, as well as supporting young people in school to be life ready and work ready.

Councillor England asked for an update on events and activities for local young people which were taking place.

Councillor Reynolds responded that 16 local secondary schools had signed up to the Life Ready – Work Ready programme and were working with local businesses including Cap Gemini, Denso, and Manby Bowdler solicitors; the Apprentice Show would take place on 16 March 2017; and the Council was also supporting events later in the year including Young Enterprise, the National Enterprise Challenge, and Harper Adams University’s Big Bang event to promote careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.

88. Notices of Motion

(i) Councillor A J Eade moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:

“This Council reaffirms its unanimous support of the Conservative group motion originally presented to Full Council on 1 May 2014 against a formal merger between Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Councils.

However, to enable Telford & Wrekin Council and Shropshire Council to deliver more effective and better services across the whole of the county and work together on efficiency savings, this Council now removes any obstacles which have prevented Telford & Wrekin Officers discussing possible options with their counterparts in Shropshire and directs them to investigate potential efficiency savings via shared services or any other means to deliver cost savings to both authorities.

This Council further directs that a report will be presented to following Full Council meetings on progress made or difficulties encountered.”

Councillor N A Dugmore seconded the Motion

Following a robust debate and vote the Motion fell.

RESOLVED - that the motion not be approved

(ii) Councillor A J Eade moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:

“This Council accepts Clinician’s arguments that the current accident and emergency provision in Shropshire is unsafe and condemns the so far poor and slow decision making progress which has so far failed to resolve this critical issue.

However, this Council makes crystal clear its full support for the retention of the Women and Children’s Unit at the Princess Royal Hospital along with the future provision of emergency care. The Council also makes clear its support for 24 hour urgent care provision at both the Princess Royal and Royal Shrewsbury Hospitals.

This Council further resolves to press the Secretary of State for Health to launch a national debate on future provision of the National Health Service.”

Councillor J M Seymour seconded the Motion.

Councillor S Davies moved an amendment to the motion as follows:-

“This Council accepts Clinician’s arguments that the current accident and emergency provision in Shropshire is unsafe and condemns the so far poor and slow decision making progress which has so far failed to resolve this critical issue.

However, this Council continues to fight for the retention of the Women and Children’s Unit at the Princess Royal Hospital along with the future provision of emergency care and thanks Telford & Wrekin residents for their unrelenting support of the Council’s PRH4Me campaign.

This Council also makes clear its continued support for 24 hour Accident and Emergency and urgent care provision at both the Princess Royal and Royal Shrewsbury Hospitals.

This Council further acknowledges that due to the Government’s mismanagement there is now a national crisis in the National Health Service and resolves to press the

Secretary of State for Health to launch a national debate on future provision of the National Health Service.

Councillor R A Overton seconded the amendment.

At the end of a robust and lengthy debate, a vote was taken on the motion put forward by Councillor Davies which was CARRIED. In accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 9.5, a recorded vote on the motion was taken, the voting being as follows:

For (29)

Councillors K T Blundell, L D Carter, E A Clare, G K Cook, S Davies, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, K R Guy, J Jones, J Loveridge, 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, C F Smith, M J Smith, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, and P R Watling

Against (0)

Abstentions (18)

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

RESOLVED - that the amended motion be approved

89. Closure Motion

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8.15, Councillor R A Sloan moved, and Councillor A R H England seconded, a motion to adjourn the meeting. Upon being put the vote, all Members unanimously:-

RESOLVED - that the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting ended at 9.44pm

Mayor:

Date: