

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of a meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 5 March, 2015 at 6.30pm at The Place, Oakengates, Telford

PRESENT: Councillors R.K. Austin, S. Bentley, K.T. Blundell, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, E.A. Clare, S. Davies, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade, C B A Elliott, A.R.H. England, N.A.M. England, R.C. Evans, I.T.W. Fletcher, V.A. Fletcher, G.M. Green, E.J. Greenaway, K.R. Guy, T.J. Hope, M.B. Hosken, M.G. Ion (Speaker), A.S. Jhawar, R.T. Kiernan, A. Lawrence, J. Loveridge, A.A. Mackenzie, C.N. Mason, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, A.A. Meredith, J.C. Minor, C.R.P. Mollett, L.A. Murray, R.A. Overton (Deputy Leader), J. Pinter, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota (Leader), R G Scammell, P.J. Scott, J.M. Seymour, R.J. Sloan, C.F. Smith, M.J. Smith (Mayor), K.M. Stringer, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

52. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22 January 2015 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

53. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor F.M. Bould

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors I.T.W. Fletcher and V.A. Fletcher declared an interest in agenda item 6ii) – Public Question in respect of Councillor Ian Fletcher's employment at one of the companies referred to in the question.

Councillors R.A. Overton and K.S. Sahota declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 7 – Cabinet Decisions, specifically in relation to Telford Homefinder – Property Management Service if this matter was brought up in debate.

Councillor S. Davies declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item 7 – Cabinet Decisions, specifically in relation to Dawley Regeneration and Improvement Works if this matter was brought up in debate.

55. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor welcomed representatives from the Telford Tigers Ice Hockey team who were in attendance at the meeting. He congratulated the team for their recent success in winning the English Premier League for the first time in 27 years. Telford Tigers had had an outstanding season, winning the title by a margin of 14 points from their nearest challengers. They were also still in contention for two further trophies this season, and he wished them every success. Members expressed their appreciation of the recent achievements of the Telford Tigers.

The Mayor then reported on a number of engagements that he had attended since the last meeting of the Council. The previous day, he had attended a Schools Sport Festival at Shrewsbury, at which the Borough was represented by pupils from Burton Borough and Phoenix schools.

The Mayor reflected that this was the last meeting of the current Council prior to the Borough Elections on 7 May, and thanked Members for their work and dedication over the last four years. He was aware that some Councillors were not standing for re-election, and they were thanked for their contribution. Tributes were paid in particular to Councillor Keith Austin, a former Leader of the Council, who was standing down after over 30 years service. Councillor Mike Ion was also not seeking re-election, and Members thanked him for carrying out the role of Speaker over the last twelve months.

56. LEADER'S REPORT & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader referred to the recent tremendous news that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) would be locating their national logistics centre at Donnington. This was the culmination of three and a half years of hard work by the Council and partners to convince the MoD that Telford was the best location for this facility. That mission had been accomplished against the odds, and as well as securing existing employment at MoD Donnington, the new facility would generate up to 1,000 new jobs and be worth £16m to the local economy. He thanked all the Council Officers who had worked so hard on this project, along with Councillor Bill McClements (as lead Cabinet Member), David Wright MP and union leaders at MoD Donnington. This news was confirmation that Telford was on the up.

The Leader then reflected on the achievements of his Administration over the last four years, including reducing youth unemployment, the redevelopment of Southwater and the Town Centre, the Pride in Your Community programme, three new libraries and a refurbished Ice Rink, the rebuild or refurbishment of all the Borough's secondary schools, the Telford Leisure Card' and an increase of 14% in the rate of recycling.

57. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

(a) Ms C Salter asked the following question of the Deputy Leader of the Council:

“As an ex-nurse with a passionate interest in our NHS, I note from the ‘Future Fit’ shortlist that there is an only one in six chance of Telford retaining a full 24/7 A&E. Could the Council confirm it will continue to fight for a full 24hr A&E at Princess Royal Hospital?”

The Deputy Leader confirmed that the Council would continue to do all it could to retain 24 hour A&E services at Princess Royal Hospital (PRH). Telford was the primary growth point in Shropshire in terms of jobs and population, and needed such

a facility. All the other options on the 'Future Fit' shortlist would be a downgrade on the current service at the PRH, and that was not acceptable to local people.

Councillors I.T.W. Fletcher and V.A. Fletcher left the meeting room during consideration of the next question.

(b) Mr S Malpass asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

"HMRC are closing offices throughout the country and splitting up their IT contract in 2017 which poses a threat to HMRC, Fujitsu and Cap Gemini jobs. What can the Council do to prevent potential job losses in the Telford Town Centre currently provided by these major Telford based employers?"

The Leader replied that there were around 3000 HMRC and associated jobs in the Borough, and it would be a hammer blow for the local economy if these jobs were lost. These companies also had strong connections to the local community in terms of contributing to co-operative and voluntary initiatives. He would be writing to the Government minister to seek an urgent meeting to discuss any such threat to jobs, and David Wright MP would also be raising the issue with the Government. The Council would also be carrying out an Economic Impact Assessment to determine what effect any loss of these jobs would have on the local economy. The Council had a good track record in supporting and fighting to retain jobs in the Borough, and he could assure the local workforce of HMRC and these companies that it would do so again on their behalf.

(c) Mr L Carter asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

"Could the Leader please give his reaction to comments by Daniel Kawczynski, MP for Shrewsbury & Atcham, that Telford & Wrekin Council should merge with Shropshire. Do you think it will have a detrimental impact on providing quality services in Telford & Wrekin and threaten 24/7 A&E Services at Princess Royal Hospital?"

The Leader responded by stating that Telford & Wrekin Council was doing very well on its own. It would work with other Councils if it was in the interests of Borough residents, but a merger with Shropshire would result in the imposition of parking charges in Borough Centres among other things. Telford and Wrekin's economy was growing at a faster rate than Shropshire, there were many new developments and initiatives to improve the quality of life for residents and council tax was lower than neighbouring authorities. It appeared that the MP for Shrewsbury & Atcham saw a merger as a solution to Shropshire Council's problems rather than to improving the quality of services in Telford & Wrekin. Mr Kawczynski had referred to an independent financial report which claimed that a merger would produce savings of £14m. However, Telford & Wrekin Council had not seen or was aware of any such report. In terms of the threat to 24/7 A&E services at Princess Royal Hospital, the MP for Shrewsbury & Atcham was on the record as saying that Royal Shrewsbury Hospital should be the only site for A&E in Shropshire. This Council would fight for the retention of 24/7 A&E at the Princess Royal Hospital.

58. 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 22 January 2015.

Telford Homefinder – Property Management Service

In response to a question about social housing being offered to people from outside the Borough, Councillor C.F. Smith, Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns, advised that there were not as many cases as had been alleged. The issue had been raised by Scrutiny as part of a wider review on Access to Affordable Housing which would be considered at the next Cabinet meeting. The Council was talking with social housing providers in the Borough to address this issue, but ultimately the Council could not stop people from outside the Borough if they were offered a property by these housing companies.

The additional delegations to Officers granted at the 29 January 2015 Cabinet meeting was noted.

(Councillor T.J. Hope left the room before consideration of the next agenda item)

59. SERVICE & FINANCIAL PLANNING 2015/16-2017/18

Prior to discussion of this item the Managing Director 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.

Councillor W.A.M McClements, Cabinet Member for Finance & Enterprise, presented a series of reports of the Managing Director, the Assistant Director: Finance, Audit & Information Governance (Chief Financial Officer), the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Employment and the Director of Neighbourhood, Customer & Cultural Services. The reports, detailing the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, the Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators and the Formal Council Tax resolutions, formed the Council's overall Medium Term Service & Financial Planning framework, and identified the service priorities and budget for 2015/16 as well as savings proposals to be delivered over the next two years, and a medium term capital programme. The proposals had been considered by Cabinet on 26 February 2015 and recommended to Council for approval. He thanked Officers for preparing the budget against a backdrop of such financial constraint, and thanked all those people who had taken part in the budget consultation exercise.

The Overview and Revenue Budget report set out the pressures facing the Council. Cumulative cuts now stood at £70m per annum, which equated to a cut in spend of over £950 for each household in the Borough, with cuts to Government grants being the greatest factor. The Council had significantly reduced its numbers of senior officers and back-office costs while protecting front-line services as far as possible. However, despite the financial challenges, the Council was continuing to invest to

create jobs and safeguard the future prosperity of the Borough and its residents, in line with the Administration's key priorities. The report highlighted a number of investments that were delivering growth, jobs and regeneration in the Borough.

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 2015/16 as:

- Freezing Council Tax for the next two years;
- Continuing to deliver jobs and investment, including a £1m fund to support high streets in the Borough Towns and district centres, and £4m to roll-out superfast broadband to those parts of the Borough without coverage;
- Minimising cuts to priority services for vulnerable adults and children as far as possible, against a backdrop of unprecedented cuts in government funding, through good financial management and making one-off additional ring-fenced funding available to support services;
- Investing in communities – creating a £1m (capital) Community Pride Fund for 2017/18, with a borough-wide environmental investment programme of £750k over the next two years in addition to the existing Pride in Your Community programme. There would also be continuing support to regenerate local centres with £650k (capital) investment to refurbish the Gower St Youth Club in St Georges.
- Investing in roads – a commitment to a programme of £2m per annum to invest in road, footpath and other highway improvements for the next 3 years over and above the funding allocated by Government for this purpose;
- Improving local people's prospects through education and skills training – including continuation of the £187m investment in school infrastructure, and a further £650k to fund a second year of investment in youth unemployment Job Box initiatives
- Improving the health and wellbeing of communities and addressing health inequalities – it was proposed to provide free swimming for residents over 50 for four years.

Attached to the report were a number of appendices, including savings proposals, Impact Assessments of the savings proposals, the Pay Policy Statement 2015/16, analysis of base budget movements, Corporate Debt Recovery Policy and details of Reserves and Balances.

Following publication of the Cabinet's budget proposals in January 2015, there had been extensive consultation via a wide range of media and settings to involve local people and groups such as the Business Forum. This included an interactive "pop-up" road show around the Borough, allowing local people the opportunity to have conversations with Cabinet Members and senior managers. In total, 2,594 contacts were made during the consultation programme, and the full findings/responses were appended to the report. Among the key results, were broad support for the Council's investment proposals and responses that were given to three key questions seeking people's views about the Borough and its future. The Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee had looked in detail at the budget proposals, and their comments were appended to the report.

Since the draft budget proposals were approved for consultation, the Government had issued the final settlement for 2015/16. The net impact resulted in a gain of £0.276m revenue support grant for the Council. Updated projections for estimated income from business rates showed a further benefit of £1.185m arising from strong growth in the local economy. This would be used to make three key changes to the original proposals, in response to the consultation. An additional £1.25m one-off funding had been set aside for Adult Social Services in 2015/16, the saving relating to changes to remissions policy for fees for Arthog Outdoor Centre and the Music Service had been deleted, and a proposed saving from rationalisation of budgets at Arthog of £50k had been reduced to £17k.

An equality impact analysis of the overall impact of the budget was appended to the report, along with environmental and economic impact assessments.

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. Given the continued delivery of savings and long-term service re-design, this had concluded that the Council was pursuing a sound financial strategy in the context of the most difficult financial position it had ever faced due to the combined effect of Government cuts and increased service pressures.

The report on the Capital Programme presented the Council's Capital Strategy for 2014/15 – 2017/18 and later years and a capital programme of £293.560m 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 2015/16, 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 2015/16. The Strategy was set within the parameters of the latest guidance and accounting standards. It was expected the Council would borrow up to £55.4m in 2015/16 based on the current capital programme plans, and would adopt a flexible approach to borrowing. The borrowing might increase if the Council proceeded with possible large commercial projects such as MoD Donnington. The report also provided an update on the treasury management activities during 2014/15. The weighted average return on internal investments at the end of December 2014 was 0.98% compared to a benchmark return for the period of 0.43%. The report also included the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, which was now being calculated on an annuity basis, which would provide savings over a number of years following the backdating of adjustments.

The report on Prudential Indicators sought approval of the prudential indicators for 2015/16 to 2017/18 required under the Prudential Code of Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

Councillor McClements concluded that it was a very positive budget that was investing in the Borough despite the above-average cuts in central Government funding. He commended the Budget to the Council, and moved all the recommendations in appendices D1 to D5. This was seconded by the Leader.

(Councillor R.C Evans arrived at 7.26pm).

Councillor W.L. Tomlinson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat/Independent Group, welcomed the additional one-off funding that was now being proposed for Adult Social Care, but there were still concerns at the potential impact of cuts in care funding. There was also concern that there was only £4m left in reserves, and it would be more prudent if some revenue funding, such as that linked to the Pride in the Community programme, was put into reserves. There were also concerns at the scale of new housing development in the Borough with insufficient infrastructure to support it. This was damaging quality of life and would lead to longer term problems. He supported many of the proposed capital investments outlined in the Budget, but had some reservations at the likely revenue costs of the Pride in Your Community Programme.

Councillor A. J. Eade, Leader of the Conservative Group, responded to the Cabinet's recommendations, and moved an amendment to the budget in the form of his Group's alternative budget which had been circulated as a separate appendix with the budget papers. He expressed particular concern that the cuts to Adult Social Care budgets would have dire consequences and hit the most vulnerable residents of the Borough. While the change of heart by the Administration in finding additional contingency funding was welcome, his Group was proposing a further £870k on top of that in order to give greater support to the elderly and vulnerable. He then highlighted a number of the other proposals in the alternative budget, which included:

- An extra investment in Highways of £23.7m over five years in order to clear the maintenance backlog and bring the highway network up to an acceptable standard. The initial costs of this would be paid for by diverting the funding allocated for the "Pride in Your Community" programme;
- contingency of £50k for a pilot of some areas of leisure provision to give managers a greater level of commercial freedom and full control of budgets;
- deletion of the Administration's proposal of free swimming for the over 50s, to be replaced by the introduction of five free swimming lessons for over 18s who were unable to swim;
- £50k for a review of the work undertaken on the 'Shaping Places' document;
- £0.5m of capital expenditure to start immediate work on planning future secondary education facilities to meet a peak in demand for places in the next few years;
- Reinstatement of the proposed cut of one post from Customer Services and an additional £40k to improve the service by providing three additional staff;
- an additional £50k for the Rights of Way service;
- a capital fund of £1m for the Borough's Towns and Local High Streets which would complement the revenue money proposed by the ruling Administration;
- additional on-going savings of £1.135m.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor A. Lawrence.

A number of Members spoke both for and against the proposed amendment. Reference was also made to the response of the Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee to the Alternative Budget Proposals.

In accordance with Council Procedure rule 11.3, a recorded vote on the amendment was duly requisitioned, the result of which was as follows:

For: (15)

Councillors S. Bentley, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade, I.T.W. Fletcher, V.A. Fletcher, E.J. Greenaway, M.B. Hosken, R.T. Kiernan, A. Lawrence, A.A. Meredith, C.R.P. Mollett, R.G. Scammell and J.M. Seymour

Against: (36)

Councillors R.K. Austin, K.T. Blundell, E.A. Clare, S. Davies, C.B.A. Elliott, A.R.H. England, N.A.M. England, R.C. Evans, G.M. Green, K.R. Guy, M.G. Ion, A.S. Jhawar, J. Loveridge, A.A. Mackenzie, C.N. Mason, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, J.C. Minor, L.A. Murray, R.A. Overton, J. Pinter, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota, P.J. Scott, R.J. Sloan, C.F. Smith, M.J. Smith, K.M. Stringer, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

The amendment having fallen, further debate took place on the substantive motion to approve the recommendations set out in reports D1 – D5. Members also considered the comments of the Budget & Finance Scrutiny Committee to the budget proposals, which were appended to report D1.

A number of Members spoke both for and against the proposed budget. In responding to the debate, the Cabinet Member for Finance & Enterprise referred to spending on Adult Social Care, which was under pressure in all parts of the country due to Government cuts in funding to local authorities. Locally, there had been no reduction in overall spend on these services up to the end of 2013/14, whereas nationally from 2012/13 to 2013/14 52% of overall savings were from reductions in adult social care spending. The Audit Commission had noted that whilst some savings had now been made from Telford & Wrekin's adult care budgets, the Council had been careful to achieve this in ways that protected services to clients as far as possible. In respect of the Pride in the Community programme, there was clear feedback from residents that they wanted neighbourhoods that were safe, clean and well-maintained, and this Programme was an investment in local communities. This was an honest budget that, despite the severe financial challenges facing the Council, was investing in the Borough's future and promoting growth and prosperity.

In accordance with Council Procedure rule 11.3, a recorded vote on the motion to approve all the recommendations in reports D1 to D5 was duly requisitioned, the result of which was as follows:

For: (36)

Councillors R.K. Austin, K.T. Blundell, E.A. Clare, S. Davies, C.B.A. Elliott, A.R.H. England, N.A.M. England, R.C. Evans, G.M. Green, K.R. Guy, M.G. Ion, A.S. Jhawar, J. Loveridge, A.A. Mackenzie, C.N. Mason, A.D. McClements, W.A.M. McClements, J.C. Minor, L.A. Murray, R.A. Overton, J. Pinter, G.C.W. Reynolds, S.A.W. Reynolds, H. Rhodes, K.S. Sahota, P.J. Scott, R.J. Sloan, C.F. Smith, M.J. Smith, K.M. Stringer, B.J. Thompson, K.L. Tomlinson, W.L. Tomlinson, C.R. Turley, P.R. Watling and D.R.W. White.

Against: (15)

Councillors S. Bentley, S.P. Burrell, E.J. Carter, N.A. Dugmore, A.J. Eade, I.T.W. Fletcher, V.A. Fletcher, E.J. Greenaway, M.B. Hosken, R.T. Kiernan, A. Lawrence, A.A. Meredith, C.R.P. Mollett, R.G. Scammell and J.M. Seymour

RESOLVED –

(i) Overview and Revenue Budget

- (a) that the base budget summarised by Service Area in Appendix 9a be approved;**
- (b) that the freezing of council tax levels in 2015/16 and the commitment to freezing council tax again in 2016/17 be approved;**
- (c) that the savings package detailed in Appendix 2, and the additional saving from the Housing Investment Programme, be approved;**
- (d) that the proposals to address the revenue pressures detailed in Appendix 2c be approved, including
 - the allocation of £2.5m one-off funding for Adult Social Services in 2015/16;**
 - the allocation of £0.75m one-off funding for Children’s safeguarding in 2015/16;**
 - the allocation of £0.25m over 3 years for Destination Telford initiatives.****
- (e) that the revenue investment of £1m to revitalise High Streets of Borough Towns and District Centres be approved;**
- (f) that the revenue investment of £0.75m over two years for a Borough wide Environmental Investment Programme be approved;**
- (g) that the revenue investment of £0.2m over 4 years to provide free swimming for all residents over 50 be approved;**
- (h) that the revenue investment of £33,000 to continue funding for the Food Bank during 2015/16 be approved;**
- (i) that the policy framework for Reserves and Balances outlined in Appendix 10 be approved;**
- (j) that the revenue implications of the medium term capital programme for the period 2014/15 - 2017/18 set out in the Capital Programme report, including new commitments of £6m Council funding for roads and highways over the next 3 years, £1m to re-**

run the Community Pride Fund in 2016/17, £0.65m for regeneration works in St Georges and £0.4m for regeneration works in Dawley, be approved;

- (k) that the Impact Assessments contained in Appendices 3a, 3b and 4 be noted;
- (l) that the creation of provisions during 2014/15 to fund those investments funded from the projected revenue budget underspend in 2014/15, together with the remaining budget gap of £0.858m, be approved, with any remaining underspend at year end to be transferred to either the severance fund or invest to save/capacity funds to support the delivery of further savings in future years;
- (m) that the Pay Policy Statement 2015/16 shown at Appendix 5 be approved;
- (n) that the Chief Financial Officer's robustness statement outlined at Appendix 15 of the report be noted;
- (o) that the Corporate Debt Recovery Policy included at Appendix 13 of the report be approved;
- (p) that the 9 month Performance Update shown at Appendix 14 of the report be noted.

(ii) **Capital Programme**

- (a) that the report and associated capital estimates for 2014/15 and 2015/16 – 2017/18, which incorporates the Capital Strategy, the Capital Programme (Annex I), the Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Annex II), Asset Management Plan (Annex III) and the three year Highways and Transport capital investment programme (Annex IV) be approved;
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Director: Development, Business & Employment to deliver the planned programme of works within the Asset Management Plan and to the Director of Neighbourhood, Customer & Cultural Services 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;
- (c) that authority be delegated to the Managing Director to finalise the terms of the HCA Agreement and enter into the Agreement on behalf of the Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Enterprise;

- (d) that authority be delegated to the Managing Director to authorise the directors of the Wholly Owned Company to proceed with the purchase of existing properties within the funding allocations already approved by Cabinet for the Housing Investment Project after consideration of separate business cases for each proposed purchase in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Enterprise and the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills.

(iii) **Treasury Management**

- (a) that the treasury management activities for the first half year be noted;
- (b) that the Treasury Management Policy Statement, as shown at Appendix A of the report, be noted;
- (c) that the Treasury Strategy, including the Annual Investment Strategy for 2015/16, together with the associated Treasury Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, be approved.

(iv) **Prudential Indicators**

- (a) that the prudential indicators as set out in the report be approved as part of setting the budget for 2015/16.

(v) **Council Tax Formal Resolution**

- (a) that the formal resolutions to determine the levels of Council Tax for 2015/16, as detailed in report D5, be approved.

(Councillors R.K. Austin, C.B.A. Elliott, A.A. Mackenzie and K.M. Stringer left the meeting)

60. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARDS & COMMITTEES

Standards Committee

Councillor N.A.M. England, Chair of the Standards Committee, presented the report of the Monitoring Officer relating to the Councillors' Code of Conduct and Appointment of Independent Persons. The Committee had considered proposed changes to the Code of Conduct to reflect the updated Nolan Principles for standards in public life, and the recommended changes were appended to the report. The Committee had also recommended the extension of the terms of office of the current Independent Persons for a further four year term.

RESOLVED –

- (a) that the amended Code of Conduct for Councillors, as shown at Appendix 1 of the report, be adopted with immediate effect;**
- (b) that the term of office of the Independent Persons, namely Michael Tebbutt and Chris Humphries, be extended for a further four years, with a review to take place towards the end of 2018.**

61. MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

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

- (a) Audit Committee – 27 January
- (b) Personnel Committee – 22 January
- (c) Planning Committee – 14 January and 4 February
- (d) Standards Committee – 20 January

62. QUESTIONS

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

a) Cllr A.J. Eade asked Cllr K.S. Sahota the following question:

“Could Cllr Sahota confirm the true cost of building new Civic Offices at Southwater in Telford after selling the old Civic Offices to ASDA, as he consistently told this Council and the public through the media that the cost was £40m when his colleague and Cabinet Member for Finance stated on Radio Shropshire that the cost was £20m. Perhaps he could explain who is telling the truth?”

Councillor Sahota asked Councillor W.A.M. McClements, Cabinet Member: Finance & Enterprise, to reply on his behalf. Councillor McClements stated that the £40m figure was based on the contents of a report of the previous Conservative Administration in January 2010 which set out the likely costs of a new Civic Offices at Southwater plus assumed on-costs. The figure that had been referred to on Radio Shropshire was the value of the capital receipt from the sale of the old Civic Offices site, and not the cost of building a new Civic Offices.

b) Cllr S.P. Burrell asked Cllr P.R. Watling the following question:

“Would the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services give us a figure, be it actual or best projection, representing the total amount of money being invested in the rebuilding or refurbishment of secondary schools in the Borough?”

Councillor Watling stated that the figure for secondary schools was £123.8m, which included obtaining the necessary planning permissions.

c) Cllr P.J. Scott asked Cllr C.F. Smith the following question:

"Newport is seeing a large growth in its population over the next few years due to the number of new houses being built in the area. Does this Council have any plans to attract new employers to Newport to provide full or part time jobs other than those connected to retail supermarkets?"

Councillor Smith advised that the Council had employed consultants to carry out a study into the supply and demand for employment land in Newport. A report to Cabinet had identified a need for 8.9ha of such land, and this had been incorporated into the emerging Shaping Places Plan. Planning permission had been granted for 4.5 hectares of employment land in the southern part of Newport as part of a mixed development. The Council would continue to work with the Newport Regeneration Partnership and others to shape economic growth in Newport, and representations that had been received on the Shaping Places proposals were currently being considered.

d) Cllr S. Bentley asked Cllr C.F. Smith the following question:

"After four years in office, would the Cabinet Member: Housing, Development & Borough Towns inform the Council as to whether or not his officers and Administration are in a position to now provide a definitive and demonstrable 5 year land supply in the Borough?"

Councillor Smith replied that the Council continued to get technical and legal advice on whether it could demonstrate a five year land supply. All Councils were subject to the planning rules that had been imposed by Central Government in relation to new housing developments. Local authorities had no control over the rate at which private developers built the homes they had been granted permission for, and the shortfall in completions due to the economic recession. A delegation from the Council had met with the Planning Minister, but he had been unable to provide any advice to overcome this situation. However, he did confirm that Telford & Wrekin had an Adopted Plan, and was ahead of many other local authorities in the development of its new Plan.

e) Cllr N.A. Dugmore asked Cllr W.A.M. McClements the following question:

"What figure of committed and proposed prudential borrowing has this Administration made since being elected?"

Councillor McClements stated that when the Administration took office, the level of committed and proposed borrowing was £118m. An additional £99m had been committed or proposed, so the current total figure was £217m. He stressed that much of this expenditure, such as the Housing Investment Programme and Solar Farm, related to 'invest to save' schemes, the returns from which would repay the capital and revenue costs and provide a surplus for re-investment by the Council.

f) Cllr S.P. Burrell asked Cllr P.R. Watling the following question:

"Could the Cabinet Member for Children's Services tell us the total number of secondary school places in the Borough when he took office in 2011 and the projected number of secondary places the Borough will have in 2017?"

Councillor Watling replied that in 2011 the total number of secondary school places was 10,850, but that this included around 1,500 surplus places. The projected number of places for 2017 was 10,550. He added that the Government had not allowed the Council to make provision for planning beyond this period, and that any future need/demand would be met as it came forward.

g) Cllr S. Bentley asked Cllr S. Davies the following question:

“Can Cllr Davies inform the Council of the difference between an Assured Tenancy and a Secured Tenancy?”

Councillor Davies stated that the two terms were out-of-date. In response to a supplementary question, he stated that there was no intention to apply a council tax exemption for any vacant rented properties owned by the Council.

h) Cllr Nigel Dugmore asked Cllr C.F. Smith the following question:

“What area of green-field land has been approved for development since this Administration was elected?”

Councillor Smith replied that between 2011 and 2014, approval had been given for 3,200 homes on approximately 100 hectares of green-field land.

The Speaker ruled that the time limit for Questions had been reached, and that the one remaining question from Cllr S. Bentley to Cllr S. Davies concerning bulk collections would be answered by means of a written reply.

63. NOTICES OF MOTION

Councillor R.A. Overton moved, in accordance with Council procedure rule 11, the following motion:

“This Council recognises that, despite £70m of unprecedented and vicious cuts in Government funding, the Borough is now recognised as a regional and national centre for business and a great place to visit and live. With the opening of Southwater, the winning of the MOD Fulfilment Centre at Donnington, the continued regeneration of our centres, the opening of new schools and many other successes, we can be proud and confident of the future.

“This Council re-affirms its commitment to establishing the Borough of Telford & Wrekin as a growth point in the region and a place where people want to live.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor S. Davies.

(Councillors E.J. Carter and C.P.R. Mollett left the meeting at 9.55pm).

Following a debate in which a number of Members spoke, a vote was taken and it was

RESOLVED – that the motion be approved.

The meeting ended at 10.18 pm

Mayor:

Date: