

BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN

Minutes of the Meeting of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin held on Thursday, 28 February 2019 at 6.00pm at The Place, Oakenqates, Telford

Present:

Councillors S Bentley, K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, S P Burrell, L D Carter, E A Clare, G H Cook, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, J A Francis, E J Greenaway, M B Hosken, J Jones, R T Kiernan, A Lawrence, J Loveridge, C N Mason, A D McClements, R Mehta (Mayor), 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, 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

75. Prayers

The Reverend Keith Osmund-Smith said prayers.

76. Apologies for Absence

Councillors E J Carter, I T W Fletcher, V A Fletcher, C A Furnival, K R Guy, N C Lowery and H Rhodes.

Councillors J C Ashford and S L Barnes were also absent from the meeting.

77. Declarations of Interest

None.

78. Minutes of the Council

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2019 and the extraordinary meeting held on 18 February 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

79. Leader's Report & Announcements

As this was the final Council meeting before local elections in May, the Leader paid tribute to retiring Councillors J C Minor, R J Sloan and A A Meredith.

The Leader reflected on the delivery of projects through the Telford 50 Legacy Fund which would benefit communities across the borough. He welcomed robust financial management which had resulted in further investment in the Pride in Our Community High Street Fund, one off investments that would benefit many different sections of the community, £31m in schools over the next three years, and £12m invested in 222 schemes for streets and highways as part of the Pride in our Community Capital programme. He went on to celebrate the Council's work to increase enforcement powers for officers dealing with environmental crime and anti-social behaviour which

had had a number of positive results for the community, celebrated the achievements of the recipients of this year's Young People's Grant awards and Better Homes for All awards. He noted that the Commissioning Body had begun work towards recruitment of an independent chair for the Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry and, following the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 18 February 2019, he had written to the Secretary of State to advise him that a formal referral on the Future Fit hospital reconfiguration would be made.

80. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor commented upon the engagements he had attended since the meeting on 17 January 2019.

81. Public Questions

No questions were received.

82. 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.

Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry Update

Councillor T J Nelson referred to discussion at the Member Advisory Group regarding the wording of the Commissioning Body's report (paragraph 3.1.5) stating that submission of the final report was "subject to it meeting all elements of the terms of reference" and that the Commissioning Body had offered reassurance that in the event that not all elements of the terms could be met, a partial report could be submitted indicating why any elements of the terms of reference could not be met. Councillor Nelson sought clarification on this point and that documentation reflected this position.

Councillor L D Carter, Lead Cabinet Member, commented that this was an interpretation of the documentation, and that the Commissioning Body had offered their reassurance at the Member Advisory Group meeting but that he would make sure the comments were relayed.

School Admission Arrangements 2020

Councillor N A Dugmore asked how the arrangements would prevent out of area pupils obtaining a place at borough schools.

Councillor S A W Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, responded that the arrangements applied government legislation.

83. Recommendations from Cabinet

Cabinet – 14 February 2019

(i) 2018/19 Financial Management Report

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development, presented the report of the Assistant Director: Finance & HR (Chief Financial Officer).

Upon being put to the vote, it was unanimously:

RESOLVED that the transfers to reserves set out in section 5.1 of the report be approved and authority be delegated to the Managing Director after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development to allocate this funding to specific projects.

84. Service and Financial Planning 2019/20 to 2021/22

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services and Economic Development, 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 2019/20. The report included details of savings proposals and investments for 2019/20 and 2020/21 and set out the proposed approach to developing the further savings that would be required through to 2021/22.

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 £117m per annum, meaning that every year there was now £1,500 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.

Following the publication of its draft budget proposals in early January, and a one month consultation period, Cabinet had confirmed its key budget priorities as Adult Social Care, Children's Safeguarding and maintaining subsidised bus services.

Attached to the report were a number of appendices, including savings proposals, Impact Assessments of the savings proposals, the Pay Policy Statement 2019/20, analysis of base budget movements, and details of Reserves and Balances.

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 2018/19 – 2021/22 and later years and a capital programme of £189.4m 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 2019/20, 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 2019/20. The Strategy was set within the parameters of relevant statute, guidance and accounting standards. It was expected the Council would borrow up to £34.4m in 2019/20 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 2018/19. The weighted average return on internal investments at the end of December 2018 was 0.47% compared to a benchmark return for the period of 0.36%. The report also included the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement, which overall was in line with that previously agreed.

The report on Prudential Indicators sought approval of the prudential indicators for 2019/20 to 2021/22 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 Lawrence, on behalf of Councillor A J Eade, Leader of the main opposition group, responded to the budget proposals commenting on the language used in relation to the level of savings and cuts made, welcomed investment in adult care, looked-after children and highways. He committed to delivering a 100 day budget if the Conservatives formed an administration after the local elections in May.

Councillor W L Tomlinson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat/Independent group commented on the savings made to date, concern over the lack of clarity on future government funding, and paid tribute to the work of officers in putting together the plans.

A number of members spoke both for and against the proposed budget. In particular, a number of speakers emphasised the level of government cuts including cuts to the public health grant which limited the preventative work that could take place, Council innovation to generate income and reduce dependency on government grants, and the need to continue to support the vulnerable in the community.

Councillor Carter responded at the end of the debate and a vote was taken on the budget proposals in reports E1 and E4 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 E5 (Council Tax setting).

Voting was as follows:

For (31)

Councillors K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, L D Carter, G H Cook, E A Clare, S Davies, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, J Jones, J Loveridge, 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, 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 (14)

Councillors S Bentley, S P Burrell, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, J A Francis, E J Greenaway, M B Hosken, R T Kiernan, A Lawrence, A A Meredith, T J Nelson, J M Seymour, B D Tillotson, and D G Wright

Abstentions (0)

RESOLVED –

- (i) **Overview & Revenue Budget 2018/19 – 2020/21**
 - (a) that the service and financial planning strategy for 2019/20 set out in the set of reports, linked to the period of the current Comprehensive Spending Review, the local authority funding settlement from the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government and the uncertainties surrounding future financial arrangements for local authorities be agreed;
 - (b) that the previous decision that Council Tax should be increased by 3.2% (made up of 2% in respect of the Government's Adult Social Care Precept and a general Council Tax increase of 1.2%) in both 2018/19 and 2019/20 be reaffirmed;
 - (c) that a further £0.842m be invested in to Adult Social Care services, which is over and above the £0.77m built in to the budget model for 2019/20 for Adult Social Care in March 2018;
 - (d) that £3.296m more be invested in to Children's Safeguarding & Family Support to protect vulnerable children. This investment comes on top of £0.75m for children's safeguarding built in to the budget model for 2019/20 in March 2018. A further £0.847m be invested in a contingency specifically to address any further cost pressures facing these services during 2019/20;
 - (e) that £0.330m be invested to maintain existing subsidised bus routes;
 - (f) that work to deliver the budget savings totalling £6.064m in 2019/20 that were approved at Council in March 2018 be continued;
 - (g) that a measured approach be taken to the use of available one-off resources of £2.961m in 2019/20 to seek to cushion the impact of continuing Government cuts in council funding and allow the level of investment required in Adult Social Care and Children's Safeguarding;
 - (h) that work with partner organisations, including Town & Parish Councils and Voluntary Sector and Community Groups be continued to seek to identify ways to mitigate the impact of some of the cuts to services that we can no longer afford and to note the availability of the £0.6m Partnership Capacity Fund;

- (i) that the Local Tax Support Scheme set out in Appendix 15 to the report be approved;
 - (j) that the Pay Policy for 2019/20 included as Appendix 3 to the report be approved;
 - (k) that the overall service and financial planning strategy set out in this report and the base budget in Appendix 6 to the report be approved;
 - (l) that the policy framework for Reserves and Balances outlined in Appendix 9 to the report be approved;
 - (m) that the CFO's robustness statement in Appendix 10 to the report be noted;
 - (n) that the Risk Register included at Appendix 14 to the report be approved;
 - (o) that the revenue implications of the medium term capital programme for the period 2018/19 - 2021/22 set out in the Capital Strategy and Programme reports be approved;
 - (p) 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;
 - (q) that the Assistant Director: Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care, be authorised to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006 (as amended);
 - (r) 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;
 - (s) that this suite of service and financial planning reports be approved as the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2019/20, including the summary document at Appendix 13 to the report, to enable new capital receipts generated in the six year period starting 1 April 2016 to be used to fund the revenue costs of reform as assumed throughout these reports;
 - (t) that the initial projections for the potential budget gap through to 2021/22 be noted and work start now in order to identify options for how this could potentially be bridged.
- (ii) Capital Strategy
- (a) that the Capital Strategy for 2018/19 and 2019/20 be approved.

(iii) **Capital Programme**

- (a) that the report and associated capital estimates for 2018/19 and 2019/20 – 2021/22, which incorporates the Capital Strategy, the Capital Programme (Annex I to the report), the Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Annex II to the report), and Asset Management Plan (Annex III to the report) and the two year Highways and Transport capital investment programme (Annex IV to the report) be approved;
- (b) that the Assistant Director: Business, Development & Employment and Assistant Director: Commercial Services be authorised to deliver the planned programme of works within the Asset Management Plan and the Assistant Director: Customer & Neighbourhood Services be authorised 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.

(iv) **2019/20 Investment Strategy**

- (a) that the Investment Strategy for 2019/20 be approved.

(v) **2019/20 Treasury Strategy and Treasury Update**

- (a) that the treasury management activities for the first half year be noted;
- (b) that the Treasury Management Policy Statement (Appendix A to the report) be noted; and
- (c) that the Treasury Strategy, including the Annual Investment Strategy for 2019/20 together with the associated treasury Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, which will apply from 2019/20 onwards be approved;

(vi) **Prudential Indicators**

- (a) that the prudential indicators proposed in the report as part of setting the budget for 2019/20 be approved.

(vii) **Council Tax Formal Resolutions 2019/20**

- (a) that the formal resolutions to determine the levels of Council Tax for 2019/20 as detailed in the report be approved.

85. Questions

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

- (i) Councillor M Boylan asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader.

Can the Leader of the Council tell me how many young people the Leader & Cabinet Members Bursary Scheme has helped?

The Leader responded that since the successful opening of the grant scheme in 2018, nearly £33,000 had been awarded to a total of 124 children and young people and at least one young person in every postcode area of Telford & Wrekin.

- (ii) Councillor A D McClements asked the following question of Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for People Services, Visitor Economy & Partnerships.

On 20 September 2018 this Council unanimously supported a motion calling on the Minister for Housing Communities and Local Government to extend the Disqualification Criteria for Public Office to include anyone who holds public office who in the past present or future who admit or have been convicted of domestic abuse to be barred from holding public office.” As at 16 January 2019 we hadn’t had a response or even an acknowledgement back from the Minister. Could the Cabinet Member for Peoples Services, Visitor Economy & Partnerships confirm whether she has since had a response?

Councillor Evans responded that she had written to the Minister on 22 January 2019 and was saddened that she had not received an acknowledgement or reply. Councillor Evans took the opportunity to report on the work that the Council was doing since the adoption of its Domestic Abuse strategy, including an in-depth review of need and demand to inform service provision, discussions had begun with Citizens Advice Bureau on a programme to identify signs of abuse in clients, Freedom Programme training had been funded for April and the Council was piloting the Young Persons CRUSH Programme with West Mercia Womens Aid. The Council was actively making links to serious violence, county lines and criminal exploitation agenda and also with the drug and alcohol agenda considering how vulnerabilities and risks multiply the issue. She concluded by applauding the Administration’s commitment by allocating a further £50,000 for this vital work.

Councillor McClements asked if the Cabinet Member would chase a response from the Minister and Councillor Evans confirmed that she would.

- (iii) Councillor P J Scott asked the following question of Councillor J C Minor, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Green Spaces & Parks.

Given the stark warnings on climate change and the potential loss of insect life in the future what measures are the Council taking now and in the future to combat these issues? Is there a policy on the planting of trees and insect attractors?

Councillor Minor responded that the Council recognised that climate change was one of the most challenging issues affecting our environment. The Met Office was forecasting that temperatures for each of the next five years were likely to be 1C or more above pre-industrial levels and whilst Britain’s greenhouse gas emissions were 40% lower than in 1990, huge challenges remained to reduce emissions. Policies in the Council’s Local Plan were designed to ensure that new development was designed to be energy efficient by promoting sustainable building standards and the generation of renewable and low carbon energy. In 2014 the Council’s solar farm at

Wheat Leasows began generating electricity. The farm formed part of the Council's strategy to become more environmentally and financially sustainable whilst reducing its carbon footprint.

One of the consequences attributed to climate change was the dramatic decline in our insect species. More than 40% of insect species were declining and a third were endangered. Policies in the Council's Local Plan were designed to ensure that new development would result in net gains for wildlife and habitats across the borough. Telford's green spaces formed a network of wildlife corridors and stepping stones that allowed insect species to move through the borough. Grassland areas such as those at Lodge Field, Muxton Marsh and Local Nature Reserves including Rough Park, and Granville were all known to support a diversity of insect species. In addition road side verges including those along the Ketley Brook and the Wrockwardine Wood Way formed linear wildflower corridors for many pollinator species.

Recently Telford Town Park visitor centre had been supporting local beekeepers by hosting training sessions and this year the park would host its own bee hives, with two hives in place by mid-April.

In December 2018, DEFRA produced the latest implementation plan for its National Pollinator Strategy and the Council was reviewing the plan and its recommendations.

On 1 April the Council would start a new 10 year Grounds & Cleansing Contract from with idverde. A major element of the contract was 'added value & community engagement'. This included working with Parishes, Friends of Groups, volunteers and schools. An annual plan would include aspects such as tree planting, wild flower schemes and a host of other local community schemes which would enhance suitable habitats.

Councillor Minor would ask Officers to share relevant information regarding global warming benchmarking data with Councillor Scott together with a written copy of the response.

86. Notices of Motion

(i) Councillor R A Overton moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:-

"Telford and Wrekin Council notes with concern West Mercia Police has been subjected to ruthless government cuts since 2010

- £70m reduction in funding from government since 2010.
- A 13% reduction in workforce
- 20% reduction in community Support officers
- 16% reduction in front line police officers losing over 300 officers in 7 years
- police calls are no longer answered from a local call centre based in Shropshire
- reduction in police station opening hours

Since 2010 in Telford and Wrekin

- crime has increased by 35% (3,973 offences). This was almost twice the rate of increase in the number of recorded offences for England and Wales as a whole (18%).
- violence against a person increased by 216%
- robbery up by 10%
- possession of a weapon up by 146%
- public order offences up by 147%

This Council notes with concern that, despite local police officers and leaders working hard, cuts to policing budgets by this government is letting down Telford and Wrekin residents.

This Council also recognises that despite increases in council tax by the PCC for new police officers, there will be no new police officers on our streets in Telford & Wrekin.

This Council is deeply alarmed that government cuts are putting our community at risk. We therefore call on Government to provide fair funding to West Mercia Police."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor G C W Reynolds.

During the course of the ensuing debate, comments were made regarding the efforts of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the wide ranging impact of government cuts.

Upon being put to the vote, it was by a majority (due to one abstention):

RESOLVED - that the motion be approved

(ii) Councillor W L Tomlinson moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:-

"To help protect the most vulnerable in our society this Council calls for an end to any further reductions in Government grants to this Authority. Furthermore this Council requests our MPs to support this call, lobby the Government and vote against any further cuts."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor P J Scott.

A robust debate ensued and upon being put to the vote, it was unanimously:

RESOLVED - that the motion be approved

The meeting ended at 8.06pm

Mayor:

Date: