

FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday, 23 January 2020 at 6.00 pm in The Place, Limes Walk, Oakengates, Telford, TF2 6EP

Present: Councillors S Bentley, K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, S P Burrell, E M Callear, L D Carter, E J Carter, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, V A Fletcher, I T W Fletcher, E J Greenaway, C Healy, V J Holt, M B Hosken, T L B Janke, A S Jhawar, J Jones, R T Kiernan, J E Lavery, A Lawrence, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, L A Murray, T J Nelson, G L Offland, R A Overton, S J Reynolds, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, K S Sahota, P J Scott, J M Seymour, C F Smith, M J Smith, B J Thompson, W L Tomlinson, K T Tomlinson, C R Turley, P Watling, D R W White and D Wright

Apologies: Councillors C Cassar, J Loveridge, J Pinter and H Rhodes

49 One Minute's Silence

Following one minute's silence, a number of Members paid tribute to the late Councillor Elizabeth Clare.

A further minute's silence was held in tribute to Rob Eyres, Founder and Chief Executive of Telford After Care Team (TACT) and other recently deceased friends of the borough.

50 Prayers

The Reverend Keith Osmund-Smith said prayers.

51 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Shaun Davies declared an interest in minute number 59 Youth Justice Plan due to his employment as a Solicitor.

52 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 September 2019 and 17 October 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

53 Leader's Report & Announcements

The Leader paid personal tribute to the late Rob Eyres, Founder and Chief Executive of Telford After Care Team, welcomed the new Chief Executive of the Council, David Sidaway, and reported on the progress being made against the Administration's Manifesto Pledges including foster carer recruitment, stronger families funding, investment in borough schools, commercial, industrial and retail investment, Superfast Telford broadband, and infrastructure repairs.

The Leader looked ahead to the exciting events planned for the summer and also for the VE & VJ Day 75th anniversary events which would be taking place as a result of Telford 2020 funding.

54 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reflected on the variety of events he had attended across borough since the last meeting and drew attention to the upcoming Murder Mystery event taking place on 27 March 2020 in aid of his charity supporting YMCA Wellington and District.

55 Public Questions

The following questions from the public had been received.

- (i) The following question to Cllr R A Overton, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Enforcement & The Pride Programme was submitted by Yvonne Hill:

"I welcome the inclusion of taxi licensing in the terms of reference of the Independent Inquiry into CSE and also the Council's recent focus on cross border licensing. What help can local residents give to ensure that only drivers licensed by Telford & Wrekin Council operate within the borough?"

Cllr Overton responded that the Cabinet felt strongly about the problems of cross-border hiring that had arisen since the Deregulation Act of 2015, which permitted operators to subcontract jobs to another Private Hire Operator licensed by any local authority in England and Wales.

The Council had and would continue to lobby central government for changes to legislation that would, amongst other matters, see that all private hire journeys must start or end within the local authority where the driver and vehicle were licensed. This would give the licensing authority greater control over public safety.

Local residents could help the Council achieve this change in legislation by also lobbying their local MP. Additionally, residents could, when booking private hire vehicles, inform the private hire operator whom they were making the booking with, that they would prefer a Telford & Wrekin Council licensed driver.

- (ii) The following question to Cllr D Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure was submitted by Carol Scott:

"Can the council advise whether they are actively and constructively working to implement a concessionary travel scheme possibly linked to TLC card for 1950's women still affected by delayed state pension,

therefore, no entitlement to bus pass or was the commitment to be a WASPI supporting council just empty words.”

Cllr Wright responded that the administration was sympathetic to the wider WASPI campaign and that at a national level there was much debate during the recent General Election on these issues. The Council took the issue of Public Transport across the Borough extremely seriously. Given the Council's determination to do what it could to make the Borough the best place to live, work, learn and do business for the benefit of all residents, having a fit for purpose public transport infrastructure was a key aspiration.

There was significant pressure on public transport budgets. The Council continued to explore opportunities that may arise and had provided some initial pump prime investment to explore how the kind of scheme Mrs Scott alluded to might be developed, however, this would be expensive and complex to administer.

The Council would welcome some commitment from Government to support a national programme to assist people who had had their state pension delayed. In the meantime the Council was developing its the Integrated Transport Strategy to ensure that the Council was best placed to benefit from any external funding that became available.

56 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.

Review of the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan - Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough

Councillor Tomlinson noted that residents may have concerns that developers and others could put forward new sites not currently in the Local Plan for consideration for industrial and housing allocation in the future, could the Cabinet Member assure the Council and public that every effort would be made to communicate with the public to make them aware of what was happening at each stage of the review process.

Councillor D Wright responded that the official process would be used to review the Plan. This was a Plan Review so the existing Local Plan remained in place and the Planning Authority would continue to make decisions in accordance with it. Caution was required to ensure that the Plan was not reopened or rewritten, so that it could be demonstrated to the Planning Inspector that the Council was undertaking a review. The process would be open and clear, Members would be able to ask questions at Council and the Council would ensure communication with the public.

Driving Delivery of Our 4 Year Programme to Protect, Care & Invest to Create a Better Borough”

Councillor S Bentley asked when potholes in the rural area would be dealt with.

Councillor S Davies reminded the meeting that there were processes in place to report potholes which Members could utilise as part of their day to day casework.

57 Recommendations from Cabinet

(a) 2019/20 Financial Management Report

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services and the Economy, presented the report of the Director: Finance & HR which detailed the Financial Management reports to Cabinet on 10 October 2019 and 2 January 2020 in relation to the new capital allocations, virements and re-phasing which required formal approval by Full Council.

RESOLVED that the changes to the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

(b) Housing Investment Programme

Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member: Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, presented the report of the Director: Finance & HR.

RESOLVED - that that an extension to the Nuplace Loan Facilities Agreement of £5.0m be approved, the rate and terms to be delegated for approval to the Councils s151 officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance & Service Delivery.

(c) Youth Justice Plan 2019/20

Councillor S A W Reynolds, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, & Education, presented the report of the Executive Director: Children's and Family Services

RESOLVED that the Youth Justice Plan 2019/20 be approved and endorsed and that the West Mercia Youth Justice Service responsibilities be noted.

(d) Council Tax Support Scheme 2020-2021

Councillor R Mehta, Cabinet Member: Communities & Inclusivity, presented the report of the Executive Director: Housing, Communities & Customer Services.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme attached to the report at Appendix A be adopted for implementation from 1 April 2020; and
- (b) the redesigned Council Tax Reduction Hardship Assistance Policy attached at Appendix B to the report be approved.

58 Scrutiny Annual Report

The Lead Scrutiny Member, Councillor Derek White, presented the Annual Report for information.

RESOLVED – that the Annual Scrutiny Report 2018/19 be noted.

59 Setting of the Council Tax Base for 2020/21

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and the Economy presented the report of the Director: Finance & HR.

RESOLVED that

- (a) the calculation of the tax base for 2020/21 as at paragraph 5.7 and Appendix 1 of the report be approved;
- (b) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012:2914), the amount calculated for Telford and Wrekin Council Tax base for 2020/21 for its Special Fund Area shall be as per the appropriate parish amounts detailed in Appendix 1 to the report for the parishes listed in paragraph 5.9 of the report; and
- (c) the extension to the policy discounting young people leaving Council care and living within the Borough from Council Tax up until their 25th birthday, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

60 Recommendations from Boards and Committees

- (a) Review of the Speak Up (Whistleblowing) Policy 2019

Councillor N A M England, Chair of the Audit Committee presented the report of the Audit and Governance Team Leader which had been considered by the Audit Committee on 1 October 2019.

RESOLVED that the updated Speak Up (Whistleblowing) Policy 2019 be adopted.

(b) Scrutiny Structure

Councillor D R W White, Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board, presented the report of the Director: Governance which had been considered by the Scrutiny Management Board on 12 November 2019.

RESOLVED - that the revised scrutiny structure set out in the report be agreed and the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committees attached to the report at Appendix 1 be approved.

61 Questions

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

1. Councillor I T W Fletcher asked the following question of Cllr D Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure.

The LGA had recently published the following document: Probity in Planning: Advice for Councillors and Officers Making Planning Decisions. Would the Cabinet Member Cllr David Wright - Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure please advise members whether the advice and recommendations contained within this document would be implemented within Telford & Wrekin Council?

Councillor Wright responded that the Council had a very robust transparent, fair and efficient planning system which produced policies fairly, properly and transparently and determined planning applications equally fairly, properly and transparently. The Planning Authority was always looking to improve practices/processes and would look at what the LGA had advised before deciding whether to change anything to reflect the LGA advice – in particular whilst the Planning Authority invited ward councillors to comment on pre-application discussions, consideration would be given to how further briefing on the relevant policy issues could be provided; there was merit in members involved in Planning to undertake an annual visit of sample of sites where planning permission had been granted and implemented so that they could see and appreciate the impact of their decisions; and there was also merit in ensuring that the time allowed for public speaking at planning meetings was shared equally between those for and against any application.

Councillor Fletcher welcomed consideration being given to the implementation of an annual visit to sample sites and suggested a rush hour visit to the site of Holy Trinity Academy with the junction of Teece Drive and Priorslee Avenue.

Councillor Wright responded that he was keen for all elements of the report to be considered and whilst it was important to set strategic direction it was also necessary to allow Members to make planning decisions independently.

2. Councillor S Bentley asked the following question of Cllr S Davies, Leader.

Did the Leader intend to unlock the gridlock of Future Fit by collaborating constructively with Shropshire Council?

Councillor Davies responded that first and foremost the gridlock was something that was not this Council's making. Often, the Council, had acted to operate within the government-set process for the reconfiguration of hospital services. He was aware of vocal dislike from certain quarters of the County of the Council's stance but he would not apologise for standing up for the hospital services and a decent NHS because that was expected by residents. He noted that the Future Fit process was approaching a cost of £0.5bn and he did not think it was too much to ask for health bosses and the government to take a second look at how such a substantial sum of taxpayers' money was spent. The proposal pitted one community against another but he stood ready to work together cross party, cross Council and with all local MPs to get the best healthcare and health outcomes possible. The challenge set a few years ago to health bosses was to find a solution not a problem or argument and the Council stood ready to do that. He reiterated his offer to meet all MPs, Shropshire Council and the Health Secretary at any time.

Councillor Bentley asked if the apparent change of viewpoint was due to the General Election result.

Councillor Davies noted that there was no U-turn in regard to the hospital situation: there was a clear clinical reason to retain the women's and children's centre in Telford but the Health Secretary had disagreed with that view. Telford would become the largest town in the UK without a fully functioning Accident and Emergency and this view had been made known to the Health Secretary but this remonstrance had been ignored. The cost of the reconfiguration had reportedly increased from £311m to £500m and in the spirit of compromise and collaboration, he had suggested looking a single site super hospital to be built, fairly and centrally located by Shrewsbury and Telford. He noted that a Motion later in the meeting would debate this issue further.

3. Councillor S Bentley asked the following question of Cllr R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Partnerships, Culture & Leisure

Did this authority utilise the services of external contact centre contractors?

Councillor Evans responded that it did not.

Councillor Bentley noted that he had received some complaints about the way that some people had been treated when they had contacted the Council.

Councillor Evans noted that the Council's approach to channel shift had improved services: since 2015 the abandoned call rate had been reduced

from 28% to 8%, the number of call waiting had been halved to 1 minute and 16 seconds and the number of customers attending at Southwater for face to face services had decreased by 96%. Councillor Evans stated that she was pleased with channel shift strategy.

4. Councillor S Bentley asked the following question of Cllr R A Overton, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Enforcement and The Pride Programme

As of 31 January 2020 this authority took responsibility for Civil Parking Enforcement. Would the Cabinet Member consider the introduction of time restricted parking around our primary and secondary schools?

Councillor Overton responded that over the past two years over £600,000 had been invested into improving road safety outside schools, with projects being designed in conjunction with schools to mitigate the problems they experienced. The funding has delivered various safety improvements with some schemes introducing additional parking restrictions. A number of schools, both primary and secondary, already had parking restrictions in place and as at 31 January, when the Council took on Civil Parking Enforcement Powers, schools would be actively patrolled. The newly appointed Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers would take an education first approach to ensure drivers contravening restrictions understood the consequences if they continued to park their vehicle on a restricted area.

It was hoped that driver behaviour would change as a result of CPE and the need for parking restrictions across the borough would be kept under review. Requests would be reviewed, designed and implemented on a case by case basis, and the Council would work with local communities and schools to understand and treat any ongoing concerns. The solutions required for each area could differ, but could include time limited waiting restrictions as well as measures such as 'school keep clear markings' and 'designated parking bays'.

In addition to introducing physical restrictions, the Council would also continue to deploy the Road Safety Education team to work alongside schools to help to educate our young people to be safe on our roads.

5. Councillor N A Dugmore asked the following question of Cllr S A W Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, & Education

Would the administration explain how a reduction in school transport provision contributes to addressing the acknowledged climate change crisis?

Councillor Reynolds responded that the Council was in consultation with residents of the borough about the ways in which travel assistance would be provided. The focus was around increasing independence and so, where possible, focussing on increased support of the Independent Travel Training offer for children and young people. This would enable them to use public

transport, or be safe when walking independently, or cycling to school where possible.

It was understood that public bus routes were not available across the borough but work was taking place with Arriva to explore how travel in the borough could be made more sustainable both from an environmental and financial point of view.

For those areas of the borough that were not serviced by a public bus route, the Council would work with providers to encourage the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, and where this was not possible, that vehicles at least met the latest vehicle emission standards.

The Council's policy in terms of admissions was to provide local schools for local children, ensuring that children did not have unnecessarily long journeys to school. For the majority of pupils, a place at a local school was available within walking distance. School organisation and catchment areas were therefore reviewed regularly to ensure that this could happen.

Parents could express a preference for a place at a school that was not their nearest but it was their responsibility to transport their children in those circumstances.

Councillor Dugmore asked if there were any plans in place to increase school transport funding and Councillor Reynolds undertook to provide a written response due to the consultation being ongoing at the time of the meeting.

6. Councillor E J Carter asked the following question of Councillor C Healy, Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy & The World Heritage Site and Cllr D Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure

As Chair of the Marches Strategic Rail Group, could I ask both the Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy and the World Heritage Site and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, whether they agree with me that the Plans to restore Rail connectivity to the Ironbridge Power Station Site provided the opportunity to offer the means of transporting 2 million tonnes of waste safely from the Site rather than by road, followed by the fantastic plans to reintroduce passenger services back to the main line as well as working with Heritage Line operators to help the visitor economy. This was in addition to providing a park and ride facility?

Councillor Healy responded that since before the local election in May, she had been of the view that a pedestrian rail link should be a key element of the proposals to develop the former power station site, together with the line being used for the removal of materials from the site.

To that end, members and Officers continued to work with representatives from Harwarth Group, Network Rail, Midlands Connect, Shropshire Council

and potential future operators to assess the future of the rail line between the main line near Stafford Park and the power station.

The line was still owned by Network Rail who accepted the existing freight use of the line. There was recognition of the need to facilitate freight movements on this line to clear the site of Pulverised Fuel Ash and enable the mineral extraction to limit vehicle movements onto the highway network. Initial work on this project had involved Network Rail assessing the work required for them to enable the use of the line for freight, and in particular the works needed to the important structures on the line such as the listed Albert Edward bridge, and the unlisted but no less important, Coalbrookdale viaduct. This work was ongoing but more information from Network Rail was anticipated in the near future.

With regard to any future operation beyond freight, the authority was committed to growing sustainable transport modes in the borough. With both the proposed rail facility, and the park and ride site, the authority was supportive of measures to reduce the impact of vehicular traffic within the World Heritage Site, as well as supporting the Destination offer as identified in the adopted World Heritage Site Management Plan that sought to “develop the WHS into a pre-eminent green environmental tourist destination”.

Councillor Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, did not add to the statement.

Councillor Carter welcomed the response. He considered it was the most important transport movement arising in the coming years. He noted that a decision had recently been taken not to continue to provide officer representation to the Marches Strategic Rail Group and he sought support from the Cabinet to ensure officer attendance at the next meeting.

Councillor Wright noted that this was outside the remit of the question but added that he was happy to take up the issue with the Leader and Chief Executive.

7. Councillor E J Carter asked the following question of Cllr D Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure

Would the Cabinet Member help to ensure that, as work takes place on the Ni Park off the A518 in Newport, a footpath and Cycletrack be provided on the North Side of the road between the Sheep Island and Aldi to enable a safe and quick access to the retail park, which was nearing completion, for residents of Station Road and others?

Councillor Wright responded that delivery of the footpath/cycle link to the North of the A518 was dependent on partnerships with private landowners and the Council aimed to ensure that this came forward as Phase 2 of the highways improvement works as they were delivered. The Council was very proud of the Ni Park development and the partnership generated with the LEP and Harper Adams and other players. It was a major step forward for the

borough economy, and also sustaining jobs and investment in the Newport area. Phase 2 included an additional dual carriageway section on the A518, a proposed new roundabout to access the Station Road East development and also improvements to the Station Road (Sheep) roundabout as well as the footpath/cycle link from Sheep island.

Council Carter stated that as chair of the Regeneration Partnership for a number of years it was a pleasure, along with colleagues, to have been chasing up something up for employment in the Newport area and it was great to see the Ni Park coming forward with 900 proposed jobs and the retail park close by. He added that it would be useful to get some timescale of when this might happen.

Councillor Wright stated that the phasing would be looked at and further stated that since development the was being delivered by a Labour Council, with investment that the Labour administration had secured from the LEP and also pump primed, he could provide assurance that the Council was committed to delivering investment in Newport. He offered further assurance the project would be phased to deliver the highway and footpath improvements and that would be access to the site would be facilitated for people across the borough.

62 Notices of Motion

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

“This Council supports the provision of a new hospital in between Telford and Shrewsbury and undertakes to send a fact finding Member/Officer delegation to Cramlington in Northumbria to review health service provision and best practice at that site.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor N A Dugmore.

RESOLVED - that the motion not be approved.

(b) Councillor N A Dugmore moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:

“This council resolves to consider housing numbers currently planned for the Borough within the Local Plan review process.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor T J Nelson.

Councillor D Wright then moved the following amendment, with additional words shown in bold and underlined.

“This Council **notes the decision of Cabinet on 2nd January 2020 to review the local plan. Council also notes that the covering report to Cabinet fully detailed the relevant legislation and Government guidelines**

informing the process of such a review. In line with this process Council resolves to consider housing numbers currently planned for the Borough within the Local Plan review process.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor R A Overton.

At the end of the debate, a vote was taken on the amendment put forward by Councillor Wright which was unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED - that the amended Motion be approved.

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

“Telford and Wrekin Council is firmly opposed to the decision of the Secretary of State to downgrade Accident & Emergency services at the Princess Royal Hospital and close the existing Women and Children’s Centre.

We note with concern that the cost of Future Fit has spiralled out of control to £498 million with every indication that this will go higher still. This astronomical increase in cost makes Future Fit uneconomical and unfair and flies in the face of the need for a balanced approach to investment across the whole system which can deliver a viable solution to the current crisis in our local NHS

This more balanced approach must include:

- a significant additional investment in accessible, local primary and secondary services across Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire which will reduce pressure on acute hospital services
- a rejection of the current plan to pour a large majority of the available capital into crumbling hospital infrastructure contrary to the spirit and intent of the NHS Long Term Plan
- a rapid feasibility study of the alternatives to the current proposal for acute reconfiguration to include both the option of a new site dedicated either to A&E alone or to all hospital services for Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire and the option of retaining full A&E provision at both sites including the retention of the Women and Children’s Centre at PRH

In order to progress these alternatives, and in the absence of fresh thinking from local NHS leaders, we call upon Shropshire Council and all local MPs to meet with this Council administration to make an agreed case to the Secretary of State to instruct that the feasibility work outlined above is undertaken in partnership with the local authorities.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor S Davies.

In accordance with Committee Procedure Rule 9.5, a recorded vote on the motion was taken, the voting being as follows:

For: 32

Councillors K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, E M Callear, L D Carter, S Davies, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, C Healy, V J Holt, T L B Janke, A S Jhawar, J Jones, J E Lavery, A D McClements, R Mehta, L A Murray, R A Overton, S J Reynolds, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, K S Sahota, P J Scott, C F Smith, M J Smith, B J Thompson, W L Tomlinson, K T Tomlinson, C R Turley, P Watling, and D Wright

Abstentions: 12

Councillors S Bentley, E J Carter, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, V A Fletcher, I T W Fletcher, E J Greenaway, M B Hosken, R T Kiernan, A Lawrence, T J Nelson, and J M Seymour

Against: 0

NB Councillors S P Burrell, K Middleton and D R W White did not take part in the debate or vote due to their Membership of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor G L Offland had left the meeting at 7.14pm.

RESOLVED - that the motion be approved

The meeting ended at 8.24 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday, 5 March 2020