

FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday, 14 January 2021 at 6.00 pm in Remote Meeting

Present: Councillors S Bentley, K T Blundell, A J Burford, S P Burrell, E M Callear, L D Carter, E J Carter, C Cassar, G H Cook, 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 Jhavar, J Jones, J E Lavery, A Lawrence, J Loveridge, 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, H Rhodes, 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

111 Prayers and Reflections

The Reverend Matt Beer, representing Telford Ministry, said prayers.

112 Declarations of Interest

None received.

113 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

114 Leader's Report & Announcements

The Leader noted that the country was now in a third period of national lockdown. He stated that the Council had continued to work hard supporting all those who had been affected by the pandemic and highlighted a number of schemes that had been undertaken in the Borough. The Council had opened a rapid testing facility at Oakengates Theatre, where any resident who did not have symptoms could get a test;- this was in addition to the NHS facilities within the Borough.

The Council had worked closely with the Environment Agency around flooding, particularly in Ironbridge Gorge, where there would be some changes made to the installation of the flood defences.

The Leader expressed frustration about the pace of the vaccination roll out in the Borough and stated that Council would work with the Government and the NHS to catch up to the national level. He stated that the Borough should not be behind national averages and would do everything in his power to support this effort.

115 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor wished all Members and residents a happy new year. The Mayor noted the engagements that he had attended, as and when restrictions allowed, and highlighted his attendance at the WE and VJ film showing at Wellington Orbit and the opening of the new Foundry Gym.

116 Public Questions

The following question to E Callear, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Libraries and Culture was submitted by Richard Handley:

“While carrying out the redevelopment of Horsehay Pool could you consider allowing paddle boarding and kayaking to take place? At present there is no publicly available water to carry out these activities other than flowing water of the Severn in Telford. It would have lots of health benefits.”

Councillor Callear, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Libraries and Culture responded to the question and advised that it was not possible to undertake such activities at Horsehay Pool due to the depth of water, as most of the pool had an average depth of less than 2 metres, however, the Council was engaging with partner agencies to look at other waters were such activities may be possible.

117 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.

2021/22 Schools Funding Formula

Councillor A Lawrence noted that this was clearly a good news story, as the funding had increased by £12m, but it was not clear how this money was split between the different funding blocks.

Councillor S A W Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning stated that she would provide a written response to this question.

Councillor V A Fletcher stated that SACRE was due to review the curriculum of religious education in the Borough and asked if there had been a budget allocated to this.

Councillor S A W Reynolds stated that this budget would not be from the schools funding formula so she would provide a written response to Councillor Fletcher.

Service & Financial Planning 2021/22 Proposals

Councillor I T W Fletcher asked if the Council was planning to set a negative budget.

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Council Finance and Governance, confirmed that the Council was not planning on submitting a negative budget. Due to technical difficulties, Councillor Evans stated that she would provide a detailed written response.

118 Councillor Questions On Notice

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

- a) Councillor P J Scott asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader:

‘There is a lot of concern locally in the Newport area and the rest of the borough about the slowness of the Covid Vaccination roll out especially among the elderly and care homes. Other areas seem to be getting their vaccinations. The residents need some clarity. Can the leader tell me if he knows why the Wrekin area appears to be left behind whilst others are being prioritised?’

The Leader thanked Councillor Scott for the work he had been doing for the residents of Newport on this issue and stated that he shared Councillor Scott’s frustration at the speed of the roll out of the vaccine. Less than 50% of care home residents in the Borough had a vaccination, which was not good enough. The Leader stated that a centre in Newport was planned and was due to open in February, with more details to be released shortly. The Telford International Centre site was due to open at the end of January and then a centre at AFC Telford.

- b) Councillor K Middleton asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader:

‘During this health pandemic Telford and Wrekin council comms team and public health messaging has in my opinion been outstanding! Providing clear and concise guidance and information to residents, keeping them up to date in the form of social media posts, emails, letters, radio interviews and live Q&As, enabling them to engage and build confidence in our local public health message. We have all seen the negative impact of mixed messaging on how people respond and adhere to the guidelines. Do you agree that a vital part of fighting coronavirus is a consistent message to the public?’

The Leader replied that communication was very important and the Council was doing all it could to keep residents informed. The Council had regularly posted on social media and had written to every home in the Borough twice, with a third letter going out later this month.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Middleton asked the Leader what his message was in respect of the vaccine?

The Leader stated that the vaccine was safe, a life saver and that everyone should get the vaccine when they are called for it. There was no need to travel hundreds of

miles to get vaccinated, centres were being set up in the Borough. He urged residents to follow the rules.

- c) Councillor N A Dugmore asked the following question of Councillor A J Burford, Cabinet Member: Health & Social Care:

'Would the cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing please update the Council on the number of Covid vaccinations performed in Telford and Wrekin and Shropshire to date with comparative data for neighbouring authorities?'

Councillor Burford expressed his frustration with the speed of the vaccine roll out and noted that, nationally, the NHS had been guarded with data, as they are aware that the spread of vaccinations is patchy. From initial figures it looks as 1 in 4 over 80s in the Borough had been vaccinated. Councillor Burford stated that he hoped to see a rise in numbers once the local vaccinations centres had opened.

Councillor Dugmore asked if the Council had asked the NHS to supply the data when it was available.

Councillor Burford confirmed that the Council was just starting to get data through and a close eye would be kept on all the data.

- d) Councillor N A Dugmore asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader:

'Will the Leader confirm the names of the Group Leaders and their deputies on Telford and Wrekin Council?'

The Leader confirmed that he was the leader of the Labour Group, with Councillor Richard Overton serving as his deputy. The leader of the Liberal Democrat / Independent Group was Councillor Bill Tomlinson, with Councillor Thomas Janke as the deputy. Councillor Dugmore was the leader of the Conservative Group, and his deputy was Councillor Adrian Lawrence.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Dugmore asked if the inclusion of the independent councillor at leadership meetings conferred leadership status on this Member.

The Leader stated he was not sure what leadership meetings the Councillor was referring to. He noted that meetings had been held with Councillors Tomlinson and Dugmore. Other meetings had been held in respect of vaccinations, where the independent Member had attended, which, given the leading nature of his campaign and the cross party nature of the work, was thought to be right thing to do.

- e) Councillor J Loveridge asked the following question of Councillor S A W Reynolds, Cabinet Member: Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning:

'Could the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning confirm that following the government's recognition of the issues of home

learning during school closures, that Telford & Wrekin schools were allocated laptops at the beginning of the Autumn term?’

Councillor Reynolds replied that during the first lockdown, the government promised that children would not be excluded from learning. The Council had received the first allocation of laptops, but while waiting for this to happen, had established their own scheme as children were falling between the gaps and there was a shortfall in the number of government issued laptops.

Councillor Loveridge asked if the laptops had now been delivered.

Councillor Reynolds stated that initially, the government slashed the number they would provide to a fifth of what had been announced. However, there had been a U-turn and the government had advised they would provide the full allocation of laptops.

119 Setting the Council Tax Base for 2021/22

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Council Finance & Governance, presented the report of the Director: Finance & Human Resources (Chief Financial Officer).

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The calculation for the tax base for 2021/22 as at paragraph 5.6 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 2021/22 for its Special Fund Area shall be as per the appropriate parish amounts detailed in Appendix 1 for the parishes listed in paragraph 5.7 of the report**

120 Recommendations from Cabinet

- (a) 2020/21 Financial Monitoring Report

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Council Finance & Governance, presented the report of the Director: Finance & Human Resources (Chief Financial Officer).

RESOLVED that:

- a) **the changes to the capital programme and the transfers to reserves detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be approved;**
- b) **authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, to approve the uses of the Investment in Council Priorities Fund**

121 Notices of Motion

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

“This Council calls for an immediate review of the relationship between Telford and Wrekin local planning authority and ATP the private planning consultancy established by this Council to avoid any perception that applicants paying to use this consultancy have an unfair advantage”

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor I T W Fletcher.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Dugmore stated that a review of the relationship between ATP and the planning department was needed, as he stated there was a perception that those who engage ATP are more likely to have their applications approved. Although it was the role of planning consultants to look at ways to overcome barriers to approval, Councillor Dugmore stated that there needed to be respect between Councillors and officers.

Various Members stated that serious allegations should not be made without proof, and that if such proof was available, this should be presented to the police or directly to the relevant officers. Councillor Wright stated that there were no double standards and that the Council carried out its duty within the law. Other Members clarified that ATP does not engage with the Planning Committee, the committee were advised by planning officers and legal advisors.

Members were advised that a new director had recently been appointed to oversee the planning department and that a review of ATP was underway, with a report due shortly.

A recorded vote was requested. The vote was as follows:

For: 12

Councillors S Bentley, S P Burrell, E J Carter, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, I Fletcher, V Fletcher, E J Greenaway, M B Hosken, A Lawrence, T J Nelson, J M Seymour

Against: 36

Councillors K T Blundell, A J Burford, E Callear, L D Carter, C Cassar, G H Cook, S Davies, A E England, N A M England, R C Evans, C Healy, V Holt, T L B

Janke, A Jhavar, J Jones, J Lavery, J Loveridge, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, G Offland, R A Overton, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, S J Reynolds, H Rhodes, K S Sahota, P J Scott, C F Smith, B J Thompson, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, P R Watling, D R W White, D Wright

Abstentions: 0

RESOLVED - that the Motion not be approved

Councillor S Bentley formally moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:

“Transparency through consultation with stakeholders and elected members is a key element of Local Government and should be fully incorporated into the decision making process of Telford and Wrekin Council.”

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor N A Dugmore.

Councillor P R Watling moved the following amendment, with additional words shown in bold and underlined:

“Transparency through consultation with stakeholders and elected members is a key element of Local Government and should be fully incorporated into the decision making process of Telford and Wrekin Council. **Our adherence to these principles is demonstrated by the results of our recent residents’ survey, the current budget engagement and live local plan consultation and our ongoing commitment to our Co-Operative Council Values.**”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor D Wright.

A vote was taken on the proposed amendment, which was carried, becoming the substantive motion.

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

RESOLVED - that the amended Motion be approved

Members of the Health Scrutiny Committee and Councillor G Offland declared an interest in the following item and did not take part in the determination of the item.

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

“This Council has no confidence in the Future Fit hospital reorganisation programme.”

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor A J Eade.

Councillor A J Burford moved the following amendment, with additional words shown in bold and underlined:

“In line with motions passed previously by Telford & Wrekin Council (the latest at an extraordinary meeting called by the Labour administration in October 2019) this Council reiterates that it has no confidence in the Future Fit hospital reorganisation programme. We believe that the Covid pandemic should cause a rethink of priorities for the allocation of the £500 million plus that Future Fit will cost. There never was a good case for using most of this funding to prop up the crumbling infrastructure at the RSH at the expense of Telford and Wrekin's Women and Children's Centre (for which a strong clinical argument for its location at PRH was successfully made only 6 years ago) and a fully functioning A&E department at PRH. This plan makes even less sense now given the urgent need to consider investment priorities in the round in the light of the pandemic. We once again call upon our NHS colleagues to discuss with us an alternative plan without preconditions and we call upon both of our MPs (who welcomed the Future Fit announcement) to support the Council and its residents by joining us in this approach We ask that a joint letter signed by the leader and group leaders be sent to local MPs and NHS organisations declaring our lack of confidence in Future Fit and calling for them to engage with us on alternative plans for this investment.”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor R A Overton.

A vote was taken on the proposed amendment, which was carried, becoming the substantive motion.

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

RESOLVED - that the amended Motion be approved

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday, 4 March 2021