

FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday 2 March 2023 at 6.00 pm in Telford Theatre, 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, G H Cook, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, R C Evans, J Gough, E J Greenaway, C Healy, M B Hosken, T L B Janke, A S Jhawar, J Jones, G C W Latham-Reynolds, J E Lavery, A Lawrence, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, T J Nelson, G L Offland, R A Overton, I Preece, S J Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, H Rhodes, Lord Sahota, P J Scott, J M Seymour, C F Smith, B J Thompson, W L Tomlinson, K T Tomlinson, C R Turley, P Watling, B Wennington and D R W White

Apologies: Councillors N A M England, V A Fletcher, I T W Fletcher, V J Holt, R T Kiernan, J Loveridge, M J Smith and D Wright

251 Prayers and Reflections

Eve Clevenger, representing the Jewish Community, led prayers.

252 Declarations of Interest

None.

253 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Full Council meeting and the Special Meeting of Council both held on 19 January 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

254 Leader's Report & Announcements

The Leader noted that this was the last meeting of Council before the Borough elections in May. He advised that a number of Councillors had decided not to stand again and thanked all Members for their service to their community.

The Leader stated that the Council played a role in almost every aspect of people's lives, with over 700 services delivered by the Council. Services across the Council were well regarded, with children's services being judged as outstanding. No libraries or leisure services in the Borough had been closed and they had been invested in.

The Leader stated that the Council had the lowest Council Tax in the Midlands and the budget proposed today was described as a budget for the future.

255 **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor asked Members to note the report on Mayoral Engagements since the last meeting of Full Council.

The Mayor noted his attendance at a number of events across the Borough, including the Holocaust Memorial Service and visits to various schools for Kindness Week.

The Mayor noted that his Valentine's Ball had recently taken place, which had raised over £7,000 for charity. He advised that all funds raised would be donated to the Interfaith Council and would be used to create a multi-faith, multi-cultural youth club where children of all backgrounds could come together and take part in activities.

256 **Public Questions**

The following question from the public had been received.

The following question to Cllr C Healy, Cabinet Member: Climate Change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment & Cultural Services was submitted by Thomas Hoof:

“In September last year you announced Central Hall in Donnington would be receiving Local Nature Reserve status. However what was once a much loved amenity and walking route is now overgrown with blocked paths and fallen trees.

Can you advise when it will be tidied and properly maintained?”

Cllr Healy, Cabinet Member: Climate Change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment & Cultural Services responded that the Council was aware of the importance of green spaces, including Local Nature Reserves. The Council had more protected green spaces around the Borough than ever before.

Central Hall was a maintained area and Cllr Healy apologised that on a recent visit, there had been blocked paths. Cllr Healy advised that recently the area had been cut with additional work planned including vegetation clearing and clearing of the steps near to the pool.

Green spaces were being invested into and Cllr Healy stated she would welcome discussions with the local parish council regarding establishing a community action team for the Donnington area.

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

- (a) Councillor T L B Janke asked the following question of Councillor R A Overton, Cabinet Member: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Housing, Enforcement & Transport:

“Newport residents have been left devastated by the news that the Royal Victoria Hotel is potentially set to be demolished, a situation that has come about by developers claiming viability issues with their original plans and the building left to rot to its foundations. What, if anything, can this council do to prevent such a scenario happening going forward now the same developer has put forward a new application to prevent this vicious cycle of plans being watered down?”

Councillor Overton responded that the Royal Victoria Hotel was a Grade 1 listed building; the site benefitted from planning consent to convert the building into apartments. With regards to the developer’s proposals, these would not be looked at favourably by the Council and any application would need to be submitted to Historic England.

The owner of the property had not completed the required work to make the site safe so the Council had instructed specialist contractors to undertake this work. The contractors were due to be on site within the next two weeks.

- (b) Councillor P J Scott asked the following question of Councillor R A Overton, Cabinet Member: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Housing, Enforcement & Transport:

“I applaud what the council have done to provide new rural buses but this has come at the expense of the Wrekin Rider Red Bus which many people local to Newport depend on. Dial a Ride does help some with specific disabilities but many elderly now feel cut off from the town centre and face, in many cases, a difficult walk into town. The new bus routes do not help these people. Will the council consider bringing the Red Bus service back to Newport?”

Councillor Overton stated that bus services impacted every community in the Borough. Following the Motion which had been passed by Council in January 2023, Cllr Overton had written to the Secretary of State seeking their support to improve local bus services but had yet to receive a response.

The Council had launched a new bus route for Newport, in addition to the Express 100 and Western 101 services. The service had been well received with over 250 trips made in the first two days of operation.

Councillor Scott asked a supplementary question asking for clarification on the red bus service.

Councillor Overton responded that there was an ongoing conversation with Newport Town Council regarding this service.

(c) Councillor P J Scott asked the following question of Councillor R A Overton, Cabinet Member: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member: Housing, Enforcement & Transport:

“Following on from the ongoing Royal Victoria Hotel and Greggs/Get Connected stability issues in Newport High Street and the collapse of the Tuckers building in the not too distant past, can the Cabinet Member explain what the Council can do to ensure that property owners / Landlords are aware of the potential for structural issues to occur in some of the older buildings in Newport to prevent a similar thing happening in the future?”

Councillor Overton advised that these two cases were very different. The works in relation to the Greggs building was unexpected and noted that the responsibility for property maintenance was the owners. Any contractors for buildings have a duty to ensure the work they carry out is appropriate. The Council does provide guidance on which works are appropriate.

Councillor Scott asked a supplementary question and asked if it was possible for daily communication to be given to residents of Newport on the progress of the building.

Councillor Overton stated that the local Councillors were regularly updated by the Council and the Council would continue to update the community as and when the situation changed.

(d) Councillor V A Fletcher asked the following question of Councillor S A W Reynolds Cabinet Member: Children, Young People & Families:

“Following the discussion at full Council in July 2021 regarding the June 2021 OFSTED report in which it was found that 90% of children and young people reported they had been sexually harassed, what action has been taken by Telford & Wrekin schools to address this?”

Councillor Reynolds stated that the report was a national report and was not specific to Telford and Wrekin, the report was based on a small sample of schools, none of which were in the Borough. Nonetheless, the conclusions of the report was extremely important and all Local Authorities were asked to review their policies and procedures; the Education Safeguarding Team locally had led the response. All Schools had been provided with the Brooke Traffic Light toolkit free of charge.

(e) Councillor V A Fletcher asked the following question of Councillor P R Watling, Cabinet Member: Stronger and Safer Communities:

“What is the current state of safety for women and girls in our Borough?”

Councillor Watling advised that most residents of the Borough agreed that their neighbourhood was a safe place to live in the recent community survey. A further recent survey specifically focused on the safety of women and girls had taken place.

(f) Councillor T L B Janke asked the following question of Councillor K Middleton, Cabinet Member: Leisure, Public Health and Well-being, Equalities and Partnerships:

“In a recent BBC program, it was highlighted that children as young as 9 years old have been using vaping products in the UK. In addition, concerns raised by the Local Government Association and the wider community about the sale of vaping products to children, even in our very own borough. We are certainly no exception when it comes to this trend. It is clear that the colourful alluring packaging and different flavours such as bubble gum are designed to attract a young demographic. Does the cabinet member for public health agree with me and many residents in the borough that vaping products should be regulated in a similar way as tobacco products, with plain packaging and a requirement for products to be kept out of sight behind shop counters?”

Councillor Middleton advised that vaping supported adult smokers to switch from tobacco, however, it was illegal to sell any vaping product to anyone aged under 18. Councillor Middleton stated that she would write to the Secretary of State asking for action to be taken such as taxing disposable vapes, stricter regulation around advertising and prohibiting certain features such as light up or character vapes.

Councillor Janke asked a supplementary question if the Cabinet Member would be willing to work with the Health and Wellbeing Board and licensing committee to put forward a joint report on the dangers of vaping which could be shared with schools.

Councillor Middleton confirmed she would be willing to do so.

(g) Councillor N A Dugmore asked the following question of Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street:

“After the revelation 8 months ago that over 1000 children in Telford and Wrekin were victims of child sexual abuse, why are there no public progress reports on the 37 recommendations made by the inquiry commissioned by this Council, not even as an agenda item at this meeting?”

Councillor Carter advised that the Crowther report contained 47 recommendations, rather than 37, which were broken down into 149 actions, over 100 of which were the sole responsibility of the Council. Almost a quarter of the actions had been completed so far, although a number of outstanding actions were linked to an annual report which was due to be published in July. All recommendations were on track to be completed by the autumn.

Councillor Dugmore asked a supplementary question.

Councillor Carter stated that the Conservative Group had not engaged with the cross-party Members group and offered reassurance to all parents that safeguarding and protection of children was the Council's number one priority.

(h) Councillor J Gough asked the following question of Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street:

"Will the cabinet member support a trial of free bulk waste collection or community skips in Donnington to monitor the reduction in fly tipping with a view to extending the scheme across the Borough?"

Councillor Carter stated that the Council took fly tipping very seriously. The Council offered bulk waste collections and noted that every collection had been subsidised in some way. The actions taken by the Council had demonstrated a reduction in fly tipping of over 40%.

Councillor Gough asked a supplementary question regarding costs of community skips.

Councillor Carter stated that there were various schemes in place, which had been costed for in the proposed budget.

258 Cabinet Decisions Made Since the Last Meeting of the Council

No comments were made.

259 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2026/27

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services presented the report of the Director: Finance & HR which set out how the Council would deliver the Strategy and its five key priorities. It sought approval of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy together with the budget framework for 2023/24.

It was noted that there had been a significant increase in demand for services and higher costs, particularly in relation to the provision of Adult Social Care and energy costs. There was a freeze on the general portion of Council Tax for the year, with a 2% rise in relation to the Adult Social Care precept.

The meeting adjourned at 19.54.

The meeting resumed at 20.03.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations as follows: -

For (30)

Councillors M Boylan, A J Burford, E Callear, L D Carter, G H Cook, S Davies, A R H England, R C Evans, C Healy, A S Jhawar, J Jones, G C W Latham-Reynolds, J Lavery, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, G Offland, R A Overton, I Preece, S A W Reynolds, S J Reynolds, H Rhodes, K S Sahota, P J Scott, C F Smith, B J Thompson, C R Turley, P R Watling, B Wennington, D R W White.

Against (10)

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

Abstain (5)

Councillors K T Blundell, E J Greenaway, T L B Janke, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson.

RESOLVED – that:

a) The following be approved:

- a. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023/24-2026/27 and the budget framework for 2023.24 set out in the suite of reports;**
- b. The second year of the freeze of the general Council Tax level announced last year;**
- c. The application of the Government's 2% Adult Social Care Precept in 2023/24;**
- d. The net investment of a further £7.26m into Adult Social Care in 2023/24;**
- e. The net investment of £2.5m into Children's Safeguarding in 2023/24;**
- f. The budget savings listed in Appendix 10 of the report totalling £7.931m in 2023/24;**
- g. The continuation of work with partner organisations, including Town & Parish Councils and Voluntary Sector and Community Groups to seek to identify ways to mitigate the impact of some of the cuts to services that we can no longer afford to deliver and to note the availability of the Invest to Save/Capacity Fund which is available to support partnership working;**
- h. The base budget in Appendix 8 of the report;**
- i. The policy framework for Reserves and Balances and their planned use outlined in Appendix 6 of the report;**
- j. The Risk Register included at Appendix 14 of the report;**
- k. The adoption of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, a link to which is included within Appendix 16 of the report, ready for implementation from 1 April 2023;**
- l. The continuation of a Council Tax Reduction Hardship Assistance Policy including an addendum for 2023/24, also within Appendix 16 of the report;**

- m. The revenue implications of the medium-term capital programme for the period 2022/23 – 2026/27 set out in the Capital Strategy and Programme reports also on the agenda;**
- n. Authority be delegated to the Director: Finance & Human Resources, after consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services, to action any virements required, following the final allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant and other Grants and following completion of NNDR1 and final estimates of Business Rates Income;**
- o. Authority be delegated to the Executive Director: Adult Social Care, Health Integration & Wellbeing, after consultation with the Cabinet Member: Adult Social Care and Health, Integration & Transformation, to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006 (as amended);**
- p. Authorisation of the Director: Policy & Governance 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 (as amended);**
- q. The suite of MTFS reports as the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2022/23 and 2023/24, including the document at Appendix 13 of the report, to enable new capital receipts to be used to fund the revenue costs of transformation and efficiency projects as assumed throughout these reports;**
- r. Authority be delegated to the Director: Finance & HR, after consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services, to amend the use of balances in 2023/24 and to make any other associated adjustments to accommodate any difference in funding between that currently assumed and final grant allocations when received;**
- s. Authority be delegated to the Director: Finance & HR, after consultation with the Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services, to make changes to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy with immediate effect to reflect all grants received from Government with authority to incur associated spend;**
- t. The Pay Policy for 2023/24 included at Appendix 17 of the report;**
- u. The application of a 100% Council Tax premium to second homes from 1 April 2024 and that the premium of 100% on long-term empty homes should be applied after 12 months rather than 24 months from 1 April 2024 provided that the necessary legislation is in place by that date and that authority be delegated to the Director: Finance & HR to finalise the detailed policies required after consultation with**

- the Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services;
- v. The Capital Strategy for 2023/24;
 - w. The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 – 2026/27: Capital Programme report and associated capital estimates for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to 2026/27, which incorporates the Capital Programme (Appendix A of the report), the Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Appendix B of the report) and the two year Highways and Transport capital investment programme (Appendix C of the report);
 - x. Authority be delegated to the following, in line with the approved budgets and any variations or changes to schemes in these programmes which must remain within overall approved budgets, after consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Members:
 - i. The Director: Prosperity & Investment to deliver the planned programme of works within the 'Asset Management Plan' and Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Appendix B of the report)
 - ii. The Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services to deliver the Highways and Transport Capital Investment Programme (Appendix C of the report)
 - iii. The Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services to allocate the block approvals for climate change initiatives.
 - y. The planned building capital maintenance programme priorities for 2023/24;
 - z. The planned Highways and Transport Capital Investment programme for 2023/24 – 2024/25;
 - aa. Authority be delegated to the Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member: Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street and the Cabinet Member: Housing, Enforcement & Transport for agreeing any variations or changes to schemes in the capital programme that remain within the overall approved budget limits;
 - bb. The Investment Strategy for 2023/24;
 - cc. The treasury Strategy 2023/24 (Appendix B of the report), including the Annual Investment Strategy, together with the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement (Appendix B of the report, section 3.0 which will apply from 2022/23 onwards) and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators (Appendix Bii of the report);
 - dd. The prudential indicators proposed in the 2023/24 Prudential Indicators Report;
- b) The following be noted;
- a. The initial projections for the potential budget gap included in this report through to 2026/27 and that these will continue to be updated as additional information becomes

- available and that work will commence to identify options for how the future budget gap can be bridged;
- b. The CFO's robustness statement in Appendix 15 of the report;**
 - c. The very high level of uncertainty relating to the medium-term financial outlook for the Council due to:**
 - National and International economic pressures resulting in an extremely challenging financial outlook for UK public services;**
 - Rapidly rising costs including energy, food and interest rates which place pressure on the Council's own budgets;**
 - The impact of rising interest rates, the highest rates of inflation for 40 years and a potential economic recession on our residents and businesses resulting in the Council declaring a cost-of-living emergency at Full Council on 10 November;**
 - The cost-of-living emergency resulting in escalating demand for many Council services adding to the financial pressures facing the Council;**
 - The Government's one-year provisional local government finance settlement not extending beyond the end of March 2024;**
 - The significant potential changes to the local government finance system which have now been discussed by the Government for many years are now unlikely to be introduced before the next general election but remain a major uncertainty, as does the potential impact of Adult Social Care funding reforms which have been delayed until October 2025.**
 - d. That this high level of uncertainty requires the Council to retain flexibility by limiting new ongoing investments to our highest priorities whilst identifying additional budget savings to ensure a balanced budget for next year and over the medium-term;**
 - e. That this considerable level of uncertainty together with the local elections due in May 2023, which will result in a new Administration with a new mandate, combine to make it appropriate to set only a one-year detailed budget for 2023/24 within the wider context of this overall MTFs;**
 - f. The treasury management activities to 31 December 2022 (Appendix A of the report);**
 - g. The Treasury Management Policy Statement (Appendix B of the report, section 4.0).**

260 **Council Tax Resolutions 2023/24**

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services presented the report of the Director: Finance & Human Resources, which sought to determine the levels of Council Tax for Telford & Wrekin in 2023-24 and took account of the requirements of Telford & Wrekin Council, the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority, together with the Town and Parish Councils.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations as follows:-

For (30)

Councillors M Boylan, A J Burford, E Callear, L D Carter, G H Cook, S Davies, A R H England, R C Evans, C Healy, A S Jhawar, J Jones, G C W Latham-Reynolds, J Lavery, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, G Offland, R A Overton, I Preece, S A W Reynolds, S J Reynolds, H Rhodes, K S Sahota, P J Scott, C F Smith, B J Thompson, C R Turley, P R Watling, B Wennington, D R W White.

Against (10)

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

Abstain (5)

Councillors K T Blundell, E J Greenaway, T L B Janke, K T Tomlinson, W L Tomlinson.

RESOLVED that the formal resolutions to determine the levels of Council Tax for 2023/24 be approved.

261 **Designation of Deputy Electoral Registration Officers**

The Chief Executive, as the Electoral Registration Officer, presented the report. Following changes to legislation, there was a requirement to appoint four officers as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers to undertake the necessary duties.

RESOLVED that the designation of Deputy Electoral Registration Officers as set out in Section 4 of the report be approved.

262 **Notices of Motion**

(a) Councillor S A W Reynolds moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:

“All too often, care experienced people can suffer discrimination, stigma and prejudice in their everyday lives. As corporate parents, councillors have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding

for the children who are looked after by us as an authority. Our children and young people in care and care leavers have the right to expect everything from a Corporate Parent that would be expected from any good parent.

This Council will continue to put the needs of care experienced people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration and resolves that 'looked after children and young people and care leavers' be added as an additional characteristic in the Council's Equality Impact assessments to determine the impact on care experienced people, alongside those who formally share a Protected Characteristic.

This Council formally calls upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation"

Councillor P R Watling seconded the Motion.

Following a robust debate, the Motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED - that the motion be approved

(b) Councillor A J Burford proposed the following Motion:-

"This Council agrees to formally ask the government under Schedule 10A of the NHS Act 2006 to reconsider its plans to close Telford's Princess Royal Hospital A&E and move the Consultant led women and children unit to Shrewsbury.

A plan agreed by the then Secretary of State for Health Matthew Hancock MP in his letter to the Council dated 2 October 2019.

The Council is on the side of our community and it makes no sense to make Telford the largest town in England without a full 24 hour A&E and close the consultant led Women and Children unit which was placed in Telford on compelling clinical need.

We ask the government to reconsider these plans based on affordability, clinical evidence, growing population, post covid practices and that what the public was consulted on in the summer of 2018 (where the overwhelming majority of Telford and Wrekin residents opposed the plans) has materially changed."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor A D McClements.

Councillor Burford then moved an alteration to the Motion, with additional words shown in bold and underlined.

"This Council agrees to formally ask the government under Schedule 10A of the NHS Act 2006 **and all other relevant legislation** to reconsider its plans to close Telford's Princess Royal Hospital A&E and move the Consultant led women and children unit to Shrewsbury.

A plan agreed by the then Secretary of State for Health Matthew Hancock MP in his letter to the Council dated 2 October 2019.

The Council is on the side of our community and it makes no sense to make Telford the largest town in England without a full 24 hour A&E and close the consultant led Women and Children unit which was placed in Telford on compelling clinical need.

We ask the government to reconsider these plans based on affordability, clinical evidence, growing population, post covid practices and that what the public was consulted on in the summer of 2018 (where the overwhelming majority of Telford and Wrekin residents opposed the plans) has materially changed.”

The alteration was seconded by Councillor McClements.

Following a robust debate, it was, by majority, approved.

RESOLVED - that the motion be approved.

The meeting ended at 8.49 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday 25 May 2023