

FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday, 5 March 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, G H Cook, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, 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, R A Overton, J Pinter, S J Reynolds, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, H Rhodes, 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, V A Fletcher, J Loveridge, G L Offland and K S Sahota

63 Prayers and Reflections

The Reverend Keith Osmund-Smith said prayers.

64 Declarations of Interest

None.

65 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

66 Leave of Absence - Councillor Jackie Loveridge

The Speaker noted that a leave of absence due to ill health had been sought for Councillor Jackie Loveridge.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Jackie Loveridge be granted a leave of absence of up to six months (ie to 5 September 2020).

67 Leader's Report & Announcements

The Leader reflected on recent weather events that had resulted in flooding and praised the community response that had been seen in Ironbridge Gorge. He particularly thanked Council staff who had worked around the clock to protect residents in the face of the most extreme conditions that had been seen for many years. The focus had shifted to help people recover from the effects of flooding and he had met with the Secretary of State in Ironbridge and would be lobbying for more permanent flood defences. This was something that he hoped all parties could join together on.

The Leader also expressed his pride in the Outstanding ratings that had been achieved following recent Ofsted and CQC Inspections.

68 Mayor's Announcements

Reflecting on his recent engagement, the Mayor thanked Members for their continued support of himself, the Mayoress and the Deputy Mayor. He noted that there were limited tickets left for the upcoming Charity Murder Mystery night and hoped to see tickets sell-out in support of his charity.

69 Public Questions

No questions were received.

70 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.

Becoming Carbon Neutral Action Plan

It was agreed that written responses would be provided to the following questions from Members:-

With respect to the procurement of commercial vehicles, Councillor A Lawrence asked how many vehicles had been procured since the Council declared a climate emergency and how many of those were diesel, petrol and the like and what was the Council's our policy trying to go forward to switch things over to as many electric vehicles as it could?

Councillor N A Dugmore asked why there had been no cross party involvement in drawing up the Carbon Neutral Action Plan?

Councillor T J Nelson asked:

1. For clarification on whether the report was trying to achieve carbon zero or carbon neutral? The title of the report was carbon neutral but there was no Plan B – it was only achieved if carbon zero was reached and there was a question around the attainability of that.
2. Why didn't the Council know how much natural woodland there was that would provide sequestration?
3. With reference to point 26 of the action plan - why had contractors not been asked to provide their own carbon reduction plans because all of the Council's main contractors had and it was not difficult to find their own carbon reduction plans.
4. With reference to point 39 of the action plan – clarify was sought on the carbon impact of first time heating

5. With reference to points 53 & 54 of the action plan - clarification on these when the action plan was reviewed.
6. With reference to point 55 of the action plan – clarification of the reference to a calculation factor of 3.66 because that was not defined.

Councillor Nelson commented that his queries amplified the point of Councillor Dugmore that if there had been cross party involvement in the process before the report was presented, Members would have been able to ask these questions and resolve these issues at that point.

71 Councillor Questions On Notice

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

- (a) Councillor P Scott asked the following question of Councillor Richard Overton, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure.

"There was an increasing problem with dog owners allowing their dogs off leads on sports pitches across the borough. In Newport the local football and rugby teams had to regularly clear the pitches of dog faeces before a game could commence. It was unhealthy and antisocial.

Would the Council consider a new bylaw to keep all dogs on leads on and around sports areas throughout Telford and Wrekin?"

Councillor Overton responded that the Council already issued Fixed Penalty Notices for those people that allowed their dogs to foul without cleaning up after them, however, work was already underway to enable the Council to commence consultation on the use of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to deal with dog related offences in the coming months. The PSPOs were made under the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 and could be used to impose a number of requirements relating to dogs to prevent activity which may be detrimental to the local community's quality of life. Some of the requirements that the Council might consult on included:

- Exclusion of dogs from certain areas
- Requiring a person to pick up after their dog
- Dogs to be kept on leads in specific areas
- Prohibiting dogs from entering into certain areas (parks / play areas)
- Restricting the number of dogs that could be walked by one dog walker
- Any other measures which would have a positive impact to prevent and deter the detrimental quality of life in the local area

Following consultation it was hoped that any PSPOs made would reduce anti-social behaviour and promote responsible dog ownership. However, in the event that somebody failed to comply with the requirements of a PSPO, there were powers under the legislation to

issue Fixed Penalty Notices or commence prosecution proceedings against them.

Councillor Scott asked for a written copy of the response and to be kept updated with progress.

- (b) Councillor S Bentley asked the following question of Councillor David Wright, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Infrastructure

“On how many occasions had the Flood Defence barriers been erected along the Wharfage since being acquired.”

Councillor D Wright responded that records had shown there had been at least 17 separate deployments of the flood barriers along the Wharfage at Ironbridge since they were secured in 2004 and Members would not be surprised to learn that four of those deployments had taken place within the last 12 months.

Due to the temporary nature of the flood defences, the Council was required to mobilise staff at short notice to install the barrier in partnership with the Environment Agency who owned and stored them. The Council also provide a rota of employees to staff the barriers 24/7 to ensure there was public safety in place. There was a cost to the Council in the region of £20,000 for each deployment.

Although the flood barriers offered protection during normal flooding events specifically for residents along the Wharfage, there were a number of properties along the Gorge at Jackfield, Ferry Road and Coalford which were not affected or protected by the temporary barrier and many of these properties had been flooded in the last two weeks and that was why the Council needed to continue to lobby to look at how we could try to protect those properties and not just the Wharfage.

By way of supplement Councillor Bentley noted media reports which stated that part of the reason the barriers buckled as the unevenness of the surface. If they had been deployed 17 times, why had this not previously been recognised.

Councillor Wright stated that the problem was the sheer level and volume of water passing through the Gorge which was unprecedented and it had been the first time the point had been reached where the barriers would potentially be topped out. The volume of water was significant. The roadway had been in good condition over the last few years. The temporary barriers had served well but this event showed more permanent barriers would be needed in this location which fitted in with the heritage requirements of the World Heritage Site. This would cost a significant amount of resource that would need to come from government in terms of protecting residents in the locality, and for the communities previously outlined that were not currently protected by the temporary barrier system.

- (c) Councillor S Bentley asked the following question of Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial Services and the Economy (Lead Cabinet Member for the CSE Inquiry)

“What measures have been discussed by the Cabinet, to bring new impetus to the Independent CSE Inquiry.”

Councillor Carter responded that the Inquiry, as per their public update in the previous week, had been making solid progress. He would encourage all Members to follow their website for their updates.

The Council had disclosed huge amounts of information to the Inquiry, as had the Police and other agencies, amounting to over 135,000 documents. The majority of these – around 780,000 pages worth - had been provided in a timely fashion by the Council.

The inquiry was also speaking to witnesses. The Council were not cited on who or how many, nor should we be.

The inquiry were encouraging more people to come forward and the Council would give voice to that request, as it had done continually, including using the events planned across CSE Awareness Day in Southwater, Telford Train Station and Oakengates.

In addition, Members should note that during the autumn, the Council commissioned in record time the services of an out of area organisation or significant quality and reputation to provide comprehensive counselling support to be people giving evidence to the Inquiry. As set out in the previous year, this was expected to be an eighteen month long forensic process. Eversheds and Tom Crowther QC were doing their job diligently, professionally and most importantly independently.

By way of supplement, Councillor Bentley asked if there was more that could be done to encourage victims to come forward?

Councillor Carter responded that the Council had continually urged anyone with information to come forward to the Inquiry. The Council would continue to work with various groups who were promoting people to come forward. The Cabinet were content that Eversheds and Tom Crowther QC were going about their work in a professional, diligent and independent manner.

72 Review of the Terms of Reference for Health & Wellbeing Board

Members received the report of the Director: Governance which set out a revised Terms of Reference for the Health and Well Being Board. The changes focussed on the Membership of the Board, in order to better reflect Cabinet Member priorities and the new Senior Management Team Structure.

RESOLVED – that the amendments to the Health and Wellbeing Board Terms of Reference as set out at Appendix A to the report be approved.

73 Service & Financial Planning 2020/21 - 2022/23

Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member: Finance, Commercial Services and the Economy, presented a series of reports from the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer, the Executive Director for Housing, Communities and Customer Services and the Director: Policy, Customer & Commercial Services. The reports, detailed the Revenue Budget, medium term Capital Strategy and Programme, the Investment and Treasury Management Strategies and Prudential Indicators, formed the Council's overall Medium Term Service & Financial Planning framework, and identified the service priorities and budget for 2020/21. The report included details of savings proposals and investments for 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 £123m per annum, meaning that every year there was now £1,600 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, support for housing initiatives, pump priming work on climate change, and Pride environmental projects.

Attached to the report were a number of appendices, including savings proposals, Impact Assessments of the savings proposals, the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21, 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 Capital Strategy and Capital Programme reports presented the Council's Capital Strategy for 2021/22 and a capital programme of £234.4m that included the proposed investments contained in the overall budget strategy. It also set out the Council's proposed planned Building Maintenance programme, particularly focusing on 2020/21 and the two year Highways & Transport capital investment programme.

The report on the Treasury Management Strategy detailed the Treasury Strategy to be adopted for 2020/21. The Strategy was set within the parameters of relevant statute, guidance and accounting standards. It was expected the Council would borrow up to £29.6m in 2020/21 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 2019/20. The weighted average return on internal investments at the end of December 2019 was 0.61% compared to a benchmark return for the period of 0.5. 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 2020/21 to 2022/23 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 a greater need to support climate change initiatives and the level of debt.

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 to the budget, emphasising the need to protect vulnerable residents.

Councillor Carter responded at the end of the debate and a vote was taken on the budget proposals in reports 9.1 to 9.4 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 9.5 (Council Tax setting).

Voting was as follows:

For (37)

Councillors K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, E M Callear, L D Carter, G H Cook, S Davies, A R H England, N A M England, R C Evans, C Healy, V J Holt, T L B Janke, A S Jhavar, J Jones, J E Lavery, A D McClements, R Mehta, K Middleton, L A Murray, R A Overton, J Pinter, S J Reynolds, G C W Reynolds, S A W Reynolds, H Rhodes, P J Scott, 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

Against (1)

Councillor S Bentley

Abstain (11)

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

(i) Overview & Revenue Budget

- (a) that the service and financial planning strategy for 2020/21 set out in the set of reports be approved;**
- (b) that a Council Tax increase of 3.99% (made up of 2% in respect of the Government's Adult Social Care Precept and a general Council Tax increase of 1.99%) in 2020/21 be approved;**
- (c) that the investment of a further £3.926m in to Adult Social Care services giving a total net budget of £45.27m for these services in 2020/21 be approved;**
- (d) that the investment of a further £4.958m into Children's Safeguarding & Family Support to protect vulnerable children giving a total net budget of £36.38m for these services in 2020/21 be approved;**
- (e) that the investment of £0.150m ongoing funding in to housing and homelessness initiatives be approved;**
- (f) that the investment of £0.1m ongoing funding be approved as an initial investment to pump prime work on climate change whilst also seeking to direct the Council's wider resources as well as external funding opportunities as they arise to further support the Climate Emergency and that the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services, be authorised to decide on the specific allocation of this new funding;**
- (g) that the investment of £0.108m ongoing funding in to small Pride environmental projects be approved and that the Executive Director: Housing, Communities & Customer services, following consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Enforcement & the Pride Programme be authorised to decide on the specific allocation of this new funding;**
- (h) that the budget savings listed in Appendix 13 to the report totalling £3.306m in 2020/21 rising to £4.581m in 2021/22 be approved;**
- (i) that a measured approach be taken to the use of available one-off resources of £1.434m in 2020/21;**

- (j) 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 £1m Partnership Capacity Fund;**
- (k) that 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 3 to the report be approved;**
- (o) that the revenue implications of the medium term capital programme for the period 2019/20 - 2022/23 set out in the Capital Strategy and Programme reports be approved;**
- (p) that the 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 Executive Director: Adults Social Care, Health Integration & wellbeing following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care, be authorised to enter into appropriate Section 256 and Section 75 Agreements under the NHS Act 2006 (as amended);**
- (r) that the Director: Governance 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 the suite of service and financial planning reports be approved as the Council's Efficiency Strategy for 2020/21, including the summary document at Appendix 14 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 2022/23 be noted and work start now in order to identify options for how this could potentially be bridged;**

- (u) that the option to extend the IGMT loan repayment period as outlined in section 25.1 of the report be approved and the Director: Finance & HR and the Director: Prosperity & Investment following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services be authorised to agree terms;**
- (v) the Director: Finance & HR following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services be authorised to fund an advance payment of pension contributions for 2021/22 from the single status reserve if this is financially advantageous to the Council;**
- (w) that once all final outstanding grant allocations are received, the Director: Finance & HR following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance, Partnerships and Commercial Services be authorised to amend the use of balances in 2020/21 to accommodate any difference in funding between that currently assumed and the final grant allocations;**
- (x) that it be noted that the budget will be reallocated in to the new organisational structure before the start of April 2020;**
- (y) that the Council's Pay Policy Statement included at Appendix 15 to the report be approved for publication on the Council's website on 1 April 2020.**

(ii) Capital Strategy

- (a) that the Capital Strategy for 2020/21 be approved.**

(iii) Capital Programme

- (a) that the report and associated capital estimates for 2019/20 and 2020/21 – 2023/24, which incorporates the Capital Programme (Annex I to the report), the Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Annex II to the report) and the two year Highways and Transport capital investment programme (Annex III to the report) be approved;**
- (b) that the following delegations, in line with the approved budgets and any variations or changes to schemes in these programmes which must remain within overall approved budgets, following consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Members be approved:**
 - (i) the Director: Prosperity & Investment be authorised to deliver the planned programme of works within the 'Asset Management Plan' and Planned Building Maintenance Programme (Annex II to the report)**

- (ii) the Executive Director: Housing, Communities & Customer Service be authorized to deliver the Highways and Transport Capital Investment Programme
- (iii) in relation to the new capital allocations:

New Capital Allocation	£m	Authority delegated to (following consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member)
Regeneration - Borough Towns / High Streets	5.0	Chief Executive
Roads, Footpaths, Cycle-paths, Car Parking	12.0	Executive Director: Housing, Communities & Customer Service
Structures - Bridges, retaining walls, bus shelters etc	4.0	Executive Director: Housing, Communities & Customer Service
Other environmental improvements	5.0	Executive Director: Housing, Communities & Customer Service

- (c) that further reports be brought to Cabinet with regard to the 'Regeneration and Investment Fund' and the Capital 'Contingency' to seek approval to allocate funding to specific schemes;
- (d) that the planned building capital maintenance programme for 2020/21 as identified as part of the report be approved and it be agreed that officers may enter into any contracts necessary to deliver the works in accordance with the requirements of the Contract Procedure Rules;
- (e) that the planned Highways and Transport capital investment programme for 2020/21 – 2023/24 be approved;
- (f) that the Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Enforcement and The Pride Programme be authorised to agree any variations or changes to schemes in the capital programme that remain within overall approved budget limits.

(iv) Investment Strategy Report 2020/21

- (a) that the Investment Strategy for 2020/21 be approved.

(v) Treasury Strategy and Treasury Update Report 2020/21

- (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;

- (c) that the Treasury Strategy, including the Annual Investment Strategy for 2020/21 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 be approved.

(vii) Council Tax Formal Resolutions

- (a) the formal resolutions to determine the levels of Council Tax for 2020/21 as detailed in the report be approved.

74 Notices of Motion

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

“During the last 4 years since the last Ofsted inspection the government has slashed Telford and Wrekin Council funding, with the Revenue Support Grant being reduced by £8.485m (46%), but this Labour Council continued to invest an extra £13.77m (53%) in our families support.

This Labour administration has a clear and ambitious vision for vulnerable children and families in Telford and Wrekin, and we have endeavoured to deliver excellent children services and ensure we provide outstanding services that benefit children and their families.

‘Children’s Services in Telford & Wrekin Council are outstanding’ those nine words encapsulate nine years of hard work and dedication by our staff, parents, carers and all of our other partners.

This administration wants outstanding children’s services for all families, this Council calls on the government to provide a comprehensive funding increase for Children’s Services for all local authorities, to provide a service for every child that they would welcome for their own.”

Councillor P R Watling seconded the Motion.

Following a robust debate, during which a number of Members congratulated the Children’s Services Team, the Motion was unanimously approved.

RESOLVED - that the motion be approved

- (b) Councillor T J Nelson moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7, the following Motion:-

“This Council undertakes to urgently plan and implement all appropriate and proactive measures to provide a comprehensive local response to the declared climate emergency.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor A Lawrence.

Councillor H Rhodes moved the following amendment, with additional words shown in bold and underlined:

“This Council undertakes to urgently plan and implement all appropriate and proactive measures, **including as set out in the ‘Telford and Wrekin Council’s Becoming Carbon Neutral Action Plan’, before Council this evening** to provide a comprehensive local response to the declared climate emergency.”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor C Healy and subsequently accepted by the proposer and seconder of the Motion.

Following a robust debate during which Members applauded the community response to recent flooding in the Ironbridge Gorge, and discussed a plethora of measures that the Council could explore, the Motion as amended was unanimously supported.

RESOLVED - that the amended motion be approved

The meeting ended at 8.04 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday, 21 May 2020