

## **FULL COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday, 16 July 2020 at 5.00 pm in Remote Meeting**

**Present:** Councillors S Bentley, K T Blundell, M Boylan, 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, A S Jhavar, 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, H Rhodes, K S Sahota, P J Scott, J M Seymour, C F Smith, B J Thompson, W L Tomlinson, K T Tomlinson, C R Turley, P Watling, D R W White and D Wright

**Apologies:** Councillors T L B Janke, J Loveridge and M J Smith

#### **88            Prayers and Reflections**

Les Pointer said prayers.

#### **89            Declarations of Interest**

Councillors I T W Fletcher and V A Fletcher declared an interest in minute number 93 'Public Questions' due to membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme. They indicated that they would not take part in the debate.

#### **90            Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

#### **91            Leader's Report & Announcements**

The Leader expressed his sympathy for those who had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and their loved ones. He praised the work of key workers who kept the Borough moving. The Leader noted the achievements of the Council during the pandemic but advised that the pandemic was not over and that efforts needed to continue. He thanked the Council's staff and volunteers who delivered 52,000 free schools meals, arranged Council Tax holidays and delivered laptops to children.

#### **92            Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor commented upon the engagements he had attended since the Annual General Meeting. He advised Members that he had chosen to support the Jayne Sargent Foundation and Telford Mind as his charities this mayoral year.

The Mayor acknowledged that due to the Covid-19 restrictions, engagements had not taken place regularly, however, he had been delighted to attend the Armed Forces Day celebration recently and looked forward to the VJ Commemorative Service in August.

### **93            Public Questions**

- (i) The following question to C Healy, Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Historic and Natural Environment, and Climate Change was submitted by Dave Ashdown:

“SCPF invests in fossil fuel companies, BP, Shell & Black Rock asset management. I am very worried about climate future and carbon levels. T&WC shares this fund so will T&WC call on SCPF to divest?”

- (ii) The following question to C Healy, Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Historic and Natural Environment, and Climate Change was submitted by Kevin Bundy:

“According to SCPF Annual Review, I am a stakeholder in the fund. This means my council tax is financing companies that drive climate crisis. Is TWC comfortable with council tax funding climate crisis after declaring a climate emergency? Is this a financially & ethically sound position?”

Councillor Healy, Cabinet Member for Visitor Economy, Historic and Natural Environment, and Climate Change responded to the question and advised that the Shropshire County Pension Fund covered both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils, as well as over 200 smaller employers. Two elected Council representatives sat on the Committee of the Pension Fund.

The fund needed to secure the best return for its’ members however it was acknowledged that questions needed to be raised in respect of continued investment in fossil fuels. It was noted that clean energy investments were outperforming those of fossil fuels so there was also financial sense to move across to these.

The Council had declared a climate emergency and it was noted that Shropshire Council had also passed a motion similar to the one on the table. Councillor Healy stated she would like to see more investment from the fund locally and that she would write to the trustees of the pension fund in respect of this.

### **94            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.

## Service and Financial Planning Report – 2019/20 Outturn

*Councillor A J Eade asked about the allocation of finances in relation to Single Status. Previous advice had been that it was prudent to use only £1m of the reserves, however, current advice seemed to be that £3m could be used. What had changed? Additionally, Councillor Eade asked when Single Status would be settled.*

Councillor S Davies responded that these were unprecedented times, however, the advice had not changed. The Leader stated that the administration valued staff and that the single status team within the Council were working hard on the project.

## Telford & Wrekin Consultation Draft Housing Strategy 2020-2025

*Councillor V A Fletcher asked about how the administration would support the three objectives in the strategy. Would the Council take all possible initiatives to achieve climate change targets?*

Councillor D Wright advised that a review of the strategy was underway. In regards to space in homes, the lifetime home standards would be promoted and it was acknowledged that a range of affordable homes was needed, not just starter homes. Climate change was a golden thread running through all policies.

## **95            Councillor Questions On Notice**

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

- (a) Councillor K Middleton asked the following question of Councillor S Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education and Lifelong Learning:

“I understand that there are children in our town who will not be covered by the government’s scheme to provide laptops and internet access to complete their education learning. I am therefore delighted to note that this Council are stepping in to help with the shortfall of the Government Scheme. Could the Cabinet Member please give us an update on how the Council scheme is going?”

Councillor S A W Reynolds responded and stated that the laptops provided by the government had been delivered and had been configured to make them suitable for children, which had included the installation of safeguarding software. The Council had recognised the shortfall in the scheme and that some children were falling between the gaps. Councillor Reynolds thanked the parish and town councils and schools who had match funded the additional funding by Telford & Wrekin Councils and urged any others to get in touch with the Council if they would like to offer support.

- (b) Councillor V Holt asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader:

“Robert Jenrick, The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government promised Councils that the Government would do ‘whatever it takes’ to financially back Councils. Yet with many Councils on the brink of bankruptcy as a result of the costs of tackling Covid 19, can you strongly urge the Government to stick to its promise to support Telford & Wrekin Council enabling us to do what’s necessary to get communities through this pandemic?’

Councillor S Davies noted that the Secretary of State had, on multiple occasions, stated that the Government would provide funding for Councils to support their efforts throughout the pandemic. However, in May, the narrative changed and the promise ended. The Leader stated that the Council had a funding gap of £17m as a result of extra expenditure or lost income.

Councillor V Holt asked a supplementary question in relation to support given by the Borough’s MPs,

Councillor S Davies stated that he was in regular contact with the MP for the Wrekin and hoped that the MP for Telford would come to the aid of Telford.

- (c) Councillor N Dugmore asked the following question of Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure:

“Since the green network was established, how many sites have been designated green network, how many of these sites have had planning applications passed which reduce their area and how many sites have been removed from the green network all together?’

Councillor D Wright advised that the Council had not removed land as green network and it was an objective of the Local Plan review as a forest community approach.

- (d) Councillor N Dugmore asked the following question of Councillor A J Burford, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care:

“Recent social media posts from the leadership state that Telford and Wrekin Council established a policy to only discharge patients from hospital to a care home after being tested for Covid19. From what date was this policy implemented and how was it communicated to stakeholders ie Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group, hospital management and to care home management.’

Councillor A J Burford stated that the policy had been developed with partner organisations and they were aware of the policies in place.

**96**            **Stronger Communities**

Councillor D Wright, Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport and Infrastructure, presented the report of the Director of Prosperity and Investment. He stated that the Cabinet had endorsed a Strong Leader decision on 18 June 2020 to support the delivery of the programme.

Councillor A J Eade asked how the LEP had unspent funds and stated that the Council should have 'ready to go' schemes.

Councillor D Wright responded and stated that the money was from an uncommitted spend from Herefordshire and that the Council had been prepared to put in their funding bid.

**RESOLVED** that the inclusion of the LEP funding as identified in the report within the Budget Strategy be approved.

**97**            **Recommendations from Cabinet**

- (a)            Service & Financial Planning Report 2019/20 Outturn

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member: Council Finance and Governance, presented the report of the Director: Finance and H.R.

**RESOLVED** that

- a) the Revenue outturn position for 2019/20, which is subject to audit by the Council's external auditors, and related virements in Appendix 3 to the report be approved;
  - b) the transfers and changes to reserves and associated approval to the relevant Directors to spend the reserves detailed in section 5 to the report be approved;
  - c) the Capital outturn position and related supplementary estimates, re-phasing and virements shown in Appendix 4 to the report and as summarised in the report be approved;
  - d) delegated authority to the Director: Finance & HR to make any changes required as the outturn is finalised (including the calculation of section 31 grants), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance & Governance be granted;
  - e) to note the performance against income targets;
  - f) the 2020/21 Public Health Grant be approved and the 2020/21 budget strategy be updated accordingly.
- (b)            2020/21 Financial Monitoring Report

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member: Council Finance and Governance, presented the report of the Director: Finance and H.R.

**RESOLVED** that:

- a) the Director: Finance & HR, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Council Finance & Governance, be granted delegated authority to make changes to the Service & Financial Planning Strategy to reflect Covid-19 grants received and any associated spend;
- b) the changes to the capital programme detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

**98            Recommendations from Boards and Committees**

- (a)            Review of the Audit Committee Terms of Reference

**RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference be adopted.**

- (b)            Corporate Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy - 2017/18 Annual Report and Policy Update

**RESOLVED that the updated Corporate Anti-Fraud & Corruption policy be adopted.**

**99            Notices of Motion**

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

“This Council recognises the dedication and commitment of local NHS and Council staff during the current Covid Pandemic and also wishes to acknowledge and thank the many and varied selfless volunteers who have also given their time and support to our community in Telford & Wrekin”

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor N A Dugmore.

During a robust debate, Members thanked all those who have kept the Borough safe during the pandemic.

**RESOLVED - that the motion be approved**

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

“The Council resolves for all political groups to join together to develop a community ‘*Think Green Think Local*’ strategy for the Borough.”

The Motion was formally seconded by Councillor A J Eade.

The Speaker ruled that this matter came within the remit of the Leader and Cabinet, and the motion would be referred directly to Cabinet for consideration without discussion.

(iii) The Motion proposed at agenda item 13(3) was withdrawn by Councillor N A Dugmore with the agreement of Councillor A J Eade (seconder).

The meeting ended at 6.25 pm

**Chairman:** .....

**Date:** Date Not Specified