

Council

Monday, 20 February 2017

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Mayor), Councillor Jennifer Wheeler (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Natalie Brookes, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, Paul Swansborough, David Thain, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley, Tracey Hurst, Sheena Jones, Jayne Pickering and Darren Whitney

Democratic Services Officer:

Debbie Parker-Jones

63. WELCOME

The Mayor opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

64. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Roger Bennett.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk and Jane Potter declared Other Disclosable Interests in Agenda Item 6 – Executive Committee, Medium Term Financial Plan – as detailed at Minute No. 68 below.

66. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30th January 2017 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

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Chair

67. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor

The Mayor advised of the following events which he had attended since the last meeting of the Council:

- Inspire Winyates Community Awards;
- Polish School Awards;
- Astwood Bank First School – presentation of certificates to pupils in School choir who had taken part in the Holocaust Memorial Day Service; and
- Kidderminster Musical Evening for which he thanked Councillor Wanda King for accompanying him.

The Mayor also thanked Councillor Wheeler for attending events which he had been unable to.

The Leader

The Leader, along with the Mayor, had attended a fund-raising event at the Palace Theatre involving local choirs, and the event at the Polish School to present certificates to pupils who had taken part in the Holocaust Memorial Day Service.

The final Health Commission meeting had taken place and the recommendations from this were due to be considered at a special meeting of the Council on 2nd March 2017.

Final confirmation of the bike race in May was still awaited and the Leader expressed his thanks to all who had pledged funds in an attempt to secure the race for the town.

Along with other Members the Leader had attended a “Time to Talk” session at the Town Hall, run by the local UNISON branch. Communications staff from UNISON’s national headquarters had also attended to report on the event and to interview various parties. The Leader praised the Time to Talk programme and was pleased that this was receiving the recognition it deserved.

It was noted that this would be Sheena Jones’s, Democratic Services Manager, last meeting of the Council before leaving the authority in March to start a new job with Worcestershire County Council. Members thanked Sheena for her service and good work at the Council and wished her well in her new role.

68. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTIONS

The Council received the minutes and considered the recommendations from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 7th February 2017 in relation to the Shopmobility Service and the Medium Term Financial Plan, together with the recommendations of the Executive Committee meeting of 20th February which had taken place immediately preceding the meeting of the Council in relation to the Pay Policy Statement and Council Tax Resolutions. The Council Tax Resolutions appeared in Additional Papers 1 to the 20th February Executive Committee.

7th February 2017

Shopmobility Service

Councillor Greg Chance proposed, Councillor Bill Hartnett seconded, the recommendations relating to charging for the Shopmobility Service.

It was noted that a charging structure for the Shopmobility Service had been proposed in order to ensure that the Service was sustainable for the future. The annual cost to the Council of the Service after voluntary contributions and funding from the Kingfisher Shopping Centre was £69k, which in light of further funding cuts from central government was deemed unsustainable. It was noted that in addition to the proposed charges recommendation, the Executive Committee had resolved that Officers explore opportunities for additional financial contributions to the delivery of the Service with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and Town Centre Partnership, and that, subject to the approval by Council of the proposed charging structure, a further report on the operation of the Service be taken to the Executive within 12 months and to report on the options for its future delivery.

Councillor Anita Clayton proposed, Councillor Tom Baker-Price seconded, the following amendment:

“That the proposed £5 and £10 registration fees be removed from the proposed charges.”

Councillor Clayton stated that she did not support either the £10 Annual Membership Fee or the £5 ‘Pay as you Go’ charge as these directly affected people with disabilities. She was concerned that the charges would make one-off trips expensive for the service users.

During the debate on the amendment, the view expressed that Disability Action Redditch should have been formally consulted on the proposals. The view was also expressed that the proposed

charges were comparable to other providers and a potential initial dip in take up of the service had been accounted for in the proposals.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.5, the amendment was the subject of the following named vote:

Members voting FOR the amendment:

Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Gay Hopkins, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford and David Thain (12).

Members voting AGAINST the amendment:

Councillors Joe Baker, Natalie Brookes, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Wanda King, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, Jennifer Wheeler, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford (14).

Members ABSTAINING from voting:

Councillor Paul Swansborough (1).

The amendment was declared lost.

Following further debate and a vote on the substantive recommendation it was

RESOLVED that

the following charges for the Shopmobility Service be approved and implemented with effect from 1st April 2017:

- 1) an annual registration fee of £10 to cover administrative costs, specialised insurance and Officer time training customers on equipment;**
- 2) a hire charge for registered users of £2 for Redditch residents;**
- 3) a hire charge for registered users of £3 for Non-Redditch residents; and**
- 4) a £5 charge for customers who do not wish to register as a member or if they only need to use the service once or for a short period.**

Medium Term Financial Plan

Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed, Councillor John Fisher seconded, the recommendations from the Executive Committee relating to the Medium Term Financial Plan.

In proposing the item, Councillor Chance referred to further unexpected Government cuts in support grants which had seen the Council's funding position change from £4m in recent years to the Council having to pay the Government over £300k by 2021. The controlling group felt that they had no option but to recommend the budget before Members. Changes to funding under the New Homes Bonus Scheme would see a loss of expected/predicted income of £1.2m. The Leader had written to the Redditch MP and Local Government Minister in January seeking a meeting with the Minister in an attempt to gain a more reasonable settlement. The budget was also being set with draft settlement figures only from Government, with the final settlement details due to be confirmed that week.

The Medium Term Financial Plan, which aimed to save £2.8m over the following 4 years, proposed the use of £400k of balances to retain free swimming for the over 60's and under 16's, community events such as the Morton Stanley Festival, Street Theatre and Firework Display and Elections by thirds. In order to reduce Council expenditure it was proposed to stop providing some services including surrendering the Council's interests in the Kingsley and Arrow Vale Sports Centres and cessation of pre-9.30am concessionary bus passes for pensioners, with charges to be introduced for the Shopmobility Service. The Council would also be investigating changing the model of delivery of Leisure Services for provision of the Abbey Stadium, Palace Theatre, Forge Mill, Community Centres and Pitcheroak Golf Course, which would form part of a procurement exercise. It was noted that the town's parks would not be included in the review.

A lengthy debate on the budget proposals ensued, during which opposing views were expressed by Members. Some supported the review of the Leisure Service whilst suggesting this could have been carried out earlier. The view was expressed that the level of savings currently projected from this initiative may not be achievable.

Members thanked finance Officers for their hard work on the budget in what were unprecedented times given the financial challenges faced by the Council and the delay in receiving the final finance settlement figures from Government. Thanks were also expressed to staff generally for the money-saving suggestions that had been submitted.

During the discussion of this item a short comfort break was taken at 8.20pm, following which the meeting resumed at 8.25pm.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the recommendations on the budget calculation were the subject of the following named vote:

Members voting FOR the resolutions below:

Councillors Joe Baker, Natalie Brookes, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Wanda King, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, Jennifer Wheeler, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford (14).

Members voting AGAINST the resolutions below:

Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Gay Hopkins, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford, Paul Swansborough and David Thain (13).

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED that

the following be approved:

1) the savings and additional income that do not impact on service delivery for:

- 2017/18 £1.032m
- 2018/19 £56k;

2) the revenue bids for:

- 2017/18 £80k
- 2018/19 £5k;

3) the Capital bids of:

- 2017/18 £136k
- 2018/19 £70k
- 2019/20 £1.508m
- 2020/21 £1.490m;

4) the unavoidable pressures for:

- 2017/18 £112k
- 2018/19 £27k
- 2019/20 £83k
- 2020/21 £25k;

5) the release from balances of:

2017/18	£103k
2018/19	£87k
2019/20	£105k
2020/21	£136k;

6) the increase in Council Tax for 2017/18 of £5 per Band D equivalent; and

7) the budget savings and pressures for 2018/19 – 2020/21 be subject to change due to the potential impact of changes to service delivery and the localisation of Business Rates together with any changes to New Homes Bonus.

(Prior to consideration of this matter, Councillors Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk and Jane Potter declared Other Disclosable Interests in Agenda Item 6 – Medium Term Financial Plan, in the following capacities:

- Councillor Brunner – as a Governor of RSA Academy Arrow Vale;
- Councillor Chalk – as an employee of RSA Academy Arrow Vale; and
- Councillor Potter – as a Governor of Tudor Grange Academy Redditch.

Councillors Brunner, Chalk and Potter remained in the room during the consideration of this matter.)

20th February 2017

Pay Policy Statement

RESOLVED that

the Pay Policy Statement 2017/18, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

Council Tax Resolutions

Further to consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan Members considered the Council Tax Resolutions 2017/18.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the Council Tax recommendations were the subject of the following named vote:

Members voting FOR the resolutions below:

Councillors Joe Baker, Natalie Brookes, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Wanda King, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, Jennifer Wheeler, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford (14).

Members voting AGAINST the resolutions below:

Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Gay Hopkins, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford, Paul Swansborough and David Thain (13).

RESOLVED that

the recommendations, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and as appended to these minutes, setting a Council Tax for 2017/18 of £227.21 for a band D unparished property, be approved.

69. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2017/18 - 2019/20

The Council received the recommendations of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meeting of 2nd February 2017 in relation to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2017/18 to 2019/20.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Strategy and Prudential Indicators at Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and**
- 2) the updated Treasury Management Policy at Appendix 2 to the report be approved.**

70. REDDITCH POLLING PLACES AMENDMENT

Members considered a report which proposed a change of Polling Place in advance of the May County Council Elections. This was an additional change to the agreed Polling Districts and Polling Places review in 2014.

The benefits of the proposed change in venue were noted, together with the anticipated savings from current portable building costs.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Polling Place for the electors in Polling District CEB be changed from a portable building in the car park of the REDI Centre to the REDI Centre itself; and
- 2) the change of Polling Place take effect for the May 2017 elections.

71. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

There were no urgent decisions to note.

72. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There were no separate items of urgent business to consider at this meeting.

The Meeting commenced at 7.07 pm
and closed at 9.02 pm

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Chair