

# Council

Monday, 29 January 2018

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## MINUTES

### Present:

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

### Officers:

Claire Felton and Sue Hanley

### Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

## 62. WELCOME

The Mayor announced the recent deaths of former Councillor, Brenda Quinney, as well as a long-serving member of staff, Mrs Jennifer Delorenzo, and led the Council in paying tribute to them both by observing a minute's silence.

The Leader explained that the flag at the Town Hall had been flown at half-mast as a mark of respect for Mrs Quinney. Mrs Quinney had served on the Council representing Batchley and Brockhill ward, from 2008 to 2014, having been originally elected in a by-election. During her tenure as a Councillor Mrs Quinney had been an active scrutiny Member, having served on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well as various Task Groups investigating Redditch Market, action that could be taken to promote Redditch and access for people with disabilities to the Borough. Mrs Quinney had also served as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC).

Councillor Brandon Clayton also paid his respects to former Councillor Brenda Quinney on behalf of his group. Mrs Quinney had been passionate about Redditch and had had a clear view of the action that could be taken to improve the lives of residents. Due

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Chair

to her background in commerce Mrs Quinney had also made a valuable contribution to the economy of the Borough. Mrs Quinney would be sadly missed by all who knew her.

Tributes were also paid to Mrs Delorenzo. The Leader noted that she had worked in the Strategic Housing Team and Customer Serves. During this time Mrs Delorenzo had presented reports at Committee meetings and provided invaluable advice to elected Members. The Leader proposed that a letter should be sent from him and the Mayor, on behalf of the Council, expressing Members' condolences to Mrs Delorenzo's family.

Following these discussions the Mayor explained that she had invited Councillor David Thain to perform some poetry which he had written. Each of the three poems, entitled 'Depression', 'Asperger's Syndrome' and 'Don't Walk on by', related to the Mayor's theme of mental health and wellbeing.

## **63. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Juliet Brunner and Pattie Hill.

## **64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **65. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 20TH NOVEMBER 2017**

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.**

## **66. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **a) Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor circulated a list of civic events which she and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Nina Wood-Ford, had attended since the previous meeting of Council (Appendix 1). The Mayor took the opportunity to thank the Deputy Mayor for her hard work and support during the period.

### **b) The Leader's Announcements**

The Leader advised that he had attended a number of events since the previous meeting of Council. In addition to those which had been highlighted by the Mayor in her

announcements the Leader provided the following updates to Council:

- The Leader had attended the carols at the bandstand event, which had transferred to St Stephen's Church due to the inclement weather.
- In addition the Leader had attended the Bromsgrove and Redditch Welcomes Refugees Christmas Party, the Hereford and Worcester Sports Awards in Worcester and the Redditch Gudwara at Ridgeway School.
- There had been a bench dedication service for the 37 Signal Regiment at Plymouth Road Memorial Gardens which the Leader had attended.
- The Annual Conference of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had been held and this had been attended by the Leader.
- The Leader had participated in the Holocaust Memorial Day commemorations. The guest speaker in 2018 had been Mr Carl Wilkins who had spoken about his experiences during the genocide in Rwanda.
- Reservist Major Sandy Hennis, from Redditch, had participated in the British Army's Expedition Ice Maiden. This was an all-women initiative which had involved the participants crossing the Antarctic. The Leader had sent Major Hennis a letter of congratulations and had invited her to the Town Hall to provide an opportunity to congratulate her in person.
- The Leader had attended an Economic Development seminar which had been held at the Palace Theatre and had been organised by the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit. This formed part of the "opening doors" initiative, designed to provide local school children with an opportunity to find out about different careers and areas of industry.

During this period the Peer Review Challenge had taken place. This challenge had been organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) and involved senior officers and Councillors from other local authorities and the LGA reviewing Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018. Members had been invited to attend a number of the sessions that had been held as part of this process and it was anticipated that a report detailing the outcomes of the challenge would be available for Members to consider in late February.

The latest review of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT) had been published by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018. This had identified some improvements in service delivery, though the trust

continued to be classified as inadequate. In response to this report the Leader had issued a press release calling for an opportunity to meet with representatives of both the trust and Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). It was understood that there would be further inspections and reviews of the Trust, starting in February.

c) Chief Executive's Announcements

There were no announcements from the Deputy Chief Executive.

**67. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9.2)**

The Leader responded to two questions that had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.2.

a) Question from Councillor Antonia Pulsford

Councillor Pulsford asked the following question:

“Have other consultancies besides NW Environmental Ltd. been asked for their proposals for upgrading Arrow Valley Park, and if so, when will Council see their presentations?”

The Leader responded as follows:

“Thank you for your question

There were no other consultancies engaged in support of a funding application. NW Environmental Ltd were jointly procured by the Environment Agency and Redditch Borough Council competitively, against 10 other companies, all of whom had a successful history of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid process. All tenders were assessed on their ability to deliver based on proposed project management, relevant experience and project delivery. Due to the joint funding and sensitivities around the competitive tendering process the financial details could not be made available to the public at this stage.

No other consultancies were engaged for their opinions as this would require further expense. However if the Borough was successful at stage 1, assistance would be required to develop the application to a stage two bid submission and NW Environmental Ltd would be able to further tender for this work at the appropriate time.

Due to the speculative nature in the preparation of the ‘First Stage’ application (to be submitted in March 2018) to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Arrow Valley Country Park, user

stakeholders' opinions had been sought to determine outline views on the viability of a funding submission. This was in line with the funding body application requirements. These stakeholders had received feedback and letters of support for the outline principles of a stage 1 application sought.

The stage 1 application had been jointly funded by the Environment Agency and the Borough. The current speculative data was not for the public domain at this stage as it was a provisional baseline data set to inform a detailed formal and costed Stage 2 submission. There would be the need to have a full public discussion through the democratic process if the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the Council a 'Stage 1 application'.

Redditch Borough Council with its funding partner The Environment Agency, sought professional assistance in securing a first round submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund (for the current financial year). Following advice from Heritage Lottery Fund Officers believed that the Borough could have a sound foundation for a submission for external grant aid via the Heritage Lottery Fund 'funding programme'. However, in order to give the Borough the strongest possible chance of success, Officers identified a requirement to review key elements of the data to ensure that it reflected the recent changes to the Heritage Lottery Fund 'funding objectives'.

The changes in the key outcomes for Heritage Lottery Fund funding focused more on people and communities, and it was these elements - amongst a number of other issues which needed to be addressed within the application. The application process was in two stages. The first stage sought to determine if the project would meet the objectives of the Heritage Lottery Fund and also to identify areas of the project for development (which could be funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund).

If successful in stage 1, the second stage would be progressed and would be the detailed proposal which Officers would seek Members' approval for before submission. Stage 2 applications would be required to include such items such as a business plan, restoration plans and proposals demonstrating participation and involvement of the local community."

Councillor Pulsford thanked the Leader for his detailed and comprehensive response and did not ask a subsidiary question.

- b) Question from Councillor Juliet Brunner

Councillor Brandon Clayton asked the following question on behalf of Councillor Juliet Brunner:

“2018 marks the centenary of the year that women in the UK were first granted the right to vote. The Representation of the People Act of 1918 granted the vote to women over the age of 30 who met a property qualification. Would the leader join with me to host an Equalities event, here in our town hall - the heart of our local democracy - to celebrate this momentous occasion?”

The Leader responded as follows:

“Thank you for your question

Clearly I welcome and support this landmark 100th anniversary; I am looking forward to celebrating this act which granted the right to vote for women over the age of 30.

I can advise Council that I have already been contacted by Laney Walsh, the Unison Branch Secretary here at the town hall, who has invited me and indeed all members of the Council to attend and support a Unison branch event which they are organising for the same Anniversary. I will quote from the letter:

*“We would like to celebrate with an event that profiles the huge part that women have played in (our) society since the Act in 1918. And the impact our town and our women have had on equalities”.*

I have already replied and accepted the invitation, I am sure you and all members would also wish to attend and support this event.”

Councillor Clayton confirmed that he was satisfied that the event that was being organised by Unison was a fitting tribute and he encouraged all Members to participate.

## **68. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)**

### **a) Transition Support for Young People Leaving Care in Redditch**

A Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Tom Baker-Price in respect of transition support for young people leaving care in Redditch. This was seconded by Councillor Jane Potter.

In proposing the motion Councillor Baker-Price highlighted the difficulties experienced by many young people who left the

care system, including the risks they faced in respect of falling into poverty due to their limited access to support networks. By reducing the net liability for Council Tax of care leavers until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, and by introducing a transitional discretionary discount scheme to enable reduction of liability for Council Tax up to and including zero from their 21<sup>st</sup> to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthdays, it was suggested that the Council could help to nurture independence amongst young care leavers.

The Children's Commissioner for England had suggested that these types of schemes could be helpful for young people leaving care. Worcestershire County Council had recently considered a Notice of Motion on a similar subject and this had received support. Motions proposing similar reviews had also been presented for Members' consideration at Wyre Forest District Council and Worcester City Council and these had been welcomed. It was estimated that if this type of scheme was introduced across the whole of Worcestershire the cost would be £17,000 per annum.

In seconding the motion Councillor Jane Potter noted that all local authorities, not just the County Council, had legal responsibilities in respect of care leavers. Young people leaving care could experience a difficult start in life and it was important to ensure that they continued to have access to sufficient support into their early adulthood.

During consideration of the Motion an amendment was proposed by Councillor Mark Shurmer which was circulated in writing at the meeting. In proposing this amendment Councillor Shurmer commented that he recognised the vulnerability of young people leaving care and their need to have access to appropriate support. However, Members were advised that there were additional implications in respect of the proposed changes to Council Tax liabilities for care leavers which he felt merited further investigation. In this context Councillor Shurmer was proposing that the subject should be reviewed in detail by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the findings to be reported back to Council in six months' time.

Councillor Shurmer also noted that not every local authority that had received a proposal to introduce a similar scheme had agreed to do so. Members were advised that this could create a postcode lottery in terms of the support available to care leavers across the country. To address this Councillor Shurmer was also proposing that the Council should write to the Government requesting that consideration be given to introducing national legislation that would assist care leavers.

In seconding the amendment Councillor John Fisher concurred that it was important to provide appropriate support to young care leavers. The proposed scrutiny review would provide the Council with an opportunity to learn more about the options available to the Council in terms of potential discretionary Council Tax discount schemes. A cross-party scrutiny review could also investigate the financial implications for the Council of any such scheme and the options available to the Council in terms of funding the scheme. This would need to take into account the number of care leavers in Redditch Borough.

Following presentation of the amendment Members discussed the proposals and concerns were raised about the potential delay that could be caused by undertaking a scrutiny review of the matter. However, it was suggested that by asking for this review to be completed to report back to Council in six months' time no delays would occur as these were the same timescales as those that had been included in the original Motion. Furthermore, it was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could launch a Short, Sharp Review to investigate this matter within the timescales available.

Reference was also made to the Notice of Motion that had been agreed by Worcestershire County Council in respect of care leavers earlier in the month. Discussions had subsequently been held between the Leader of the County Council and all of the Leaders of the District Councils and the matter was due to be considered further when Leaders of the District Councils in Worcestershire met in February.

During consideration of this matter a five minute adjournment took place to provide all Members with an opportunity to consider the amendment to the Motion. Following this adjournment Councillor Tom Baker-Price, as the mover of the original Motion, confirmed that he was willing to accept the amendment as the substantive Motion.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.5, the amended Motion in respect of transition support for young people Leaving Care in Redditch was the subject the following named vote:

Members voting FOR the resolution:

Councillors Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Roger Bennett, Natalie Brookes, Michael Chalk, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford, Mark Shurmer, Rachael Smith, Yvonne Smith, Paul Swansborough,



David Thain, Jenny Wheeler, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford.

Members voting AGAINST the resolution:

No Members voted against the resolution.

Members ABSTAINING on the resolution:

No Members abstained in the vote on this resolution.

Accordingly the Motion was approved and Members

**RESOLVED that**

**The motion be agreed in the following terms:**

**This Council notes with deep concern the Children's Society's 'Wolf at the Door' report (2015) and the representations made by Kelly Pickard the Children's Commissioner on the subject of council tax for care leavers.**

**We would like to reaffirm the commitment this Council has to partnership working with Worcestershire County Council, to ensure young people who have left care are appropriately housed and supported in their transition.**

**The Children and Social Work Act 2017 clearly places corporate parenting responsibilities on District Councils for the first time, requiring them to have regard to children in care and care leavers when carrying out their functions.**

**This Council is the Council Tax billing and housing authority for the Borough of Redditch and as such recognises this group is particularly vulnerable to falling into debt when moving into independent accommodation for the first time.**

**This Council therefore requests the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out a full investigation and review.**

**The objectives are to explore the available options that can be put in place to enable more support to be given; to determine how the process could work in liaison with the County Council; and to assess the financial impact to the Borough, including how we would recover a commensurate share of the necessary funding from the County Council.**

In order to provide the maximum support possible to care leavers, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, working with officers, are asked to bring forward proposals to this Council utilising powers granted to this Council under section 13A of the local government financing act 1992 to ensure the following:

- 1. Reduce their net liability for Council Tax under the national scheme and after Council Tax support to zero, until the care leaver's 21st birthday.**
- 2. Introduce a transitional discretionary discount scheme to enable a reduction of liability for Council Tax, up to and including zero, from their 21st birthday until the care leaver's 25th birthday.**

**These proposals are to be presented to Council within six months of the adoption of this motion.**

**In order to eliminate the current postcode lottery of exemption, the Council will also write to the Government requesting that consideration is given to introducing national legislation to help care leavers.**

b) War Memorial and Commemorations 2018

A Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Juliet Brunner in respect of War Memorial Commemorations in 2018. In the absence of Councillor Brunner, with the Mayor's agreement, this Motion was moved by Councillor David Thain and seconded by Councillor Gareth Prosser.

In proposing the Motion Councillor Thain explained that it was important, on the centenary of the end of the First World War, to remember the sacrifices that had been made by serving men and women in the armed forces both during that conflict and in the following 100 years. There was also a need to educate children and young people about both the First World War and subsequent conflicts to ensure that they learned lessons and future generations would not experience the same loss of life.

Councillor Prosser seconded the Motion and in so doing he explained that this was an important matter that required every Member's support.

During consideration of the Motion an amendment was proposed by Councillor Greg Chance which was circulated in writing during the meeting. In proposing the amendment Councillor Chance advised that he recognised the need to remember the sacrifices that had been made by the armed

forces over the years. However, it was also important to recognise that the Royal British Legion organised the Remembrance Parade on 11<sup>th</sup> November, rather than the Council, and the local authority needed to aim to continue supporting their work.

In seconding the amendment Councillor Joe Baker noted the importance of all Members, across political parties, supporting the armed forces and service men and women. In line with this the Council had a proud history of supporting the armed forces at various civic events, including in Councillor Baker's Mayoral year.

The Leader advised Members that he had received a letter from the Royal British Legion Redditch Branch. This letter advised that the Royal British Legion was already in the early stages of organising the Remembrance Parade for 2018. The Redditch Branch of the Royal British Legion would liaise with Worcestershire County Council over road closure as well as public transport providers. Arrangements for displays of ceramic poppies were also already in the process of being organised by the Poppy Appeal Organiser for the Redditch Branch of the Royal British Legion. The letter recognised the Council's work to obtain quotes in respect of cleaning the war memorials in the Borough and welcomed the participation of elected Members in the Parade. The Council was advised that the content of this letter had been taken into account when the amendment to the Motion had been drafted.

During consideration of this matter a number of Members noted their personal connections to the Armed Forces. In some cases Members had served in the Armed Forces whilst in other cases Members had close relatives who had served or continued to serve in the forces. In every case Members noted that they were proud of this service and welcomed all events that demonstrated the respect and support of the local community.

At the end of the debate Councillor Thain, as the mover of the original Motion, confirmed that he was willing to accept the amendment as the substantive Motion.

**RESOLVED that**

**The Motion be agreed in the following terms:**

**In public Commemoration of those servicemen and servicewomen of Redditch who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended the**

**First World War commemoration parade and ceremonial, in Redditch of WW1 centenary 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018.**

**Redditch Borough Council will continue to acknowledge, and play its full part in enabling its citizens to acknowledge, the ultimate sacrifice of its servicemen, servicewomen, their families and all of those who supported them at home and abroad, on the anniversary of the ending of The First World War.**

**Redditch Borough Council commits to the following:**

- 1) to continue to work with the Royal British Legion, 37<sup>th</sup> Signals and Mercian Regiments and others in the organisation of a parade befitting and appropriate to the occasion;**
- 2) to appropriately cleanse and refurbish the St Stephens and Plymouth Road war memorials in consultation with, and taking the advice of, relevant organisations and bodies including The War Memorial Trust;**
- 3) To continue to support any necessary road closures which facilitate commemoration of this significant anniversary;**
- 4) that the Town Hall is made available to provide refreshments and hospitality for Veterans, Service personnel, and their families as part of commemorating this special event; and**
- 5) the Council would wish to make these commemorations and events as relevant and meaningful to the widest range of groups and individuals and would therefore welcome suggestions of appropriate ways we could lend our support or enable the marking of this very special and significant anniversary.**

## **69. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (Including Homelessness Reduction Act new Burdens Funding)

Members noted that the Homelessness Reduction Act would result in significant changes to the ways that local authorities supported people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The new legislation placed a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness from occurring and Councils would need to respond accordingly.

## Fees and Charges 2018/19

The Leader advised that many of the fees and charges had increased by 3.9 per cent, though some had increased by more than this, others by less and no increases had been proposed for charges for some services. Where increases over 3.9 per cent had been proposed this was to ensure that full cost recovery could occur.

## Acquisition and Investment Strategy

Council was informed by the Leader that this would enable the Council to invest in land and assets both within the Borough and in locations contiguous to the borders of Redditch. However, no projects were currently being investigated.

## Finance Monitoring Quarter 2 2017/18

Clarification was requested regarding the term “virement”. Members were advised that this referred to the process by which funds might be moved from one budget to another.

### **RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018 be received and all recommendations adopted.**

### **70. REGULATORY COMMITTEES**

The Council considered the minutes from meetings of the Licensing Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and the Planning Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> November and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

### **RESOLVED that**

- 1) the minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> November be received and adopted; and**
- 2) the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> November and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017 be received and adopted.**

### **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 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.52 pm