

Council

Monday, 22 July 2013

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Wanda King (Mayor), Councillor Pat Witherspoon (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Joe Baker, Roger Bennett, Rebecca Blake, Michael Braley, Andrew Brazier, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Simon Chalk, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Adam Griffin, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Roger Hill, Gay Hopkins, Alan Mason, Phil Mould, Brenda Quinney, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, Luke Stephens and Debbie Taylor.

Officers:

C Felton, C Flanagan, S Hanley and J Pickering

Committee Services Officer:

S Jones

28. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy and Derek Taylor.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Bush declared an Other Disclosable interest in agenda item no.8, Executive Committee, relating to the Compulsory Purchase Order, 11, Clent Avenue.

Councillor Bill Hartnett reported that he had declared an interest at the Executive Committee meeting of 9th July 2013, minute no.27 relating to Hewell Road development site. This would be considered as an item of report later in tonight's meeting.

30. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 10th June 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

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Chair

31. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Mayor

The Mayor's communications and announcements were as follows:

i) Mayoral Functions

The Mayor advised that since the last meeting of the Council she and the Deputy Mayor had received visitors from Redditch's twin town of Mtwara in Tanzania and attended several engagements, including Civic Services in Droitwich Spa, Wyre Forest and Worcester City, the Fly the Flag day at the Town Hall and Astwood Bank carnival.

ii) Civic Service

The Mayor announced that her Civic Service would be held on 22nd September and all members of the Council were welcome to attend.

(b) Leader

The Leader's announcements were as follows:

i) Alexandra Hospital

The Leader announced that he and the Leaders of Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils had written to Jeremy Hunt M.P, requesting that given the length of time it had taken, the decision about the future of the Alexandra Hospital be called in.

He also reported that from 24th July the Stroke Unit at the Alexandra Hospital would be closed to new admissions and patients would be taken to the Worcester Royal acute hospital.

ii) Youth Theatre at the Palace

The Leader was pleased to report a very enjoyable and successful production of the Wizard of Oz by the Youth Theatre. He congratulated all involved.

iii) Marketing Day

The Leader had opened a recent marketing day which promoted opportunities for local businesses with the Borough and County Councils and National Health Service. Over 120 businesses had attended and he

thanked Carmen Young from the Procurement Team for her work in supporting this.

(c) Chief Executive

The Deputy Chief Executive did not have any announcements.

32. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

(a) Mercian Regiment

Councillor Roger Bennett asked the following question of the Leader:

“In March 2009 Redditch Borough Council gave the freedom of the Borough to the Mercian Regiment. Since that time the 2nd Mercian Regiment which recruits from Worcestershire, have continued to serve all over the world including Afghanistan.

Following the Forces Day Parade recently held in Redditch there is a growing desire by residents to show their appreciation for those in the Armed Forces who protect and serve us.

Would he agree with me that we should allow our residents the opportunity to show their appreciation for our brave servicemen and women who are representing our town, by making a commitment and invite them to parade through the town at their earliest convenience?”

The Leader replied as follows:

He reported that he had contacted the Mercian Regiment so that they were aware the question was being put to this meeting. Their response had been favourable although the Regiment was unlikely to be able to respond to a request to march until later in the summer.

“Members will know that the Mercian Regiment already have Freedom of the Borough and as a result the ability to march through the town as and when appropriate.

We are conscious that they are very busy at present on active duties but have been able to make contact with them to reaffirm our commitment to supporting a march as and when the time is right.

Obviously there are costs associated with a march and it is important that we factor these into our budgets – particularly now when finances are scarce. Officers have estimated that the costs will be between approx. £2,250 to £2,750 and how they would be met would depend on the time of year the march was

held. If it was in 2014-15 the Council may be able to provide for it within budgets, otherwise it may be met from Reserves.

On that note we now wait to hear from the Regiment in respect of timescales. It might be worth noting however that Bromsgrove have been waiting for over a year due to the commitments of the Regiment so it may be a little while yet.

On another note I would like to advise Council that I am currently in discussions and working with the 37th Signal Regiment to learn more about their role and the work that they do here in Redditch. Alan Mason will acknowledge the support they gave him during his mayoral year last year.

As members will know the Regiment is based in Redditch and a great number of our residents are associated with their activities.

They have invited all members of Council to visit their Headquarters to familiarise ourselves with their work and the support that they give to our armed forces with the view to considering a Council Motion to grant them the Freedom of the Borough.

I hope that members join with me in supporting this proposal and commit to attending the HQ on a date to be arranged.

The Regiment are very keen for us to attend and I think it would bring the work that they do in the Borough and the Council closer together”

(b) Councillor Brandon Clayton put the following question to the Leader:

“Following the decision to give away our land at the Hewell Road site to a social landlord for free, who then decided what type of housing was to be built.

Can the Leader of the Council tell us:

A) Does Redditch Borough Council have any influence over the type of housing to be built on our land in the future;

B) Does the leader acknowledge that Redditch has a need for bungalows, particularly as the Council has a 5 year waiting list for residents wanting one;

C) Can he confirm whether there will be any bungalows built for rent on Council land within the next five years?”

The Leader replied as follows:

“Can I start by stating that I took no part in either the selection process or the formal consideration and decision at Executive in respect of the land and future build at Hewell Road.

During the research to enable a full response to your question, I am advised you were a member of the selection panel, all of whom agreed the recommendations considered by Executive.

I am aware the issue was raised during the panel of the type of properties the Council would wish to see built on the land, however not specifically in respect of bungalows.

As considered by Executive, none of the submissions offered by Registered providers offered a capital receipt of more than £1.

The panel, of which you were a member, all agreed without exception that the process had been a fair process.

A – No final decisions have yet been made as to the type of housing to be built at the Hewell Road site and Strategic Housing officers will work with the partner to agree viable delivery on the site. In the event that the provider cannot provide a scheme that meets housing need in Redditch, the Council would not continue with them on this project. More broadly, Redditch Borough Council is able to influence the type of housing built on Council-owned land in the future in a number of ways:

1. The Council uses the outcomes of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to help inform provision of affordable housing in the borough.
2. The Council is able to use the planning system to inform the type of housing provided – discussions and negotiations about numbers and type would normally take place during the course of a detailed planning application, with Strategic Housing officers.
3. The Council is able to influence the type of housing built through analysis of on-going customer demand. The housing register is traditionally used as a way of analysing housing need in the Borough, but there are a number of other factors that may influence supply and demand. For example, the welfare reform agenda has created a need to focus on supplying a greater number of smaller properties, to enable households affected by under-occupancy to downsize. The Council analyses these factors in their entirety in order to reach decisions about meeting housing provision locally.
4. The Council needs to be mindful of site viability in all of its work influencing housing type.

B – There are 710 bungalows owned by the Council within its own stock – this equates to nearly 12% of the overall stock. On the housing waiting list, there are nearly 700 households requesting bungalows or other suitable property. Waiting times for a bungalow are dependant upon a number of factors, including current housing need, area of preference and size requirements, so averaging out waiting times does not provide a meaningful picture for customers hoping to secure a bungalow in the future. However, it may be worth noting, that, of those housed between January 2012 and January 2013, no household in Gold or Priority Band (high housing need) waited for longer than 13 months for any type of property.

C – Whilst building bungalows is always on the agenda during planning application discussions, the Council is not in a position to make cast iron guarantees about the number of bungalows to be delivered in Redditch on Council-owned land in the future. The Council recognises that there is a general need for these types of properties, but they are ‘land-hungry’, and costly to develop, and both these issues present a challenge when development opportunities are at a premium in the Borough. So, whilst bungalow provision may play a part in the future type of housing delivered in the Borough, focus will need to be on all property types in the current housing market conditions”.

33. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

No motions had been submitted.

34. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Councillor David Bush declared an Other Disclosable interest in minute no. 27 of the minutes of 9th July and left the room during its consideration and determination.

Members considered the minutes of the Executive Committee meetings of 11th June and 9th July 2013.

11th June

In proposing the recommendations contained in the minutes of the meeting of 11th June, the Leader suggested that consideration of the recommendations at minute no. 18, Restructuring Enabling Heads of Service, be deferred to the next meeting of the Council. This was due to the timescale between receipt of consultation feedback and the current meeting. This was agreed.

During consideration of the recommendations relating to the Financial Reserves Statement, it was noted that the Council’s Section 151 officer would review the presentation of financial information to make it more accessible in future.

Further to a query arising from the recommendation at minute no.10 to install a canopy over the access ramp to Shopmobility, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that officers would ask Shopmobility if funding could be released to provide artwork for this similar to that decorating other bus shelters in the Borough.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee meetings held on 11th June and 9th July be received and all recommendations adopted, with the exception of the recommendation at minute no.18, 11th June 2013, Enabling Heads of Service, which stands deferred for consideration at the next meeting of the Council.

35. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Members received the minutes of the meetings of the Licensing and Planning Committees.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 1st July 2013 be received and adopted; and**
- 2) the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 5th June and 3rd July 2013 be received and adopted.**

36. SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2013/14

The Council considered a report from the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, which presented a Scheme of Members Allowances for 2013-14.

RESOLVED that

The Scheme of Members Allowances for 2013-14 be approved.

37. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTER - CHANGE OF DATE FOR SEPTEMBER COUNCIL MEETING

The Council agreed rescheduling of the September meeting to enable officers to prepare the latest Local Plan no.4 report.

RESOLVED that

the rescheduling of the September meeting of the Council to Monday 9th September be approved and the consequent rescheduling of the August meeting of the Executive Committee to Monday 2nd September be noted.

38. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

There were no Urgent Decisions to note.

39. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

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

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.36 pm