

Council

14th October 20123

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Mr R McColl, Ms S Duffin, Mrs E Daykin and Mr R Daykin

Officers:

A Darroch, K Dicks, C Felton, C Flanagan and S Hanley

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

52. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Andrew Brazier, Adam Griffin and Brenda Quinney.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

54. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 9th September 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

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Chair

55. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) The Mayor's communications and announcements were as follows:

i) Former Councillor Tom Wareing

It was with great sadness that the Mayor formally advised the Council of the death in mid-September of former Councillor Tom Wareing. The Mayor paid tribute to former Councillor Wareing and welcomed his widow, Beryl and one of his four sons, Paul, to the meeting.

Members of the Council were invited to offer up words they might wish to offer in memory of former Councillor Wareing and of his services to the Borough.

The Leader of the Opposition commenced the tributes to former Councillor Wareing, commenting on the active part he played in the life of the Borough, being a regular writer of letters to the local newspapers and providing advice to her and her colleagues up until recent times. The high regard in which Councillor Wareing had been held was attested by the numbers who had been present at the commemorative service to celebrate his life.

The Leader of the Council then led other Members in expressing their thoughts on the character and achievements of former Councillor Wareing. The consistency of Councillor Wareing's views and his faith were commented on by a number of Members. The meeting was advised that the decision had been taken on this occasion to fly the flag at half-mast over the Town Hall given the significant role former Councillor Wareing had played on the Council.

Members observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect and it was subsequently

RESOLVED that

the Council formally place on record its gratitude to former Councillor Tom Wareing for his service to the Council and to the community.

ii) Mayoral Functions

The Mayor advised that since the last meeting of the Council she and the Deputy Mayor had attended a number of engagements, including her own Civic Service in September, Education Awards at NEW College, an Apple Day at

Headless Cross Community Orchard, welcoming some Palestinian visitors to Woodrow First School, the County Harvest Service in Worcester, a Shrievalty Service at Worcester Cathedral, the Friends of Gruchet Quiz Night, Reading Challenge Awards at Redditch Library, an event with the Severn Freewheelers Emergency Voluntary Service at the Alexandra Hospital and Pershore Civic Service the previous day.

iii) Forthcoming Events

The Mayor advised that forthcoming events included the Mayor of Evesham's Indian buffet, a Business Breakfast with the local MP, her own Skittles Evening on Friday, the opening of a new business unit, the opening of a new bridge at Redditch Golf Club, the Remembrance Day Service and the Council's Bonfire Night Display.

iv) Births

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Simon Chalk on the recent birth of his baby son and Town Centre Manager, Lindsey Berry on the recent birth of her first child.

(b) The Leader's announcements were as follows:

i) Special Olympics Redditch

The Leader led the Council in congratulating the Special Olympics Redditch Team which had competed at the recent Special Olympics at Bath and had come away with a haul of 20 Medals. The Council was honoured to have six of the athletes and a number of the organisers of the Team in attendance at the meeting. Sarah Duffin, Chair of Special Olympics Redditch, spoke about the organisation, commenting that it was a charitable body which had been formed 25 years previously by Elaine Daykin as a provider of sports provision for people with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Redditch competed at both a national and international level and was privileged to be one of the current Mayor's charities.

ii) Mental Health and Well-Being Week

The Leader commended Councillor Rebecca Blake and Harriet Ernstsons from the Redditch Standard for organising a recent series of events to publicise the issue of Mental Health awareness.

iii) MacMillan Coffee Morning

The Leader thanked Councillor Pattie Hill and others for running a very successful MacMillan Cancer Support Coffee Morning at the Town Hall in late September.

iv) Alzheimer's Society

The Leader informed the Council that there was a newly established Alzheimer's Society branch in the Redditch area and added that a number of Customer Services staff were to avail themselves of the opportunity to undertake training in dealing with customers with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

v) Redditch Keralan Society

The Leader advised that he and other Members had enjoyed a very enjoyable social event organised by the local Keralan Society recently.

vi) Bandstand Festival

The Leader reported that he had attended the final weekend of the Bandstand Festival and reflected on an excellent series of events throughout the summer.

vii) Redditch Magistrates' Court Open Day

The Leader advised that he and many other local people had attended a very interesting open day at Redditch Magistrates' Court.

viii) Alexandra Hospital

The Leader reported that Members had been instrumental in gaining responses to the CCG engagement process on the Alexandra Hospital and that 300 had been returned thus far.

ix) New Town Celebrations

The Leader reported that he had attended a recent event at the Palace Theatre celebrating 50 Years of Redditch New Town, noting that additional events had been organised to reflect the interest locally in the anniversary.

56. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Leader responded to five questions submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9.2 from Councillors David Bush, Michael Chalk and Adam Griffin and Mr Robert McColl as detailed below.

(i) Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 – Proposal for Houses off Far Moor Lane

Councillor Brunner, on behalf of Councillor Griffin, who had submitted his apologies for the meeting, asked the following question:

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that openness and transparency in local government is important?

In this spirit of openness could he please explain to this Council why residents in my ward of Winyates Green have not been consulted about the proposal to build houses off Far Moor Lane?

Furthermore could he explain why the inclusion of this in LP4 was not discussed at PAP or in any other forum with Councillors?

Would he confirm whether any Winyates Councillors were briefed about this proposal? If so when was this briefing and why was I not included when it occurred?

What will he do to ensure residents of Winyates Green are made aware of this major housing proposal? More importantly, will he commit to keeping the residents of Winyates Green updated on any such proposals?

The Leader replied as follow:

Yes I agree that openness and transparency in local government is important

Officers have confirmed and advised that the item which discussed the inclusion of lands in the A435 corridor came to and was discussed at the Planning Advisory Panel on 18 September 2012.

Since then the sites were featured in the April 2013 version of the draft Local Plan No.4. There have been no changes to the background report 'A Review of the A435 and Adjoining Lands' since it was brought to Planning Advisory Panel and therefore featured in the latest Proposed Submission Local Plan No.4.

Residents in all wards were consulted in line with the adopted procedures in the Councils Statement of Community Involvement. The future stages of the Plan's progression will also follow these procedures, to ensure residents and others are kept up to date.

Councillors were briefed about the contents of the Proposed Submission Plan on 29th August 2013 (a Conservative group meeting at which I understand you were in attendance) and 6th

September 2013 (a Labour group meeting at which Councillors Yvonne Smith and Phil Mould were in attendance).

There was no supplementary question.

(ii) Council-owned Housing Land

Councillor Michael Chalk asked the following question:

- a) Will the leader inform this council of every piece of land in the Borough that this council owns and can be used for housing?
- b) Will he detail which is for sale or potential sale?
- c) Will he give assurances to this Council and the residents of this town and outline how he proposes to explore all avenues to sell land rather than give it away for nothing.
- d) How does he propose to ensure that this Council gets best value for the sale of this land?

The Leader replied as follows:

- a) Worcestershire County Council Property Services are able to identify all RBC land and building assets, but details of non building related assets are only held electronically on the GIS mapping system, or on CRA transfer plans, and identification is not at site level but based upon Title / transfer records.

As such each land asset covers a swathe of area which may include built and non built areas, operational, investment and leisure sites.

As a result, the Council does not hold one definitive list detailing all sites owned by the Council which may be suitable for housing development, and to create one would take time and resources.

However, Officers have identified a number of sites considered suitable for housing development subject to planning.

A number of these sites have been declared and agreed to be surplus.

- b) The following sites have been declared surplus:-

Middle House Lane – joint owned RBC/WCC
Auxerre Avenue
Upper Norgrove House
Ipsley 3

Hewell Road Pool (subject to planning)
Wirehill Drive (Planning refused)
Loxley Close
Clifton Close
Fladbury Close
Mordiford Close (Planning refused)
Skilts Avenue/Lodge Pool Drive (Planning refused)

- c) A detailed report entitled 'Delivering New Affordable Housing' will be considered by Redditch Borough Council Executive Committee when it next meets on 15th October 2013.

The report outlines the opportunities, financial risks and challenges associated with increasing housing stock in the Borough and it also contains a series of recommendations for increasing the supply of affordable homes in Redditch.

The Executive have the opportunity to ask officers to report back with more detail on each of these options and recommendations, so that the Council can be satisfied that it has fully explored all avenues before taking any specific future proposals forwards.

- d) When assessing best value it is important to consider the roles and responsibilities of the Council not just the monetary element of the disposal of land.

The Council as the Local Strategic Housing Authority has a number of roles and responsibilities which it needs to consider when disposing of land and what constitutes best value.

These roles and responsibilities include assessing and planning for the current and future housing needs of the local population, planning and facilitating new supply, making the best use of the existing housing stock, planning and commissioning housing support services which link homes and housing support services and working in partnership to secure effective housing and neighbourhood management on an on-going basis.

The Council also has a Strategic Purpose of 'Help me find somewhere to live in my locality' and the disposal of land to a Registered Provider to enable the supply of new affordable housing, with the Council receiving nomination rights to the properties, may provide better value than just the sale of a site for the highest capital receipt.

There was no supplementary question.

(iii) Local Plan No. 4 – Statement of Community Involvement

Mr Robert McColl asked the following question:

The Council's Statement of Community Involvement sets out a clear statement that Community Involvement is fundamental to the development of The Local Plan.

The draft Local Plan No 4 also states that the plan has been 'influenced by the local community', as well as stakeholders and developers. The statement adds that it aims to help the local community see that the housing growth can re-vitalise the area.

To date, there is little evidence that either of these claims have been robustly pursued. To the contrary, to date the Council have only given one example of direct communication, which was a letter to a Winyates Green resident, mistakenly referenced as a member of a group that was disbanded more than a decade ago.

Similarly, it has not been made clear which part of this strip of loved greenbelt and special wildlife site, or the residential area of the Green is in need of re-vitalisation.

Can the residents of Winyates Green be given the opportunity to influence this plan? Can meaningful consultation take place, giving us the time and opportunity to fully understand the proposals and its implications? Can we have an exhibition jointly hosted by the Council and local residents in the Winyates Green Community Centre?

The Leader replied as follows:

Residents in all wards were consulted in line with the adopted procedures in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. This current stage of the Plan process requires residents to indicate what part or parts of the Plan are 'unsound' and officers are available to help anyone to understand the forms that need to be filled in to register the residents' comments.

Officers have advised that this strip of land is not green belt and not a special wild life site (SSI)

Planning Officers will be available to assist any resident in procedures to complete Representation Forms at Redditch Town Hall during the following surgery sessions at the Town Hall which are held at various times, day and night, on week days and at weekends. In total some 34 sessions will be held between 30 September and 11 November.

Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm (ask at Main Reception)

Tuesday (22nd Oct and 5th Nov) 4pm to 8pm (in these Committee Rooms)
Saturday (26th Oct and 9th Nov) 9.00am to 11.30am (again, in these Committee Rooms)

There was no supplementary question.

(iv) Proposal for Houses off Far Moor Lane

Mr Robert McColl asked the following question:

In 2001, Stratford on Avon submitted a planning application to build housing along this strip of land. It was refused for many reasons, but I would like to focus on one in particular, it relates to access to the housing estate from Far Moor Lane. It was turned down in 2001.

[At time of writing, Council planning experienced difficulty locating the documented reasons that road access to the site was refused]

Access to a housing estate from Far Moor Lane now appears to be considered by planning to be acceptable. Can the Council clarify what has changed, and why the original ruling has been overturned?

The Leader replied as follows:

The site subject to the Planning Application considered in 2001 was at Winyates Green Triangle and not the strip of land you are referring to.

However, the current proposed access to the Winyates Green Triangle area is not from Far Moor Lane.

The present sites for potential residential development have not been looked at as potential sites before this Plan period, and therefore have no highways history. When preparing the 'Review of the A435 and Adjoining Lands' report, County highways officers were consulted about the sites and their potential for access; this consultation led to a refinement of the development areas, but County highways officers raised no objection.

Mr McColl asked a supplementary question of the Leader relating to the road access to the potential residential development site at Winyates Green which, it was contended, was still from Far Moor Lane.

The Leader responded that he would need to consult with Planning Officers on very specific elements of the proposals contained within Local Plan No.4 and requested that Mr McColl provide a detailed version of his question following the meeting to which an answer would be provided.

(v) Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration of draft budget proposals

Councillor David Bush asked the following question as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has assisted the work of this Council and produced several recommendations that the Executive Committee has accepted and implemented change?

Does he recognize the important role this Committee plays?

Will he consider sending the controlling group's budget to Overview and Scrutiny, as the Conservatives did prior, in order consideration and any recommendations can be made to Executive?

And if so can we have sufficient lead time for considerations to take place?

The Leader replied as follows:

Yes I would agree Overview and Scrutiny over the years has assisted the work of the Council and has an important role.

As in previous years Overview and Scrutiny will have the opportunity to review the proposed budgets during the period from December 2013 – January 2014 prior to Full Council final approval in February 2014.

The Director of Finance will present the financial position during this time to ensure Overview and Scrutiny has the opportunity to review any bids or savings that may be proposed.

Last year, when I was Leader, the budget was considered by Overview and Scrutiny in January 2013 and February 2013. This was due to the lateness of the financial settlement from Central Government which prevented earlier consideration which otherwise would have been considered in December 2013.

There was no supplementary question.

57. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

No motions had been submitted.

58. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Council considered the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 17th September 2013. With respect to the recommendation from the Committee in relation to Executive Committee Minute 52 – Options for 54 South Street (Previous REDI Centre) – amended recommendations were circulated following contact from a community group seeking to register the property as an Asset of Community Value.

(The Council adjourned at 7.52pm to allow Members the time to consider the amended recommendations. The Council reconvened at 8.00pm)

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 17th September 2013 be received and all recommendations adopted, subject to in respect of Minute 52 - Options for 54 South Street (Previous REDI Centre), it being RESOLVED that

- 1) prior to any action being taken on the recommendations at 2 and 3 below, Executive Committee consider the application for 54 South Street to be registered as an Asset of Community Value;**
- 2) in the event of any community groups not being successful in submitting an appropriate business case for the property (within 6 months of being notified of the intention to sell) that it be marketed for disposal; and**
- 3) the Head of Finance and Resources agree the final details of any sale, following the receipt of any bids / expressions of interest, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management.**

59. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Members received the minutes of recent meetings of the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 28th August and 25th September 2013 be received and adopted.

60. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

There were no Urgent Decisions to note.

61. 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 8.21 pm

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Chair