

Council

27th January 2014

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, Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy, Adam Griffin, 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 N Stote (Save the Alex Campaign)

Officers:

K Dicks, C Felton, S Hanley, K-L Johnson, S Jones, S Mould and S Sellers

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

73. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Brenda Quinney.

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

75. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

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

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Chair

76. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

i) Craig Prentice-Underwood

The Mayor informed the Council of the very sad death before Christmas of Craig Prentice-Underwood. Members were reminded that Craig's parents, Robert and Margaret, had founded and been tireless campaigners for the Redditch Heart Safe Charity following the death of their daughter, Charlotte, three years previously. A letter of condolence had been sent to the family in response to this tragic loss.

ii) Special Council – 10th March 2013

The Mayor formally advised the Council of the intention to call a special meeting of the Council on Monday 10th March 2014 at which consideration would be given to the conferring of the Freedom of the Borough upon 37 Signal Regiment which was based in the town.

iii) 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 a visit to the Alexandra Hospital on Christmas Day, a skittles evening with Redditch One World Link, the opening of a new Specsavers store, a Wassail event at Headless Cross Orchard, a Special Olympics event in Bromsgrove, a Black Country Night, also in Bromsgrove, the Holocaust Memorial Day Event in the Town Centre and a Redditch Special Olympics Awards Ceremony the previous weekend.

iv) Forthcoming Events

The Mayor advised that forthcoming events included a Charity Ball in Kidderminster, a Race Night in Evesham, an Inner Wheel Club Lunch at the Golf Club, a Mayoral Quiz at Stourport-on-Severn, the Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth Event at the Town Hall, a performance of The Merry Widow at the Palace Theatre and a sponsored climb of Ben Nevis by herself and Councillor Joe Baker.

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

i) Special Olympics Awards Ceremony

The Leader advised that he had attended a very enjoyable Special Olympics Awards evening the previous weekend at the Town Hall.

ii) Holocaust Memorial Event

On the preceding Saturday the Leader had attended the Holocaust Memorial Event and reported that it had been a very moving event, a highlight of which had been an address by Eva Clarke, the third Holocaust survivor to have addressed the Redditch event over the years.

iii) Meadow Hill Road House Fire

The Leader advised the Council of his wish to recognise Mr Naheem Akhtar for his heroism in helping his neighbours to escape from a recent house fire on Meadow Hill Road.

iv) Save the Alex Campaign

The Leader advised the Council that the Save the Alex campaign had achieved a tremendous success in helping to retain Accident and Emergency Services at the Alexandra Hospital, although this was tempered by the uncertain future for a number of other key services, such as a consultant-led Maternity Service. The Leader placed on record his gratitude to the Chief Executive, Kevin Dicks, and his Personal Assistant, Susan Tasker, for their work in helping to coordinate efforts to protect hospital services and also to the Save the Alex Campaign Group.

Councillor Carole Gandy added her thanks to those of the Leader and included a number of additional individuals who had helped the cause, including other local Council Leaders, the local MP and the Chair of the local Clinical Commissioning Group.

Mr Neale Stote was invited to address the Council on behalf of the Save the Alex Campaign. Whilst the Group was pleased at the recent good news, there was concern over the effect on the Birmingham Women's Hospital and the Worcester Royal Infirmary of proposed maternity changes. Given that there was still considered to be a risk of down-grading services at the Alex, the Group was committed to continue fighting to retain the current status of the Hospital and its services.

77. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

No questions had been submitted.

78. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

No Motions had been submitted.

79. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Council considered the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee held on 10th December 2013 and 14th January 2014.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 10th December 2013 be received and all recommendations adopted subject to, in relation to Minute 96 (Options for Threadneedle House) it being noted that Officers were to provide Councillor Michael Braley with clarification as to whether the Post Office would remain on site as a continuing tenant of either a new owner or the Council in the event of a sale of the site; and**
- 2) **the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 14th January 2014 be received and all recommendations adopted subject to,**
 - i) **in relation to Minute 113 (Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2014/15), it being further RESOLVED that**

the seventh bullet point in the main features of the Council Tax Hardship Fund as listed in Paragraph 1 (Background) of the Policy be clarified to provide that new applicants for funding can apply and be considered on a case by case basis as and when they become eligible for Council Tax Support; and
 - ii) **in relation to Minute 115 (Polling Districts and Polling Places – 2013/14 Review), it being further RESOLVED that**

the new Polling District (BYD) referred to at Recommendation 1 b) be named Brockhill East.

80. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Members received the minutes of a number of recent meetings of the Council's Regulatory Committees.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 20th November and 18th December 2013 be received and adopted.

81. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Council considered a decision that had been taken under its urgency procedures in respect of a decision to not Defend Elements of the Reasons for Refusing a Planning Application at a Planning Appeal in order to Mitigate the Reputational and Financial Risk to the Council.

There was considerable discussion around the determination of the original application at the Planning Committee and the subsequent decision to not defend the decision at appeal. It was suggested that the agreement to not defend the decision, albeit on the advice of Counsel, would render the Borough vulnerable to further appeals from large developers in the expectation that future appeals might not be defended when applications were refused against the recommendations of Officers. This was considered pertinent in view of a number of potential applications expected in and around the Borough in coming years. There was also consideration given to whether the refusal was indefensible as Counsel had suggested and to what extent efforts could have been made to obtain evidence to support the Council's position. Officers made it clear that the decision in this case was an isolated example which had been taken in the unusual circumstance of the Council being informed that the case was considered indefensible and that very substantial costs might be awarded against the authority.

It was generally agreed that members of the Planning Committee should be offered as much training as could reasonably be provided but Planning Committee members were also reminded that they had every opportunity to ascertain from Officers the recommended reasons for refusal or approval of any application prior to a decision being reached at such meetings.

RESOLVED that

the decision be noted.

(The Council adjourned at 8.26pm for a comfort break. The Council reconvened at 8.30pm)

82. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL

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

The Meeting commenced at 7.02 pm
and closed at 8.43 pm

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Chair