

Council

Monday, 20 October 2014

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Pat Witherspoon (Mayor), and Councillors Joe Baker, Roger Bennett, Rebecca Blake, Michael Braley, Andrew Brazier, Natalie Brookes, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy, Bill Hartnett, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Alan Mason, Phil Mould, Jane Potter, Mark Shurmer, Rachael Smith, Yvonne Smith, David Thain, John Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford

Also Present:

Reverend Paul Lawlor, Mayor's Celebrant

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering, Claire Felton, Clare Flanagan and Sheena Jones

Committee Services Officer:

Rosemary Cole

37. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Pattie Hill, Paul Swansborough and Debbie Taylor.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

39. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15th September 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

40. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Chair

a) Mayor

The Mayor's communications and announcements were as follows:

i) Former Councillor and Mayor of the Borough, Arthur Price

The Mayor referred to the recent death of former Councillor Arthur Price who had also been Mayor of the Borough in 1985.

The Leader paid tribute to former Councillor Price who had been particularly active as a Councillor in the areas of Education, the Police and Justice and who had worked as a volunteer with Victim Support. The Leader stated he had written a letter of condolence to Mrs Price on behalf of the Council.

Those present stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect to former Councillor Price.

ii) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that since the last meeting of the Council she had attended a number of engagements including "Ride for Rory" at the Alexandra Hospital; a number of MacMillan Coffee mornings, Service of celebration for Worcestershire NHS staff at Worcester Cathedral; Diversity Conference at the Town Hall; a Charity bag pack at Morrisons; and Headless Cross Community Orchard Apple Day. The Mayor also thanked fellow Councillors for their support for her charity Hoedown Barn Dance which had been a great success and thanked her Deputy Mayor, Pattie Hill for standing in for her when she was unable to attend an event.

iii) Forthcoming Engagements

The Mayor advised that her forthcoming engagements included League of Friends at the Alexandra Hospital; Caribbean Roots Celebration Evening; Worcestershire Sports Award Evening; the Redditch Fireworks Event and the Armistice Day Parade and Remembrance Day event.

b) Leader's Announcements

i) West Mercia Police Discussion

The Leader referred to the useful discussion session with West Mercia Police which had taken place immediately before the start of this meeting. The discussion had emphasised the importance of partnership working between the Borough and the Police. The Leader thanked Members for their attendance.

ii) NEW College Awards Ceremony

The Leader reported that together with the Mayor and Councillor John Witherspoon he had attended the NEW College Awards Ceremony. There was a great deal of good work going on at the College.

iii) Business Leaders' Theme Group

The Leader informed Members that the first meeting of the new Business Leaders' Theme group had been very successful. The Group comprised 5 members from the business and volunteer sectors and 5 Local Authority Members. Discussions had included the "Eastern Gateway"

iv) Alexandra Hospital

The Leader reported that together with the Council Leaders from Bromsgrove and Stratford he had written to the Chairs of University Hospital Birmingham and the CCG and to the Health Minister requesting the reversal of the decision to refuse certain treatments to patients from Redditch.

v) World Class Worcestershire

The Leader had attended an event at the Chateau Impney designed to showcase and promote the many excellent products and attractions of Worcestershire.

vi) Head of Community Services

The Leader formally congratulated Judith Willis on her appointment to the post of Head of Community Services.

41. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

No questions had been submitted.

42. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

1. Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management

The following Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Roger Bennett and seconded by Councillor D. Thain:

"The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee have received a report from the Auditors, Grant Thornton, who have issued a cautionary note to this Council.

This report has exposed weaknesses in the controlling Group's long term financial planning identifying:

1. An absence of an up to date sustainable 3-5 year medium term financial plan;
2. Lack of robust plans to deliver the required savings to balance the budget;
3. Planned use of reserves to fund recurrent expenditure.

We call for the resignation of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management with immediate effect.

We demand on behalf of the tax payers of Redditch that the controlling group prioritise financial planning to ensure this Council has a sustainable medium term financial plan as soon as possible”.

In proposing this Motion, Councillor Bennett expressed concern that the difficult financial situation was not being adequately addressed by the controlling Group and that there appeared to be a lack of understanding of the financial position of the Authority and of the need to take difficult decisions on where savings would be made.

Councillor Bennett stated that a clear plan was required in order to make the required savings and that it was unsatisfactory to include such high levels of unidentified savings within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Many other Local Authorities were in a similar situation in that they were required to make significant savings and they were able to produce a Medium Term Financial Plan for a three year period. The setting of a budget for one year was not satisfactory and this had been recognised by the Council's Auditors.

In responding to the Motion, the Leader stated that a decision had been taken in February 2014 to set a one year budget and to reconsider the position further later in the year with a view to considering a detailed financial plan for the period to the end of 2016/17. Councillor Brunner had been at the meeting of the Executive Committee when this approach had been agreed. There would be a report to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Leader reminded Members that the Auditors had signed off the accounts and had recognised that the savings unidentified at the time had in fact been achieved.

There was detailed discussion on the approach to be taken in addressing the very significant reduction in funding received from Central Government in recent years. Reference was also made to the stringent reductions in expenditure introduced by Worcestershire County Council and the likely impact of this on service users.

Councillor John Fisher stated that he would not resign as Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management. Councillor Fisher stated that the Medium Term Financial Plan would be based on savings to be achieved in innovative and effective ways through work on Transformation of Services and Service Reviews. The intention was to protect and improve services and to support staff in making necessary changes rather than to achieve savings by making arbitrary cuts which would damage services.

The Notice of Motion was the subject of the following named vote in accordance with Procedure rule 17.7:

Members voting FOR the Motion:

Councillors Roger Bennett, Michael Braley, Andrew Brazier, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Brandon Clayton, Carole Gandy, Gay Hopkins, Jane Potter and David Thain. (10)

Members voting AGAINST the Motion:

Councillors Joe Baker, Rebecca Blake, Natalie Brookes, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Wanda King, Alan Mason, Phil Mould, Mark Shurmer, Rachael Smith, Yvonne Smith, John Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford (15)

Abstentions:

None

The Mayor therefore declared the Motion to be LOST

2. World Mental Health Day

(Councillor Michael Braley sat in the seating provided for the public during this item and did not participate in it).

A Notice of Motion had been had been submitted by Councillor Rebecca Blake in respect of World Mental Health Day 2014. This was seconded by Councillor Bill Hartnett.

In proposing the Motion Councillor Blake referred to the work undertaken by the voluntary sector, businesses and statutory services over the past eighteen months within the Borough to address mental health issues and to improve awareness.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Hartnett played tribute to the work of volunteers and support groups within the Borough who had highlighted mental health issues. There was a need to work in partnership to achieve the best outcomes.

Councillor Juliet Brunner supported the Motion and referred to the work of the Redditch Mental Health Action Group who had worked to change attitudes to mental health issues.

Councillor Brunner proposed the following addition to the wording of the Motion which was accepted by the Proposer and Seconder:

“that Redditch Borough Council refer a request for a review of the delivery and outcomes of Mental Health Services in Redditch to Worcestershire County Council’s Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee”

During the debate, Members supported the Motion and it was highlighted that most people would know someone who was affected by mental health issues or would be affected themselves at some stage.

It was

RESOLVED that

The Motion be agreed in the following terms:

- (a) **“That Redditch Borough Council supports the town wide pledge to mark World Mental Health Day 2014.**

‘We believe mental health matters and want to see it given as much attention, time and investment as physical health.

We believe a new way of delivering services is needed and the system needs to be radically overhauled to ensure help is given in a timely and appropriate manner and no-one is forgotten.

We believe this is not the responsibility of any one organisation and must be done together with everyone including patients to get the services Redditch needs and deserves.

We believe the time to act is now’; and

- (b) **That a request be referred for a review of the delivery and outcomes of Mental Health Services in Redditch to Worcestershire County Council’s Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee ”**

43. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

The Council received the minutes of recent meetings of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committees and the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meetings of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on 3rd July 2014 and 25th September 2014 be received and adopted ;
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 8th October 2014 be received and adopted.

44. POLITICAL BALANCE

Members received the report of the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services setting out a revised political balance of the Council following the establishment of a new Political Group on the Council

Members' attention was drawn to an amendment to the report, in that the additional seat to be appointed to by the Redditch Democratic alliance was in respect of a place on the Licensing Committee rather than the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Political balance of the Committees of the Council be agreed as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report; and
- 2) the appointment by the Redditch Democratic Alliance to the place on the Licensing Committee be noted.

45. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

There were no urgent decisions to note.

46. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL

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