

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

Jack Carradine, Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley and Jayne Pickering

Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

29. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors David Bush, Matthew Dormer and Nina Wood-Ford.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Anita Clayton and Jennifer Wheeler declared other disclosable interests in Minute Item No. 37 in their capacity as the Council's representatives appointed to the Redditch Town Centre Partnership.

31. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 25th July 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

.....
Chair

32. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) The Mayor

The Mayor advised that he had participated in a number of civic events and activities in recent months which included the following:

- Hosting a civic celebration which had been attended by over 100 people and which followed a diversity walk in the town.
- A visit to Gruchet-le-Valasse in September, where all participants had been made to feel very welcome.
- The annual Scarecrow Day at Forge Mill Needle Museum in August.
- The Redditch Bandstand Event which had been well attended.
- Attending a barbecue at the Polish Club.
- An event at the Abbey Hotel for the 216 Redditch Air Cadets Squadron.

b) The Leader

The Leader reiterated the Mayor's comments in respect of a number of local community events which they had both attended. In addition praise was extended to all Paralympians who had performed really well in Rio, including Claire Cashmore, a Paralympian swimmer from Redditch who had won a gold medal. An event would take place at County Hall to mark the achievements of all Worcestershire Paralympians. The Leader had also attended an event at the local Gudwara and an invitation had been extended for all Members to attend Diwali celebrations at Ridgeway Academy on 30th October.

During the meeting reference was made to the following matters which Councillor Hartnett was involved with in his capacity as Leader of the Council:

- Campaign work to improve rail services for Redditch, in respect of both the fares and timetable. The option for an express train from Redditch to Birmingham would be considered as part of this process.
- The arrival of a fifth Syrian family in Redditch who had been welcomed.
- The receipt of a letter from the Mayor of Orlando, in the United States of America, thanking the Council for their condolences following the shootings in a nightclub in June 2016.

- Meetings with representatives of Worcestershire County Council to discuss safety measures for Muskets Way Bridge.
- Discussions with the MP and Worcestershire County Council about future funding for the Redditch Bike Race. There was the possibility that some County Councillors would contribute funding from divisional funds, though additional finances would need to be sourced, including from the business sector.

More detailed information was provided in respect of a number of matters. This included further information about the Redditch Health Commission which the Leader advised was in the process of being organised. Representatives from the Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust had been invited to attend a public meeting to outline their proposals for the future of acute services and their consultation process. Subsequent meetings would provide an opportunity for the public to contribute to proceedings. The dates of these meetings had not yet been confirmed, though would take place in late November at the earliest. Responses had been received in writing from University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) and the Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. The written correspondence from UHB had highlighted the option for joint scrutiny of the proposals about acute hospital services, which could be undertaken by the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny (HOSC) with representatives of Birmingham HOSC and Herefordshire HOSC. The Leader advised that he would be supportive of this proposal.

Prior to the Health Commission meetings the Leader would be participating as Co-Chair in a public consultation event about local health services which had been organised by Karen Lumley MP. This meeting, due to take place at the Town Hall on the evening of 28th September, had originally focused on changes to Paediatric Services in Worcestershire, though had since been extended to focus on a range of matters involving the Alexandra Hospital. The meeting would also be open to public attendance.

During consideration of the Leader's Announcements Members paid tribute to Mrs Ida Parkinson, the first Macmillan nurse in Worcestershire, who had sadly passed away. Mrs Parkinson had received the Douglas Macmillan award in 2011 in recognition for her lifetime achievements and she had been instrumental in helping to establish the Primrose Hospice. Members agreed that a letter should be sent by the Leader and Mayor on behalf of the Council to Mrs Parkinson expressing Members' condolences. As a further mark of

respect Members observed a moment's silence in memory of Mrs Parkinson.

33. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no questions on notice.

34. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

A Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Juliet Brunner in respect of Social Media Training. This was seconded by Councillor Anita Clayton.

In proposing the Motion Councillor Brunner explained that social media had revolutionised the ways in which people could communicate with each other and the speed at which this could take place. Social media could also be used by elected Members to communicate with local residents. Councillors who used social media to communicate with residents and other stakeholders needed to ensure that they did so in a morally responsible manner and were mindful of requirements set out in the Malicious Communications Act.

The previous week the Positive Activities Group, a sub-group of the Redditch Partnership chaired by Councillor Brunner and comprising representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), had been consulted by the Mental Health Services for Young People Task Group. During discussions at this meeting it had become apparent that social media use was having an impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in particular. To help address this Councillor Brunner suggested that the Council should lead by example in the way that elected Members used social media.

In seconding the Motion Councillor Clayton reiterated the need for elected Members to lead by example in their use of social media. Councillor Clayton reminded Members that unfortunately she had been subjected to bullying on social media earlier in the year and this experience had been upsetting. To avoid distressing others when using social media it was important to ensure that careful consideration was given to messages that were communicated on these platforms.

Once the original Motion had been presented Councillor John Fisher proposed an amendment to the wording of the Motion. This amendment removed the final paragraph of the original Motion and replaced it with the following sentence; "*The Council will provide suitable training on the appropriate use of social media*". This amendment was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

In proposing the amendment Councillor Fisher noted that social media was relatively new as a communications tool and all Members needed to be aware of appropriate ways to communicate on social media when using these facilities. Online abuse was not acceptable and people needed to ensure that they did not upset others through their behaviour or the language they used on social media. In the event that a Member felt that another Member had used abusive language on social media this could be addressed through the Council's standards procedures. There was the potential for training to be provided to Members in respect of social media and this could be discussed further at a meeting of the Member Development Steering Group. However, Councillor Fisher suggested that the original wording of the Motion could be improved and that a similar message would be conveyed more effectively using the amended wording.

In seconding the amendment Councillor Chance concurred that social media needed to be used responsibly and that abusive language was unacceptable. The amended wording would help to convey the benefits of attending training in respect of social media and of ensuring that Members used these communication tools responsibly.

The amendment was considered by Members and following brief discussions the amendment was agreed by the Council.

RESOLVED that

the Motion be agreed in the following terms:

“Social Media (SM) is now an integral part of the fabric of our society. It is overwhelmingly a force for good but can be used inappropriately.

The Council will provide suitable training on the appropriate use of social media.”

35. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 13th September 2016. There were a number of recommendations to be debated which were discussed as follows:

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants

There was general consensus amongst Members that the Council's grants programme was valuable and should continue to be funded. However, different views were expressed about the proposal for any underspends in the grants at the end of any year to be put back into balances. On the one hand concerns were raised that this would represent a reduction in funding for VCS organisations which

were struggling to secure funding from other sources in difficult economic circumstances. As an alternative it was suggested that any unspent funds could be placed in reserves earmarked for use in the grants process. On the other hand it was noted that every effort was made to promote the various rounds of the grant process and that the Council wanted to ensure that the funds were made available to VCS groups. By following the Shopping, Investing and Giving (SIG) model of funding it was anticipated that all funds would be used to support the Voluntary Sector. In cases where there had been unspent funds in previous years this had either been a very low number or had occurred due to exceptional circumstances involving the closure of an organisation in receipt of funding.

The availability of support for the grants process was also discussed. There had been no Grants Officer at the Council for some time. The potential to recruit to this post would be investigated further over the coming months.

ICT Infrastructure Resource

During debate on this item clarification was provided which confirmed that this decision would apply to two specific posts only and not to the whole of the shared ICT team.

Efficiency Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20

The Government had offered local authorities an opportunity to sign up to four year financial plans and the majority of Councils had accepted this offer. The content of the Council's proposed Efficiency Plan was similar to that for other Councils. This did not mean that the Council accepted the concept of the negative grant position, whereby the authority would need to pay the Government from a set date. The Council would continue to work the Local Government Association (LGA) in an attempt to challenge this.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 13th September 2016 be received and all recommendations adopted.

36. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

The Council received the minutes from meetings of the Planning and Licensing Committees:

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 13th July and 10th August 2016 be received and adopted; and**

- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 18th July 2016 be received and adopted.

37. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Executive Committee's decisions in respect of the application from the Redditch Town Centre Partnership (RTCP) for discretionary rate relief (DRR) under the Localism Act 2011 for premises in The Quadrant, Redditch, were noted in accordance with the Council's Urgency Procedure Rules.

RESOLVED that

the decision be noted.

(During consideration of this item Councillors Anita Clayton and Jennifer Wheeler declared other discloseable interests in their capacity as the Council's representatives on the Redditch Town Centre Partnership).

38. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no general Urgent Business for discussion.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.09 pm