

Council

Monday, 24 July 2017

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Jennifer Wheeler (Mayor), Councillor Nina Wood-Ford (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Natalie Brookes, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Jane Potter, Antonia Pulsford, Rachael Smith, Yvonne Smith, Paul Swansborough and Pat Witherspoon

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Kevin Dicks and Sue Hanley

Committee Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

25. WELCOME

The Mayor announced the recent death of former Councillor and past Mayor, Mr Jack Cookson, and led the Council in paying tribute to him in a minute's silence. The Mayor expressed her condolences to the family and thanked them for taking the time to attend the meeting. Members were also provided with details of the funeral arrangements.

The Leader advised that the flag at the Town Hall had been flown at half-mast as a mark of respect and he led Members in remembering Mr Cookson. He noted that Mr Cookson had been one of the founders of, and had always attended, the Batchley Support Group's, "cool by the pool", and "yule by the school".

Councillor Juliette Brunner extended her Group's condolences to Mrs Cookson and her family stating that she had very fond memories of former Councillor Cookson and that he would be sadly missed by everyone who knew him.

The Mayor reminded Members that her chosen charities were St Basil's and Young Minds following the theme of mental health and wellbeing. The speaker for the meeting was the Council's Sports and Wellbeing Manager, who spoke on the positive impact that

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Chair

sport could have on mental health and wellbeing, together with the work that the Council was carrying out in this area. She took the opportunity to remind Members of the five ways to wellbeing and gave examples of how sports activities could contribute towards these. In particular she highlighted the Council's use of volunteers and how they helped to deliver services throughout the Council. Members were also provided with an insight into the Youth Coaching Pathway and how this had led to a number of young people going on to paid employment in their chosen career. Finally, Council was provided with information about a recent scheme of diversionary activities and how this had reduced the number of recorded anti-social behaviour incidents over the May half-term holiday period.

26. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Roger Bennett, David Bush, Matthew Dormer, Pattie Hill, Gareth Prosser and David Thain.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Jane Potter, Brandon Clayton and Andrew Fry declared an Other Disclosable Interest in Minute Item No. 35, West Mercia Fire and Rescue Governance Consultation, as Members of the Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Authority.

Members discussed the approach that should be taken in respect of this interest and commented that when this item had been discussed at other local authorities the consensus had been that it was not necessary to withdraw from discussions. There was also the suggestion that it would have been helpful to provide the relevant Members with a dispensation in advance of the meeting, through the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, to allow them to take part in the debate. The Chief Executive reminded Members that officers had given advice on the information before them but ultimately the decision was for each individual Member to make.

Following further discussion it was confirmed that Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Jane Potter, Brandon Clayton and Andrew Fry would withdraw from the meeting during consideration of Minute Item No. 35.

28. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 19TH JUNE 2017

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Monday 19th June 2017 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

29. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised on the following events which she had attended since the last meeting of the Council:

- The Annual General Meeting of the Samaritans
- Armed Services Day
- Civic services at both Bewdley and Broadway.
- The Worcester University Children's University presentation event at the RSA Academy where the Mayor had presented certificates.
- The Astwood Bank Carnival, at which the Mayor had judged the floats.
- Redditch Music Festival and Bandstand event.
- The opening of the new Range store in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre.

The Mayor had also attended a number of charity events and took the opportunity to thank the Deputy Mayor for attending those events she had been unable to attend.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised that he had attended a number of civic events alongside the Mayor. In addition the Leader also highlighted the following in his announcements:

- Redditch Has Talent at the Place Theatre which had been most successful. The Leader took the opportunity to thank Councillor Gareth Prosser for awarding the prizes to the category winners.
- The Leader expressed his disappointment in the announcement of the Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Groups' (CCGs') findings after the lengthy review of acute hospital services and confirmed that the CCGs were going ahead with the proposed plans. He suggested that this did not address the projected increase in housing developments in Redditch, Bromsgrove and Stratford and the trust's financial deficit would continue. The Leader remained of the view that

the Council's Health Commission was correct in the position it had taken.

- The Leader had recently attended the LGA Conference and had participated in a workshop called "World Merit". The Leader explained that, with the agreement of the Chief Executive, the Council would sign up to be a "bronze level" World Merit Council (at no financial cost to the authority).

c) Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive confirmed that he had no announcements to make for the meeting.

30. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9.2) (IF ANY)

There were no Questions on Notice.

31. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

A Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Tom Baker-Price in respect of support for Care Leavers making the transition to living independently.

Whilst presenting this Notice of Motion Councillor Baker-Price explained to Members that after giving further consideration to it, he felt that as this was such an important matter it was unfair to expect Members to be able to make a decision without receiving more detailed information on the matter and he suggested that a report could be prepared to provide Members with the full facts. Councillor Baker-Price concluded by proposing that the motion be withdrawn.

The Notice of Motion was withdrawn under item 13.8 of the Council Procedure Rules and no further debate took place.

32. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH JULY 2017

Council Housing Allocation Policy 2017

It was highlighted that the consultation responses in respect of the housing Allocations Policy had been tabled for Members' information and included officer responses. The Council's policy took into account both waiting times and need.

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

The policy had been updated to take into account recent legislative changes.

Shared Planning Policy and Conservation Service Business Case

Members were reminded that this had been considered and approved at both Shared Services Board and the Executive Committee. Whilst the business case contained exempt information this had been considered in public session by the Executive Committee and the same approach was adopted at Council.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11th July 2017 be received and all recommendations adopted.

33. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

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

Members' attention was drawn to the minute extract from the Licensing Committee meeting held on 17th July 2017 and a recommendation in respect of the Equality Act 2010. Councillor Pat Witherspoon, Chairman of Licensing Committee, spoke in support of the recommendation and explained that the creation of a register of wheelchair accessible taxis would enable the Council to better understand the needs of users and the availability of vehicles. Members also welcomed progress with a matter which had been reviewed as part of a scrutiny investigation in 2016.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meeting held on 27th April 2017 be received and adopted;**
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 14th June 2017 be received and adopted; and**
- 3) Council adopts the draft position statement with respect to sections 165-167 of the Equality Act 2010.**

34. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION 2017

The Leader introduced this report and in so doing informed Members that the Council reviewed the Constitution on an annual basis. On this occasion there were a number of small changes and the relevant sections of the Constitution were attached to the report with full copies being available in the Group Rooms and Democratic Services.

Concerns were raised that the amendments were being considered without prior consideration by the Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP), which would have allowed the points to be discussed in detail. It was noted that the CRWP had not met for over 12 months and a recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee remained to be considered.

The Leader explained that in some cases amendments had been agreed by the Executive Committee and in others changes had been made under delegated powers, following consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders. The amendments were small and were brought before the Council to allow Members to discuss them.

Following further discussion a request was made for the question to be put to the vote and therefore no further debate took place.

RESOLVED that

the Council's Constitution as presented be approved.

35. WEST MERCIA FIRE AND RESCUE GOVERNANCE - CONSULTATION

The Leader provided Members with background information to this item explaining that he had been contacted by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in respect of a consultation on proposed changes to the governance arrangements for both Shropshire and the Hereford and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Services. Whilst the Council was not a statutory consultee and Members were able to respond individually in their own right, the Leader suggested it would be appropriate for Council to debate the proposals and provide a formal response to the PCC. There were three options highlighted within the papers before Members:

1. To sustain the current trajectory, whereby existing governance arrangements remain in place.
2. A single employer model, whereby the two Fire and Rescue Services would be merged with the West Mercia Police to create a single organisation that would be subject to its own governance arrangements.
3. Joint governance arrangements, whereby the PCC would become the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) for both the Fire and Rescue Services and the West Mercia Police and the Fire and Rescue Authorities would cease to exist.

The Leader expressed the view that option 1 was the only viable option available due to a lack of detailed information within the documentation, particularly in respect of the business case and the suggested savings. There was also the possibility of staff

redundancies and the added pressure on existing staff to maintain full services should the other options be considered.

Councillor Hartnett therefore proposed and Councillor Chance seconded the following recommendation:

“having considered the document Council recommends to the PCC to sustain the current trajectory, whereby existing governance arrangements remain in place.”

Councillor Brunner put forward a proposal requesting that the item be deferred until the Council was in receipt of further information to enable Members to make an informed decision. Worcestershire County Council had deferred the item and had agreed with the PCC for a submission to be made after the deadline and it was suggested a similar approach could be adopted in Redditch. It was also proposed that the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee be asked to grant those Members with an other disclosable interest in respect of this item a dispensation to allow them to participate in any debate in respect of this matter.

The Leader highlighted that the Members concerned had made the decision to not take part in the debate following earlier discussions and advice from Officers. The Council was not a statutory consultee but the item had been brought forward to allow Council to debate the subject and put forward a collective view. Members were still able to respond to the consultation individually. The proposal to defer the matter was therefore rejected.

Councillor Brunner subsequently proposed an amendment which was then tabled for Members' information. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Chalk:

“This Council requires more information to make an informed response to the consultation on the Police and Crime Commissioner’s proposed changes to governance arrangements for the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Authority and West Mercia Police.

This Council will,

- 1. Request from Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Authority a copy of the independent consultant’s paper they have commissioned reporting on the impact of the PCC’s proposed changes to governance for the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority and West Mercia Police.*
- 2. This Council, as a non-statutory respondent in this consultation, delegates to the Executive to respond on behalf of Council at its next meeting in September.*

3. *Request that the PCC accept a response from this Council after the close of the consultation.*
4. *This Council shares the Shire leaders' concerns regarding the lack of detail of the proposed savings in the Police and Crime Commissioner's business case."*

In bringing forward her proposal Councillor Brunner informed Members that there was insufficient information within the papers provided for Council to make a decision. Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Services had commissioned their own consultants in light of the proposals and it was suggested that it would be helpful for Members to consider this before agreeing a response.

A vote was taken on the proposed amendment and it was declared lost.

Following further debate the substantive recommendation was considered.

RESOLVED that

having considered the West Mercia Fire and Rescue Governance consultation Pack Council recommends that the West Mercia PCC sustains the current trajectory, whereby existing governance arrangements remain in place.

(Prior to consideration of this matter Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Brandon Clayton, Andrew Fry and Jane Potter declared an other disclosable interest and left room for this time taking no part in the debate or the voting thereon.)

36. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

There were no urgent decisions to note.

37. 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 8.38 pm