

Council

Monday, 25 June 2007

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor David Hunt (Mayor), Councillor Jack Field (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors P Anderson, K Banks, I Beech, K Boyd-Carpenter, M Braley, J Brunner, M Chalk, G Chance, B Clayton, J Cookson, D Dudley, D Enderby, A Fry, C Gandy, M Hall, W Hartnett, N Hicks, P Hill, R King, W King, C MacMillan, P Mould, B Passingham, M Shurmer, D Smith, D Taylor and D Thomas

Officers:

H Halls, S Hanley, S Mullins, S Skinner, C Smith, and J Smith

Also Present:

Deacon Tony Martin, the Mayor's Chaplain

Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

24. MAYOR'S WELCOME

The Mayor opened the meeting, welcomed all present and invited his Chaplain, the Deacon Tony Martin to lead the Council in Prayer.

25. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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Chair

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on the 21st of May 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

28. COMMUNICATIONS AND MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor's communications and announcements were considered under the following headings:

a) Bob Wilson

The Mayor advised Members of the very sad death of Bob Wilson, husband of former Mayor and Councillor Pat Wilson and father of former Councillor Sarah Sulley. Condolences had been sent to the family.

b) Mayoral Engagements

The Mayor advised that, since the previous meeting of the Council, he had attended various functions, including: a very successful and enjoyable Twinning Visit to Auxerre; the Green Fair at St. Stephen's Church; The Fire Station Open Day; the Licensing of a new Team Vicar; the Festival of Live Arts; the Cancer Research "Relay for Life", the re-launch of the Salvation Army's Charity Shop; the official opening of Poole Place underpass; the State of the Borough Conference; and the Wheels Presentation Event.

c) Forthcoming engagements

The Mayor advised that forthcoming engagements included the opening of Redditch's Travelodge Hotel; a concert by the Bel Canto singers; the opening of the Rainbow Club; the Local Heroes Award Ceremony at the Palace Theatre; and the Annual League of Friends of the Alex Summer Fete.

d) Urgent Business

The Mayor advised that he had accepted one item of Urgent Business: the additional late question in relation to Dingleside School from Mr T Wareing.

The Mayor had also agreed to accept the following late documents:

- i) the Decision Notice from the Executive Committee's 13th of June 2007 meeting, which included recommendations that required decisions in order to meet deadlines;
- ii) Additional Papers 1 and 2; and
- iii) a number of Constitutional documents.

29. MATTERS ARISING - COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS / NOMINATIONS ETC.

The agenda had included reference to a number of matters arising from the appointments and nominations made at the Council's Annual Meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Council's representatives on the Worcestershire Race Equality Council be amended and now confirmed as Councillors Shurmer and R King;**
- 2) the legal advice that had been received stating that the nomination of Mr D Cartwright to the REDI Trust was acceptable be noted; and**
- 3) the following appointments to the Grants Assessment Panel be noted:**

Councillors Hall (Chair), Anderson, Braley, Chance and Hill.

30. LEADERS' QUESTIONS

The Leader responded to a number of questions which had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order 8A, namely:

- a) Planning and Development
(Mr C T Wareing)

Mr Wareing's question related to a number of possible developments within the Borough and the need to provide an adequate associated infrastructure.

The Leader responded that a significant expansion of housing within the Borough which, he pointed out, had not been proposed by the Council, would certainly be a mistake without the necessary development of associated infrastructure.

The Council had offered to construct the Bordesley By-Pass in connection with the Abbey Stadium Development, demonstrating the Council's responsible attitude to the provision of such infrastructure.

Sadly, it appeared that the Abbey Stadium development that had been proposed by Atlantic Beacon would not be coming to fruition and that, consequently, the Council's fall-back scheme would be adopted.

b) Budget Overspends
(Councillor J Brunner)

Councillor Brunner's question related to a contention that the Council had overspent on its 2006/07 budget and that this had been alleviated by a change in the treatment of Capital Charges.

The Leader replied that the Council did not overspend on its General Fund Budget for 2006/07. In fact the report of the Head of Financial Services to the Executive Committee on the 13th of June had clearly stated that the budget had been underspent by £487,000 of which only £1,000 had been from Capital Charges. The Leader believed this was a good result for the Council.

The same report had also highlighted that all four Directorates had made savings against their approved budget, albeit that, at a Cost Centre or Service level, there had been some variances. All of the variances had again been highlighted within the report.

In response to questions regarding the adequacy of the financial reporting and compliance with the Constitution, the Leader indicated that Councillors had already raised this issue with Officers and the Borough Director had been asked to expedite this review to ensure improvements were made where possible and to ensure that, whatever reporting arrangements were ultimately agreed, compliance with the Constitution was assured. Alternatively, where issues could not be addressed, proposals to amend the Constitution would be brought forward as a matter of urgency.

c) Council Funding
(Councillor C MacMillan)

Councillor MacMillan's question related to the provision of a breakdown of the proportion of the Council's funding spent on front line services and that spent on overheads and administration.

In response, the Leader indicated that the answer to this question clearly depended upon the interpretation of "overheads and administration". For the purposes of his answer the Leader had assumed that it meant Central Support Costs such as Finance, Legal, and Human Resources costs, etc.

The Leader advised that , of the £48,500,000 Gross Expenditure referred to in the 2006/07 Statement of Accounts presented to Council that evening, the overhead and administration costs amounted to £4,300,000. This meant that the cost of the Direct Services amounted to £44,200,000 and therefore the overhead costs equated to approximately 10%.

The Council's Council Tax revenue for 2006/07 had been £4,800,000. This clearly only supported 10% of the gross expenditure. Of this, 10% went to support Administration and Overhead costs. The Council did not allocate funding to individual services but funded any service deficits in the summary accounts.

Unfortunately comparisons with previous years were problematic because of changes to accounting practices / presentation. Officers were to be asked to provide the additional information in due course.

d) Our Education System
(Mr C T Wareing)

Mr Wareing's question related to a proposal by the County Council that Dingleside Middle School be closed.

The Leader concurred that a decision to close Dingleside Middle School would have an adverse impact on the Woodrow area and that, sadly, it appeared that the decision to close had already been made in principle.

The Leader was to work alongside his County Council colleague for the Arrow Valley West Division to ensure that the parents of children who were being educated at

Dingleside were not “trampled underfoot” by the County Council. All steps would be taken to ensure that parents were given the necessary assistance to transport their children to alternative schools, that the best possible time was chosen for such a closure to take place and that staff were given the necessary support to prevent a collapse in their morale.

As an indication of the action that was being taken in this respect, the Leader advised that he was to meet representatives of the County Council Education Department the following day.

31. NOTICE OF MOTION - REDDITCH STUDENT COUNCIL

Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor J Brunner in relation to the lack of representation on the Student Council of students attending Special Schools in the town. The matter had been drawn to the attention of the Councillor by the Head Teachers of the two schools concerned.

Members agreed unanimously with the Motion and it was proposed that the Student Council be requested to consider a change to its Constitution to enable representation on that body by students of the two Special Schools within the town. It was further proposed that the necessary measures be put in place prior to the next elections to the Student Council in January 2008, should the Student Council be amenable to the request from Council.

RESOLVED that

the Motion be approved in the following terms:

"At the present time, Redditch Student Council does not have any representation from Students attending Special Schools in the Town.

Redditch Borough Council seeks to address this and would offer the opportunity for young people from our Special Schools to be included as a matter of urgency.

Redditch Borough Council actively encourages inclusion and will task Officers to work with Redditch Student Council enabling students from all schools to be represented."

32. NOTICE OF MOTION - EXTENSION OF CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION SCHEME

Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor J Field in relation to the level of Anti Social Behaviour in Crabbs Cross and the desire of local Members for the installation of CCTV as a matter of urgency to combat this. It was noted that a number of Section 30 Dispersal Orders had been in place in Crabbs Cross in recent months and a fourth Order was due to commence in July.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety acknowledged that problems were being experienced in Crabbs Cross, particularly at the weekends, and it was suggested that a positive and constructive approach should be adopted.

A partnership approach was proposed, referring the matter to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Tasking Group, through which the appropriate agencies could co-ordinate a plan of action. Secondly, the Portfolio Holder proposed contacting the local Beat Officer and Police Community Support Officer. Finally it was suggested that the matter should be referred to the Community Safety Executive Panel. It was noted that this body might determine that one solution could be through the deployment of Mobile CCTV.

This overall approach received Members' support.

RESOLVED that

the Motion be approved in the following terms:

“Redditch Borough Council has extended CCTV across the town.

However Crabbs Cross does not currently benefit from this provision.

We believe that, with the level of Anti Social Behaviour in Crabbs Cross, CCTV should be installed as a matter of urgency to combat this.

We call on the Leader of the Council to bring forward the schedule for the extension of the CCTV programme so that this can be dealt with as soon as possible.”

33. DEPUTATION - REDDITCH ALLIANCE OF GREENS

In accordance with Standing Order 51, the Council received a deputation from the Redditch Alliance of Greens, an association of representatives from Redditch Trade Justice Network, Redditch Vegetarians and Vegans and Redditch Friends of the Earth.

Speaking for the Deputation, the Reverend Noel Sharp stated that the ostensible purpose of the Deputation was to invite Members to the screening of a film, "An Inconvenient Truth" at the Room Upstairs at the Palace Theatre on Thursday 6th September 2007.

Ms Diane Harrison, Mr Kevin White and Mr Alistair Waugh proceeded to expand on a number of aspects of the "Green agenda" which could be influenced by the Local Authority, making explicit reference to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change that had been formally signed by the Council in 2006.

The Mayor thanked the Deputation for their attendance.

34. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the 23rd of May 2007 be received and all recommendations approved; and**
- 2) the Executive Committee Decision Notice of the 13th of June 2007 be received and all recommendations approved, including, in respect of**

the agreement of revised fees and charges for Local Land Charges Services, as tabled on the update sheet circulated at the meeting and as detailed below:

BASIC FULL SEARCH (LLC1 + CON 29)	£124	£80
LLC1 ONLY (= Land Charges Register only)	6.00	11.00
CON 29 ONLY (= Supplementary Enquiries only) (including Worcestershire County Council fees of £12.00)	118.00	69.00
PART II OPTIONAL ENQUIRIES EACH [+ £6.00 if WCC Qu.]	10.00	5.00 [*11.00]
ADDITIONAL ENQUIRIES EACH [+ £6.00 if WCC Qu.]	14.00	5.00 [*11.00]
EACH ADDITIONAL PARCEL OF LAND	14.00	11.00
PERSONAL SEARCH	11.00	11.00
EXPEDITED SEARCH (24HR)	165.00	91.00
REFRESH SEARCH	N/A	15.00
COPY OF AGREEMENT	37.60	37.60

35. MINUTES OF REGULATORY COMMITTEES

The Council received the Minutes of the most recent meeting of the Planning Committee.

In respect of the general operation of the Committee, Officers were requested to provide a response to Members outlining the measures that could be taken by the Council to enforce the incorporation of environmentally friendly measures in applications that come before the Planning Committee for determination.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on the 22nd of May 2007 be received and adopted.

36. THE CORPORATE PLAN AND PERFORMANCE PLAN

The Council considered a report which detailed the Council's Corporate and Performance Plans for the period 2007 to 2010.

The Corporate and Performance Plan was agreed in principle but a number of Members expressed concern that insufficient opportunity had been provided to consider the report in detail. In consequence, it was agreed that the Plan be forwarded on to another body of the Council following the meeting for further consideration. Subject to these comments, it was

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Corporate and Performance Plan be approved; and**
- 2) Group Leaders, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, consider which body of the Council should review in detail the Corporate and Performance Plan in due course.**

37. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Council considered the Statement of Accounts for 2006/07.

Members raised similar concerns in relation to this report as they had for the previous item.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the 2006/07 Statement of Accounts be approved;**
- 2) a copy of the Statement be signed by the Mayor; and**
- 3) Group Leaders, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, consider which body of the Council should review in detail the Statement of Accounts in due course.**

38. AUTHORISATION OF OFFICERS

RESOLVED that

John Wilcox, Revenues Officer, be authorised to take Council Tax and Business Rate cases to the Magistrates' Court on behalf of the Council.

39. CONSTITUTION

RESOLVED that

the Council's current Constitution and associated documents (Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegation to Officers, Scheme of Members' Allowances, Codes and Protocols etc.) as now issued be endorsed.

40. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

Members noted two Urgent Business decision, which had been determined in accordance with Standing Order 36, namely:

EDMS (Electronic Document Management Service) – Anite (UB Reference 464) and

Purchase of Refuse Vehicles (UB Reference 465).

RESOLVED that

the matters be noted.

41. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There were no separate items of Urgent Business for consideration at this meeting.