

# Council

20 April 2009

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Jack Field (Mayor), Councillor Malcolm Hall (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors P Anderson, M Braley, J Brunner, M Chalk, G Chance, A Clayton, B Clayton, J Cookson, D Enderby, A Fry, C Gandy, W Hartnett, G Hopkins, D Hunt, R King, W King, C MacMillan, P Mould, W Norton, J Pearce, B Quinney, M Shurmer, D Smith, D Taylor and D Thomas

### Also Present:

D Andrews (Chair, standards Committee) and M Collins (Vice-Chair, Standards Committee)

### Officers:

S Mullins, S Skinner, Jackie Smith, K Dicks, S Hanley and H Halls

### Committee Services Officer:

I Westmore

### 136. WELCOME

The Mayor opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

### 137. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Banks and Hicks.

### 138. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Cookson, Hartnett, Pearce and Taylor declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 6 (Executive Committee – Decision Notice of the meeting of 1 April 2009) as detailed separately at Minute 141 below.

### 139. MINUTES

#### RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 6 April 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.**

.....  
Chair

## 140. COMMUNICATIONS AND MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

a) Former Borough Councillor Cyril Springall

The Mayor noted with regret the recent passing of former Borough Councillor and Deputy Mayor Cyril Springall. Members paid tribute and stood for one minute as a mark of respect to former Councillor Springall and also to former Councillor George Langston whose passing had been reported at the previous meeting of the Council.

b) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that since the previous meeting of the Council he had attended various functions, including: a service at St Leonard's Church in Beoley for visitors from Burg in Germany, the Kidderminster Charter Trustees Mayor's Springtime Ball and the Scout Association St. George's Day Parade and Service at St. Stephen's Church.

c) Forthcoming events

The Mayor advised that forthcoming events included; Studley Operatic Society's production of the "The Card" at the Palace Theatre, the Young Enterprise Awards Presentation evening at the Town Hall, Worcestershire County Council's Civic Service at the Church of St Philip and St James in Hallow, the Bromsgrove Civic Charity Dinner at Grafton Manor, the visit of a party from our twin town of Gruchet-le-Valasse and Barn Dance at the Town Hall and the Astwood Bank Carnival in May.

d) Urgent Business

The Mayor advised that he had accepted one additional item of "Urgent Business":

Item 11 – Urgent Business – Notice of Motion – Winter Utility Bills.

The Mayor had also accepted two late reports:

Item 8 – Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report;

Item 9 – Housing Revenue Account Amended Determination for 2009.

Other Notices:

d) Press Releases

With the agreement of the Mayor, the Leader made a number of points in relation to matters that had been raised through the local and national media recently and which were to be the subject of Press Releases from the Council.

- i) Clarification was provided that weekend car parking charges would apply to the Council Car Park on Trescott Road and not the commercial Car Park at Trafford Park which was not owned by the Council.
- ii) It was hoped that the media could widely advertise the Council's Credit Crunch Advice Pack and the other means of help available through the Council given the recent steep rise in the number of people claiming benefits.
- iii) The recent press story on the Dial-a-Ride Service was considered to give an extremely inaccurate picture of this Service given that the recently agreed budget was not significantly different to that for the previous year. The Leader hoped that the Newspaper concerned might print a retraction.

**141. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 2 March 2009 be received and adopted;**
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11 March 2009 be received and adopted and all recommendations approved, subject to:**

**in respect of Minute 259 (Environmental Enhancement Programme) it being further RESOLVED that**

**a transparent set of criteria and scoring mechanisms be developed as to how the parking and Capital Landscape projects are to be identified and carried out.**

- 3) the decision notice of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 1 April 2009 be received and all recommendations approved, subject to;**

**in respect of Minute 278 (Preferred Registered Social Landlords Development Partners) it being further NOTED that**

**the following Councillors be appointed to the Member Selection Panel:**

**Councillors Braley, B Clayton, Shurmer (Sub: Chance) and one vacancy (Liberal Democrat)**

(A separate sheet was tabled at the meeting detailing a minor change to the recommendations pertaining to the Environmental Enhancement Programme (Minute 259), as one matter had inadvertently been recorded as being resolved by the Executive Committee, in good faith, whereas it should more properly have been a recommendation to Council. During the course of the discussion, the following proposed amendment to Recommendation (formerly Resolution) 2 on the Environmental Enhancement Programme was the subject of a named vote in accordance with Standing Order 16:

***“After completion of the already identified project programme and works in Matchborough and Church Hill estates,...”*** added to the start of the recommendation.

**Members voting FOR the amendment to the motion:**

Councillors Chance, Cookson, Fry, Hartnett, Hunt, R King, W King, Mould, Shurmer, Taylor and Thomas.  
(11 votes)

**Members voting AGAINST the amendment to the motion:**

Councillors Anderson, Braley, Brunner, Chalk, A Clayton, B Clayton, Enderby, Field, Gandy, Hall, Hopkins, MacMillan, Norton, Pearce, Quinney and Smith.  
(16 votes)

**Member abstaining from voting:**

None.)

(Prior to consideration of this item, and in accordance with the requirements of Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2000, Councillors Cookson, Hartnett and Pearce declared a personal and prejudicial interest, in view of the fact that they were members of the Board of Redditch Co-operative Homes and Councillor Taylor declared a personal and

prejudicial interest, in view of her close personal relationship to an officer of that organisation, and all withdrew from the meeting.)

## **142. REGULATORY COMMITTEES**

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

### **RESOLVED that**

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 4 March 2009 be received and adopted; and**
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 3 March 2009 be received and adopted.**

## **143. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

The Council received the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2008/09.

Members were extremely complimentary about the report and the continuing progress that had been made in Overview and Scrutiny over the past year. The work that had been undertaken into the Third Sector was particularly highlighted as an example of good practice and the Chair of the relevant Task and Finish Group acknowledged the praise on behalf of the Group.

It was noted that there were significant challenges coming forward in the year ahead with the roll-out of the Councillor Call for Action and the increasing prominence of an outward-focussed role for the Committee in relation to the Local Area Agreement and the Duty of Partners to Cooperate. It was also noted that the Council magazine, Redditch Matters could significantly enhance the public visibility of Overview and Scrutiny and the opportunities for interaction with the local community.

The Members of the Committee and the dedicated support Officers were both commended for their performance. The success in retaining a non-politicised Overview and Scrutiny function was remarked upon and it was hoped that this situation might continue. Members who were not on the Committee expressed the desire to receive feedback on some of the training events that Overview and Scrutiny Members had attended during the course of the year.

**RESOLVED that**

**the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2008/09 be received and noted.**

**144. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AMENDED DETERMINATION FOR 2009**

The Council was asked to consider its response to the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation on the Draft Housing Revenue Account Determination 2009/2010 amendments. Given the economic climate the Government had proposed a change to determination levels for authorities to help tenants with the amount of rent they would have to pay for the current year.

It was noted that the consultation period was not due to finish until later in the week but there had previously been a considerable amount of lobbying from local government at the levels of rent that had originally been set in the subsidy determination.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the draft 2009/10 Housing Revenue Account Subsidy determination be amended in line with the consultation from the Department of Communities and Local Government; and**
- 2) the cost of implementing the revised rents be taken from Housing Revenues Account balances.**

**145. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS**

There were no Urgent Business decisions under Standing Order 36 for consideration at this meeting.

**146. URGENT BUSINESS - NOTICE OF MOTION - WINTER UTILITY BILLS**

An urgent Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Banks too late to meet Standing Order deadlines but had been accepted by the Mayor for consideration at the meeting on the basis of its broad public interest and the fact that there was not a further ordinary Council meeting before 22 June 2009 which could receive the Motion. The Motion was in respect of winter fuel bills. This was seconded by Councillor Brunner.

There was some discussion of the detail of the motion and there was consideration of a proposed amendment before it was duly

**RESOLVED that**

**the Motion be approved in the following terms:**

***"The Council asks that the Government investigate the charges made by all gas and electricity (utility) companies in respect of monthly charges made by direct debit.***

***It has recently come to my attention that householders will this year be required to pay substantial additional amounts per month over and above what they were previously expected to pay.***

***I'm sure that there are many people throughout the country who have received similar requests and who do not understand why such extortionate contributions will be required each month. Nor do I understand how these companies are calculating their bills or why they are not informing customers soon enough when monthly direct debit contributions are not covering the costs of electricity or gas consumption.***

***I am concerned about the impact that this may be having on people, particularly the most vulnerable members of society, who may not be willing or comfortable with challenging the utility companies about such excessive demands.***

***Householders are encouraged to pay their bills on a monthly basis by direct debit so that as customers they don't get into debt, but if monthly repayment requirements are being inflated in this way, it is hard to see how debt may be avoided."***

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.57 pm

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Chair