

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Mr D Newman

Officers:

Sheena Jones, Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton and Jayne Pickering

Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

40. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Antonia Pulsford.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor David Bush declared an interest in respect of Minute No. 46 with regard to the Council's response to the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy Proposed Modifications. He left the room during consideration of this issue and did not participate in the discussions or vote on this matter.

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Chair

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 27th July 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

43. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) The Mayor

The Mayor announced that she had attended the Community Festival at the Redditch Bandstand on Saturday 19th September. The event had been well attended with lots of food and community activities. The Mayor thanked staff for their hard work organising this event.

b) The Leader

The Leader delivered a number of announcements:

- Concerns were raised about the Alexandra Hospital following recent announcements that Worcestershire Acute NHS Hospitals Trust would potentially have a deficit of £48 million by the end of the financial year and news that Redditch patients were being referred to hospitals outside the Borough.
- The Leader had attended Morton Stanley Festival in August where there had been a number of new community stands.
- The Onam celebration hosted by the Redditch Kerala Cultural Association had also been attended by the Leader in August 2015.
- In September the Leader had attended the Community Festival at the Redditch Bandstand alongside the Mayor. He thanked staff and Ms Sue Yeng for their hard work organising the event.
- The Leader had also attended a fund raising event in Abbeydale to help Syrian refugees.
- Leaders from Councils across Worcestershire had recently met to discuss the refugee crisis. Agreement had been reached in principle about an appropriate local response, though this would be subject to further clarification about the resources available to support refugees.

44. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Leader responded to three questions that had been submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9.2 from Mr D. Newman, Councillor Baker-Price and Councillor Brunner as detailed below.

a) Parking in Mount Pleasant

Mr D Newman asked the following question:

Can the Council update regarding parking in Mount Pleasant? When the TV cameras were on the estate we were promised a resolution in the next couple of weeks. This has never materialised and we are in the same position.

The residents demand a resolution to the issue and I for one would welcome residents' parking permits.

It is noted adjoining roads to Mount Pleasant, such as Oakly Road, have double sided parking, and the only assumption for Mount Pleasant not having double sided parking for residents is the amount of traffic we take.

I feel the road would benefit from a trial of becoming a one way road, as the bottom of Mount Pleasant is a no entry for cars anyway.

What can the Council do to canvas opinion of residents about the future of the road going forward, or if required, I would canvas the estate for proposals.

The problem cannot go on indefinitely, and this road was not made for the amount of traffic going up and down it. If a resolution is not forthcoming the residents will have to look to take objection to the Council's lack of support, by blocking the entrances to the estate.

The Leader replied as follows:

Whilst I sympathise with you and your neighbours, regarding the parking situation in your area, Redditch Borough Council, through our partnership with Wychavon District Council, is only responsible for enforcing the lines and signs that are designated under the traffic regulation order (TRO), which must be done fairly and consistently across the Borough.

Responsibility for making changes to the TRO or carrying out works to the highway sit with the County Council's Highways Department. However, I have asked Councillor Greg Chance, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder who covers transport

issues, to arrange to meet with you and other residents in the area, along with the two County Councillors for the area to gain their support and develop a proposal that can be put to the County Council Highways Team.

b) Business Booster Grant Scheme

Councillor Baker-Price asked the following question:

Would the leader please state the amount of money the Council has given to businesses through the 'businesses booster grants' scheme this year?

The Leader responded as follows:

The 'Business Booster' grants scheme and funding is now administered by the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) shared service. I can confirm that for the 2015/16 financial year to date, £19,409 has been awarded to businesses in Redditch through the 'Booster' grant scheme and that six businesses from Redditch have benefitted from support.

A supplementary question was raised by Councillor Baker-Price concerning start-up costs for businesses. He explained that he had checked the British Chamber of Commerce's website which indicated that start-up costs for new businesses were high. He suggested it might be more useful to direct funding to support a new officer post, which would be responsible for signposting and supporting new businesses applying for grant funding. Councillor Baker-Price also noted that he had visited the Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) website and that this did not make reference to Redditch in relation to grants to businesses.

The Leader responded by suggesting that, due to the level of detail, the supplementary question should be sent to him in writing so that a written response, addressing all of Councillor Baker-Price's points, could be provided.

c) Devolved Powers – Worcestershire

Councillor Brunner asked the following question:

Given that a recent poll undertaken by Worcestershire County Council states that 88% of Worcestershire residents want devolved powers from Westminster kept locally, when will the Labour group allow Redditch residents a say on whether they wish to support devolved powers to Worcestershire?

The Leader explained that, as detailed during recent briefings delivered by the Chief Executive, the Council was in the process of exploring a potential devolution deal. Discussions about the devolution deal were not as advanced as discussions about the potential for the Council to enter into a combined authority. Following further consideration alongside other local authority Leaders the Leader would report back to the Council.

A supplementary question was raised by Councillor Brunner as to whether the Leader agreed that Redditch residents should be consulted about devolving powers in Worcestershire.

The Leader responded by explaining that the Council would potentially consult at the appropriate time depending on the circumstances and the offer available.

45. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

No motions had been submitted.

46. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 8th September 2015. The following key points were raised during consideration of this item:

a) Equal Opportunity Policy

Concerns were raised that the Equal Opportunity Policy was phrased in a manner that suggested that elected Councillors were employed by the Council. However, Officers clarified that as Councillors had a responsibility to staff and individual Equality duties within the context of various Equalities enactments they needed to be aware of and agree to the contents of the policy; however, Councillors were not regarded as staff or treated as such within Council policies.

b) Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme

The following points were raised whilst considering this item:

- The proposal that any underspend in the grants at the end of the financial year should be put back into balances; it was suggested that if any funds remained unallocated at the end of the evaluation process, a further opportunity for applications should be made available. However, the view was also expressed that every effort was made to publicise the availability of grants and the appropriate deadlines and

the take-up of funding reflected the demand from within the sector.

- The three rounds of community grants and the need for clarification concerning the potential for any unspent funds in early rounds to be allocated to Voluntary and Community Sector groups in later rounds.
- The work of the Grants Panel which operated in an apolitical manner.
- The positive contributions made by the Voluntary and Community Sector to the community in Redditch.
- The value of the support provided by Council staff to local Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and the potential impact this could have on the success of a bid.
- The work of the Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group in 2013/14 and improvements that had subsequently been made to the Council's grants process.
- Alterations that had been made to the grant themes for 2016/17 and amendments to the Grants Policy and scoring matrix which were designed to further enhance the process.

c) Consolidated Revenue and Capital Outturn and Financial Reserves Statement

A number of issues were raised during consideration of this matter:

- The assessment of the Council's accounts by the Council's external auditors; Grant Thornton.
- The level of funds held by the Council in balances.
- The level of unplanned savings and whether this enabled accurate budget forecasts to be made.
- Overall savings of £819,000 secured in 2014/15.
- Cuts to the local government grant received by the Council of 49 per cent over the previous five year period and the impact this had had on the Council's finances.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 8th September 2015 be received and all recommendations adopted subject to, in relation to Minute 33 (Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme) Community Grant Fund, it being noted that there would be some latitude in the allocation of the grants across the three rounds to maximise the potential for the £16k allocation to be used..

(During consideration of this item Councillor David Bush declared an interest in respect of the Council's response to the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy Proposed Modifications. He left the room

during consideration of this issue and did not take part in the discussions or vote on this subject).

47. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

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

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 20th July 2015 be received and adopted; and**
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 12th August 2015 be received and adopted.**

48. PLACE PARTNERSHIP LIMITED - APPOINTMENT OF SHAREHOLDER REPRESENTATIVES

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor John Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, and Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive, be appointed as shareholders to the Shareholder meetings of the Place Partnership; and**
- 2) in future appointments to the Shareholder meetings be by office; the Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for the function which includes corporate property management, both being able to nominate substitutes for when they are unable to attend a meeting.**

49. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

There were no urgent decisions to note.

50. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

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