

Council

Monday, 25 January 2016

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Pattie Hill (Mayor), Councillor Joe Baker (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Natalie Brookes, 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, Yvonne Smith, Paul Swansborough, Debbie Taylor, David Thain, Jennifer Wheeler, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford

Also Present:

Wayne Brandrick, Claire Mitchell, Neil Ordish, Phillippa Smith, Laney Walsh and Lindsey Wood (Time to Change Working Group representatives).

Officers:

Jack Carradine, Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley and Sheena Jones

Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

68. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Roger Bennett, Juliet Brunner, Antonia Pulsford and Rachael Smith.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

70. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Council held on Monday 7th December 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

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Chair

71. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) The Mayor

The Mayor advised that she had attended a number of excellent events over the festive period. Particular reference was made to her visit to the Alexandra Hospital on Christmas day when she had been pleased to meet with both staff and the patients.

b) The Leader

Councillor Hartnett had attended a number of events and undertaken certain work in his capacity as Leader and he highlighted the following for Members' consideration:

- The Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event to highlight opposition to domestic violence.
- The Town Centre Partnership's carol service at the bandstand.
- Christmas dinners provided to residents in Church Hill and Winyates.
- Operation Improve Redditch, an initiative identified by the Economic Development Theme Group to place talented postgraduate students from the University of Birmingham in work placements in organisations located in the Borough.
- The Pride of Redditch Awards.
- A meeting with Diamond Bus Company to discuss a petition received about local bus services.
- The latest developments with the Alexandra Hospital, including the resignation of the Chair of the Trust and the Health Improvement Plan for Worcestershire.
- The settlement of 1 per cent of Syrian refugees who would be arriving in the UK within Worcestershire. This would equate to 50 individuals across the county, or two families per district.
- Holocaust Memorial Day. Thanks were extended to Julia Kinch, Astwood Bank First School, the Polish Saturday School and the Kerala Cultural Association.
- The Young Athlete Programme (YAP), an offshoot of the Redditch Special Olympics, which provided children with an opportunity to participate in physical activities.
- The Worcestershire Devolution Deal. The Leaders and Chief Executives of the Councils continued to meet and were waiting to liaise with the Government over proposals.
- The West Midlands Combined Authority. A number of meetings had taken place and the Combined Authority was undertaking consultation in the areas of the constituent authorities about the establishment of the authority.

- A meeting of the Non Constituent Members of the West Midlands Combined Authority was due to take place and would provide an opportunity to discuss and identify common issues.
- The Leader had written to the Government about the Council's Revenue Support Grant settlement highlighting concerns and requesting reconsideration.

72. TIME TO CHANGE PLEDGE - UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION

Representatives of the Council's Time to Change Working Group attended the meeting and delivered a presentation on the subject of the work that the group had undertaken since Members signed the Time to Change Pledge 12 months previously.

Action taken included circulation of a mental health survey amongst staff; providing training to managers and supervisors about supporting staff with mental health difficulties; introducing the Employee Assistance Programme for staff and providing a number of activities designed to enhance staff wellbeing. 600 employees across the shared services with Bromsgrove District Council had attended Time to Talk days during the last 12 months. It was noted that the Council was highly regarded for the proactive approach it was taking and this had been commented on at national level. The positive impact the Pledge had made was illustrated by a personal account.

Members congratulated the working group and all involved for their hard work and noted that they would continue to support them in their endeavours.

73. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no Questions on Notice.

74. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no Motions on Notice.

75. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members considered the recommendations from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 15th December 2015. During consideration of these minutes a detailed discussion was held about the Bereavement Services – Review of Cremation Fees and Charges and Proposed Capital Works and the following points were raised:

- The level of increase that had been proposed to the charges for bereavement services.
- The Council's existing fees for bereavement services and how these compared to charges at other local authorities.
- The extent to which residents could afford higher fees.
- The provision of a free service for cremations to non-residents aged 18 years old or younger and the number of young people each year within this category for whom this service was provided.
- The intention to invest any surplus generated from the increased fees in improvement works at the crematorium.

An amendment was proposed to one of the recommendations seeking to restrict free cremation services only to young people who were residents of Redditch and aged under 18. However, this proposed amendment was defeated.

Members also considered the minutes from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 12th January 2016 and debated the following items in detail:

a) Purchase of Crossgates House

Members discussed a number of points as follows:

- Whether there was sufficient demand for office space to justify the purchase and it was suggested that the Town Hall office space could be used more effectively;
- Agreements with Bromsgrove District Council for provision of office space to staff in shared services and the income received from this;
- The suitability of purchasing a property in challenging economic circumstances.
- The length of time it would take for the Council to pay for the property and the potential for the asset to appreciate in value over time.

b) Housing Revenue Account Rent and Capital 2016-17

Some key points were considered during the debate about this item:

- The reduction of rents for tenants living in Council houses by one per cent per annum and the impact that this would have on Council finances.
- The potential impact the reduction in rents would have on the finances of tenants on low incomes.
- The original 30 year business plan to pay back the Government for purchasing the Council housing stock and the difficulties of achieving this following legislative change.

- The value of building more Council houses or purchasing new stock to replace properties sold under the right to buy scheme.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 7th December 2015 be received and all recommendations adopted; and
- 2) the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 12th January 2016 be received and all recommendations adopted.

76. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

The Council received the minutes from the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 9th December 2015.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 7th December 2015 be received and adopted.

77. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

There were no items of urgent business requiring a Council decision for consideration.

78. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There were no general items of urgent business for consideration.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.35 pm