



Council

Monday, 21 November 2016

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Ms Sharon Harrison and Ms Sue Smith (Chair and Vice Chair of Redditch LGB&T Community Group)

Mr Daniel Smith (Stonewall)

Mr Peter Willis

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley and Sheena Jones

Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

39. WELCOME

Prior to the start of the meeting Councillor King delivered a seasonal message for the consideration of Members.

40. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Juliet Brunner, Andrew Fry and Gareth Prosser.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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Chair

There were no declarations of interest.

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 26th September 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

43. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) The Mayor

At the start of this item the Mayor circulated a list of civic engagements that he had attended over the past two months.

The Mayor then welcomed representatives of the Redditch LGB&T community and of Stonewall to the meeting, who were attending to celebrate the outcomes of the work of the Provision of Support Networks for the LGB&T Community Task Group, which concluded in July 2015.

To begin with Mr Peter Willis, a teacher from a local school in Worcestershire, delivered a presentation about the importance of the Task Group's second recommendation, which encouraged schools to take part in the Stonewall Schools' champions programme or to make use of the Birmingham LGB&T Group's Schools toolkit. Members were advised that significant progress had been achieved since the 1980s in terms of challenging homophobic and transphobic attitudes and behaviour towards the LGB&T community. Schools which participated in the School Champions' programme helped young people to feel confident about expressing their sexuality and gender identity in the school environment and encouraged young people to have positive attitudes towards equality.

Following this presentation the Chair and Vice Chair of the Redditch LGB&T Community Group, Ms Sharon Harrison and Ms Sue Smith, presented awards on behalf of the community group. This included four awards to Councillors Joe Baker, Natalie Brookes, Gay Hopkins and David Thain in recognition of their hard work as members of the Task Group. Councillor Baker also presented an LGB&T Hero award on behalf of the Redditch LGB&T Community Group to Jess Bayley, Democratic Services Officer in recognition of her work supporting the Task Group.

The Mayor subsequently invited Mr Daniel Smith from Stonewall to deliver a presentation about the work of Stonewall and the benefits for organisations of participating in

the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. Mr Smith explained that Stonewall had been established in opposition to S28 of the Local Government Act 1988 which had prohibited local authorities from promoting homosexuality or discussing sexual orientation within schools. The organisation continued to campaign in support of the LGB&T community having supported recent initiatives such as the introduction of same sex marriage legislation in 2015. Stonewall also managed the Workplace Equalities Index which over 500 organisations took part in every year, though only the top 100 were advertised on Stonewall's website. The benefits of participation included the potential to improve working policies and practices, enhanced opportunities to advertise staff vacancies to talented LGB&T staff and a chance to benchmark progress compared to other organisations.

Following the delivery of this presentation Mr Smith presented an award to the Leader of the Council on behalf of Redditch LGB&T Community Group in appreciation of the Council's support for the LGB&T community locally.

b) The Leader

The Leader provided an update on the civic engagements he had participated in over the previous two months. This included attending a celebration at Evesham Rowing Club of the achievements of Olympians and Paralympians from Worcestershire, taking part in the Diwali celebrations at the local Gudwara and at Ridgeway Academy, attending the Herefordshire and Worcestershire annual sports awards, taking part in the Polish Independence Day celebrations and meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury at St Stephen's Church. Councillor Hartnett also congratulated Councillors Greg and Debbie Chance following their recent wedding.

A number of key issues were raised during consideration of this item:

- Meetings of the Health Commission, discussed at the previous meeting, had been postponed until the New Year due to circumstances outside the control of the Council.
- Further powers had been requested from the government for non-constituent members of Combined Authorities. Support had been received from the constituent members of the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- The Leader had written to the Redditch Town Centre Partnership to request that the former covered market area be returned to the control of the Council as it had

not been possible to introduce a play barn on the site as originally planned.

- The Remembrance Sunday events had been well attended in both Redditch town centre and Astwood Bank.
- The Leader had attended a church service at St Philip's Church in commemoration of the centenary of the end of the battle of the Somme in the First World War during which over one million people had been killed.
- Local businesses and five county Councillors had pledged funding to support the continuation of the Bike Race in Redditch. Initial talks had been held with the event organisers, which were felt to be positive - feedback was currently awaited.

The Leader also notified Members that he had recently been advised about proposed changes to specialist stroke rehabilitation services. These changes, if implemented, would lead to the reduction in the number of specialist care units from three to one, with specialist services in future being based in Evesham. General rehabilitation services would continue to be provided at the Princess of Wales Community Hospital in Bromsgrove and at the Timberdine Community Unit. Specialist support would also continue to be provided, where appropriate, on an in-reach basis by the Community Stroke Service. Councillor Hartnett had contacted the Leader of Bromsgrove District Council about these proposed service changes and they intended to raise their concerns in writing in due course.

44. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Leader responded to three questions submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 9.2 from Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Jane Potter and Paul Swansborough. One further question, which had been submitted for consideration by Councillor Juliet Brunner, was withdrawn in her absence and Members were advised that this would be re-submitted for consideration at the following meeting of the Council.

a) Council Expenditure on Consultants

Councillor Tom Baker-Price asked the following question:

Would the Leader of the Council inform Council how much money has been spent on consultants since May 2012 in

- i) planning
- ii) leisure
- iii) transformation / systems thinking/Vanguard
- iv) revenues and benefits

- v) finance
- vi) community centres

The Leader replied as follows:

Thank you for your question. I can confirm that the costs I am presenting are within budget and only relate to pure consultancy costs as opposed to use of temporary resources to cover staff vacancies which should be identified as interim rather than consultants.

i) Planning

Nothing

ii) Leisure

£4,202 (shared but mainly for the Leisure Appraisal for Redditch Borough Council).

iii) Transformation / Systems Thinking / Vanguard

£209,362 for Redditch Borough Council only.

The Council has been working towards transforming services by considering customer need and systemically changing the way we work for the last four years (and for years before that). During that time we have developed “locality working” for a number of our teams including Housing, Benefits, Environmental Services and more recently bringing together a number of different stakeholders within the Connecting Families team to deliver support to our residents. We have required some external support over those years to ensure we develop radical solutions to fix problems in our Borough.

Whilst there has been a cost associated with this of £209,000 we have made significant savings of £800,000 over the last two years and have made other changes to our services (for example Benefits Officers working in locality offices) which may not have made savings but have improved access and quality of service to the most vulnerable members of our communities. This will equate to £1.6 million over the four year planning period excluding any other savings that may be realised from future transformational work.

iv) Revenues and Benefits

£29,883 (partly single system costs).

This relates to the project management of the unified revenues and benefits system. Savings will be realised well in excess of this as a result of reduced waste and improved services to the public. The costs are contained within the reserves and not against revenue budgets. No bid for new money has been required.

v) Finance

£37,000 shared across both Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council with the charge to Redditch being £18,000.

This spend relates to the use of specialist risk and system advisors to improve Risk Governance arrangements and to enable automated use of the ledger system. The savings with the financial service review in 2013 offset all associated costs.

vi) Community centres

£0

A supplementary question was subsequently raised by Councillor Baker-Price asking the Leader whether there had been a change in policy since 2012 when Council had been informed that budget consultants would no longer be required.

The Leader responded by explaining that there had been no change in policy as expenditure on the consultants detailed in his answer had been built into the budget.

b) Consultant's Work – Leisure Services

Councillor Jane Potter asked the following question:

With a particular focus on Leisure, will the Leader inform this Council of the cost of the consultant's work in preparing a report on options for Leisure?

The Leader replied as follows:

The cost of £4,202, as detailed in answer to Councillor Baker-Price's question, relates to the previous production of an independent high level overview of the options that could be available to Council, and the potential savings that could be achieved if one of these options was progressed.

A supplementary question was subsequently raised by Councillor Potter who asked the Leader whether the Council

would be arranging for a trust to manage Leisure Services in order to achieve financial savings and an increase in participation in leisure activities.

The Leader responded by explaining that, in line with a recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Officers were in the process of investigating all options in detail. The Executive Committee would wait for these investigations to be completed and would consider the data arising from this process before making any decisions on this subject.

c) West Midlands Combined Authority

Councillor Paul Swansborough asked the following question:

In view of the fact that Greater Manchester Combined Authority (WMCA) has to date borrowed a total of £1 billion alone from the European Investment Bank to secure match funding from HM Treasury and private investors, can the Leader confirm how the West Midlands Combined Authority intends to raise its capital and revenue funding post Brexit and whether the cost of non-constituent membership will increase due to the loss of support from the European Union?

The Leader responded as follows:

Thank you for your question. I have contacted the WMCA and have been advised as follows:

WMCA is developing a major programme of investment across the West Midlands region. This is expected to include funding from a wide range of sources, which includes prudential borrowing by WMCA and some of its member authorities; major government capital grants (for transportation and HS2 growth strategy, for example); and investment by the private sector and by our public sector partners. WMCA will seek to source its borrowing from the lenders who provide the best value. The PWLB is available to fund all WMCA's borrowing proposals whether before or after Brexit, but the European Investment Bank (EIB) is currently a cheaper source of borrowing for eligible projects.

WMCA treasury officers are in discussion with the EIB about a potential loan for projects which are sufficiently advanced, for the EIB's consideration. Match funding for any EIB loan would come from the other sources of finance outlined above.

At this stage we are not certain as to whether Brexit will affect the progress of these discussions. Reports will be brought to

the WMCA Board once officers are in a position to make recommendations.

The cost of non-constituent membership is not directly linked to the Investment Plan and therefore not linked to the funding of the programme; however, WMCA Officers are preparing papers around the possible budget for 2017/18 for discussion at forthcoming WMCA meetings.

A supplementary question was subsequently raised by Councillor Swansborough who asked the Leader whether in the current challenging financial circumstances facing local government, including Redditch Borough Council, the local authority remained committed to being a non-constituent member of the WMCA.

The Leader responded by confirming that the Council remained committed to membership of the WMCA.

45. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no Motions on Notice.

46. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 1st November 2016.

During consideration of Minute No. 39, detailing a recommendation on the subject of the Public Realm Scheme, clarification was requested about whether damage to the surface would be covered under the terms of the scheme. Members were advised that this matter had also been discussed during the Executive Committee meeting. There was the potential to share a stockpile of materials with Bromsgrove District Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council and Members had requested specific design features to enhance the integrity of the scheme.

The Business Case for the Development Management Shared Service was also discussed during consideration of this item. Members were advised that whilst this item had been considered in confidential session during the Executive Committee meeting the documentation was now in the public domain following consultation with affected staff.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 1st November 2016 be received and all recommendations adopted.

47. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

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

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on 22nd September 2016 be received and adopted; and
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 12th October 2016 be received and adopted.

48. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Executive Committee's decisions in respect of the Town Centre Lighting Enhancement Scheme, involving the transfer of monies from the S106 capital account, and Tommy Wilson's Fair were noted in accordance with the Council's Urgency Procedure Rules.

49. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no general urgent business for discussion.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.20 pm