

# Council

Monday, 19 February 2018

## MINUTES

### Present:

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

### Also Present:

Laney Walsh (Bromsgrove and Redditch Branch, Unison)

### Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley and Jayne Pickering

### Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

## 73. WELCOME

The Mayor opened the meeting by announcing the recent death of a long-serving member of staff, Mr Andrew Walker, and led the Council in paying tribute to him by observing a minute's silence. Members were advised that Mr Walker had worked for the Council for 27 years since March 1990. During his career at the Council Mr Walker had worked in a range of services and had been well respected by colleagues for his knowledge and ability to help when issues needed to be resolved.

The Leader advised that he had known Mr Walker throughout his career with the Council. Mr Walker had started as a Litter Picker and had been promoted several times during his career. By the time of his death Mr Walker was acting as Interim Manager of the Repairs and Maintenance team. Mr Walker had been involved with a range of high profile initiatives in Redditch over the years, including the introduction of fortnightly waste and recycling

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Chair

collections and the Ricky the Rat advertising campaign. The Leader was also aware that Mr Walker was a dedicated family man with seven children and a loving wife.

Councillor Brunner passed on condolences on behalf of the Conservative Group. She mentioned that Mr Walker had been well liked and respected by both staff and elected Members. He had accompanied Members on various walkabouts within their wards and had always been really helpful.

A number of other Members testified to their like and respect for Mr Walker. In so doing Members noted that Mr Walker had been passionate, hard-working and very knowledgeable about his service area. Mr Walker had continued to answer work related phone calls whilst in hospital and Members concurred that this was a testament to his good character and dedication to his work.

Following these discussions the Mayor invited Mrs Laney Walsh, Branch Secretary to the Redditch and Bromsgrove Branch of Unison, who had been directly involved in work on the Time to Change initiative at the Town Hall, to speak on the subject of young people and mental health.

Mrs Walsh advised Members that mental health was an important subject both for her and the wider community. Unfortunately many people in society continued to misunderstand the subject and often judged people who were experiencing mental health problems. This could send a problematic message to young people.

Members were advised that people needed to consider the language that they used when referring to mental health issues. Negative language could reinforce judgemental perceptions and this could resonate for the rest of a young person's life. Adults had a duty to encourage young people to participate in society as well as to explore their emotions. This was only likely to happen if older adults set a positive example.

Socialisation was important to enable everybody to address potential mental health and wellbeing problems. As part of this social media could be a positive force where used constructively. Unfortunately some people chose to bully and harass others in a variety of settings and this could have a negative impact on a person's self-esteem and mental wellbeing. Young people needed to be encouraged to learn as they grew older and supported in stressful situations. By encouraging young people to participate in social and voluntary activities they could be enabled to reflect and be calm, thereby helping to address issues such as anxiety.

Mrs Walsh thanked Members for providing her with an opportunity to speak and for listening to what she had had to say.

**74. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Gay Hopkins.

**75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**76. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 29TH JANUARY 2018**

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.**

**77. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

a) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that she had attended the following events since the last meeting of Council:

- The Time to Talk event at the Town Hall.
- The Polish Saturday Morning School event, to present certificates of achievement to the students.
- The Snowdrop weekend at Beoley Church.
- The Charity Spring Ball hosted by the Mayor of Kidderminster.
- A Valentine's Day meal.

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor for her hard work and support during this period.

Members were asked to note that the civic dinner would take place on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2018. All Members were invited to attend.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader provided a number of updates for Members' consideration. Firstly the Leader advised that he had met with Rachel Maclean MP and representatives of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT) and the Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to discuss the findings in the latest Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of the trust. The Leader had been calling for further improvements to be made to acute hospital services and had reminded those present that the Council had not

supported the changes proposed by the CCG in 2017. Positive news had been received regarding improvements in terms of recruitment of new staff by the trust. However, there remained financial difficulties which still needed to be addressed. The chair of the Board had reported that the trust had plans in place to reduce the deficit by changing procurement arrangements and reducing the use of agency staff.

Members were advised that the Leader had also attended a roadshow for the National Citizen Service in Church Hill. This involved participants working in small teams on particular projects and positive feedback had been received from all those involved.

Members learned that the Leader had recently attended an official launch of the Swift card at Redditch bus station. The swift card was already available in many parts of the West Midlands. Redditch had been selected as the first non-constituent area in the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to launch the card. The response to the Swift card had been very positive and all the available cards had been taken by the end of the launch day.

Finally, the Leader had also attended the Four Choirs night at the Palace Theatre recently. This had been a very enjoyable evening.

c) Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive confirmed that he had no announcements on this occasion.

## **78. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Council received the minutes and considered the recommendations from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 as well as the recommendations that had been agreed at the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> February immediately before full Council.

6<sup>th</sup> February 2018

### Independent Remuneration Panel Report and Recommendations for 2018/19

Members noted that the proposals that had been received from the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) would require an additional £68,500 if approved. There was general consensus that, given the funding difficulties for local government, such an increase would not be appropriate at this time.

**RESOLVED that**

**having regard to the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP):**

- 1) the Basic Allowance for 2018/19 not be increased and this continue at the current level set for 2017/18, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the IRP's report;**
- 2) the Special Responsibility Allowances remain at the current levels set for 2017/18, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the IRP's report;**
- 3) travel allowances for 2018-19 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance;**
- 4) subsistence allowances for 2018-19 remain unchanged;**
- 5) the Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged; and**
- 6) the Parish Council in the Borough, if travel and subsistence is paid, is paid in accordance with the rates paid by Redditch Borough Council and in accordance with the relevant Regulations.**

**HRA Initial Budget 2018/19 – 2020/21**

Members considered the content of the HRA Initial Budget 2018/19 – 2020/21 and noted that in line with Government requirements there had been a one per cent decrease on the rents paid by tenants for Council properties over a four year period. This decrease on the rents had financial implications for the Council. In addition on the one hand it was suggested the rental decrease would help some of the most vulnerable tenants. On the other hand it was noted that this decrease would mainly be reflected in changes to housing benefit entitlements for many residents.

Members also noted that the Council was investing in new properties through the Housing Growth Programme and the Mortgage Buy Back Scheme. The outcomes from these would have implications for the Council's HRA in the long-term.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the draft 2018/2019 Budget for the Housing Revenue Account attached to the report at Appendix A be approved;**

- 2) the budget projection for 2018/19 incorporating the 1% rent reduction be approved;
- 3) the actual average rent decrease for 2018/2019 be 1%;
- 4) that a capital budget of £150k be approved for a stock condition survey to be carried out
- 5) that £0.876k be transferred from the general reserve in 2018/19 to fund the future HRA revenue budgets
- 6) that £5.1m be transferred from the Major Repairs Reserve to fund the HRA capital programme.

## Minutes

### **RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 be received and all recommendations adopted.**

19<sup>th</sup> February 2018

### Medium Term Financial Plan for 2018/19 to 2021/22

At the start of this item Councillor Juliet Brunner proposed an amendment to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 to 2021/22. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Brandon Clayton. The amendment contained the following wording:

“The proposed budget for the period 2018/19 – 2021/22 is only balanced for one year. If no further savings were made the remaining 3 years would result in taking £1.3m from balances. This would be unsustainable as it would leave the Council balances well below the minimum recommended level of £750k.

The following amendment (made up of 2 elements) would enable the Council to have a financially sustainable budget over the 4 years.

Move the Leisure services to an external trust. This would generate approximately £800k savings per year savings which is over £350k more that setting up the Council owned company whilst maintaining the Council services. Over the 4 years this would deliver a net of £860k more than the current proposal.

Increase the resource in the place teams. This may cost an additional £150k per annum but would include enhancing the service and in particular the tree teams. Over the financial plan period this would increase costs by a total of £450k.

This amendment to budget would realise a net saving of over £400k which would result in less being taken from balances. The total drawn down from balances would be £900k which would leave them above the minimum level recommended.”

Following presentation of the proposed amendment a number of points were discussed in detail:

- The length of time required to achieve £860k savings as a result of an external trust managing the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services. Members were advised that this would be a net saving over a four year period.
- The role of a charitable trust in delivering the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services.
- The feedback that had been received from residents in surveys that had been completed during the consultation process in respect of the options appraisal for Leisure and Cultural Services.
- The continuing role of the Council as the owner of any leisure assets should management of Leisure and Cultural Services be outsourced to an external trust.
- The work of the Leisure Provision Short Sharp Scrutiny Review group in 2015 to review future arrangements for the delivery of Leisure and Cultural Services and the conclusions that this group had reached.
- The leisure centres that had been visited in other parts of the country during the scrutiny review and the additional premises that had been visited by the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism with relevant Officers since then.
- The potential for the Council to achieve savings from renegotiating contracts with software providers such as Microsoft.
- The plans for the redevelopment of Redditch town centre and the extent to which the Council was likely to secure £5 million funding from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) to help fund this project.

On being put to the vote the amendment was defeated with 12 Members voting in favour of the amendment and 16 against.

Members subsequently discussed the proposals from the Executive Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018 in respect of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 to 2021/22. These were proposed by Councillor Bill Hartnett and seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

In proposing the item Councillor Hartnett explained that Council Tax would be raised by 2.99 per cent, which equated to £6.79 extra for a Band D property for the year. Council Tax had been increased to help the Council balance the budget. The level of financial assistance available to Councils in the Revenue Support Grant had

reduced in recent years and would be in a negative position from 2019/20 onwards. Other local authorities in the country had also been affected by grant reductions and a number were choosing to increase Council Tax in response. There were plans to regenerate the town centre and to enhance economic growth in Redditch. The Council would continue to work with the GBSLEP and WMCA to work in partnership on any opportunities available to the region.

A lengthy debate on the budget proposals ensued, during which opposing views were expressed by Members. Some were supportive of the proposals detailed in the report. Others expressed concerns about the plans and the extent to which this would enable the Council to have sustainable finances in the long-term. Thanks were extended by Members to officers for their hard work on the budget.

At the end of the debate in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the recommendations on the budget calculation were the subject of the following named vote:

Members voting FOR the resolutions below:

Councillors Joe Baker, Natalie Brookes, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Wanda King, Mark Shurmer, Rachael Smith, Yvonne Smith, Paul Swansborough, Jennifer Wheeler, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford.

Members voting AGAINST the resolutions below:

Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Roger Bennett, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford and David Thain.

**RESOLVED that full Council**

- 1) Approve the additional income / efficiencies as attached at Appendix 1:**  
2018/19 £708k  
2019/20 £18k
- 2) Approve the unavoidable pressures as attached at Appendix 2:**  
2018/19 £869k
- 3) Approve the Revenue bids as attached at Appendix 3:**  
2018/19 £10k



- 4) **Approve the Capital Programme bids as attached at Appendix 4:**
  - 2018/19 £676k
  - 2019/20 £560k
  - 2020/21 £1.257m
  - 2021/22 £2.772m
- 5) **Approve the return / release from balances of :**
  - 2018/19 £85k (release from balances)
- 6) **Approve the Increase of Council Tax by 2.99% per Band D equivalent for 2018/19**

## Council Tax Resolutions

Further to consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 to 2021/22 Members also considered the Council Tax Resolutions.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the recommendations on the Council Tax Resolutions were the subject of the following named vote.

### Members voting FOR the resolutions below:

Councillors Joe Baker, Natalie Brookes, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Wanda King, Mark Shurmer, Rachael Smith, Yvonne Smith, Paul Swansborough, Jennifer Wheeler, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford.

### Members voting AGAINST the resolutions below:

Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Roger Bennett, Juliet Brunner, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford and David Thain.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the recommendations, as set out in Appendix 5 to the report and as appended to these minutes, setting a Council Tax for 2018/19 of £234.00 for a Band D unparished property, be approved.**

## Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation

There was general consensus that the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the future

presentation of the Medium Term Financial Plan reports should be supported.

**RESOLVED that**

**the format of Medium Term Financial Plans be amended in future years to reflect cumulative savings and pressures over the four year period.**

The Pay Policy Statement

**RESOLVED that**

**the Pay Policy as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.**

**79. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018/19**

An extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018, when the Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19 had been discussed, was considered.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the Strategy and Prudential Indicators at Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and**
- 2) the Treasury Management Policy at Appendix 2 to the report be approved.**

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

There were no urgent decisions to note.

**81. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)**

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

The Meeting commenced at 7.26 pm  
and closed at 9.14 pm