

Council

Monday, 18 November 2019

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Michael Chalk (Mayor), Councillor Gareth Prosser (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Roger Bennett, Joanne Beecham, Juliet Brunner, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, John Fisher, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Julian Grubb, Bill Hartnett, Pattie Hill, Ann Isherwood, Wanda King, Anthony Lovell, Gemma Monaco, Nyear Nazir, Mike Rouse, Mark Shurmer, Yvonne Smith, David Thain, Craig Warhurst and Jennifer Wheeler

Also Present:

Reverend Paul Lawlor

Officers:

Kevin Dicks and Claire Felton

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

48. WELCOME

The Deputy Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting.

49. ELECTION OF THE MAYOR FOR THE PERIOD 18TH NOVEMBER 2019 TO 26TH MAY 2020

Councillor Michael Chalk was elected Mayor of the Borough for the remainder of the municipal year, following which he made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office and was then invested with the Chain of Office by the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Gareth Prosser.

RESOLVED that

Councillor Michael Chalk be elected Mayor of the Borough of Redditch to serve until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

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Chair

50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

52. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Council held on Monday 23rd September 2019 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

53. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) The Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor confirmed that his wife would be his consort.

Members were advised that a list of civic engagements that had been attended by the former Mayor and the Deputy Mayor since the previous meeting of Council had been tabled at the meeting for consideration (Appendices 1 and 2).

Councillor Chalk thanked the previous Mayor, Councillor Roger Bennett, who had stood down from the position and, on behalf of the Council, expressed gratitude for the work he had carried out as an ambassador for the town.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised that Thursday 12th December 2019 would be the deadline for submissions in respect of membership of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

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

RESOLVED that

the Council formally express, and record, its gratitude to Councillor Roger Bennett for his excellent service to the town over the last 6 months as Mayor.

54. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9)

There were no questions on notice.

55. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

There were no motions on notice.

56. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Council discussed recommendations arising from meetings of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 29th October 2019 and Monday 11th November 2019. During consideration of these minutes the following matters were debated in detail:

a) Tenancy Recharge Policy

The Tenancy Recharge Policy had been introduced to provide the Council with an opportunity to recharge tenants and former tenants for damage caused to Council properties. The policy had been introduced to complement the new Tenancy Agreement and Handbook, which had been approved by the Executive Committee in October and which was designed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Council, as landlord, and the tenant respectively.

There was general consensus that where a tenant had wilfully caused damage s/he should be charged for any work required to resolve that damage. Concerns were expressed that some tenants might be required to pay for general wear and tear as well as the level of consultation that had been undertaken with tenants and residents. Furthermore, concerns were raised that there was no right to appeal and that some tenants on low incomes would struggle to pay for repair works. On the other hand Members noted that the policy stated that the tenant would be recharged in cases of wilful neglect or malicious damage and where it was the responsibility of the tenant for work to be undertaken.

Reference was made to the financial costs involved in undertaking the work and the impact that this had on the Council's budget position in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Members also noted that it was standard practice for both housing associations and private sector landlords to recharge tenants in cases where the tenant had neglected or caused malicious damage to a property. This policy would ensure Council tenants were treated in a similar way.

b) Redditch Town Centre Regeneration (Community Hub and Railway Quarter)

The proposals in respect of the regeneration of Redditch town centre were debated in some detail. Members noted that originally plans had been brought forward in respect of this matter in March 2018 and had subsequently been amended in August that year. The proposals were at a preparatory stage and a number of options remained available for redevelopment of both the community hub and the railway quarter.

Reference was made to the most appropriate location for the community hub and it was noted that no decision had yet been taken in respect of this matter. There was general consensus that regeneration of Redditch town centre would have a positive impact on the town's reputation and civic pride.

Members also discussed the funding that would be available to support the regeneration of Redditch town centre. Redditch had been announced as one of 100 towns that would be eligible to receive up to £25 million in funding for regeneration of the town centre. The Council would need to submit an investment plan by the summer of 2020 in order to secure some of this funding.

Concerns were raised about the time that had been taken since the initial proposals for regeneration of the town centre had been published in March 2018. However, it was noted that the work that had been undertaken during this time ensured that there was a lot of useful information available that could be used in the Council's submission in the Town's Fund programme. Questions were also raised about the arrangements that had been in place for the state of the area debates referred to in the report, including how these had been advertised, where they had occurred and the number of people who had attended. Council was informed that all Members had been invited to attend the state of the area debates and that further consultation would be taking place in future.

During consideration of this item Members noted that the report had been subject to pre-scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee had been very supportive of the proposals. However, there had been general consensus that there was a need to learn from previous regeneration exercises, such the redevelopment of Church Hill district centre. In particular, Members had expressed the view that all Councillors needed to be kept informed about the project due to the importance of the town centre to the whole

Borough. It was confirmed that all Councillors would be briefed where appropriate.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 29th October 2019 be received and all recommendations adopted; and**
- 2) **the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Monday 11th November 2019 be received and all recommendations adopted, subject to removing the words “consideration be given” from the second resolution in Minute Item No. 67.**

57. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Members considered a recommendation arising from a meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee held on 31st October 2019 in respect of Local Government Ethical Standards. This proposed changes to the Members' Code of Conduct and would include new features, such as references to bullying on social media.

RESOLVED that

the changes to the Code of Conduct to reflect the CSPL Best Practice Recommendations be approved and that authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to update the constitution accordingly.

58. POLITICAL BALANCE (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

The Council considered a report setting out the proposed political balance of the Council's Committees, which had been produced following changes at the Council. A list of nominations to Committees and Sub-Committees was tabled at the meeting (Appendix 3).

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Political balance of the Committees of the Council be agreed as set out in paragraph 3.6;**
- 2) **the arrangement where the seats on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are not allocated in accordance with the political balance requirements be continued;**
- 3) **the arrangement where the seats on the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel are not allocated in accordance with the political balance requirements be continued;**

- 4) appointments by political group leaders to the places on each Committee etc. be noted;
- 5) the Council appoints the non-aligned Councillor to places on Committees; and
- 6) the Council appoints Chairs and Vice-Chairs to the Committees and other bodies as set out in Appendix 3 to the minutes.

59. OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS

Members noted that Councillor Julian Grubb had been nominated to replace Councillor Juliet Brunner as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Corporate Parenting Board in his capacity as relevant Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED that

Councillor Julian Grubb's appointment to the Worcestershire Corporate Parenting Board be noted.

60. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Leader explained that there had been one urgent decision taken since the previous meeting of Council. This decision had been taken in respect of the Council's membership of the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool 2020/21. The government had announced that the Worcestershire business rates pilot pool would not be continuing in 2020/21. Enquiries had been made about the potential to join a Greater Birmingham and Solihull business rates pool but Officers had been advised that this option would not be available in 2020/21. The Council had therefore opted to join the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool in 2020/21 but a decision on this subject had been required before the date of the Council meeting.

61. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no general urgent business for Members' consideration on this occasion.