



MINUTES

Present:

Councillors Gareth Prosser (Mayor), Ann Isherwood (Deputy Mayor), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Imran Altaf, Karen Ashley, Tom Baker-Price, Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Debbie Chance, Brandon Clayton, Luke Court, Matthew Dormer, Aled Evans, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Julian Grubb, Lucy Harrison, Anthony Lovell, Emma Marshall, Gemma Monaco, Nyear Nazir, Timothy Pearman, Mike Rouse, David Thain, Craig Warhurst and Jennifer Wheeler

Officers:

Kevin Dicks and Claire Felton

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

35. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting.

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Juliet Brunner, Alex Fogg and Wanda King.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

38. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Council held on Monday 20th September 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

39. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made at the meeting:

a) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that he had attended the Armistice Day commemorations on 11th November at Plymouth Road and the Remembrance Sunday service on 14th November. He thanked Members for the excellent turnout at the event and explained that it had been well organised. The Mayor had also attended two poppy appeals in the Kingfisher Shopping Centre held during November.

In addition, the Mayor advised that since the previous meeting of Council, he had attended the Mayor's Civic Service in Alcester, Warwickshire. The Mayor had also attended the opening of the Business and IP Centre (BIPC) at Redditch Library.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader announced that Councillors Brandon Clayton and David Thain were standing down from the Executive Committee. He thanked them both for their hard work as Portfolio Holders.

Council was advised of the following additional changes with respect to the membership of the Executive Committee:

- Councillor Joanne Beecham was being appointed to the Executive Committee as the Portfolio Holder for Leisure.
- Councillor Aled Evans was being appointed to the Executive Committee as Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services.
- Councillor Mike Rouse was being appointed Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services.

Members were also asked to note the following changes to the Conservative Group's appointments to various Committees. These did not change the political balance at the Council.

- Audit, Governance and Standards Committee – Councillor David Thain was replacing Councillor Aled Evans on the Committee.
- Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel – Councillor Emma Marshall was replacing Councillor Joanne Beecham on the Panel.

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Brandon Clayton was replacing Councillor Joanne Beecham on the Committee.
- Planning Committee – Councillors Anthony Lovell, Emma Marshall and David Thain were being appointed as additional named substitutes on the Committee.
- Shareholders Committee – Councillor Alex Fogg was replacing Councillor Joanne Beecham on the Committee.

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

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

40. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9)

There were no Questions on Notice on this occasion.

41. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

Armed Forces

Councillor Tom Baker-Price proposed a Motion in respect of the support available from the Council to the armed forces, their families and service veterans. This Motion was seconded by Councillor Julian Grubb.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Baker-Price reminded Members that the Council had signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012. In signing up to this covenant, the Council was promising to treat armed forces personnel, their families and veterans fairly. The actions proposed in the Motion highlighted how the Council could address this responsibility. Under the proposed Motion, staff who were in the reserve forces would be treated fairly. It also recognised that members of staff with family in the armed forces might require additional support. Redditch Borough Council already had a range of flexible working arrangements in place, but the proposed actions would enhance these arrangements in order to meet the specific needs of armed forces personnel, their families and veterans. By signing up to the Motion, the Council would show leadership, particularly if action was taken to achieve the bronze award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

A career in the armed forces was incredibly diverse, with armed forces personnel serving in areas such as UN peace keeping missions, counterterrorism and defence. However, the experiences of armed forces personnel could be traumatic or could be difficult to transition from so additional support was needed. The actions proposed in the Motion had already been agreed by other local

authorities. Councillor Baker-Price concluded by urging other Members to continue to raise the issue of support for the armed forces to ensure that action was taken.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Grubb commented that he was proud to support the Motion. Councillor Grubb was the Council's Armed Forces Champion and he recognised that action to support the armed forces was important. Many of the actions detailed in the Motion were aspirational. However, if the Council made a start on some of the actions, this would create a good foundation on which to build further support in future.

Following the presentation of the Motion, Members discussed the subject in detail. There was general agreement amongst Members that the Motion addressed an important issue. Members acknowledged that veterans often faced challenges, including with securing housing and alternative employment, once they left the armed forces and needed additional support. In addition, Members commented that there was already a significant amount of support for the armed forces in Redditch, as demonstrated by the turnout of Members and the public at the recent local Remembrance Sunday commemorations.

During consideration of this item, the Leader advised Members about the action that was already taken by the Council to support the armed forces, including reservists, family members and veterans. This included:

- Flying the Armed Forces Flag for Armed Forces Day. In 2021 the Armed Forces Flag was flown from Monday 21st June through to Armed Forces Day on Saturday 26th June. In 2022, Armed Forces Day would be Saturday 25th June, so the Council would fly the flag from Monday 20th June. Members were asked to note that the flag would be flown on the front of the building and not on top of the Town Hall, where the Union Flag had to take precedence.
- Under the Council's Housing Allocations Policy, the Council considered persons in the armed forces as having been resident in the UK for the purposes of applying for social housing and they were eligible to join Redditch Homes without the need for a local connection. The Council also took into account any medical conditions arising from time served in the armed forces when considering high medical need or disability banding. This included Members or former members of the armed forces who were suffering with a severe and enduring mental illness or disorder where the medical condition would be significantly improved by a move to alternative accommodation. The financial resources available to an armed forces veteran were disregarded when assessing their

financial resources to support their housing needs, in cases where the financial settlement was received as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

- Redditch Borough Council supported training commitments and time off for staff who volunteered in non regular forces.

Members were informed that the Council welcomed this opportunity to demonstrate the authority's continued commitment to the armed forces community within Redditch. In line with the proposed Motion, the Council would explore the opportunities that working with the Career Transition Partnership might present, particularly in relation to the promotion of vacancies. The Council would also engage with the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme with a view to gaining a bronze award whilst maintaining an ambition to achieve a gold award in the future.

The Council would commit to reviewing the existing Service in Non Regular Forces policy with a view to ensuring it remained fit for purpose, particularly in relation to the granting of leave. Members were asked to note that, through this policy, the Council supported training commitments and time off for staff who volunteered in the non-regular forces.

The authority would aim to exploit the opportunities these engagement activities would provide, to ensure, wherever possible, that members of the armed forces community were supported to achieve the best possible outcomes.

RESOLVED that

this Council reaffirms its commitment to ensure that members of the armed forces community should not face any disadvantages in accessing public services and worse outcomes than those who have not served. To achieve this purpose council believes that Redditch Borough council should aim to:

- **Support the employment of veterans young and old and working with the Career Transition Partnership in order to establish a tailored employment pathway for Service Leavers by sending through details of all vacancies and Career Tasters that are available and through a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans;**
- **Support the employment of Service spouses and partners;**
- **Endeavour to offer a degree of flexibility in granting leave for Service spouses and partners before, during and after a partner's deployment through a publicly accessible flexible working policy;**

- **Support Council employees who choose to be members of the Reserve forces, including by accommodating their training and deployment where possible through a publicly accessible Reservists Policy;**
- **Offer support to local cadet units, either in our local community or in local schools, where possible;**
- **Participate actively in Armed Forces Day by flying the flag from the Town Hall during the preceding week and publicising it to staff and partners.**
- **Gain at least a bronze award from the defence employer recognition scheme with ambitions to achieve gold.**
- **Encourage local businesses to join the defence employer recognition scheme.**
- **Consider how through procurement the council can encourage suppliers to support the armed forces community.**

42. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Local Development Scheme

The Leader advised that the report in respect of the Local Development Scheme updated Members on the progress that had been made with the Local Plan review. A timetable had been included together with information about a Statement of Common Ground with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

Church Green Conservation Area Adoption

The Church Green Conservation Area Report detailed proposals with respect to the conservation area. Members welcomed the proposals, which celebrated the town's heritage, as well as the proposal to extend the conservation area to include properties located on Alcester Street. Whilst the report highlighted that the conservation area had an "at risk" status, members were advised that this would help the Council to apply for grant funding that could be used to the benefit of the conservation area.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the consultation process that had been undertaken with respect to this report. Members expressed some disappointment in the relatively low number of responses that had been received in this consultation process. However, the feedback that had been received indicated that the proposals had received a favourable response from local stakeholders.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 26th October 2021 be received and all recommendations adopted.

43. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Licensing Committee Recommendation – Gambling Act 2005 – Review of Statement of Principles

The Chair of the Licensing Committee, Councillor Salman Akbar, presented a recommendation on the subject of the review of the Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005, which had been discussed at a meeting of the Committee held on 8th November 2021. Members were advised that, under the terms of the legislation, the Statement of Principles had to be reviewed by the Council every three years. The latest review needed to be completed by the end of 2021. The revised Statement of Principles had been amended slightly but there were no significant changes.

RESOLVED that

the Revised Draft Statement of Principles be approved and published.

44. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND PRELIMINARY STAGE BOUNDARY REVIEW FOR REDDITCH - COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION

The Leader presented a report on the subject of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England Preliminary Stage Boundary Review for Redditch – Council Size Submission. Members were informed that this report had been discussed at a meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on Monday 18th October 2021. The main focus of the report was on the future size of the Council and, in considering this matter, the Committee had taken into account Members' aim to ensure that all wards were represented by three Councillors. The Committee had concluded by proposing that there should be 27 Councillors, who would represent 9 wards, at Redditch Borough Council.

Members subsequently discussed the report in detail and in so doing highlighted the following points:

- The previous reviews of the size of the Council undertaken by the Boundary Commission in 1983 and 2004, which had concluded on each occasion that the Council should have 29 Councillors.

- The benefits arising from having wards represented by more than one Councillor. Members commented that this approach enabled Councillors to share the workload with colleagues.
- The discussions that had been held at the Electoral Matters Committee about the potential for the Council to have either 27 or 30 Councillors in total, both of which would result in wards represented by three Members.
- The potential risks arising from having an even number of Councillors in total, particularly if at a future date the elections resulted in an equal number of Councillors being elected to represent two or more political groups.
- The information provided by Worcestershire County Council, which indicated that no population growth was anticipated in the Borough over the following 20 years. Members questioned the basis on which this conclusion had been reached by Worcestershire County Council and commented that housing growth in the Borough would potentially impact on the size of the local population.
- The system of elections by thirds used in Redditch and the extent to which it would be preferable to move to a system whereby elections were held every four years. On the one hand, it was suggested that a system of elections by thirds caused disruption to the democratic process each year and resulted in higher financial costs to the Council than elections every four years. On the other hand, Members commented that a system of elections by thirds enabled Councillors to keep in touch with local issues on a yearly basis.
- The potential to maintain distinct identities for each of the wards at the following stage of the review process.

RESOLVED that

Council put forward the Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, including a proposal for there to be a total of 27 Councillors at Redditch Borough Council.

45. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

Members were informed that there had been two urgent decisions since the previous Council meeting, on the subjects of the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool and extra funding for the Waste Collection Service. These decisions were not subject to debate.

46. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

Council was informed that, as a consequence of the changes to Committee appointments, detailed during the Leader's

Announcements under Minute Item no. 39, there was a need for decisions to be taken regarding a small number of appointments. These decisions needed to be taken as urgent business to ensure that Committee meetings and Outside Body meetings could proceed effectively in line with constitutional requirements prior to the next scheduled meeting of Council.

Shareholders Committee

Members were advised that following the change to the membership of the Shareholders Committee, a vacancy had arisen for the position of Vice Chair of the Committee. Councillor Alex Fogg was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Shareholders Committee for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year. There were no other nominations.

Outside Body Appointment – Waste Management Board

Clarification was provided that the Council was required to nominate the relevant Portfolio Holder to serve as the authority's representative on the Waste Management Board in an ex officio capacity. For this reason, it was proposed that Councillor Aled Evans should be appointed to the Waste Management Board, replacing Councillor Brandon Clayton.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor Alex Fogg be appointed Vice Chair of the Shareholders Committee for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year; and**
- 2) Councillor Aled Evans be appointed as the Council's lead Member on the Waste Management Board.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.51 pm