



Council

Monday, 23rd May, 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Ann Isherwood (Mayor), Tom Baker-Price (Deputy Mayor), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Karen Ashley, Joe Baker, Joanne Beecham, Juma Begum, Juliet Brunner, Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Luke Court, Matthew Dormer, Aled Evans, Peter Fleming, Alex Fogg, Andrew Fry, Lucy Harrison, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Joanna Kane, Sid Khan, Anthony Lovell, Emma Marshall, Nyear Nazir, Timothy Pearman, Gareth Prosser, David Thain and Craig Warhurst

Officers:

Melissa Bassett, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley, James Howse and Darren Whitney

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Imran Altaf.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MAYOR'S OPENING REMARKS

The outgoing Mayor, Councillor Gareth Prosser, commented that it had been an honour and a privilege to serve as Mayor of the Borough of Redditch for two consecutive municipal years from June 2020 to May 2022. Members were reminded that this period had coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, which had had a significant impact on the local community, although Councillor Prosser commented that he had been impressed by the stoic character and fortitude of the people of Redditch during this time.

Council was informed that £1,800 had been raised over the two years in support of the Mayor's charities, the Redditch Association for the Blind and the Disability Support Project, Redditch.

Chair

Councillor Prosser thanked the Members and community representatives who had raised funds for the charities. In addition, Councillor Prosser made particular reference to the role of his wife, Mrs Lynn Prosser, as his official consort and he thanked her for her support.

4. ELECTION OF THE MAYOR FOR 2022/23

Councillor Ann Isherwood was elected Mayor of the Borough for the forthcoming year. She made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office and then was invested with the Chain of Office. Councillor Isherwood thanked the outgoing Mayor and, on behalf of the Council, expressed gratitude for the work he had carried out as an ambassador for the town.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor Ann Isherwood be elected Mayor of the Borough of Redditch to serve until the next Annual Meeting of the Council; and**
- 2) the Council formally express, and record, its gratitude to Councillor Gareth Prosser for his excellent service to the town as Mayor in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 municipal years.**

5. ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR 2022/23

Councillor Tom Baker-Price was elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Redditch for the forthcoming year. He made the statutory declaration of acceptance of office and was then invested with the Deputy Mayor's Badge of Office.

RESOLVED that

Councillor Tom Baker-Price be appointed Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Redditch to serve until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday 11th April 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were provided at the meeting.

a) The Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor announced that her consort during the year would be her husband, Mr Paul Isherwood. She thanked him for his ongoing support and assistance during her time serving as the Deputy Mayor.

Members were advised that the Mayor's charity in 2022/23 would be Touchstones. The charity provided bereavement support to children and young people. The Mayor advised that support for the charity would form part of her focus on nurturing and supporting children and young people during her time serving as Mayor.

Council was advised that there were a number of civic engagements that the Mayor was scheduled to attend over forthcoming weeks. This included:

- 24th – 25th May - the Mayor would be acting as a judge for Level 3 students studying beauty and make up courses at the Hereford and Worcester (HoW) college.
- 27th May – the Mayor was booked to attend the Redditch Food Festival that would be taking place at Church Green East.
- 30th May – the Mayor had been invited by the Lord Lieutenant to attend the Queen's Jubilee Garden Party at Hanbury Hall.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader welcomed all new and returning Councillors who had been elected in May 2022 to the Council.

During consideration of this item, former Councillors and unsuccessful candidates who had not been returned at the local elections in May 2022 were thanked for their hard work.

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

In the absence of the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that there were no announcements on this occasion.

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Council appointed Councillor Matthew Dormer to the position of Leader for the coming four-year period.

RESOLVED that

Councillor Matthew Dormer be, and hereby is, appointed Leader of the Council for the ensuing four years.

9. LEADER'S APPOINTMENTS

The Leader presented his appointments to the Executive Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year.

During consideration of this item, questions were raised about the reasons for the appointment of Executive Committee members without portfolio. Council was informed that the two Executive Committee members without portfolio would be active members of the Committee and would take part in the local decision making process.

RESOLVED that

the appointment by the Leader of the Deputy Leader, of Members to the Executive Committee and to the individual Portfolios be noted.

10. APPOINTMENTS OF COMMITTEES, PANELS ETC. AND THEIR CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS

Members considered the Council's political balance and nominations from the political groups to the Council's various Committees and Panels.

Council was informed that, in addition to the nominations detailed in the supplementary agenda for the meeting, Councillor Karen Ashley was being proposed as an extra named substitute for the Conservative Group on the Planning Committee.

During consideration of this item, questions were raised about the agreed figures in the political balance and the seat allocations for each of the political groups. Officers clarified that when the political balance was initially calculated, there had been vacant seats on the majority of Committees that needed to be filled and both political groups were entitled to additional seats in order to receive their overall mathematical entitlement. The political group leaders had entered into negotiations and agreed the distribution of some of these seats in order to achieve their entitlement. The two

Councillors who were not aligned to a particular political group had been allocated remaining seats on the Council. There was also one seat which no group was entitled to but which group leaders had ultimately agreed to allocate to the Conservative group during their negotiations. The final seat allocations achieved a balanced position for the Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Political balance of the Committees of the Council be agreed;**
- 2) subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, appointments by political group leaders to the places on each Committee etc. be noted;**
- 3) the Council appoints Chairs and Vice-Chairs to the Committees and other bodies as set out at Appendix 2;**
- 4) appointments to Working Groups and other bodies listed in the appendix be agreed; and**
- 5) the terms of reference for the Committees be confirmed.**

11. OUTSIDE BODIES

The Leader presented the nominations to the Outside Bodies that had been circulated for Members' consideration in a supplementary pack for the meeting. Members were advised that one amendment was being proposed, in respect of the Council's nomination to the Redditch Eastern Gateway Steering Group and Councillor Anthony Lovell was being nominated to this position instead of Councillor Peter Fleming.

During consideration of this item, an alternative nomination was made for Councillor Sid Khan to be appointed to the position of Armed Forces Champion instead of Councillor Aled Evans, as printed in the supplementary agenda pack. On being put to the vote, it was agreed that Councillor Aled Evans should be appointed as the Council's Armed Forces Champion in the 2022/23 municipal year.

RESOLVED that

subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, appointments to the places on each of the Outside Bodies, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be agreed.

12. SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS

The Officer Scheme of Delegations was presented for Council's consideration. Members were advised that the Monitoring Officer had delegated authority to update the Scheme of Delegations to reflect changes to legislation and any amendments to the Scheme that had been agreed during the year. However, no additional delegations, or amendments to existing delegations, were proposed for Members' consideration. The current Scheme of Delegations was proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Nyear Nazir.

Reference was made to the respective roles of the Council and Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP) in determining the content of the Council's constitution. Officers confirmed that the Council ultimately made decisions about changes to the constitution, including the Officer Scheme of Delegations, which formed part of the constitution. However, the CRWP reviewed potential changes to the constitution and made recommendations based on the information gathered which, when presented to Council, enabled Members to make decisions about changes to the content in context.

During consideration of this item, Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed four amendments to the Officer Scheme of Delegation. These amendments were seconded by Councillor Joe Baker.

The proposed amendments were:

- At Part 5.05, in respect of the Housing Allocations Policy, it was proposed that future amendments to the policy that were deemed necessary and which would not trigger the statutory obligation to consult with people impacted by the changes, should be determined by the Executive Committee, not Officers.
- At Part 5.05, in respect of the offer of alternative accommodation to the family of a deceased relative, it was noted that consideration of this matter would inevitably take place at a sensitive time for a family. In this context, it was proposed that the decision regarding the offer of suitable alternative accommodation to occupants of Council house properties who were relatives of a deceased tenant, should be taken by the Executive Committee and not by Officers.
- At Part 5.05, in respect of Housing Management Tenancy charges, concerns were raised that the delegation did not specify the charges that would be set or the parameters for setting charges. For this reason, it was proposed that the decision should be taken by the Executive Committee, not officers.

- At Part 5.10, in relation to the administration of the Right to Buy scheme, it was commented that there was an urgent need for more social and Council housing in the Borough. The proposal was therefore made that decisions in respect of the administration of the Right to Buy Scheme should be taken by the Executive Committee rather than Officers.

On being put to the vote the amendments were lost.

A further amendment was subsequently proposed by Councillor Andrew Fry in respect of Part 5.04 of the Officer Scheme of Delegations on the subject of Garden Waste Charges. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Sharon Harvey.

The amendment proposed that the decision to set or vary the level of charges for the opt-in chargeable garden waste service, in relation to the overall figure agreed, should be taken by the Executive Committee rather than by Officers.

Members briefly discussed this amendment and, in doing so, commented that the delegation referred to the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services making a decision on this subject following consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services. Reference was also made to the involvement of Members each year in considering the Council's fees and charges, which set the parameters in cases where fees could be varied by Officers.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

An amendment was subsequently proposed in respect of Part 5.05 of the Officer Scheme of Delegations by Councillor Juma Begum on the subject of Tenant Recharges. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Joe Baker.

The amendment proposed that the decision to authorise tenant recharges where works had been carried out and were deemed to be the tenant's responsibility, should be taken by the Executive Committee rather than Officers.

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Begum raised concerns that the costs of living were increasing, including the charges for works undertaken on behalf of tenants in these instances, and Member involvement in the decision making process would therefore be appropriate.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Baker commented that there were concerns that the charges for this type of work could be

high. In this context, it was important to ensure that the Executive Committee was involved in making the decisions.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

A further amendment was proposed by Councillor Sharon Harvey in respect of Part 5.10 of the Officer Scheme of Delegations, concerning the Council Tax Support Scheme. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Joe Baker.

The amendment proposed that the delegation to officers to carry out statutory consultation on draft Council Tax Support Schemes in accordance with legislative guidance, should instead be determined by the Executive Committee.

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Harvey commented that there was a cost of living crisis impacting on local residents. Members would be held to account for decisions that were taken which could impact on domestic living costs. In this context, it was important for Members to be involved fully in the decision-making process in respect of the Council Tax Support Scheme.

Consideration was given briefly to this proposed amendment. Members were asked to note that the delegation provided officers with delegated authority to undertake consultation with the public concerning proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme but did not provide officers with the power to determine the content of the scheme, which remained a Council decision.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

The final amendment debated during consideration of this item, was proposed by Councillor Joanna Kane in respect of Part 5.07 of the Officer Scheme of Delegations concerning the fees and charges for and concessionary use of the civic suite. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Sharon Harvey.

This amendment proposed that the Executive Committee, rather than Officers, should set and vary the fees and charges for the hire of the civic suite and should also be responsible for agreeing requests for concessionary use of the civic suite.

In considering this amendment, Members commented that the civic suite was hired out to interested parties on a commercial basis. Bookings of the civic suite had to take into account existing commitments, which were managed by Officers. The Mayor had some discretion to offer the opportunity for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations concessionary use of the civic

suite on a small number of occasions, but advice was always taken from officers regarding such requests.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED that

the current version of the Officer Scheme of Delegations be agreed.

13. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - RECOMMENDATION FROM THE AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Council considered a recommendation that had been received from the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee on the subject of the Member Code of Conduct. The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Luke Court and seconded by Councillor Emma Marshall.

In considering the proposal, Members commented that the Local Government Association (LGA) had proposed a new model code of conduct based on best practice. The Monitoring Officers in Worcestershire had reviewed the model Member Code of Conduct and agreed arrangements for the Code of Conduct for Members elected across Worcestershire. At the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meeting held on 14th April 2022, Members had subsequently endorsed the updated code of conduct in an amended form.

RESOLVED that

subject to the amendments proposed at the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meeting held on 14th April 2022, the Worcestershire-wide draft Code of Conduct and its appendices, be adopted by the Council.

14. ELECTORAL REVIEW REDDITCH - WARD PATTERNING SUBMISSION

Members considered the proposed ward patterning submission that had been drafted by Officers for the consideration of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Officers were thanked for their hard work in proposing the suggested ward boundaries and preparing the report. However, Members commented that additional work was needed to ensure that community ties and identities were reflected in the ward boundaries that would be in place in the Borough. For this reason, Members concurred that the proposed submission that had been

drafted by Officers would not be endorsed as the authority's formal submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Instead, Members agreed that no formal submission would be made by the Council in this regard. This recommendation was proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Nyear Nazir.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the number of wards as well as the number of Councillors that would be elected to represent the Borough moving forward. Some Members expressed the view that 30 Councillors representing 10 wards would be preferable to 27 Councillors representing 9 wards. Concerns were also raised that, under the proposals detailed in the report, existing communities would be divided.

Questions were raised about the need for ward boundaries to be set in such a way that there would be approximately 7,000 voters per ward. Members commented that this objective, if applied to considerations about ward boundary divisions, would inevitably result in the break up of existing local communities.

Reference was made to the previous electoral review that had been carried out for the Borough in 2004. Members commented that this had also resulted in some communities being divided and it was suggested that in future, ward boundaries needed to reflect communities that would be recognised by the public.

RESOLVED that

Council note the work undertaken by officers in collating and presenting the warding pattern but that Council agree that there be no formal submission by the Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in this regard.

15. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

Members were advised that no urgent decisions had been taken since the previous meeting of Council.

16. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

Council was informed that there was no urgent business for consideration on this occasion.