

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Salman Akbar, Karen Ashley, Imran Altaf, Joe Baker, Juliet Barker Smith, Joanne Beecham, Juma Begum, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, James Fardoe, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Lucy Harrison, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Chris Holz, Joanna Kane, Sid Khan, Anthony Lovell, Emma Marshall, Kerrie Miles, Gemma Monaco, Timothy Pearman, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow, Craig Warhurst and Ian Woodall

Also Present:

Mufti Abdul Kadeer Khairabadi Bandyalvi (the Mayor's Chaplain)

Officers:

Peter Carpenter, Kevin Dicks, Claire Green and Sue Hanley

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

14. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting.

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Luke Court and Alex Fogg.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Joe Baker, Bill Hartnett and Emma Marshall declared other disclosable interests in Minute Item No 20 – Motions on Notice - in respect of the Motion that had been submitted for consideration on the subject of the recent Redditch Pride event. In declaring their interest, Councillors Baker, Hartnett and Marshall advised that they sat on the Redditch LGB&TQ Support Services

Chair

Committee which organised the Pride event. They left the room during consideration of this item and took no part in the debate nor vote thereon.

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Monday 22nd May 2023 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

18. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were provided at the meeting:

a) The Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that he had appointed Mufti Abdul Kadeer Khairabadi Bandyalvi as his Chaplain for the 2023/24 municipal year. In addition, the Mayor confirmed that his scout for the year would be Mr Manuel Kajdanski

Members were advised that the Mayor's charity for the year would be Redditch Self Defence Association.

A list of the Mayor's engagements scheduled to take place in June and July 2023 were tabled for Members' consideration (Appendix 1).

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader opened this item by congratulating Ms Madison Atkins, from Redditch, for winning the Haringey Boxing Cup. Congratulations were also extended to Mr Joshua Tongue, again from Redditch, for his recent appointment to the England Test Cricket Team to play in The Ashes.

Members were informed that the Leader had recently attended a meeting of the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA's) Board as well as a meeting of the Redditch Business Leaders' Group.

During consideration of this item, the Leader noted that this would be the last meeting that Mr Kevin Dicks would be attending as Chief Executive of Redditch Borough Council. On behalf of the Council, the Leader thanked Mr Dicks for his hard work and service to the Borough over many years and wished him all the best for the future.

Members subsequently outlined their gratitude to Mr Dicks for his service as Chief Executive over many years. It was noted that Mr Dicks had been hard working and had acted with integrity throughout his tenure as Chief Executive. There had been many changes during the time that he had served as Chief Executive, including the introduction of shared services, and Members thanked Mr Dicks for his support during this time.

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive thanked Members for their comments and support during his time working for Redditch Borough Council. Council was advised that the Chief Executive had always tried to do the best for the Borough and the people served by the Council and he was proud of the work that had been delivered by the authority, often in challenging circumstances. Particular thanks were extended by the Chief Executive to the Deputy Chief Executive for her support and hard work whilst he had managed the Council.

19. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9)

The Mayor confirmed that there were no Questions on Notice for consideration on this occasion.

20. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

The Mayor advised that two Motions on Notice had been received for consideration at the meeting.

Outdoor Market

Councillor Joe Baker submitted the following Motion on Notice for Council's consideration:

“That Council ask Executive to consider the reintroduction of the Outdoor Market, following the Labour group plans which received a large amount of support from the public.”

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Ian Woodall.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Baker commented that the Labour group had campaigned for the return of an outdoor market in the recent local elections. It was envisaged that this would involve good quality products being sold at an outdoor market held on a weekly basis in the town. The market stalls that would be used by market traders would be flat packed and stored in a safe location when not in use. A weekly outdoor market could also potentially offer more affordable products for sale than some of the themed markets that had taken place in Redditch in recent years. Local businesses had indicated some interest in operating their own market stalls in an outdoor market and it was suggested that this could therefore help to support the local economy. Members were asked to note that it would be helpful to employ a market manager to manage the outdoor market to ensure that it operated successfully moving forward.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Woodall noted that the Federation of Small Businesses had recently highlighted that local shopping had increased since the Covid-19 pandemic. Increasingly, people liked to buy produce, including food, that was locally sourced, particularly people from the millennial generation and younger people who were keen to reduce their carbon footprint. It was suggested that an outdoor market would support these shopping preferences.

Members subsequently discussed the Motion in detail and in doing so commented on the following matters:

- The heritage of Redditch and the history of a market in the town.
- The successful outdoor markets that operated in neighbouring locations, including Bromsgrove and Stratford-on-Avon and the potential for these arrangements to be replicated in Redditch.
- The reliance of a successful outdoor market on sufficient footfall.

- The previous experiences with an outdoor market in Redditch, including management of the outdoor market by an external organisation.
- The changing shopping habits amongst people both locally and nationally and the implications for the successful operation of weekly outdoor markets.
- The work of the Redditch Business Improvement District (BID) to attract themed markets and events to the town, including artisan markets and Digbeth Dining events, and the visitors that had attended these markets.
- The potential for people to develop entrepreneurial skills by operating a market stall.
- The extent to which themed markets as opposed to weekly markets would attract local stall holders to an outdoor market in Redditch.
- An online survey conducted by the Redditch Standard in respect of an outdoor market and the outcomes of this consultation exercise.
- The possible location of an outdoor market in Redditch town centre.
- The benefits of having events and attractions outside the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to help encourage people to visit the town.
- The market stalls that would be used for a weekly market and the associated maintenance costs for these stalls.
- The other events that were held in the town centre, including the carnival and street theatre and the potential for these to continue to take place alongside an outdoor market.

At the end of the debate the vote on the Motion was lost.

Pride Event

Councillor Joanna Kane submitted the following Motion on Notice for Council's consideration:

- "That this Council agrees that Redditch's first community PRIDE event on June 3 was a resounding success; and:
- That in recognition of their organisational skills and promotion of the town, a formal letter of thanks should be sent to Redditch LGB&TQ Support Services for making it an historic event; and

- That this Council commits to building on this success by encouraging a wide range of cultural events for the future."

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Kane and seconded by Councillor Juliet Barker Smith.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Kane commented that 3rd June 2023 had been a historic day for Redditch as this had been the date when the first Pride event had taken place in the Borough. The Pride event had been family friendly and inclusive and had been attended by in excess of one thousand people. There had been lots of community engagement and the event had attracted visitors from outside the Borough. The Pride event had been organised by the Redditch LGB&TQ Support Services group, which had established a Committee to co-ordinate arrangements. As the event had been such a success, Councillor Kane proposed that the Council should send a formal letter thanking the Redditch LGB&TQ Support Services group for their hard work. In addition, Councillor Kane expressed the hope that this event would be followed by other successful cultural events in the Borough celebrating the diversity of the local community.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Barker Smith commented that she welcomed the cross-party support for the Motion. Redditch Pride had been the first pride event ever to be held in the Borough and had been a big success. The Pride event had demonstrated that people were keen to participate in local events and there was therefore the potential to hold further cultural events in the future.

Members subsequently discussed the Motion in detail and in doing so agreed that Redditch Pride had been a very successful event. There was general consensus that the Redditch LGB&TQ Support Services group had worked very hard to organise the event and deserved recognition for this. The involvement of people from different backgrounds in organising the event was also welcomed by Members. Reference was made to LGBTQI+ history and Members commented on progress that had been made in society in recent decades in terms of challenging homophobic and transphobic prejudice and how the Pride event helped to demonstrate this situation. Members also noted that the Pride event had been invaluable for people from the local LGBTQI+ population, particularly young people who might be learning about their own sexuality and would appreciate guidance and support.

During consideration of this Motion, Members noted that Redditch had a very diverse population and it was suggested that the Council also needed to promote and encourage further cultural activities in the community. As examples, Members referred to events held in recent years which had celebrated independence for Jamaica and Pakistan respectively. Members also commented that cultural events could have a beneficial impact on the local economy and it was noted that many of those who had participated in the Pride event had also visited pubs and restaurants whilst they were in the town.

On being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

RESOLVED

- **That this Council agrees that Redditch's first community PRIDE event on June 3 was a resounding success; and:**
- **That in recognition of their organisational skills and promotion of the town, a formal letter of thanks should be sent to Redditch LGB&TQ Support Services for making it an historic event; and**
- **That this Council commits to building on this success by encouraging a wide range of cultural events for the future.**

(Prior to consideration of the second Motion on Notice, Councillors Joe Baker, Bill Hartnett and Emma Marshall declared other disclosable interests in respect of the subject of the Motion, relating to the recent Redditch Pride event, as they were members of the Redditch LGB&TQ Support Services Committee which organised the Pride event. They left the room during consideration of this Motion and took no part in the debate nor vote thereon.)

21. INDEPENDENT PERSONS - STANDARDS REGIME

Council considered a report concerning the appointment of independent persons for the Council's standards regime.

RESOLVED that

- 1) for the purposes of the appointment of independent persons under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011, the Council join the group of Worcestershire local authorities who operate a joint pool of independent persons;**

- 2) authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to appoint the named individual independent persons currently serving in the joint pool, and to make any future appointments to the role of independent person;
- 3) Mr Mel Nock the Independent Person appointed by Bromsgrove District Council continue to act as Independent Person for Redditch Borough Council on a temporary basis until the end of October 2023; and
- 4) authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make any consequential changes to the Constitution.

22. OFFICER APPOINTMENT - INTERIM SECTION 151 OFFICER

Members considered a report in respect of the extension of the appointment of the Interim Section 151 Officer for a further six months.

During consideration of this item, questions were raised as to why the Council had not yet appointed a permanent Section 151 Officer and concerns were raised about the financial implications of this situation. The Chief Executive advised that external advice had been provided that it would not be appropriate to recruit to this position during the pre-election period. In addition, the Chief Executive had subsequently announced his intention to retire and the Council had been advised that a permanent Section 151 Officer should not be recruited until a new Chief Executive had been employed. West Midlands Employers had been appointed to conduct the recruitment process for both posts on behalf of the Council and the positions were due to be advertised imminently. Members were advised that the recruitment process would take time as applications would need to be shortlisted, interviews would need to be held and the successful candidates would potentially need to serve out their notice periods at other organisations. In the meantime, whilst there would be some additional financial costs attached, as detailed in the report, the extension of the interim appointment for the Section 151 Officer post would ensure there was some continuity at the Council.

RESOLVED that

the appointment of the Interim Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 officer approved by Council for twelve months on 27th June 2022 be extended for up to a further six months until 26th December 2023.

(Prior to consideration of this item, the Interim Section 151 Officer left the meeting. He therefore was not present during the debate in respect of this item nor the vote thereon.)

23. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Members considered recommendations that had been agreed at meetings of the Executive Committee held on 21st March and 13th June 2023.

Air Quality Enhanced Monitoring Options Report

Consideration was given to the grant funding that Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) had secured to support air quality monitoring and Members thanked officers for their hard work in respect of this matter. Members noted that it was important to ensure that air quality was monitored to benefit local residents.

Housing Policies

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement presented the Housing Policies for Members' consideration. Members were advised that the policies provided tenants with clarity regarding the respective responsibilities of tenants and the Council as their landlord. The policies would help the Council to manage anti-social behaviour (ASB), repairs and maintenance of Council properties, including compliance with safe home standards and to provide support to tenants who were aiming to downsize. Officers were thanked for their hard work in developing these policies.

During consideration of this item, Councillor Joe Baker proposed an amendment to the wording of the second recommendation in respect of the Housing Policies. The amended wording was as follows:

“Delegated authority be given to the Head of Community and Housing Services and/or Head of Environmental and Housing Property, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for

Housing, *tenants and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee*, to agree any revisions to the Housing Policies following the consultation and in line with any legislative or government guidance updates.”

The amendment was proposed by Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor Sharon Harvey.

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Baker commented that he had concerns about how the housing policies that related to recharging tenants would impact on those residents. Given the financial implications for tenants, Councillor Baker suggested that it would be appropriate for them to be consulted on any future revisions to the policies. In addition, Councillor Baker suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s role in scrutinising the policies would be helpful on an ongoing basis as a way to ensure that the detail in the policies was thoroughly considered.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Harvey suggested that Members needed assurance that any future revisions to the policies would be subject to appropriate scrutiny.

Members subsequently discussed the amendment in detail and in doing so commented on the following points:

- The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in reviewing the content of the Housing Policies and the existing power of the Committee to ask to scrutinise Council policies.
- The consultation referenced in the recommendation and the statutory requirements in respect of consulting with Council tenants.
- The need for transparency in terms of arrangements for consultation with tenants and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

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Members requested clarification about the reasons why the proposed increases to charges for the Dial a Ride service had been resolved by the Executive Committee rather than referred to Council. Officers explained that there were some charges that

could be determined by the Executive Committee and it was agreed that clarification in respect of these charges would be provided in writing after the meeting.

Compulsory Purchase of a Long-Term Empty Property

Members considered a report on the subject of the compulsory purchase of a long-term empty property.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 21st March and Tuesday 13th June 2023 be approved and all recommendations adopted.

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to any individual, which was likely to reveal the identity of any individual and which related to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

24. OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS - WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Nominations were received for Councillor Joanne Beecham to be appointed as the Council's lead representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel in the 2023/24 municipal year and for Councillor Karen Ashley to be her substitute.

During consideration of this item, Officers confirmed that due to the political balance requirements for the panel, the lead representative and substitute would need to be members of the administration.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor Joanne Beecham be appointed as the Council's lead representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel in the 2023/24 municipal year; and**

- 2) **Councillor Karen Ashley be appointed as the Council's substitute member on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel in the 2023/24 municipal year.**

25. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Mayor advised that one urgent decision had been taken since the previous Council meeting, in respect of the appointment of a new Managing Director for Rubicon Leisure Limited.

26. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no urgent business for consideration on this occasion.

The Meeting commenced at 7.02 pm
and closed at 8.54 pm