



Council

Monday, 13th November,
2023

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

Peter Carpenter, Nicola Cummings, Claire Green, Sue Hanley and Guy Revans

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

40. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all present to the meeting.

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Karen Ashley and Kerrie Miles.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Monday 25th September 2023 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

Chair

44. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made:

a) The Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that a record of the civic engagements which had been attended by him and the Deputy Mayor since the previous meeting had been included in agenda pack 1 for Members' consideration.

The Mayor also reported that over the previous weekend he had sent a letter using the Mayoral letterhead and apologised, stating his remorse for doing so.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader reported that he had attended the Economy Growth Board, the Housing Land Delivery Board, the Investment Board and Combined Authority Board over the last month. He had also attended Remembrance events over the weekend.

The Leader would update the Group Leaders on developments with North Worcestershire EDR outside the meeting.

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

The Interim Chief Executive confirmed she had no announcements to make on this occasion.

45. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9)

Three Questions on Notice had been received for this meeting.

Notice of Consultation RBC Tenancy Agreement

Ms J. Snape asked the Leader: "Could the leader please inform us of the cost to the Council of having to reissue the Notice of Consultation on RBC's Tenancy Agreement to all Council tenants, due to having issued the initial letter with the incorrect phone number on it?"

The Leader responded that with regret and sincere apologies from Officers this letter was reissued when it became apparent that in error part of the telephone number was transposed.

The Leader advised that the letter was sent on the 23rd October 2023 to 5,279 tenants. It was in black and white (mono) on one side of A4. The cost of this mailing was £745.45.

The Leader was pleased to report that to date the Council had received 73 written responses to the consultation and 142 residents were consulted with roadshows held in 12 locations.

Ms Snape asked a supplementary question, about whether the Leader or Portfolio Holder should have proof read the letter before it was sent out. The Leader responded that Officers were responsible for drafting the letter and it would not be appropriate for councillors to do so. A regrettable human error had occurred on this occasion.

Levelling Up Funding Matchborough and Winyates

Councillor J. Spilsbury asked the Leader “How can the leader demonstrate his commitment in real terms to residents of Matchborough and Winyates, given the failure to secure levelling up funding?”

The Leader responded that he had commitment to the whole town. He had requested the preparation of a comprehensive pre-development feasibility study for the regeneration of Matchborough and Winyates, which was commissioned by NWedR on behalf of the council and delivered by Arcadis. This included the preparation of several development options for each local centre including feasibility studies, concept designs and viability assessments and appraisals. This work provided the core of the evidence base included in the LUF 2 bid and would be used in future bids for government grants and other relevant external funding programmes. There was no call for any Council to bid in Levelling Up Fund 3, it was an allocation. As the Council had already received funds from another source it was likely to be a challenge to receive further money.

The Leader invited Andy Street, the Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), to a site visit in Redditch to discuss key regeneration plans for the town, including the regeneration of Matchborough and Winyates. As a result, conversations between WMCA, RBC and NWedR officers had commenced to explore potential WMCA support for the regeneration of Matchborough and Winyates. These included initial work on strategic fit, value for money and eligibility requirements of the various WMCA funding programmes that the council may be able to apply to as a non-constituent member of the Combined Authority. NWedR and RBC officers were working together to formulate the next steps.

Councillor Spilsbury asked a supplementary question about when residents could expect to hear confirmation of firm plans.

The Leader replied that he could not give firm dates about the Matchborough regeneration. The plans had been in place for 10 years and he was committed to see Matchborough get its fair share of funding. The Council would continue to seek funding and he referred in particular to potential opportunities with West Midlands Combined Authority.

Relocation of Redditch Library

Mr O. Hale asked the Leader: "With regards to the relocation of the Library to the Town Hall, Redditch Council said they would not back the relocation if the majority of the population of Redditch did not want it relocated. Considering that the consultation sample showed that exact result, with a '99% confidence that the population would give the same result as the sample', can the Leader confirm if Redditch Council will continue to back the relocation?"

The Leader replied that the number of responses to the consultation was disappointing. A thorough process had been undertaken by officers both at the County and Borough Councils and prior to that by the Towns Deal Board in working up the proposals. The County Council had decided to move the library into the Town Hall and the Borough Council would facilitate that.

Mr. Hale asked a supplementary question that given reports about the consultation said that the number of participants gave a valid response, and demonstrated that the people of Redditch did not want the library to move, was the Leader able to say that this was what the people of Redditch wanted?

The Leader replied that he believed the people of Redditch did want the project and the number of respondents to the consultation represented 1% of the population of the town.

46. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

The Mayor announced that there were no Motions on Notice for consideration at this meeting.

47. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Council considered the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 31st October 2023.

Garden Waste Service

Members supported the recommendations to introduce a garden waste service in the Borough which would increase the capacity of the service and enable more residents to take it up. In response to queries from members, the Portfolio Holder reported that officers were working on a theme for the vehicle to highlight the service and green credentials. The new service would begin in February 2024, and the service that had until now been operated by Bromsgrove District Council on the Borough's behalf had demonstrated the demand for the service from residents. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council would continue to promote home composting.

Annual Refresh of Council Plan

During the debate on this item the view was expressed that the priorities were not appropriate, and the Council's finances could be managed better. The Leader of the Council responded that the priorities in the plan reflected those of the residents on Redditch who had contributed to the consultation and the Council's finances were stable.

Medium Term Financial Plan Tranche 1 Budget - including Fees and Charges (prior to consultation)

During consideration of the recommendation about the play audit, the view was expressed that whilst supporting this, it was disappointing that smaller play areas were not included. The Portfolio Holder invited all members to contact her to discuss potential improvements to play areas in their wards.

In response to questions about the process for the medium-term financial plan, the Interim S151 Officer clarified that fees and charges would be presented to Executive Committee in early December following consideration by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group. They would then be presented to Council in January 2024,

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee held on 31st October 2023 be received and all recommendations adopted.

48. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Mayor advised that there had been no urgent decisions made since the previous meeting of Council.

49. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no urgent business for consideration on this occasion.

The Meeting commenced at 7.01 pm
and closed at 8.05 pm