

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors Juma Begum, Joanna Kane, Joe Baker, Juliet Barker Smith, William Boyd, Brandon Clayton, Claire Davies, Matthew Dormer, James Fardoe, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Chris Holz, Wanda King, Alan Mason, Sachin Mathur, Gemma Monaco, Rita Rogers, Gary Slim, Jen Snape, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow, Craig Warhurst, Ian Woodall and Paul Wren.

Officers:

Peter Carpenter, Nicola Cummings, Sue Hanley and Guy Revans

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill.

17. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all present to the meeting.

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sid Khan and David Munro.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday 20th May 2024 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

21. ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Mayor's announcements

The Mayor referred to a list of events she had enjoyed attending since the previous meeting, which had been published within a supplementary agenda pack.

Chair

b) Leader's announcements

The Leader referred to the meeting of the Executive Committee held immediately prior to the Council meeting which had decided that the current library building in the town centre would not be moving into the Town Hall community hub.

The Leader announced that there had been changes to the membership of the Executive Committee. Members were advised that Councillor Sharon Harvey, Deputy Leader, had been appointed Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, replacing Councillor Sid Khan, Councillor Jen Snape had been appointed as Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, and Councillor Wanda King had been appointed to the Executive Committee as member without portfolio.

The Leader reported he had attended a meeting of the Worcestershire Leaders' Board where the implications of collecting food waste had been considered. Members were advised that he would update the Council as further information became available.

The Towns Board had met the new Member of Parliament and discussed the plans for regeneration of Redditch and the Levelling Up fund.

The Leader asked all Members to publicise the Redditch Uniform Bank which was being held on Saturday 3rd August 2024. Volunteers were also being sought for this event.

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive confirmed that she did not have any announcements on this occasion.

22. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9)

The Mayor announced that no questions had been received for this meeting.

23. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

The Mayor advised that one Motion on Notice had been received for this meeting.

Hillcrest Ward

Councillor David Munro had submitted the following Motion for consideration, which was proposed in his absence by Councillor Ian Woodall:

“That the Council asks Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust to reconsider the proposed closure of Hillcrest Ward in Redditch and the consequential transfer of all adult acute mental health in-patient treatment to the Elgar Unit at the Worcester Royal Acute Hospital site”.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Woodall referred to a recent meeting of the Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) which Councillor Munro had attended to observe and where the redesign of Adult Mental Health Inpatient and Rehabilitation Services had been discussed. It was acknowledged that action needed to be taken following a Care Quality Commission (CQC) report based on inspections in 2023. The report was critical of the safety and effectiveness of the adult mental health services and rated them as “Requires Improvement”. The Acute ward for adults of working age and the psychiatric intensive care units were rated “Inadequate”. Councillor Woodall referred to specific issues raised by the CQC at Hillcrest ward, including safety not being prioritised and maintenance, cleaning and staffing issues.

The Health and Care Trust had reported that it would strive to treat admitted patients locally. Councillor Woodall reported that the reality was that facilities currently available were due to be improved in Worcester and Hereford but, as part of the reconfiguration proposals, present inpatient acute provision in Redditch was due to be transferred to Worcester. This would be a loss to the town which followed previous changes to maternity and paediatric services.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Rita Rogers, who referred to the detrimental impact that a loss of beds in Redditch would have on the ability of residents to access services, both as patients and carers. She also suggested that Worcestershire County Councillors could advocate retention of services in the Town as the County Council was a partner in service provision and delivery. She expressed concern that the services in Worcester were not of an appropriate standard to justify the relocation of services from Redditch.

During consideration of the Motion the main points discussed were:

- The reasons for changes in service provision that had been given at the HOSC meeting and which reflected changes that were needed in mental health service provision.
- The Get it Right First-Time guidance from the Royal College of Physicians advocated provision of the right type of treatment for the variety of patients who were treated.
- Major changes to health needed to be agreed by the Secretary of State for Health and thus the motion was premature as the consultation was still ongoing.
- A Member reported that HOSC members had visited Hillcrest to see the changes proposed and the building would be used for other purposes in treating mental health. It was clarified that the building was owned by the Health and Care Trust and not the Acute Hospitals Trust.
- The removal of health services from the Town to Worcester was a backward step since new housing developments were increasing the size of the population.
- Patients suffering mental health issues and their carers would experience extra strain by having to find transport to Worcester for treatment.
- It was suggested that the consultation period was long enough that there would be time for the Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the proposals and invite representatives of the relevant organisations, such as the Health and Care Trust, to attend a meeting. Arising from this, Councillor Woodall agreed to add the following to the Motion: “Council asks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the proposals for Reconfiguration of Adult Mental Health Inpatient and Rehabilitation services.”
- NHS England had called for a review of mental health service provision nationally because of a reduction in the number of mental health inpatient beds and therefore it was appropriate for the Council to review the proposals.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Council asks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the proposals for Reconfiguration of Adult Mental Health Inpatient and Rehabilitation services; and**
- 2) Council asks Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust to reconsider the proposed closure of Hillcrest Ward in Redditch and the consequential transfer of all adult acute mental health in-patient treatment to the Elgar Unit at the Worcester Royal Acute Hospital site.**

24. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 26th February 2024 were considered. Members were informed that the recommendations arising from that meeting had previously been approved at the Council meeting held on the same date. The minutes were being reported for noting, in line with standard practice whereby minutes of Executive Committee meetings were reported to Council.

Members considered recommendations from the meetings of the Executive Committee held on 18th March and 9th July 2024. The Leader confirmed that no recommendations had been agreed at the meeting of the Executive Committee held immediately before Council, as all of the matters had been resolved at that meeting. Therefore, there were no recommendations arising from that meeting for consideration at Council.

It was noted that the recommendation on the subject of the Productivity Plan discussed at the Executive Committee meeting held on 9th July would not be considered at this meeting as this had been subject to an urgent decision in order to be submitted to the Government in accordance with the required deadline.

Finance and Performance Quarter 3 Report 2023/24

The Council considered recommendations relating to updated charges for Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) and noting the half yearly Treasury Management report.

Independent Remuneration Panel Members' Allowances

The Council considered recommendations for the level of Councillors' allowances for 2024/25.

The Executive Committee had considered recommendations from the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The Committee had not recommended acceptance of the IRP's recommendations in full.

The Executive Committee had not accepted the IRP's recommendation for an 8.6% increase to the Basic Allowance, which would in fact have represented a 16.6% increase due to the number of years in which no increases had been made to the basic allowance in Redditch. Instead, the Executive Committee had recommended to the Council that the basic allowance should be increased by 3%, the same percentage as the increase in Council tax. It was noted that if implemented, the 16.6% increase for 2024/25 would have achieved parity with the basic allowance in

other Councils. The view was expressed that the Council would at some stage need to address its historic decisions not to match the IRP recommendations in order to encourage people from a variety of backgrounds to stand for election.

In proposing the Executive Committee's recommendations, the Leader pointed out that the size of the Council had reduced by 2 members at the elections in May 2024, which had left some surplus funds in the allowances budget. It was proposed to increase the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Chair of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee to £3,500 and for the Group Leader of the opposition to £4,500. He suggested that these proposed increases reflected the work that these postholders undertook. These proposals could be accommodated within the total budget.

During consideration of this item the view was expressed that Councillors should not be paid more than one SRA. However, no agreement was reached on this point. It was also suggested that the IRP should be asked to refer to office holders as 'Chair rather than 'Chairman' in their reports, in line with terminology used at the Council.

Combined Financial Outturn and Quarter 4 Financial Monitoring Report (Including Update on the Fleet)

The Council considered recommendations relating to reprofiling the budget for capital fleet replacement, which aimed to reduce the impact of extending the anticipated life of domestic refuse collection vehicles; proposals to fund the crematorium sound system, street market and proposals for Dial a Ride charges and medical fares.

The following were the main points raised during the debate on this item:

- The view was expressed that the changes to Dial a Ride fares potentially undermined local taxi operators. However, the view was also reported that the changes in fares would encourage better use of the Dial a Ride service as it would be more affordable for service users. Some Members reported that use of the service had declined since charges increased and the service was important in enabling vulnerable people to be less isolated.
- A member asked for clarity about whether the Dial A Ride service made or lost money on each journey. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources responded that the Council would save money from additional journeys being made, but if an additional vehicle was needed that would add to the costs.

- A Member suggested that the Council should not take on running a market as there were other organisations that could do this, such as the Business Improvement District (BID). However, others expressed the view that a good quality weekly market would be an attraction that the Council should undertake to support the local economy.
- A request was received for more detail about the reported reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by using HVO vehicles instead of diesel in the domestic waste collection service. The potential use of virgin palm oil as fuel was also queried. The question was raised as to whether renting vehicles was an option until a decision was made on the type of vehicle which the Council would use in future. The Executive Director responded that the use of HVO instead of diesel-powered vehicles should reduce carbon emissions by 80%. The Council purchased palm oil from suppliers who used sustainable sources. He also reported that renting or leasing vehicles might be an option for the Council to explore, although there were some risks of increasing costs. Electrification of the refuse fleet would require additional infrastructure to support this.
- Questions were raised about whether the Council's financial plan was secure. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources responded that quarter 1 2024/25 financial monitoring would be reported in September at which point more detail would be available.
- In response to a query from a Member, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Resources reported that design costs on the new library site had been minimal. The Executive Committee would consider a report about the final position in September 2024.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 26th February 2024 be noted; and**
- 2) The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee held on 18th March and 9th July 2024 be received and all recommendations adopted.**

25. ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE INCLUDING TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Council considered a report which recommended the establishment of a new Joint Appointments Committee. This would be a joint committee with Bromsgrove District Council.

In presenting the report, the Leader referred to the planned arrangements for recruiting to the posts of Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer. In response to a question, the Chief Executive explained that the proposed amendment to the top of the salary for the Head of Paid Service had been arrived at following advice from an external organisation and should improve the likelihood of attracting good candidates. She also clarified that the proposal would not impact on the posts whose salaries were linked to that of the Head of Paid Service, since the bottom of the grade was not being changed.

RESOLVED that

- 1) A Joint Appointments Committee (JAC) be established, to replace the current Appointments Committee, for Redditch Borough Council (RBC) with Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) of 10 Councillors (5 from each authority, which must include both Leaders) with terms of reference as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 2) The Joint Appointments Committee is directed to appoint a subcommittee of 6 members (3 from each authority), which will form the final interview panel for the appointment of the Head of Paid Service and S151 Officer and make recommendations to the JAC.**
- 3) To appoint 5 members to the JAC in accordance with para 2.2 and Appendix 4 of the report.**
- 4) To authorise the Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution, including any consequential amendments required as a result of the above.**
- 5) To approve a 1.31% increase to the top increment of the Head of Paid Service grade.**
- 6) To approve a revised Pay Policy to include changes to Head of Paid Service grade and the introduction of a new grade between top of NJC Grade and Hay Grades.**

26. OUTSIDE BODIES APPOINTMENTS (INFORMATION TO FOLLOW)

The Council considered nominations to various Outside Bodies. Some of the joint appointments shared with Bromsgrove District Council and Wyre Forest District Council had been confirmed following negotiations. There were also some nominations to outside bodies where the Leader had requested changes.

RESOLVED that

Council makes appointments to the bodies listed in the appendix to the minutes.

27. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Mayor reported that two Urgent Decisions had been taken since the last meeting of the Council in respect of Approval of the Investment Plan for Category 1 Outlier Levelling Up Cultural Fund and submission of the Council's Productivity Plan.

28. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

Council considered an urgent report which set out a revised political balance of the Council following changes to the composition of political groups. The reason for urgency was that the Council was required to consider its political balance as soon as possible after such changes.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Political balance of the Committees of the Council be agreed as set out at Appendix 2 to the minutes; and**
- 2) appointments by political group leaders to the places on each Committee etc. be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.57 pm