



Walsall Council

Dear Councillor,

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall to be held on **MONDAY the 13TH day of JULY, 2015 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Dated this 3rd day of July, 2015.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Executive.

The business to be transacted is as follows:

1. To elect a person to preside if the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are not present.
2. Apologies.
3. To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 1st June 2015.
4. Declarations of interest.
5. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**
To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.
6. Mayor's announcements.
7. To receive any petitions.

8. Petition: Against proposals to make Caldmore Road one-way from Vicarage Place to Caldmore Green. A petition containing over 1,500 signatures was submitted to Council on 13th April 2015 by Councillor Arif. Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

9. To answer any questions in accordance with Council procedure rules:

(a) From the public

Mr. A. Barry of Shelfield - Management of Green Belt Area in Stubbers Green and Lichfield Road

"To date what has the cost been to manage and clean up after travellers within the Walsall borough during 2015 and more importantly how much has been spent managing the green belt area referred to within the petition between Stubbers Green Road and the Lichfield Road respectively?"

(b) From members of the Council

(1) Councillor Smith – Council tax reduction scheme

"Given that the former Labour administration decided that no householders would, any longer be exempt from paying Council tax which meant that from April 2015 up to 19,465 householders (the figure announced by Councillor D. Coughlan in an answer to a question I asked at the Council meeting of 12/1/15) were faced with new Council tax bills, the vast majority facing extra bills of approximately £20 per month for the first time (including approximately 1,514 householders in the Blakenall ward that I represent), would the Portfolio holder give a brief review of the first 3 months of the policy's implementation and in particular;

- (a) How many of these estimated 19,465 are now in arrears with their Council tax (attributable to the introduction of this policy)?
- (b) What is the estimated total amount of the arrears in the first 3 months since these charges were applied (attributable to the introduction of this policy)?
- (c) How much money was put in the "small cash limited discretionary scheme" to "assist the most vulnerable in exceptional circumstances" and how much of this has been used up in the first 3 months since the charges were introduced?"

(2) Councillor Jeavons – Replacement of stolen bins

"Following the Labour administrations' trial on free replacement of stolen bins for those residents presenting a crime number, could the portfolio holder confirm how many bins were replaced under the trial, giving a month by month breakdown?"

(3) Councillor Robertson – English Defence League

“The so called English Defence League are threatening to return to Walsall on August 15th. Will the Leader of this Council join with all members of this Council in condemning this attempt by the EDL to bring their disgusting racist violence back to Walsall and confirm how we celebrate the unity in our community and will robustly defend Walsall's multicultural cooperation and community cohesion.”

(4) Councillor Smith – Community Alarms

“Whilst I congratulate Walsall Council's Cabinet for not only scrapping the former Labour Council's £2.90 per week charge for community alarms for the 4,036 citizens over 80 that they introduced in April this year but also going even further and scrapping charge for the remaining 1,957 disabled and frail citizens below the age of 80 as from July 1st 2015, I would ask the Portfolio holder to give me, this Council and the public a ward by ward breakdown of the 5,993 recipients of community alarms (the number stated in the recent report to Cabinet) who will now benefit from this much welcomed scrapping of charges, a new policy that will not only help disabled, elderly and frail people live as independently as possible in their own homes but will also save lives that might otherwise have been lost?”

(5) Councillor Smith – Healthwatch contract

“Given that at their meeting of 29/10/14 with regard to the renewal of the contract to Healthwatch Walsall, the then current value of the Healthwatch contract being £224,000 of public money per annum, the Cabinet resolved:

- (1) That Cabinet approve an extension to the existing Healthwatch Walsall contract, for a further 1 year, to then expire on 31 March 2016.
- (2) That the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Executive Director Neighbourhoods work with Healthwatch to address concerns about public engagement and transparency of decision making,

Can the Leader of the Council outline to me, this Council and the public, the extent to which the second part of Cabinet's resolution has been carried out?”

(6) Councillor Smith – Adaptations for disabled tenants

“To what extent is Walsall Council supporting the policy of Whg which is to refuse permission to their disabled tenants for adaptations to be made to their properties, on the grounds that the tenant/s concerned have 2 surplus bedrooms, despite the Occupational Therapists’ adaptation recommendations and despite the Council’s Housing Improvement department having assessed the case as qualifying for the appropriate grant and with the resources being available?”

(7) Councillor Smith – School performance information

“Can the Portfolio Holder explain why the parents and guardians of approximately 64,000 pupils and students of Walsall Schools are denied access to information that the Walsall Council holds on all of the primary schools in the Borough (and maybe the secondary schools too) with regard to the A to D grade assessment of each school’s performance by the Council’s Education Services and in particular tell the 64,000 parents and guardians why they are not considered competent enough to receive and understand this information and therefore why the information should be “kept behind closed doors”?”

10. New statutory procedures for dismissal of statutorily protected officers.
Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

11. Portfolio holder briefings. To receive a 5 minute presentation from the Leader of the Council.

(Note: A member of the Council may ask the portfolio holder any question and another associate question without notice upon each report. Questioning by members is limited to 10 minutes for each report presented.)

12. Appointments on outside bodies and charities

- (a) Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust: Following the resignation of Councillor Ditta to appoint a representative for a period of 3 years.
- (b) Blanch Woollaston Charity: To appoint a trustee for the balance of the 3 year period expiring on 13th September 2017 in place of ex-Councillor Cassidy.

13. To confirm the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillors Robertson, D. Coughlan, Burley, Jeavons, Jukes, Chambers and Russell**:

“This Council welcomes the fact that most responsible dog owners clear up after their pet while walking the streets and in our parks.

A minority fail to clean up and this Council has introduced a number of initiatives to persuade compliance as an important public health measure.

Council proposes to lead a public consultation as is currently happening by Daventry Council, on proposals to introduce a spot fine to a dog walker if they fail to carry the means to clear up after their dog of £100 which will rise to £1000 if taken to court. The results of this consultation will form the basis of a report to be considered by the appropriate scrutiny committee to agree recommendations.”

(Note: Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.)

14. To confirm the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillors Robertson, D. Coughlan, Burley, Jeavons, Chambers, Russell and Jukes**:

“Council recognises the importance of both high standards of compliance by tenants and landlords to their respective tenancy agreements. This is in the best interests of both tenants and landlords and for the surrounding community around these let properties. Council will consult on a proposal to introduce a selective licensing scheme of private rented housing in selected areas of Walsall, in accordance with part 3 of the Housing Act 2004

In this scheme, private landlords in selected areas of Walsall, would have to apply for a one-off licence for each house they let, meet various license conditions and be subject to a 'fit and proper persons' test. These conditions would include:

Making sure the home is safe

Clear arrangements around deposits and paying bills

Taking references from tenants before allowing them to move in and

Ensuring the landlord deals with tenants who cause anti-social behaviour in and around their home.

The use of licences for each property can be granted by WMBC as in use in other authorities. If this Charter of minimum standards of operation is not complied with, this licence could be withdrawn and so prevent the offending landlord from operating in Walsall Borough until there is compliance.

The licence fees collected will ensure the operation is self financing.

The result of the consultation will be the subject of a report by the Director of Regeneration with recommendations with operational details to ensure that any adopted policy complies with current legislation and current housing strategy. This report will also be considered by the relevant scrutiny committee.

(Note: Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.)