



Walsall Council

Minutes of the **MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 7th July, 2008, at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House.

Present

Councillor T.G. Ansell (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillor Mrs. C. Micklewright (Dep. Mayor)

“ A.J.A. Andrew
“ D.A. Anson
“ M. Arif
“ C.M. Ault
“ J.M. Barton
“ L.A. Beeley
“ M.A. Bird
“ C. Bott
“ P. Bott
“ B. Cassidy
“ K. Chambers
“ A.G. Clarke
“ J. R. Cook
“ S.P. Coughlan
“ C.U. Creaney
“ B.A. Douglas-Maul
“ M. D. Flower
“ A.E. Griffiths
“ A.D. Harris
“ L.A. Harrison
“ E.F. Hughes
“ A.D. Johnson
“ H. Khan
“ M. Longhi
“ S.W. Madeley

Councillor R.A. Martin

“ M. Munir
“ Mushtaq Ahmed
“ M. Nazir
“ J.G. O'Hare
“ T.S. Oliver
“ A.J. Paul
“ G. Perry
“ J.D. Phillips
“ K. Phillips
“ D.J. Pitt
“ M.G. Pitt
“ J. Rochelle
“ B. Sanders
“ H.S. Sarohi
“ K. Sears
“ Mrs. D.A. Shires
“ I. Shires
“ P.E. Smith
“ C.D.D. Towe
“ A. Underhill
“ R.A. Walker
“ G. Wilkes
“ M. Yasin
“ Zahid Ali

23. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors P. Hughes, McCracken, E.E. Pitt, Robertson, Turner, Tweddle, Woodruff and Young.

24. Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meetings held on 19th and 21st May 2008, copies having been sent to each member of the Council be approved as correct records and signed, subject to the following amendment:

21st May 2008 - Councillor Wilkes being substituted for Councillor Chambers on the West Midlands Planning and Transportation Sub-Committee.

25. Declarations of interest

The following members declared their interest in the items indicated:

Councillor Anson	Walsall Housing Group (prejudicial)
Councillor P. Bott	Walsall Housing Group (personal and prejudicial)
Councillor Cook	Walsall Housing Group
Councillor Khan	Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust
Councillor Longhi	Non-Executive Director, Walsall Hospitals Trust (prejudicial)
Councillor Oliver	Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust, as Walsall tPCT NED (personal)
Councillor Paul	Walsall Housing Group (personal and prejudicial)
Councillor Perry	Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust (prejudicial)
Councillor Sears	Acorn Home Care (personal)
Councillor Sanders	Walsall Housing Group
Councillor I. Shires	Walsall Housing Group (personal and prejudicial)

Councillor Walker

Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust

Councillor Yasin

Walsall Housing Group (personal and prejudicial)

26. Mayor's announcements

Death of Mrs D. Leaker

The Mayor referred to the death of Mrs. Doris Leaker, Mayoress in 1995/96 and **moved** the following motion, which was duly seconded and:

Resolved

That this Council have heard with deep regret of the death of Mrs. D. Leaker, Mayoress of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council in 1995/1996 and place on record their appreciation of her services to the borough over a period of many years and extend to the members of her family their sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

27. Petitions

The following petitions were submitted:

- (a) Councillor Oliver – out of hours burial services
- (b) Councillor Barton – parking restrictions on Bloxwich Road
- (c) Councillor Rochelle – safety measures on Little Aston Road
- (d) Councillor Clarke – height of trees on Fordwater Road
- (e) Councillor Madeley:
 - (1) Proposed car park in Portal Road, Bentley
 - (2) Castle Street, Darlaston – double yellow lines
 - (3) Bus route in Morris Avenue and Slim Road

28. Questions

(a) From members of the public

Little Aston Road, Aldridge

Mrs. D. Doyle of 211 Little Aston Road, Aldridge, asked the following question of Councillor Harris:

“What safety measures do you plan to put in place on the Little Aston Road, Aldridge, given that 111 people, including every household in the road but one, have raised their concern by signing a petition re speeding and the need for enhanced safety measures?”

Councillor Harris thanked Mrs. Doyle for raising this matter and coming along to the meeting this evening. He said he understood her concerns and those of her neighbours in Little Aston Road and that there were a number of positive actions to report.

The Council, with the police, had looked at the number of accidents and also at the speed of traffic on this stretch of road. In the last two years there had been only two injury collisions reported - one involving a drunk and the other was a rear end shunt. He went on say that he knew that there had been other collisions which had not involved injury but this information was not collected by the Police.

A speed survey was carried out in April this year. The results showed that the average speed in the 40mph limit area was 36.2 mph with only 5% of drivers exceeding the minimum enforceable speed limit.

Even so, because of the residents concerns, he said that the Police had agreed to carry out regular enforcement with a speed camera van. The Council was constructing a hard standing for this which would be ready at the end of this week.

Councillor Harris said he was pleased to say that safety improvements were being introduced including better road markings, warning signs for the bend in the road and white marker posts to highlight the bend. He was expecting all of these to be in place within the next few weeks.

He hoped that Mrs. Doyle and her neighbours felt reassured that the Council were taking their concerns seriously and responding positively.

Mrs. Doyle asked the following supplementary question:

“Can you assure us that our safety concerns will be addressed?”

Councillor Harris replied that there would be a speed camera van in the area intermittently. The Department of Transport had specific criteria for planning speed cameras. Monitoring would be carried out on a regular basis and this would determine if a permanent camera could be installed in the future.

(b) From members of the Council

(1) Postal voting

Councillor Smith asked the following question of Councillor O'Hare:

“Would the appropriate portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public of the percentage of the electorate, ward by ward, that were registered for a postal vote for the 1 May 2008 local elections?”

Councillor O'Hare informed the Council that details of postal voters by ward had been circulated around the Council Chamber. He went on to say that there were a total of 19,327 registered postal voters representing some 10.16% of the electorate. This ranged from 13.25% in St. Matthews Ward to 7.22% in Pheasey Park Farm Ward.

(2) Employee surveillance

Councillor Smith asked the following question of Councillor Griffiths:

“Given recent public concern expressed by some that the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 gives Councils “license to snoop” and given that in an answer to a question that I tabled on 25/2/08 specific to employee surveillance after which Councillor Griffiths stated that *“In the last 2 years there have been 10 instances of approved employee surveillance, 5 relating to sickness absence”*, would the appropriate portfolio holder update me, the Council and the public, with details of the total number of surveillance authorisations that have been made by Walsall Council officials since the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act came into force, especially any that have been authorised other than those 10 instances of employee surveillance referred to by Councillor Griffiths at the meeting of 25/2/08?”

Councillor Griffiths said that the Council did not use cameras for minor misdemeanours such as dog litter, etc.

Since the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act came into force, Walsall Council had instigated 916 investigations, 886 of which related to benefits fraud, anti-social behaviour and trading standards cases. 30 other investigations had been around miscellaneous issues including staffing issues.

He said that Councillor Smith would be aware that he could not comment on details of cases as they were confidential, however, he would be aware that every elected Member had a duty to protect the public purse and the Council Tax payers of this Borough. He himself had raised the issue of levels of sickness at February Council. The Council were very supportive of genuine cases but needed to ensure that potential situations where the Council was being defrauded by people claiming to be ill who were working, for example, were dealt with robustly.

The Council also had responsibility to work closely with the Police and Department of Work and Pensions to reduce crime and benefit fraud and surveillance was one of the tools at the Council's disposal.

Councillor Griffiths said that the Chief Surveillance Commissioner inspected the Council on the 31 January 2008 and a satisfactory overall rating was given.

Councillor Smith asked the following supplementary question:

“In listening to the response and noting the 1,000 cases since 2000 and bearing in mind this Act was brought in against anti-terrorism, has there been a case in recent years where officers who have a grievance have been sitting in cars conducting surveillance?”

Councillor Griffiths replied that he had no knowledge of any cases of this kind.

(3) Charges for visits by Neighbourhood Care Officers

Councillor Smith asked the following question:

“Would the portfolio holder for social care, health and housing inform me, this Council and the public whether there have been any changes, and if so what changes, since her response to my question at the Council meeting of 21/4/08 (the last Council meeting before the local elections) when I asked her to give details of any plans being considered to introduce a charge on those older and disabled residents, who are not in receipt of housing and Council tax benefits, for visits by Neighbourhood Care Officers (NCOs) whose service they presently receive for free?”

Councillor O'Hare replied in the absence of Councillor McCracken.

Councillor O'Hare said that the NCO service was a part of the Supporting People funded programme and the Commissioning Body, that was comprised of the Council and its partner organisations, had been considering the issue of charging for some of the services that it funds. There was a clear expectation from government who allocated the Supporting People funding that for the sake of equity and resource maximisation, the issue of charging was considered. No recommendation to introduce a charge for this service had been put to Cabinet to date, but officers were currently preparing options for Members' consideration. He made no apology, however, for the fact that the Council (like all others in the country) considered how and where it should charge for its services. As services changed and evolved to better meet the needs of the people of Walsall this matter had been, and would continue to be, kept under ongoing review.

Councillor O'Hare continued that should it be decided to introduce a charge for the NCO or any other Supporting People service, the Council had a well established “fairer charging” framework which ensured that any charges that were made at present or might be introduced in the future were applied according to a persons financial means and clearly if an individual was in receipt of a state benefit which was paid for the purpose of purchasing care, then this would be taken into consideration in reaching a decision on the level of any charge. The Council, however, did take great care to ensure that charging did not create hardship for an individual and a team of staff were employed who worked with service users to ensure that their income was maximised irrespective of whether the fairer charging assessment concluded with the application of a charge.

He said, in addition, that should Cabinet decide to progress proposals for charging then there would be a statutory 12 week consultation period which would include the opportunity for individual members to comment.

Money was allocated to Councils by the Government on the basis that charges were made for certain types and level of care service and there was clear guidance as to how such processes were administered. Walsall Council had taken great care to abide by this guidance. In the face of such Government expectation, not to apply a charge for services, however, would significantly impact upon the resources available to the Council to fund its services and would therefore be both unwise and unfair.

Councillor Smith asked the following supplementary question:

“Given that I asked before the election in good faith and was lambasted for cheap electioneering by Councillor McCracken, would Councillor O’Hare now apologise and admit that the Cabinet will introduce charges to those older people not in receipt of housing benefit?”

Councillor O’Hare said no, Councillor McCracken’s last answer was not in conflict. Government wanted us to seek out where fair charges were necessary. No apology for what the Labour government had imposed on this Council as a duty.

(4) Residents dealing in scrap and associated businesses from home

Councillor Smith asked the following question of Councillor Andrew:

“Given that at the Council meeting of 2/7/07, a notice of motion was overwhelmingly passed (51 to 1) with regard to residents who deal in scrap and associated businesses from their home without planning permission, stating in the notice of motion that *“this Council resolves to make every effort via a full strength enforcement team to stop this activity”*, would the appropriate portfolio holder outline details to me, this Council and the public of the extent to which the “full strength enforcement team” has been successful in stopping this activity during the twelve months that have elapsed since the resolution was passed?”

Councillor Andrew confirmed that the Planning Enforcement Team currently had no vacant posts and the service was to benefit from a new dedicated technical support post starting this month following a restructure of the planning technical support function.

As Councillor Smith understood planning enforcement was a very complex area of work that was wrought with legal difficulties and niceties that needed to be complied with.

He said that the team had been dealing with three longstanding cases of this kind for more than 2 years in Valley Road, Chestnut Road, Green Rock Lane and there were some more recent ones that may also require formal action. Whilst some success had been achieved in the case of Valley Road it was noted that it

had recently restarted. The two other cases Green Rock Lane and Chestnut Road, were on-going although very few complaints had been received. In some cases we were told that nearby residents may be intimidated and therefore did not contact the Council. In these cases contact was usually made by Ward Members. In these cases where it was not possible for residents to keep a log of activities and this slowed down and created problems in acquiring sufficient evidence.

In the case of Chestnut Road the property was subject to intensive monitoring by the Enforcement Team during the early part of 2008 and insufficient evidence of a breach of planning control was found. The property at Green Rock Lane had also been investigated although it would appear that much of the problem related to the highway including parking of vans which was being addressed by highways officers and in this case no complaints had been received for over a year.

Councillor Andrew said that the above cases were difficult to deal with under planning legislation where activities were sporadic in nature or took place out of office hours. Often the occupiers were known to the Police and nearby residents were concerned about general problems and nuisance. Clearly many residents were aggrieved by the lifestyles of the occupiers who they perceived were cheating the system, for example benefit fraud. These matters are of course not for planning officers to comment on but information was passed onto relevant parties for example Social Security or the Tax Office.

(5) Charges for stolen wheelie bins

Councillor Smith asked the following question of Councillor Walker:

“Given the statement that the charging policy for stolen bins (presently at £18.50) was under review, timed to be released just prior to the May local elections and given the most recent announcement just after the elections that the charges for stolen wheelie bins, be they green, brown or may be grey in the near future are to remain after all, would you not agree with me that the Cabinet has missed a golden opportunity to salvage some of the damaged reputation to this Council caused by this unfair and unjust policy which has caused and will increasingly cause widespread discontent in all parts of the Borough?”

Councillor Walker replied that it has always been known that the policy would come along in June as Cabinet had agreed the implementation plan in March 2008.

Councillor Smith asked the following supplementary question:

“Despite assurance would she not agree that the general public were mislead prior to the election on a positive review?”

Councillor Walker re-iterated her previous comments.

(6) Waste collection policy

Councillor Smith asked the following question of Councillor Walker:

“Will the portfolio holder for the environment clarify the position with regard to the brown bin recycling scheme by making it clear that under her recently announced new waste collection policy, and in the interest of encouraging more recycling as well in the interests of fairness and equality, all households with gardens, including bungalows and even low rise flats with gardens, presently excluded from the brown bin scheme, will now be included?”

Councillor Walker replied that the Council were currently exploring the possibility of expanding the green waste collection service by another 13,500 properties when it was considered that every property that would use a brown bin effectively would have one and this would commence early 2009.

Councillor Smith asked the following supplementary question:

“Would you not agree that many pre-war houses have large gardens and therefore also have the need to dispose of green waste?”

Councillor Walker said that the Council was exploring the possibility of expansion based on the criteria explained.

(7) Urgent question – Strike action

Councillor Smith asked the following urgent question pursuant to Council procedure rule 11.4(b):

“Would the appropriate portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public of the Council’s assessment of the likely impact of strike action on the services provided by this Council to the people of Walsall on 16th and 17th July 2008?”

Councillor O’Hare replied that strike action was being organised by Unison and TGWU (Unite). 20% of T & GW had voted for strike action and 15% of Unison members voted to strike.

He said that given that something around 80% of those entitled to vote and did not vote to strike, it was impossible at this stage to predict the impact with accuracy. However, it was possible to confirm that the strike call did not affect teachers, youth workers, craft workers, Soulbury staff and certain other senior staff.

This was part of a national dispute relating to the pay offer made by the National Employers Organisation and the offer was for a 2.45% increase.

Discussions between the Council and trade unions would continue throughout the dispute. Whilst recognising every individual’s right to withdraw their labour, the Council also had a responsibility to the wider community of Walsall. The

Council would maintain as many essential services as possible and planning to secure those services would continue up to and throughout the strike.

The most recent meeting between Human Resources staff and the unions was held that afternoon and a range of exemptions from strike action was agreed in order to protect the most vulnerable people.

He continued that in addition to all of the routine communication with staff, managers would advise staff on 14 July of their rights and responsibilities in strike situations. This would include picketing and the pension impact of broken service for staff who took strike action.

Whilst it could not be predicted at this stage where services would be affected, attempts would be made to minimise the disruption. However, it would be realistic to assume that local people would face disruption of some services.

Councillor O'Hare said that the Council hoped that this national dispute was resolved quickly at a fair level for employees and an affordable level for Council tax payers.

Councillor Smith asked the following supplementary question:

“Given that local Council workers have been treated appallingly by the “new” Labour government, does he not feel that Unison workers should be supported?”

Councillor O'Hare replied that this was a national issue not decided by this Council. There was no money to pay over and above the national settlement. He went on to say that it was not open to the Council to endorse strike action, we wanted a negotiated settlement. The union had a right by law to take strike action.

29. Recommendation of Cabinet – Sustainable Community Strategy

The report to Cabinet was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Andrew and:

Resolved

That Walsall's Sustainable Community Strategy as set out in the appendix to the report be approved.

30. Recommendation of Licensing and Safety Committee – Review of statement of licensing policy

The report to Licensing and Safety Committee was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor Sears, seconded by Councillor Bird and:

Resolved

That having undertaken consultation on the existing Licensing Policy between 7th April, 2008 and 2nd June, 2008, the proposed revised changes to the current Statement of Licensing Policy as detailed in the report now submitted, be approved.

31. Walsall Housing Group – proposed changes to group structure

A report was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor O'Hare and seconded by Councillor Andrew:

- (1) That the Council supports whg's proposals to:
 - (a) transfer all whg properties into one property owning (Registered Social Landlord) RSL, the current parent RSL of whg, being WHT (Walsall Housing Trust); and
 - (b) change the existing Local Trust Boards to Local Neighbourhood Boards as committees of WHT with a range of delegated authorities from the WHT Board.
- (2) That the Council notes the content of this report and authorises the Chief Executive (or nominee) to agree the requisite Council consents under the Transfer Agreement with WHT and approve such changes to WHT's memorandum & articles as necessary.
- (3) That the Council provides all other consents necessary to effect the change to WHT's group structure.

Amendment moved by Councillor Oliver and duly seconded:

That the Council notes whg's proposals to:

- Transfer all whg's properties into one property owning (registered social landlord) RSL, the current RSL of whg, being Walsall Housing Trust Limited (WHT); and
- Change the existing Local Trust Boards to Local Neighbourhood Boards as committees of WHT with a range of delegated authorities from the WHT Board.

This Council requests the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel to fully consider the proposals towards the conclusion of whg's consultation process and then produce a brief report and recommendations at the appropriate time for consideration by Council.

At this point in the meeting, the time being 7.25 p.m., the meeting was adjourned by the Mayor for 5 minutes.

The meeting re-commenced at 7.30 p.m.

Councillor O'Hare requested Councillor Oliver to withdraw his amendment in order that the following could be added to that amendment:

“..... being not later than at its meeting on 8th September 2008.”

Councillor Oliver withdrew his amendment.

It **moved** by Councillor by Councillor Oliver and duly seconded:

That the Council notes whg's proposals to:

- Transfer all whg's properties into one property owning (registered social landlord) RSL, the current RSL of whg, being Walsall Housing Trust Limited (WHT); and
- Change the existing Local Trust Boards to Local Neighbourhood Boards as committees of WHT with a range of delegated authorities from the WHT Board.

This Council requests the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel to fully consider the proposals towards the conclusion of whg's consultation process and then produce a brief report and recommendations at the appropriate time for consideration by Council, being not later than at its meeting on 8th September 2008.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared carried.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and declared carried and it was:

Resolved

That the Council notes whg's proposals to:

- Transfer all whg's properties into one property owning (registered social landlord) RSL, the current RSL of whg, being Walsall Housing Trust Limited (WHT); and
- Change the existing Local Trust Boards to Local Neighbourhood Boards as committees of WHT with a range of delegated authorities from the WHT Board.

This Council requests the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel to fully consider the proposals towards the conclusion of whg's consultation process and then produce a brief report and recommendations at the appropriate time for consideration by Council, being not later than at its meeting on 8th September 2008.

32. Notice of motion – Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust

A report was submitted:

The following motion, notice of which had been duly given was **moved** by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor P. Bott:

The Local Government Act of 2000 and the Health and Social Care Act of 2001 places obligations on local overview and scrutiny committees to scrutinise health services and places obligations on NHS bodies to provide information, answer questions and respond to recommendations. Given that this responsibility is included within the remit of the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel and given recent announcements, reported in the press in early June 2008 that as many as 127 posts including 89 nurses, midwives and health visitors at the Manor Hospital are set to be made redundant by October 2008 as part of a programme of savings ahead of a switch to foundation trust status, with possibly hundreds more staff being lost by 2011, this Council calls on the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Panel to consider fully the actual details of the Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust's plans as a matter of some urgency after which a report should be presented to Council as soon as is practicable in order to give the Council an opportunity to consider the findings of the Scrutiny Panel on this matter.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried – 3 members voting in favour and none against and it was:

Resolved

The Local Government Act of 2000 and the Health and Social Care Act of 2001 places obligations on local overview and scrutiny committees to scrutinise health services and places obligations on NHS bodies to provide information, answer questions and respond to recommendations. Given that this responsibility is included within the remit of the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel and given recent announcements, reported in the press in early June 2008 that as many as 127 posts including 89 nurses, midwives and health visitors at the Manor Hospital are set to be made redundant by October 2008 as part of a programme of savings ahead of a switch to foundation trust status, with possibly hundreds more staff being lost by 2011, this Council calls on the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Panel to consider fully the actual details of the Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust's plans as a matter of some urgency after which a report should be presented to Council as soon as is practicable in order to give the Council an opportunity to consider the findings of the Scrutiny Panel on this matter.

33. Notice of motion – Muslim burials

A report was submitted:

The following motion, notice of which had been duly given was **moved** by Councillor Oliver and seconded by Councillor Khan:

This Council recognises that Walsall is a multi cultural borough and that we should work with all communities to achieve community cohesion, whilst wherever possible being sensitive to specific cultural and religious needs.

We therefore note the lack of progress in Walsall in responding to community needs in terms of Muslim burial issues, and calls upon the Council to work in partnership with appropriate community representatives to support the development of a business case for a community based model, such as implemented in Leicester which is cost effective, meets appropriate legal, health and safety requirements, and empowers the local community.

Councillor Oliver presented a petition concerning out of hours burial services.

Amendment moved by Councillor Walker and seconded by Councillor Andrew:

This Council recognises that Walsall is a multi-cultural borough and that we should work with all communities to achieve community cohesion, whilst wherever possible being sensitive to specific cultural and religious needs.

We therefore note the continued progress in Walsall in responding to community needs in terms of Muslim Burial issues. We further note the work to date, in partnership with the community, elected members, officers and the fact finding visit to other authorities. This Council recognises and welcomes the input and support given to the families of the bereaved by the many co-operative bereavement committees operating in Walsall.

We call upon the Leader to present the opportunity to consider any business case, brought forward by any valid and representative organisation or group, which seeks to further improve service delivery, with the proviso that such a business case is cost effective, meets appropriate legal and health and safety requirements, empowers the local community but which does not disadvantage other groups.

At this point in the meeting it was **moved** by Councillor Bird and duly seconded:

That Council procedure rule 9(a) be suspended for the remainder of the meeting in order to enable the business to be completed.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried and it was:

Resolved

That Council procedure rule 9(a) be suspended for the remainder of the meeting in order to enable the business to be completed.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared carried– the voting at the request of several members of the Council being recorded as follows:

**For the amendment -
29 members**

Cllr: O'Hare
Andrew
Ansell
Arif
Ault
Beeley
Bird
C. Bott
P. Bott
Clarke
Douglas-Maul
Flower
Griffiths
Harris
Harrison
E. Hughes
Martin
Micklewright
Munir
Paul
Perry
D.J. Pitt
Rochelle
Sanders
Sears
Towe
Walker
Yasin
Zahid

**Against the amendment -
16 members**

Cllr: Oliver
I. Shires
Anson
Barton
Cassidy
Chambers
Cook
Coughlan
Khan
Madeley
Nazir
J.D. Phillips
Sarohi
D.A. Shires
Smith
Wilkes

The substantive motion was put to the vote, declared carried and it was:

Resolved

This Council recognises that Walsall is a multi-cultural borough and that we should work with all communities to achieve community cohesion, whilst wherever possible being sensitive to specific cultural and religious needs.

We therefore note the continued progress in Walsall in responding to community needs in terms of Muslim Burial issues. We further note the work to date, in partnership with the community, elected members, officers and the fact finding visit to other authorities. This Council recognises and welcomes the input and support given to the families of the bereaved by the many co-operative bereavement committees operating in Walsall.

We call upon the Leader to present the opportunity to consider any business case, brought forward by any valid and representative organisation or group, which seeks to further improve service delivery, with the proviso that such a business case is cost effective, meets appropriate legal and health and safety requirements, empowers the local community but which does not disadvantage other groups.

34. Changes in membership of Employment Appeals Committees

Resolved

That the following changes in membership of the Employment Appeals Committees for the municipal year 2008/2009 be noted:

Employment Appeals A	Delete Councillor Cassidy and substitute Councillor K. Phillips
Employment Appeals B	Delete Councillor K. Phillips and Substitute Councillor Cassidy

35. Appointments to charities and statutory bodies

(a) Blanch Woollaston Charity

Resolved

That Councillor Micklewright be appointed a Trustee of the Blanch Woollaston Charity for the period expiring 13th September 2011.

(b) W.J. Croft Charity

Resolved

That Councillor C. Bott be appointed a Trustee of the W.J. Croft Charity for the period expiring on 25th July 2012.

(c) Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Resolved

That Councillor Munir be appointed to serve on the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for the municipal year 2008/2009.

The meeting terminated at 9.50 p.m.