



Walsall Council

Minutes of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 8th November, 2021, at 6.00 p.m.** at the Town Hall, Walsall.

Present

Councillor R. Burley (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillor G. Ali

“ B. Allen
“ A. Andrew
“ H. Bashir
“ M.A. Bird
“ C. Bott
“ P. Bott
“ O. Butler
“ B. Chattha
“ A.G. Clarke
“ S.J. Cooper
“ D. Coughlan
“ S. Coughlan
“ C. Creaney
“ S.K. Ditta
“ S. Elson
“ K. Ferguson
“ G. Flint
“ M. Follows
“ N.Z. Gultasib
“ A.D. Harris
“ L.A. Harrison
“ A.J. Hicken
“ A. Hussain
“ K. Hussain
“ D. James
“ L.D. Jeavons
“ P. Kaur

Councillor E. Lee

“ Mrs. R.A. Martin
“ F. Mazhar
“ K. Murphy
“ J. Murray
“ S. Nasreen
“ A.A. Nawaz
“ A. Nazir
“ M. Nazir
“ K. Pedley
“ G. Perry
“ W. Rasab
“ L.J. Rattigan
“ I.C. Robertson
“ S. Samra
“ K. Sears
“ G. Singh Sohal
“ P. Smith
“ C.A. Statham
“ M.A. Statham
“ C.D.D. Towe
“ A. Underhill
“ V.J. Waters
“ T.S. Wilson
“ R.V. Worrall
“ A. Young

37. **Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors N. Gandham, S. Johal and J. Whitehouse.

38. **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September, 2021, copies having been sent to each member of the Council, be approved as a correct record subject to the following:-

Minute 19 – Councillor Lee to be included as having declared an interest in item 19 - Notice of Motion – GP Practices / Health Centres;

Minute 25 - to remove the word ‘Mayor’ and replace with ‘Chair’ at paragraphs 1 and 3; and

Minute 36 – Councillor Lee to be included within the list of members leaving the meeting - paragraph 1.

39. **Declarations of interest**

Councillor Bashir declared an interest in item 13 – Notice of Motion – Universal Credit.

40. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)**

There were no items to be considered in private session.

41. **Mayor’s announcements**

Death of former Mayoress, Irene Sherratt

The Mayor referred to the death of former Mayoress, Irene Sherratt (Mayoress to Alan Davies - 1991/1992). Councillor P. Smith paid tribute to Irene Sherratt, following which it was **moved** by the Mayor, duly seconded and:

Resolved:

That this Council have heard with deep regret of the death of former Mayoress, Irene Sherratt (Mayoress to Alan Davies - 1991/1992) and places on record their appreciation of her services to the borough over a period of many years and expresses its condolences to her family at this sad time.

42. **Appointment of Deputy Mayor 2021/22**

It was **moved** by Councillor Nawaz and seconded by Councillor Hussain:

That Councillor Sean Coughlan be appointed Deputy Mayor of this Borough for the remainder of the municipal year 2021/22.

The Council's Director of Governance advised that this was not a lawful motion as Council, at its meeting held on 20th September, 2021, had made a clear decision to not appoint Councillor Coughlan as Deputy Mayor. That decision had not been varied under rule 16.1 of Part 4.2 of the Council's Constitution. Therefore, to allow this to take place there would need to be a nomination signed by 5 members revoking the previous decision of Council.

It was then **moved** by Councillor Bird and seconded by Councillor Andrew:

That Councillor Rose Martin be appointed Deputy Mayor of this Borough for the remainder of the municipal year 2021/22.

The motion having been put to the vote was declared carried – the voting being recorded as follows:

**For the motion –
34 members**

Cllr: Bird
Ali
Allen
Andrew
Butler
Chattha
Clarke
Cooper
Elson
Ferguson
Flint
Follows
Harris
Harrison
Hicken
A. Hussain
Kaur
Lee
Martin
Murphy
Murray
Pedley
Perry
Rasab
Rattigan
Samra
Sears

**Against the motion –
20 members**

Cllr: Nawaz
Burley
Bashir
C. Bott
P. Bott
D. Coughlan
S. Coughlan
Creaney
Ditta
Gultasib
K. Hussain
Jeavons
Mazhar
Nasreen
A. Nazir
M. Nazir
Robertson
Underhill
Worrall
Young

**Abstentions –
1 member**

Cllr: James

Singh Sohal
Smith
C. Statham
M. Statham
Towe
Waters
Wilson

Resolved

That Councillor Rose Martin be appointed Deputy Mayor of this Borough for the remainder of the municipal year 2021/22.

43. Petitions

The following petition was submitted:

(1) Councillor Elson – Make Sandringham Avenue Safer

44. Questions by members of the Public

None

45. Questions by members of the Council

(a) Councillor. Worrall asked the following question of Councillor Andrew:

In order for Walsall Council to celebrate the Commonwealth Games and provide lasting beneficial legacy to the citizens of Walsall, I and residents that are cyclists and have disabilities are proposing a fully accessible cycling and walking link between Walsall Gallery Square via the Arboretum to the Commonwealth Games site at Perry Barr, to be named "The Commonwealth Way."

We have researched the route in detail: it avoids the dangers and pollution of busy main roads, using instead properly-surfaced canals towpaths and park and green space paths, linked as necessary via lesser-used roads, to provide a healthy, safe, relatively low-cost, link to and from the Games. Details will be circulated to each member of Council, and appropriate Council officers, before the Full Council meeting on 8 November

We have also researched similarly accessible, low-cost, feeder links from Darlaston, Willenhall, Bloxwich and Pelsall into the proposed common route to the Games site.

May I ask the portfolio holders for Regeneration, and Clean & Green: Cllrs. Andrew and Butler, respectively, to say whether they might be minded to support the principle of creating such a commemorative link and, if they do, to ask officers to evaluate options and a timetable for creating it, perhaps using our proposals as a starting point, and linking as appropriate with partners such as our neighbouring

authorities at Birmingham and Sandwell and the Canal & River Trust as a major player?

Councillor Andrew replied as follows:

Thank you for your suggestion to create a commemorative walking and cycling link which certainly will have our support. I will ask officers to consult with their colleagues in Birmingham, Sandwell and at Transport for West Midlands to evaluate the proposal and how it would fit with other plans.

Transport for West Midlands has also recently unveiled the Starley Network, a new cycling vision for the West Midlands, with 493 miles of priority cycle routes. On top of local routes already planned and funded, the network also features a number of new cycle routes, some of which are proposed to run along the same transport corridors as the Commonwealth Games SPRINT bus routes.

Councillor Butler has been out to look at the route already and advises me that the route is passable. With the need to tackle climate change, we fully recognise the need to develop alternative and sustainable forms of transport across the West Midlands. Many cyclists will say that they are discouraged from using their bikes because of the volume of traffic on the roads. By developing safe, segregated cycle routes along the lines of the Dutch Model we will be able to do more to encourage cycling. We know that Councillor Worrall is not only a rail enthusiast but a cycling supporter, he will be pleased to know that part of the Towns Fund money for Bloxwich and Walsall is being used to upgrade the canal towpath in order to make it safer for cyclist's and pedestrians at all times of the year.

Councillor Worrall asked the following supplementary question:

Would the Portfolio Holders consider as a matter of Policy going forward, as the cycling/walking network is expanded that full access to the new routes for legitimate users be built in as a matter of course.

Councillor Andrew replied:

We will look into that and I will ask officers to report back.

(b) Councillor. Smith asked the following question of Councillor Bird:

Given that at the Council Meeting of 20/9/21, this Council voted unanimously to pass the following Notice of Motion:

“This Council notes the widespread public concern, bordering on anger by many residents across the Borough, at what is seen as a deterioration in the services of many GP Practices/Health Centres; Concerns about:

- Difficulty getting through on the phone to many of them.
- Difficulty getting a doctor's appointment within a reasonable time, especially a face to face appointment.
- Extra pressure put on A&E as a result of many patients being unable to obtain satisfactory responses from their GP Practices/Health centres, thus feeling

- the only alternatives being A&E or the Urgent Care Walk-in Centre, where patients could and often do, have a wait of several hours before being treated.
- Particular problems around inequality that the shift away from face to face meetings and towards more phone appointments and online appointments pose, especially for patients who may be profoundly deaf, unable to speak, have language barrier issues, be visually impaired, have serious mental health issues, have learning difficulties and those without the appropriate skills and/or access to computers and the internet.

and consequently this Council resolves to use the maximum influence that it has to engage with the appropriate organisations and bodies including its own Health and Well Being Board, Healthwatch Walsall, Walsall's Members of Parliament and the Department of Health and Social Care, in order to a) draw attention to this concern and b) call for a massive improvement in what is perceived by many to be an deteriorating and unacceptable service for so many."

Can you tell me, this Council and the public what action has been taken since then by Council Officers to act on this Resolution and in particular, which bodies/organisations/individuals have been contacted, and what responses have been forthcoming as a result?

Councillor Bird replied as follows:

I can assure Councillor Smith that this resolution was taken on board and our officers have written to both to MP's, the CCG and anyone involved in delivering this service. Sadly, at this point in time, no replies have been received but I can advise Councillor Smith that the information that has been provided to date is that there is an increase in demand for GP's Services and sadly, there is a shortage of GP's to meet that demand. I agree that there is great concern amongst members of the public in relation to getting face to face meetings. I too struggled to do so and spent 5 hours in the Urgent Care centre with an insect bite which took 5 minutes to diagnose when I saw the doctor. There were other people in there when I left who had to wait 7 hours for an appointment. This is not a fault of the hospital but a fault of the system. I rang the Chief Executive of the hospital and raised my concern that the pressure on the Acute Trust are such that doctors or indeed, some of the service they deliver, should be put down to practice nurses or an alternative and a Triage system put in place that is acceptable to members of the public and indeed that is the tack that our officers have taken. In particular, the report that went to the Scrutiny Committee highlighted an increase in demand for appointments by 25% to 50% and attendance at the Urgent Treatment Centre, provided by Manning Healthcare, is significantly above normal levels. The report confirms that there are insufficient GP's in Walsall or indeed in the country to meet the increase in demand and this situation will be further worsened if there was an expectation to deliver a greater number of face to face appointments as the mix of appointment types allows GP's to see more people in the same amount of time. From my experience in recent weeks, you can get a doctor's appointment to receive vaccines for Covid/Shingles for which they receive payment.

Councillor Smith asked the following supplementary question:

Councillor Bird mentions that the Council has written to MP's, the CCG and anybody else associated with this matter but no replies have been received so far.

If no replies have been received where does the information you refer to come from and if and when we do get replies, will you ensure that all Councillors receives a copy?

Councillor Bird replied:

We will, of course, provide all elected members with the information when we receive it.

46. **Portfolio Holder Briefings**

Education and Skills

A report was submitted.

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills, Councillor Towe, gave a presentation.

Members asked questions in relation to the presentation which were responded to by Councillor Towe.

Clean and Green

A report was submitted.

The Portfolio Holder for Clean and Green, Councillor Butler, gave a presentation.

Members asked questions in relation to the presentation which were responded to by Councillor Butler.

47. **Notice of Motion - Definition of Islamophobia**

A report was submitted.

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

That:

This Council accepts and adopts in full, with all examples therein, the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia, which is:-

'Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness'

And further resolves to act and combat robustly all forms of Islamophobia through its internal and external policies.

The motion having been put to the vote was declared carried – the voting being recorded as follows:

**For the motion –
28 members**

Cllr: Nawaz
Burley
Ali
Bashir
C. Bott
P. Bott
Chattha
D. Coughlan
S. Coughlan
Creaney
Ditta
Gultasib
Hicken
A. Hussain
K. Hussain
Jeavons
Kaur
Mazhar
Nasreen
A. Nazir
M. Nazir
Rasab
Robertson
Samra
Singh Sohal
Underhill
Worrall
Young

**Against the motion –
24 members**

Cllr: Bird
Allen
Andrew
Butler
Clarke
Cooper
Elson
Ferguson
Flint
Follows
Harris
Harrison
Lee
Martin
Murphy
Murray
Pedley
Perry
Rattigan
Sears
C. Statham
M. Statham
Towe
Wilson

**Abstentions –
2 members**

Cllr: Waters
Smith

Resolved:-

That:-

This Council accepts and adopts in full, with all examples therein, the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia, which is:-

'Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness'

And further resolves to act and combat robustly all forms of Islamophobia through its internal and external policies.

48. **Notice of Motion – Climate Change**

A report was submitted.

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

That this Council:

“Council recognises the importance, to all communities and countries, of the Glasgow COP26 conference where Countries are meeting to agree a way forward to combat climate change. The Council wishes to develop local measures that could be put into place to contribute to this agenda here in Walsall and resolves to establish a cross party working group to engage with a wide range of partners both in the public, private and voluntary sectors to develop a set of recommendations as to how we could make changes to enable and promote a green agenda here in Walsall.”

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

Resolved

That this:-

“Council recognises the importance, to all communities and countries, of the Glasgow COP26 conference where Countries are meeting to agree a way forward to combat climate change. The Council wishes to develop local measures that could be put into place to contribute to this agenda here in Walsall and resolves to establish a cross party working group to engage with a wide range of partners both in the public, private and voluntary sectors to develop a set of recommendations as to how we could make changes to enable and promote a green agenda here in Walsall.”

49. **Notice of Motion – Universal Credit**

Councillor Bashir having declared an interest in this item, left the room and did not return.

A report was submitted.

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

That:-

“This Council regrets the decision taken to cease the £20 uplift on Universal Credit and acknowledges many Walsall families will be detrimentally impacted upon by this decision.

This Council recognises the cumulative impact of rising utility bills, rising inflation, increase in transport costs, increase in fuel cost and many other rises that have

added to the cost of living for our residents and have pushed many into financial hardship facing choices of buying food to feed their children or keeping them warm.

This Council resolves to write to the three Walsall MP's asking them to publically acknowledge the above and to publically call for the reversal of the decision to cease the £20 UE uplift and to write to the appropriate minister to inform him / her of the impact on our most vulnerable families."

The motion having been put to the vote was declared **lost** – the voting being recorded as follows:

**For the motion –
22 members**

Cllr: Nawaz
Burley
C. Bott
P. Bott
D. Coughlan
S. Coughlan
Creaney
Ditta
Gultasib
K. Hussain
Jeavons
Mazhar
Nasreen
A. Nazir
M. Nazir
Robertson
Samra
Singh Sohal
Smith
Underhill
Worrall
Young

**Against the motion –
27 members**

Cllr: Bird
Ali
Allen
Andrew
Butler
Chattha
Clarke
Cooper
Elson
Flint
Follows
Harris
Harrison
Hicken
A. Hussain
Kaur
Lee
Martin
Murphy
Murray
Pedley
Perry
Sears
C. Statham
M. Statham
Towe
Wilson

**Abstentions –
3 members**

Cllr: Rasab
Rattigan
Waters

The meeting terminated at 8.43 p.m.