



Walsall Council

Minutes of the **MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 9th January 2012 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House.

Present

Councillor G. Perry (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillor G.E. Wilkes (Deputy Mayor)

“ A.J.A. Andrew
“ R.E. Andrew
“ T.G. Ansell
“ D.A. Anson
“ M. Arif
“ I. Azam
“ D.J. Barker
“ O.D. Bennett
“ M.A. Bird
“ P. Bott
“ R. Burley
“ R. Carpenter
“ B. Cassidy
“ K. Chambers
“ A.G. Clarke
“ J. R. Cook
“ D. Coughlan
“ S.P. Coughlan
“ C.U. Creaney
“ A. Ditta
“ B.A. Douglas-Maul
“ J. Fitzpatrick
“ S.F. Fitzpatrick
“ S. Fletcher-Hall
“ A.D. Harris
“ L.A. Harrison

Councillor E.F. Hughes

“ K. Hussain
“ G. Illmann-Walker
“ D. James
“ T.J. Jukes
“ M. Longhi
“ S.W. Madeley
“ Ms. R.A. Martin
“ Mrs. B.V. McCracken
“ J. Murray
“ M. Nazir
“ T.S. Oliver
“ A.J. Paul
“ K. Phillips
“ L.J. Rattigan
“ I.C. Robertson
“ J. Rochelle
“ E.B. Russell
“ H.S. Sarohi
“ K. Sears
“ Mrs. D.A. Shires
“ I. Shires
“ R.M. Thomas
“ C.D.D. Towe
“ F.J. Westley
“ A. Young
“ Zahid Ali

77. **Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Flower, Jeavons, Turner and Woodruff.

78. **Minutes**

Councillor Oliver referred to minute no. 68 on page 4 which he said omitted to refer to the fact that the Leader had given an undertaking to include an item on the Summons of this meeting relating to the position with regard to the Serco contract.

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2011 copies having been sent to each member of the Council, be approved as a correct record and signed.

79. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

80. **Mayor's announcements**

(1) **Death of Mrs. J. Bentley**

The Mayor referred to the recent death of Mrs. Bentley, Mayoress in 2003/2004 and paid tribute to her services to Walsall. Councillors I. Shires and Bird also paid tribute to Mrs. Bentley, following which it was **moved** by the Mayor, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That this Council expresses its regret at the death of Mrs. J. Bentley, Mayoress of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council in 2003/2004 places on record their appreciation of her services to the town and expresses its condolences to her family at this sad time.

(2) **Death of former Councillor Roy Cooper**

The Mayor referred to the death of Mr. R. Cooper and paid tribute to his services to the Council and Walsall over a number of years. Councillors Wilkes, Bird, Madeley and Ansell also paid tribute to Mr. Cooper, following which it was **moved** by the Mayor, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That this Council expresses its regret at the death of Mr. R. Cooper a member of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council from 1982 to 1987 and from 1991 to 1995 and places on record their appreciation of his services to the town and the people of Walsall and expresses its condolences to his family at this sad time.

Members and officers stood in silence as a mark of respect

(3) Walsall Housing Group – board composition and membership

The Mayor informed the Council that this item would be deferred to the next meeting in order for officers to clarify the situation.

(4) Order of business

The Mayor informed the Council that the item relating to Walsall Housing Strategy (Item 12) would be taken before the recommendation of Cabinet with regard to Walsall Housing Renewal Assistance Policy (Item 10).

81. Petitions

The following petitions were submitted:

- (1) Councillor D.A. Shires – improving road safety along Pool Hayes Lane and Castle Drive.
- (2) Councillor I. Shires – New Invention Infant and Junior Schools creation of a “school zone” in Cannock Road.
- (3) Councillor J. Fitzpatrick – against increases in Members’ allowances.
- (4) Councillor Perry – Allens Lane, Pelsall - heavy and speeding traffic - request for pedestrian/zebra crossing.

82. Questions by members of the Council

(1) Upgrade of properties in Blakenall ward

Councillor Robertson asked the following question of Councillor A. Andrew:

“Will the same offer of free improvements to their properties, as was given recently to privately owned homes in Bloxwich East, be given to residents in my ward in Dolphin Close, Goscote Close and Place, now that Walsall Housing Group have upgraded their properties in that part of Blakenall ward?”

Councillor Andrew thanked Councillor Robertson for asking about the opportunities to improve other private homes in the borough and in particular homes in the Blakenall ward. He said that the Council was the first in the country to sign a Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) that covered all tenures back in January 2010. This was part of the Blakenall ward and was a partnership between the Council, British Gas and Walsall Housing Group. Works undertaken in the first CESP were mainly paid by British Gas and WHG with a small contribution using Regional Housing Pot funding for each private home.

Councillor Andrew said that the Council was now working with British Gas in Birchills where the cost of improvements to residents and the Council was actually nothing so it was an even better deal than with secured for CESP 1. The Council was looking to see if similar schemes could take place in other areas of the borough. Some of these schemes might even be extended to provide new windows where people had metal or single glazed units.

Councillor Andrew said he could not confirm if and when the particular roads in Bloxwich listed by Councillor Robertson would get improvements, but he assured him that the Council was working to get the most for the borough as a whole including Blakenall, Bloxwich and other wards in the borough. As soon as information on a new scheme was available ward members and residents would be informed, as fellow Councillors would know from the publicity in Birchills undertaken in November and December.

Councillor Robertson asked the following supplementary question:

“Do you agree that it was unfair and that the Council could do more working with partners to get available funding to upgrade private houses?”

Councillor Andrew replied that working with “Action on Carbon” could allow more money to fund “retro” fitting and would help tackle fuel poverty and carbon footprints. He said that the Council was working with partners nationally and locally to order to ensure efficiency.

(2) Communications Unit

Councillor Robertson asked the following question of Councillor Bird:

“What is the projected cost of running our communications unit of this Council for the current financial year and full costs for the previous five years, broken down, if possible please, into categories such as staff and all overheads?”

Councillor Bird replied that the total cost for the current and previous 5 financial years was as follows:

2011/12	£867,907
2010/11	£841,954
2009/10	£734,161
2008/09	£697,787
2007/08	£581,678
2006/07	£501,219

Councillor Robertson asked the following supplementary question:

Do you agree that the Communications Unit should have a prime purpose to promote Walsall Borough. to attract jobs and promote the region rather than the work of Cabinet members?"

Councillor Bird replied that statutory rules governed how the Communications Unit worked, the unit promoted Walsall and the work of the Council. It was true to say that in some of the work undertaken by the Cabinet it was only Cabinet members who could be named in press releases. The Council could only be governed by this with regard to the way Walsall was promoted and Walsall was promoted nationally and internationally.

83. Mayoralty 2012/13

Councillor Bird confirmed the agreement that the nomination of the Mayor would revert to seniority and therefore invited the Labour Group to move nominations.

It was **moved** by Councillor Nazir, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That Councillor G.E. Wilkes be nominated as Mayor and Councillor D.A. Anson be nominated as Deputy Mayor of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council for the municipal year 2012/2013.

84. Birchills-Leamore Ward By-Election

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Jukes to the meeting and the Council noted the result of the by-election for the Birchills-Leamore Ward on 22nd December 2011 as follows:

Names of candidates	No. of votes polled	Candidate elected
Aftab, Kamran	512	Tina Joan Jukes
Gebrakedan, Leandra	46	
Hazell, Liz	59	
Jukes, Tina Joan	835	
Newey, Chris	130	

Turnout 15.9%

85. Walsall Housing Strategy 2011-2016

A report was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor A. Andrew, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That the Housing Strategy 2011 – 2016 set out in the Appendix to the report be adopted.

86. Recommendation of Cabinet

Walsall Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2012-2014

The report to Cabinet was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor A. Andrew, seconded by Councillor Bird and:

Resolved

- (1) That the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2012-2014 as contained in Appendix A of this report be adopted and published with the commencement dates as listed in the Policy document.
- (2) That funds returned to the Council through the land charging process for all grants and loans be made available for future private sector housing renewal assistance.

87. Members' Allowances 2012/13

A report was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and seconded by Councillor A. Andrew:

That the Council notes the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, thanks them for their work in producing the report and agrees to continue with the existing Members' Allowances Scheme for the municipal year 2012/13.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried – 28 members voting in favour and 27 against and it was:

Resolved

That the Council notes the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, thanks them for their work in producing the report and agrees to continue with the existing Members' Allowances Scheme for the municipal year 2012/13.

88. Pay and reward policy

A report was submitted.

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

Resolved

- (1) That the Pay and Reward Policy, with attached appendices be approved.
- (2) That the Council re-affirms the procedure for the appointment of Chief Officers as set out in the Constitution.

89. Walsall Housing Group – board composition and membership

The item was deferred to the next meeting.

90. Portfolio holder briefings

(a) Communities and partnerships

Councillor Z. Ali, portfolio holder for Communities and partnerships gave a presentation.

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

(b) Leisure and culture

Councillor Harris, portfolio holder for Leisure and culture gave a presentation.

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

91. Appointments on outside bodies

(a) Walsall Adult and Community College governing body

The item was withdrawn.

(b) Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

The following nominations were made to the above Trust:

Councillors McCracken and Nazir

The nominations were put to the vote and it was:

Resolved

That Councillor Nazir be appointed to serve on the Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

(c) **Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership Trust**

The following nominations were made to the above Trust:

Councillors Arif and Illmann-Walker

The nominations were put to the vote and it was:

Resolved

That Councillor Illmann-Walker be appointed to serve on the Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership Trust.

92. **Notice of motion – Save money, stay warm, go green**

A report was submitted.

The following motion, notice of which had been duly given was **moved** by Councillor I. Shires and seconded by Councillor D.A. Shires:

(1) This Council notes:

- That British households currently spend more on heating their homes than their counterparts in Sweden where winter temperatures are far lower;
- That this means a legacy of draughty, cold homes that are expensive to heat – leaving vulnerable local residents facing serious health risks;
- An over-reliance on fossil fuels, leaving households and businesses exposed to soaring world energy prices.

(2) This Council recognises the role played by the coalition government in securing:

- The Warm Homes Discount to give an extra £120 each year to the least well-off pensioners in Walsall to keep warm this winter;
- A commitment from energy companies to help with free loft and cavity wall insulation for Walsall's poorest households;
- From October 2012, the Green Deal will aim to insulate all domestic and commercial properties to high standards at no upfront cost to consumers.

(3) This Council resolves:

- To support the Green Deal locally by ensuring local residents in Walsall know about the opportunities and helping direct them towards providers.
- To investigate how else the Council can help with supporting home insulation work – for instance acting as a Green Deal provider itself;
- To write to the Local Government Association and other appropriate national bodies with details of Walsall Council's plans to keep our residents warm and to tackle climate change.
- To investigate ways that the Council can assist local residents to save money and keep warm through the provision of information and advice, including through working with partner agencies.

Amendment moved by Councillor Coughlan and seconded by Councillor Oliver:

That the following paragraph be added to the motion:

(3) This Council further recognises:

- The national charity Save the Children says 800,000 of the poorest families qualify for a £120 discount on fuel bills in 2011/12 under the new Warm Home Discount Scheme. However, they also report that a funding shortfall by energy companies means only 25,000 families will get this discount, and that the scheme is "fundamentally flawed" because it does not require the energy companies to provide sufficient funding to support all households on low incomes and at risk of fuel poverty.
- According to an unprecedented attack from the government's own climate advisers, the government's flagship programme to transform the energy efficiency of 14 million homes in the next decade will fail and only reach 2-3 million households.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost - 27 members voting in favour and 28 against.

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

**For the motion -
28 members**

Cllr: Bird
I. Shires
A. Andrew
R. Andrew
Ansell
Arif
Azam
Barker
Bennett

**Against the motion -
9 members**

Cllr: Anson
P. Bott
S. Coughlan
Creaney
Ditta
S. Fitzpatrick
Hussain
Madeley
Young

**Neutral –
18 members**

Cllr. Oliver
Burley
Cassidy
Chambers
D. Coughlan
J. Fitzpatrick
Fletcher-Hall
Ilmann-Walker
James

Carpenter
Clarke
Cook
Douglas-Maul
Harris
Harrison
E. Hughes
Longhi
Martin
McCracken
Murray
Paul
Perry
Rattigan
Rochelle
Sears
D.A. Shires
Towe
Zahid

Jukes
Nazir
Phillips
Robertson
Russell
Sarohi
Thomas
Westley
Wilkes

and it was:

Resolved

(1) This Council notes:

- That British households currently spend more on heating their homes than their counterparts in Sweden where winter temperatures are far lower;
- That this means a legacy of draughty, cold homes that are expensive to heat – leaving vulnerable local residents facing serious health risks;
- An over-reliance on fossil fuels, leaving households and businesses exposed to soaring world energy prices.

(2) This Council recognises the role played by the coalition government in securing:

- The Warm Homes Discount to give an extra £120 each year to the least well-off pensioners in Walsall to keep warm this winter;
- A commitment from energy companies to help with free loft and cavity wall insulation for Walsall's poorest households;
- From October 2012, the Green Deal will aim to insulate all domestic and commercial properties to high standards at no upfront cost to consumers.

(3) This Council resolves:

- To support the Green Deal locally by ensuring local residents in Walsall know about the opportunities and helping direct them towards providers.
- To investigate how else the Council can help with supporting home insulation work – for instance acting as a Green Deal provider itself;

- To write to the Local Government Association and other appropriate national bodies with details of Walsall Council's plans to keep our residents warm and to tackle climate change.
- To investigate ways that the Council can assist local residents to save money and keep warm through the provision of information and advice, including through working with partner agencies.

The meeting terminated a 9.00 p.m.

Mayor:

Date: