



Minutes of the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 18 September, 2023, at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Present

Councillor C.D.D. Towe (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillor G. Ali

“ B. Allen
“ A. Andrew
“ B. Bains
“ H. Bashir
“ M.A. Bird
“ P. Bott
“ R. Burley
“ S. Cheema
“ S.J. Cooper
“ S.K. Ditta
“ S. Elson
“ G. Flint
“ M. Follows
“ N. Gandham
“ A. Garcha
“ P. Gill
“ N. Gultasib
“ A. Harris
“ F. Hassan
“ A.J. Hicken
“ A. Hussain
“ I. Hussain
“ K. Hussain

Councillor T. Jukes

“ P. Kaur
“ R. Larden
“ E. Lee
“ R. Martin
“ R. K Mehmi
“ E. Morgan
“ J. Murray
“ S. Nasreen
“ A.A. Nawaz
“ A. Nazir
“ A. Parkes
“ K. Pedley
“ L.J. Rattigan
“ K. Sears
“ G. Singh Sohal
“ P. Smith
“ C.A. Statham
“ M.A. Statham
“ A. Underhill
“ M. Ward
“ V.J. Waters
“ J. Whitehouse
“ R.V. Worrall

40. Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Murphy, Perry, Rasab, Harrison, Ferguson, Samra, Latham, S. Hussain, C. Bott and, Wilson.

41. **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July, 2023, a copy having been sent to each member of the Council, be approved as a correct record.

42. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

Resolved

There were no items in private session.

44. **Mayor's announcements**

Come Dine with the Mayor

The Mayor welcomed all members to attend his 'Come Dine with the Mayor' event taking place on Sunday 1st October, 2023 at 6.30 p.m. An email with full details of the event having been circulated to all members.

Tributes to the Interim Chief Executive

The Mayor explained that Deborah Hindson would be leaving her role as Chief Executive and thanked her for her hard work and dedication during her time as Interim Chief Executive at Walsall. In doing so, he wished her all the very best.

Councillors M. Bird and A. Nawaz concurred with the sentiments expressed by the Mayor and added further tributes.

45. **Petitions**

The following Petitions were received: -

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| (1) Councillor Underhill | – | To reopen the basketball court for the children in Whitton Street, Darlaston. |
| (2) Councillor Sears | – | Chester Road safety campaign. |

46. **Questions**

(a) From the public:

Dr Fiona Macmillan

In light of the understandable delays in developing the Walsall Borough Local Plan, when might a revised timetable be available?

Councillor Andrew replied as follows:

As many will be aware the delays are due to the uncertainty over the planning reforms, especially the proposed changes to the plan making system. The Government is currently carrying out a consultation on the reforms which will close on the 18th of October this year. Once this process is concluded, the Council will be in a position to set out a timetable for the Walsall Borough Local Plan, as government has not indicated how long it will take to consider the consult consultation responses, make decisions, and implement any challenges. I am unable to confirm when a revised timetable will be available.

Dr Fiona Macmillan asked the following supplementary question:

Is there any possibility of establishing, assuming the government comes to a conclusion, how long the time gap would be between that and the emergence of a local timetable?

Councillor Andrew replied as follows:

Not at this current time, no.

Lee Jeavons

Whilst I appreciate the reassuring statement made on 01/09/2023 with regard to Reinforced Aerated Autoclaved Concrete in schools controlled by Walsall MBC, many of our schools are now academies. Would the relevant portfolio holder, bearing in mind the responsibility of Walsall MBC for general school performance, be able to provide me, this council and Walsall people with the same assurances for academy schools in the borough?

Councillor Statham replied as follows:

Walsall Council can confirm that it has reviewed and undertaken inspections in its schools and that reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) is not present in any maintained school that the council is responsible for.

RAAC is a lightweight form of concrete used widely in roof, floor, cladding and wall construction in the UK from the mid-1950 to the mid-1990s,

especially for panels on flat roofs. Following the DfE published guidance, an inspection was undertaken at all schools within this scope.

This inspection consisted of an initial visual inspection which was then followed by a physical intrusive inspection where this was deemed necessary to give assurance.

No maintained schools in the borough have been required to close following the Government's announcement highlighting the potential risks of RAAC.

Local authorities, diocese boards of education and academy trusts are responsible for their school buildings.

Although Walsall Council is not the responsible body for diocese and academy schools, we requested assurance from those organisations that RAAC is not present. We have not received any notifications of RAAC being present in any Walsall school.

For further assurance, we also contacted the DfE Regional Directors team and were informed that they are not aware of any confirmed RAAC issues which have been reported involving Walsall schools, either maintained or academies.

Ensuring the safety of students and teaching staff in our schools is our priority. We have been aware of the RAAC issue for some time, so we have undertaken due diligence and already completed a review of Walsall maintained schools. Inspections and reviews have found that none of these schools have used RAAC.

Lee Jeavons asked the following supplementary question:

Could the relevant portfolio holder tell me, with potential for Reinforced Aerated Autoclaved Concrete (RACC) to exist in other buildings of the period, such as the Gala Baths, E.M Flint Gallery and our Civic Centre, if a register has been compiled of Council owned buildings with RAAC?

Councillor Bird replied as follows:

RAAC assurance inspections are underway and will be completed for all maintained schools by Friday 22nd September 2023. For corporate buildings a desktop assessment exercise will be completed by 15th September 2023. This exercise utilises images and technical data held which enabled officers to identify those buildings where the presence of RAAC could be ruled out due to the building age and/or construction type.

Through this process, we have identified 29 properties that require intrusive surveys to verify roof structure types and a further 54 properties where a visual inspection is recommended. These inspection requirements do not indicate that RAAC is present, but it is the systematic risk-based approach

that has been implemented to ascertain whether RAAC may be present. The inspections will commence on 25th September, and it is anticipated these will be completed by 12th October, subject to not requiring any Refurbishment and Demolition Asbestos Surveys prior to undertaking the intrusive tests.

(b) From members of the Council: None

46. **Members Criminal Record Checks**

The report to Standards Committee on 17th July, 2023 was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor Martin, seconded by Councillor Andrew and:

Resolved

That Councillors involved in decisions on the provision of services for vulnerable adults undertake an enhanced DBS Check.

47. **Review of the Constitution**

A report was submitted (see annexed).

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

Resolved

That the following wording be added to Part 3.5, Table 5, paragraph 18.25 of the Constitution:-

- The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014; and
- The Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) (England) Regulations 2020 S.I. 1095

48. **Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer**

A report was submitted (see annexed).

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

Resolved

That the Chief Executive be appointed as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer in accordance with Section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, with effect from 9th October, 2023.

49. **West Midlands Fire Authority**

It was **moved** by Councillor Nawaz, seconded by Councillor K. Hussain and:

Resolved:

That Councillor Ward be appointed to the West Midlands Fire Authority.

50. **Portfolio Holder Briefing**

Education and Skills

Councillor M. Statham gave a presentation.

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

The meeting terminated at 6:41 p.m.

Mayor:

Date: