



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 9TH day of JULY, 2012 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Dated this 29th day of June, 2012.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Sheehan".

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 21st May, 2012.
4. Declarations of interest.
5. Mayor's announcements.
6. To receive any petitions.

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

(a) From the public - **None**

(b) From members of the Council

(1) Councillor Smith re: Social landlord premises

“With regard to the so called “bedroom tax” that is a part of the Coalition Government’s Welfare Reform Act, that will see, from April 2013, the housing benefits of Social landlord tenants under the age of 62, reduced by 14%, if deemed to have one surplus bedroom and 25% if deemed to have 2 or more surplus bedrooms, would the Portfolio holder give me, this Council and the public, a ward by ward breakdown of the estimated number of Social landlord households (or at least Whg figures if it is not possible to encompass all Social landlords’ properties) likely to be faced with (a) a 14% cut in housing benefits and (b) a 25% cut in housing benefits, as a result of this policy and on the assumption that the recipients of housing benefits, deemed to be having “surplus bedrooms” remain in their present households?”

(2) Councillor Worrall re: 86 Lichfield Road, Sheffield (Brush garage)

“In response to my petition handed in at Council on 23rd May, in which residents asked for an inquiry into the Council’s actions in the matter of the above unauthorised development, Mr. Tim Johnson, Executive Director, has replied to say that any such inquiry would be inappropriate given that the considered view of the Ombudsman is expected shortly – possibly within a matter of days or weeks. (The texts of the petition and reply are set out below).

Would the Leader advise whether the Council has now heard from the Ombudsman as to his intentions in this matter and if so, what these intentions are?

(Text of petition handed to Council on 23 May:

“We the undersigned residents, note with dismay the decision of Development Control Committee, not to take any enforcement action against the owner of 86 Lichfield Street, Sheffield (the Brush Garage) against the recommendations of Council officers, Counsel’s opinion and the views of the Local Government Ombudsman, and call for an independent inquiry into the case aimed at identifying all the circumstances leading to the decision and achieving a just and proper settlement in the best interests of the community and of the Council itself.”

Text of Mr. Johnson's reply of 8 June:

"I am writing to you in relation to the petition submitted to the adjourned meeting of Council on 23 May, concerning 86 Lichfield Road, Sheffield (Brush Garage).

The petitioners have asked for an independent inquiry into the matter "aimed at identifying all the circumstances leading to the decision and achieving a just and proper settlement in the best interests of the community and of the Council itself."

You may be aware that the Local Government Ombudsman has for some while now been investigating complaints from two local residents, both signatories to the present petition, in relation to Brush Garage. The Ombudsman has carried out a full and thorough investigation of the matter and I can confirm that currently the Council is awaiting the Ombudsman's considered view upon the complaint. This expected shortly, possibly within a matter of days or weeks.

In these circumstances, I believe that it would be inappropriate for me now to initiate, or commission, any separate investigation into the matter.")

(3) Councillor Smith re: Walsall 's Town Heritage funds

"With regard to what some people regard as Walsall town centre's biggest eyesore, namely the boarded up and long time scaffold - clad building in Bridge Street that last traded as a nightclub, Studio 45 (closed down in January 2007) and before that as a pub under various names (the Black Swan, the Berni Inn, the Dirty Duck, the Stork Hotel to name a few) and subsequent to it closing down in 2007, received monies from Walsall's Town Heritage Initiative funds, can the appropriate Portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public of the value of the grant given and how the grant was spent?"

(4) Councillor Worrall re: Pelsall Lane bus lane/lay-by Rushall

I submitted two petitions to Council on 23rd May (see below) in which residents and traders asked the Council to address the dangers and/or obstructions caused by parking and rat-running to avoid the traffic lights and to relocate the bus stop to a nearby alternative position in Pelsall Lane.

As no reply other than an acknowledgement had been received by 26 June, would the portfolio holder advise Council of what steps, if any, are proposed, to identify and implement a scheme to effectively address residents and traders' concerns and in particular to minimise the perceived risk of accidents and injuries inherent in the existing arrangements?

(Text of petitions handed to Council on 23 May:

Petition 1:

“We the undersigned, call on Walsall Council, in consultation with local residents and traders in Rushall, to develop and implement a scheme for the Pelsall Lane bus lay-by that will:

- Relocate the bus stop
- Close the lay-by to rat-running vehicular traffic
- Increase parking; and
- Improve the environment for residents and shoppers”

Petition 2:

We support moving Pelsall Lane bus stop.”)

8. **State of Walsall debate.** See separate report.

9. **Annual scrutiny report 2011/12.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

10. **Corporate parenting strategy 2012 - 2015.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

11. **Empty properties.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

12. **Civil enforcement of bus lane contraventions.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

13. **Scrutiny and Performance Panels:**

To report the following Labour group nominations to Scrutiny Panels following Adjourned Council on 23rd May 2012:

Children and Young People	Councillors Cassidy, Jukes, Thomas
Community Services and Environment	Councillors Hussain, Creaney, Illmann-Walker

Corporate	Councillors S. Coughlan, Illmann-Walker Worrall
Health	Councillors James, Russell, Sarohi
Regeneration	Councillors Creaney, Jeavons, Wade
Social Care and Inclusion	Councillors Burley, D. Coughlan, Oliver

14. Appointments on charities:

- (a) **Merrions Wood Trust** – To appoint a trustee for a period of 4 years expiring on 24th May 2016.
- (b) **W.J. Croft Charity:** The term of office of Councillor Russell expires on 25th July 2012. To appoint a trustee for a period of 4 years to 25th July 2016.

15. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillor Smith:**

This Council calls on the Council's Health Scrutiny Panel to organise and host a Borough wide Public meeting to allow for a balanced public debate on whether or not the Walsall Manor Hospital should seek and be granted Foundation Status, with opportunities for members of the public present to make contributions, ask questions and to democratically deliberate on the issue at the Public meeting, though it is accepted that any decision would have no legally binding effect one way or the other.

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

16. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillors Young, Thomas and Oliver:**

This Council recognises the major benefits to the local community of the work and services delivered from the Ryecroft Neighbourhood Resource Centre.

It is further recognised that these services are threatened by the consistent lack of revenue support, and calls upon Walsall Council to work with the Centre's management committee to deliver a sustainable business plan – as a matter of urgency – including proposals for appropriate grant, service level agreement and premises lease support.

(Note: Report to follow.)