



Walsall Council

Minutes of the **MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 18th September 2017 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House.

Present

Councillor M. Longhi (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillor P. Bott (Deputy Mayor)

“ B. Allen
“ A.J.A. Andrew
“ D.J. Barker
“ O.D. Bennett
“ M.A. Bird
“ C. Bott
“ R. Burley
“ K. Chambers
“ A.G. Clarke
“ C.E. Clews
“ S.J. Cooper
“ D. Coughlan
“ S.P. Coughlan
“ S.R. Craddock
“ C.U. Creaney
“ A. Ditta
“ S.K. Ditta
“ B.A. Douglas-Maul
“ K. Ferguson
“ M. Follows
“ J. Fitzpatrick
“ S.F. Fitzpatrick
“ N.Z. Gultasib
“ A.D. Harris
“ L.A. Harrison
“ D.T. Hazell
“ E.A. Hazell
“ A.J. Hicken

Councillor E.F. Hughes

“ K. Hussain
“ D. James
“ L.D. Jeavons
“ C. Jones
“ T.J. Jukes
“ A. Kudhail
“ Mrs. R.A. Martin
“ J. Murray
“ A.A. Nawaz
“ M. Nazir
“ A.S. Nazir
“ G. Perry
“ K. Phillips
“ L.J. Rattigan
“ I.C. Robertson
“ J. Rochelle
“ K. Sears
“ I. Shires
“ G.S. Sohal
“ C.D.D. Towe
“ A. Underhill
“ S. Wade
“ M. Ward
“ P. Washbrook
“ T.S. Wilson
“ R.V. Worrall
“ A. Young

32. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Russell and Sarohi.

33. Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meetings held on 10th July and 7th August 2017 copies having been sent to each member of the Council, be approved as correct records and signed.

34. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no items to be considered in private session.

36. Mayor's announcements

Retirement of the Chief Executive

The Mayor reminded members that Paul Sheehan would be retiring as Chief Executive in November. He thanked him for his hard work on behalf of Walsall and contribution to the Council during his time as Chief Executive and wished him a long and happy retirement. Councillors S. Coughlan, E. Hazell, Shires and Bird concurred with the sentiments expressed by the Mayor.

The Chief Executive thanked members for their good wishes.

37. Petitions

The following petitions were submitted:

- (a) Councillor Follows – to strongly secure King George V playing fields and introduce an injunction to prevent travellers using this site for unauthorised encampments.

- (b) Councillor D. Coughlan – Against the conversion of 18 Rose Hill being turned into a hotel/hostel/HMO.
- (c) Councillor Clarke – asking that approval be denied for a car wash & valeting facility situated at The Royal Oak, 68 Chester Road, Brownhills.
- (d) Councillor Towe – Injunction for Barr Beacon and Doe Bank Park to stop travellers unauthorised encampments.

38. Question by member of the public

Brown bin service

Mr. P.E. Smith asked the following question of Councillor Jones:

“Given that most sensible and rational people would consider it economic and political madness to try to remove the popular garden waste Brown Bin service, presently paid for by Council tax contributions, from 94,000 households, resulting in a situation where up to 80% of the 14,000 tons garden waste collected annually (11,200 tons) could well remain uncollected if charges are introduced, are you prepared to admit publicly that this was never a really serious proposition and that Cabinet is likely to “bin” this hare-brained proposal, using the so called “consultation” exercise and the old chestnut “listening to the people” as justification for doing so?”

Councillor Jones replied:

“Mr Smith will be well aware that since 2010 the Council has saved approximately £160 million by making efficiencies and reducing, ceasing and changing services. However amid an ongoing challenging financial outlook, the Council anticipates the need to save a further c£35 million over the next two years.

He will also be aware since he asked the same question at Scrutiny recently, under section 45/46 of the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) 1990, the Council has the right to make a charge for garden waste collections. Many other Councils have already introduced such a charge or are considering introducing a charge.

The proposal to introduce a charge in Walsall has been up for consideration over the past couple of years, however there has never been an extensive public consultation exercise undertaken to determine the appetite for or indeed the impact of such a service change. In February 2017, this Cabinet signalled intent to consult on a saving in the region of £300,000 and have the potential to enable the delivery of a better service overall.

We are an open and transparent administration. Listening and responding to the people and communities of Walsall is fundamental to our decision

making process. Failure to consult in a fair and lawful manner would not only result in poorly informed decisions, but also leave the Council at risk of legal challenge.

We are currently analysing the results of the consultation prior to any decision being made later this year when we propose our budget.

Lasting nine weeks, consultation took place at a formative stage, prior to any decisions being made, which was made clear in the consultation.

13,800 questionnaires were sent to residents, a survey was hosted online and feedback was gathered via email and letter.

We had 454 responses to the online version and 3,648 to the postal questionnaire. The response rate for the postal survey was 26.4%. It is not possible to calculate a response rate for the online survey.

Although the Council's stated preference is to introduce a charge, in order to consult in a meaningful way and give residents a genuine opportunity to influence the decision, four possible options were put forward. In addition, residents were invited to make their own suggestions for how the savings could be made with any genuine, permissible suggestions being considered.

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) the Council has a legal obligation to pay due regard to equality characteristics, in particular S.149 of the Equalities Act 2010 states that public bodies must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity. Understanding and taking into account how a change to the garden waste service may impact residents and in particular those with protected equality characteristics, is critical.

The research explored residents' use of the service, behaviours and willingness to pay as well as views on options for a garden waste collection service. Results from the consultation, which will provide a significant amount of insight and understanding, are now in the process of being analysed and will be presented to Cabinet where, along with other information, will be conscientiously considered in advance of any decision being made."

Mr. Smith asked the following supplementary question:

"To what extent would you agree with me that:

Firstly, given that if you have had only a 20% response to the 13,819 letters sent out (which equates to 2762 responses) this represents only 2.9% of the 94,000 households with a brown bin,

Secondly, given that the highly questionable projected "savings" of £330,000 if the brown bin service is removed represents only 0.05% (5% of 1%) of the Council's estimated £617,394,000 aggregate gross expenditure for the present financial year (or if you prefer, 0.3% (a third of 1%) of the £108,470,000 net Council tax requirement for 2017/18),

Thirdly given that the Council's new "magical money tree" called the Saddlers Centre is believed by some starry-eyed optimists to be likely to provide the Council with a total estimated annual return on investment of over £2m per year over a 5 year period,

And fourthly, given that the Council has at least £12m of Council taxpayers money stashed away in general reserves,

To what extent would you agree with me that, there is ample scope to do a U turn and abandon plans to upset up to 94,000 households by removing their present brown bin service, especially as Walsall Council tax is presently and has been for some time, the highest in the West Midlands?"

Councillor Jones said that he did not agree and referred Mr. Smith to his original response.

39. Question by member of the Council

Grass cutting and Lyme disease

Councillor Bird asked the following question of Councillor Jones:

"Will the Portfolio Holder for Clean and Green please advise the members of this Council what risk assessment has been conducted to limit the amount of tics in the long grass that is now the policy of the current Administration to remain uncut. Can the Portfolio Holder also advise us if any consultations were taken with Public Health with regard to any increase in Lyme disease that could occur by increasing the habitat for these dangerous insects."

Councillor Jones replied:

"Clean and Green contacted Public Health England (PHE) in respect of grass cutting arrangements. Public Health England highlighted best practice in relation to ensuring that grass is cut back on and near to paths in parks to reduce the risk of members of the public coming into contact with ticks. Consistent with this advice, Clean and Green have cut pathways across sites to enable access and to limit the risk of any contact with ticks.

Risk assessment has highlighted that Walsall is not a high risk area for tick exposure, unlike parts of Scotland, Cornwall and Norfolk, where the prevalence of ticks is high. There have been no confirmed cases of Lyme disease among Walsall residents in recent years.

However, it is important that residents remain vigilant for the signs of tick bites. Most people who contract Lyme disease develop a characteristic bull's eye rash at the site of the tick bite. Other symptoms may include flu-like symptoms, Bell's palsy or nerve pains.

This does present a good opportunity to remind our residents of ways that they can reduce the risk of being bitten by ticks, particularly if they are on holiday in high risk areas:

- Wearing clothing with sensible coverage, e.g. long-sleeved shirts and trousers tucked into socks.
- Wearing light-coloured clothing so ticks are easier to spot and brush off.
- The use of DEET-containing skin insect repellents.
- Walking on clearly defined paths, to avoid brushing against vegetation.
- Avoiding dense vegetation.
- Checking the whole body for attached ticks after a period of exposure - most ticks do not carry infection and do not transmit the bacterium in the first few hours of a feed.

Councillor Jones also provided the following background information:

“Prevalence of ticks in Walsall

Ticks are found across the UK in woods, fields, moorland and heath, urban parks and also some gardens, where there is wildlife that can be fed on and vegetation to protect them from drying out. They are less active in winter and dry summer months. Tick numbers vary across the country. Walsall is not a high risk area for tick exposure, unlike parts of Scotland, Cornwall and Norfolk, where the prevalence of ticks is high.

There is no specific data pertaining to length of grass and prevalence of ticks, however, PHE guidelines recommend that for individuals to avoid coming into contact with ticks, one should avoid dense vegetation.

Public Health Risks from ticks

Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne disease in the UK. Ticks cannot fly or jump; they are transmitted via clothes or skin brushing against something that they are on. Once on skin, ticks bite into the skin and feed off blood. Ticks do not transmit the bacterium to an individual in the first few hours of a feed. The number of ticks carrying the pathogen is approximately 2-6%. Therefore not all tick bites lead to Lyme disease.

Other less common tick-borne diseases include Babesia, Bartonella, Ehrlichia and Rickettsia.

Lyme disease

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. The pathogen is known to be carried by the sheep tick, *Ixodes ricinus*, the hedgehog tick, *I hexagonus* and the fox or English dog tick *I canisguia*.

A total of 283 laboratory confirmed cases of Lyme disease were reported across England and Wales in the second quarter of 2017. There were 10 cases of laboratory confirmed Lyme disease in the West Midlands over this period. No confirmed cases of Lyme disease have been reported in Walsall residents in recent years.

Most patients that contract Lyme disease develop a characteristic bull's eye rash at the site of the tick bite. Approximately one in three individuals do not develop a rash. Other symptoms that individuals may develop include flu-like symptoms, Bell's palsy or nerve pains.

Lyme disease has a good prognosis with high chance of full recovery in patients that are started on treatment early. If Lyme disease is left untreated over several weeks, months or even years then further complications can ensue."

Councillor Bird asked the following supplementary question:

"As I was recently confirmed as having the disease, would you agree that the Council owe it to the general public to require Clean and Green, together with Public Health, to raise awareness of Lyme disease and advise them of the risks?"

Councillor Jones noted the comments made and wished Councillor Bird a speedy recovery.

40. **Annual scrutiny report 2016/17**

Councillor Hussain presented the report.

Resolved

That the annual scrutiny report 2016/17 be noted.

41. **Portfolio holder reports**

(a) **Regeneration**

A report was submitted.

Councillor Jeavons, portfolio holder for Regeneration gave a presentation.

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

(b) **Social Care**

A report was submitted.

Councillor D. Coughlan, portfolio holder for Social Care gave a presentation.

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

42. **Appointments to outside bodies and charities**

(a) **Visionary Investment Enhancing Walsall Ltd. (VIEW) Board**

A report was submitted.

Resolved

- (1) That the appointment of Manjit Jhooty and Jennifer Blake as independent members of the Board be noted.
- (2) That Councillor Andrew be appointed as a member of the Board for the remainder of the current municipal year.

(b) **Blanch Woollaston Charity**

The Council was informed that the term of office of Councillors Harrison and Hicken as trustees of the charity had expired.

Resolved

That Councillor Underhill be appointed a trustee of the Blanch Woollaston Charity for a period of 3 years expiring on 13th September 2020.

43. **Notice of motion – Crime**

The following amended motion, notice of which had been duly given was **moved** by Councillor S Coughlan and seconded by Councillor Chambers:

This council recognises the concerns of Walsall residents in relation to crime and the fear of crime. This council expresses concern at recent crimes and notes the recent attack on a “good Samaritan, with a brick” in Darlaston, thefts from a disabled centre in Goscote, arson in relation to Pelsall Villa football club and particularly in relation to recent crimes in the Aldridge area, where there have been three crimes at banking premises and a violent stabbing, resulting in the sad death of resident, Mr James Brindley.

This council notes that:

- There has been a recorded increase in crime, particularly violent crime across the West Midlands within the last year
- That in the calendar year there was a 2% decrease in the number of officers available to West Midlands Police and a decrease in numbers by 2000 officers since 2010, following a £140m budget cut from central govt
- That budget cuts in terms of revenue support grant have hampered the ability of Walsall MBC to deploy CCTV to assist the police

This council resolves to:

- Write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Local government, expressing its concerns with regard to austerity measures and their effects on community safety
- Invite our three elected MP's to join this campaign, by asking them to also write to the government on this issue
- Invite our MP's to campaign against austerity, which affects the cohesiveness of our local communities.
- Seek to ensure that with the announced end to the public sector pay cap for police, that this is fully funded by Government and does not create another financial burden on local authorities.

Amendment moved by Councillor Bird and seconded by Councillor Andrew:

That a further bullet point be added to paragraphs 2 and 3 as follows:

Paragraph 2:

- The Labour Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr. David Jameson, has reduced the resources and Police officers in Walsall MBC.

Paragraph 3:

- Request the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel, Councillor Sean Coughlan, to ask the Labour Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr. David Jameson, to report to his panel of the reasons of reducing the Police resources in Walsall MBC and revisit the deployment of these resources in the light of the perceived increase in crime in the borough.

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

For the amendment - 27 members	Against the amendment - 29 members	Abstained - 2 members
Cllr: Bird	Cllr. S. Coughlan	Cllr. C. Bott
E. Hazell	Shires	Hughes
Allen	Barker	
Andrew	P. Bott	
Bennett	Burley	
Clarke	Chambers	
Cooper	Clews	
Craddock	D. Coughlan	
Douglas-Maul	Creaney	
Ferguson	A. Ditta	
Follows	S. Ditta	
Harris	J. Fitzpatrick	
Harrison	S. Fitzpatrick	
D. Hazell	Gultasib	
Hicken	Hussain	
Kudhail	James	
Longhi	Jeavons	
Martin	Jones	
Murray	Jukes	
Perry	Nawaz	
Rattigan	A. Nazir	
Rochelle	M. Nazir	
Sears	Phillips	
Sohal	Robertson	
Towe	Underhill	
Washbrook	Ward	
Wilson	Wade	
	Worrall	
	Young	

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

For the motion - 56 members	Abstained - 2 members
Cllr. S. Coughlan	Cllr. Hughes
Bird	Rochelle
Shires	
E. Hazell	
Allen	
Andrew	
Barker	
Bennett	
C. Bott	
P. Bott	

Burley
Chambers
Clarke
Clews
Cooper
D. Coughlan
Craddock
Creaney
A. Ditta
S. Ditta
Douglas-Maul
Ferguson
J. Fitzpatrick
S. Fitzpatrick
Follows
Gultasib
Harris
Harrison
D. Hazell
Hicken
Hussain
James
Jeavons
Jones
Jukes
Kudhail
Longhi
Martin
Murray
Nawaz
A. Nazir
M. Nazir
Perry
Phillips
Rattigan
Robertson
Sears
Sohal
Towe
Underhill
Ward
Wade
Washbrook
Wilson
Worrall
Young

and it was:

Resolved

This council recognises the concerns of Walsall residents in relation to crime and the fear of crime. This council expresses concern at recent crimes and notes the recent attack on a “good Samaritan, with a brick” in Darlaston, thefts from a disabled centre in Goscote, arson in relation to Pelsall Villa football club and particularly in relation to recent crimes in the Aldridge area, where there have been three crimes at banking premises and a violent stabbing, resulting in the sad death of resident, Mr James Brindley.

This council notes that:

- There has been a recorded increase in crime, particularly violent crime across the West Midlands within the last year
- That in the calendar year there was a 2% decrease in the number of officers available to West Midlands Police and a decrease in numbers by 2000 officers since 2010, following a £140m budget cut from central govt
- That budget cuts in terms of revenue support grant have hampered the ability of Walsall MBC to deploy CCTV to assist the police

This council resolves to:

- Write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Local government, expressing its concerns with regard to austerity measures and their effects on community safety
- Invite our three elected MP’s to join this campaign, by asking them to also write to the government on this issue
- Invite our MP’s to campaign against austerity, which affects the cohesiveness of our local communities
- Seek to ensure that with the announced end to the public sector pay cap for police, that this is fully funded by Government and does not create another financial burden on local authorities.

The meeting terminated at 8.15 p.m.