



Walsall Council

Minutes of the **MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 12th January 2015 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House.

Present

Councillor P.E. Smith (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillor A. Underhill (Deputy Mayor)

“ A.J.A. Andrew
“ D.A. Anson
“ M. Arif
“ D.J. Barker
“ O.D. Bennett
“ M.A. Bird
“ C. Bott
“ P. Bott
“ R. Burley
“ B. Cassidy
“ K. Chambers
“ A.G. Clarke
“ C.E. Clews
“ D. Coughlan
“ S.P. Coughlan
“ S.R. Craddock
“ C.U. Creaney
“ A. Ditta
“ J. Fitzpatrick
“ S.F. Fitzpatrick
“ M. D. Flower
“ A.D. Harris
“ L.A. Harrison
“ D.T. Hazell
“ E.A. Hazell
“ E.F. Hughes
“ K. Hussain
“ G. Illmann-Walker

Councillor D. James

“ L.D. Jeavons
“ C. Jones
“ T.J. Jukes
“ P. Lane
“ M. Longhi
“ Mrs. R.A. Martin
“ Mrs. B.V. McCracken
“ J. Murray
“ A.A. Nawaz
“ M. Nazir
“ G. Perry
“ K. Phillips
“ I.C. Robertson
“ J. Rochelle
“ E.B. Russell
“ H.S. Sarohi
“ K. Sears
“ Mrs. D.A. Shires
“ I. Shires
“ G.S. Sohal
“ C.D.D. Towe
“ S. Wade
“ F.J. Westley
“ V. Whyte
“ T.S. Wilson
“ R.V. Worrall
“ A. Young

66. **Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors Douglas-Maul and Rattigan.

67. **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2014 copies having been sent to each member of the Council, be approved as a correct record and signed.

68. **Declarations of interest**

The Mayor informed members that the Monitoring Officer had granted the appropriate dispensation to enable all members to speak on Item 11(1) – Localised Council tax reduction scheme and Item 11(2) – Council tax empty property discounts.

There were no other declarations of interest.

69. **Local Government (Access to information) Act 1985**

There were no items to be considered in private session.

70. **Mayor's announcements**

(1) Terrorist attack in Paris

The Mayor informed the Council that he had written to the Council's twinned towns of Mulhouse and Drancy expressing its condolences over the events which had occurred in Paris earlier in the month.

(2) Death Mrs. Jean Douglas-Maul

The Mayor referred to the recent death of Mrs. J. Douglas-Maul, Mayoress in 2000/2001 and paid tribute to her services. Councillors Bird, Clarke and S. Coughlan also paid tribute to Mrs. Douglas-Maul, following which it was **moved** by the Mayor, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That this Council expresses its regret at the death of Mrs. J. Douglas-Maul, Mayoress in 2000/2001 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.

(3) Death of former Councillor G. Macmanomy

The Mayor referred to the death of former Councillor G. Macmanomy and paid tribute to his services to the borough over a period of many years. Councillors Bird and S. Coughlan also paid tribute to Mr. Macmanomy, following which it was **moved** by the Mayor, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That this Council expresses its regret at the death of Mr. G. Macmanomy a member of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council from August 1986 to May 1992 and July 1993 to May 1999 and places on record their appreciation of his services to the borough over a period of many years and expresses its condolences to his family at this sad time.

Members and officers stood in silence as a mark of respect.

(4) Item 17 – Notice of motion – former Willenhall Gas works site

Councillor I. Shires informed the meeting that in accordance with Council procedure rule 15.8 he proposed to withdraw the notice of motion with regard to the former Willenhall Gas works site as the remediation notice had not been served and to proceed with the motion could delay any action.

The meeting consented to the request.

71. Petitions

The following petitions were submitted:

- (1) Councillor Andrew – Against the closure of Pheasey Park Farm Children’s Centre.
- (2) Councillor Arif – Introduction of 2 hour parking at St. Michael Street Council car park Monday to Friday (over 500 signatures)
- (3) Councillor Bird – “Axe Labour’s garden tax” (over 1,500 signatures)
- (4) Councillor S. Fitzpatrick – Save Blakenall Library (over 500 Signatures)
- (5) Councillor Jukes – Against closure of lifelong learning centre on Stephenson Square (over 500 signatures)

- (6) Councillor Sears – Save Walsall Wood Library (over 500 signatures)

72. **Petition reports**

- (a) **Parking charges in Willenhall**
(b) **Parking charges in Bloxwich and Brownhills**

The report was submitted.

With regard to the parking charges in Willenhall, the Mayor informed the Council that Mr. Hancock the petition organiser would not be attending the meeting as the Cabinet agreed, as a consequence of feedback received through the budget consultation process, not to implement the proposal to introduce district centre car parking charges

Councillors S. Coughlan, Bird and I. Shires spoke on this item.

With regard to the parking charges in Bloxwich and Brownhills, Councillor Harrison spoke to the petition.

Councillors Andrew, S Coughlan and Bird spoke to this item.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the petitions be noted.
(2) That the decision of Cabinet on 17 December 2014 in relation to the changes to the draft budget and capital programme be noted.

- (c) **Petition to save Streetly Library**
(d) **Petition against closure of Pheasey Park Farm Library**

The report was submitted.

Councillor Clarke spoke to the petition with regard to Streetly Library.

Councillors Anson, Longhi, Hussain, Hughes, Nawaz, Bird, Arif, Robertson and Andrew spoke to this item.

Councillor Bird referred to the petition relating to the closure of Pheasey Park Farm Library and **moved** the following which was duly seconded:

This Council calls on the Cabinet to remove the proposal to close Pheasey Park Farm and Streetly Library and find alternative revenue saving in the budget for 2015/16.

Councillors Ditta, D. Coughlan, Nazir, Andrew, I. Shires, Towe, S. Coughlan. Chambers and Hussain spoke to the motion.

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

**For the motion –
26 members**

Cllr: Bird
E. Hazell
I. Shires
Andrew
Arif
Barker
Bennett
C. Bott
Clarke
Craddock
Flower
Harris
Harrison
D. Hazell
Hughes
Longhi
Martin
McCracken
Murray
Perry
Rochelle
Sears
D. Shires
Sohal
Towe
Wilson

**Against the motion -
30 members**

Cllr: S. Coughlan
Anson
Burley
Cassidy
Chambers
Clews
D. Coughlan
Creaney
Ditta
J. Fitzpatrick
S. Fitzpatrick
Hussain
Illmann-Walker
James
Jeavons
Jones
Jukes
Lane
Nawaz
Nazir
Phillips
Robertson
Russell
Sarohi
Underhill
Wade
Westley
Whyte
Worrall
Young

**Abstained -
2 members**

Cllr: P. Bott
Smith

At this point in the proceedings the time being 8.00 p.m. the meeting adjourned for 5 minutes.

The meeting reconvened at 8.05 p.m.

73. Questions by members

(1) Female genital mutilation

Councillor Burley asked the following question of Councillor Robertson:

“Are you aware of a recent West Midlands Police and Crime Panel report highlighting serious concern at the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) still being practised here in the UK? How can Walsall Council assist and support the campaign to eliminate this abhorrent practice?”

Councillor Robertson replied that FGM had been a specific criminal offence in the UK since 1985, yet continued to be practiced within some cultures and communities.

He said that whilst Police data stated that there had been no referrals or auditable cases of FGM in Walsall, the Council was aware that due to the make-up of its diverse and emerging communities there were significant risks. The Council and partner agencies viewed this very seriously and were already working together to raise awareness, provide education and promote reporting so that appropriate support could be accessed by those at risk.

There were agreed multi-agency procedures in place and Operational Sentinel, the West Midlands Police operation aimed at protecting our most vulnerable victims, including a dedicated strand of work on FGM. Head teachers and GPs were contacted last year with information on FGM, the signs and action to take if they had concerns.

He said that there was no doubt that due to the often hidden nature of this crime, there was a significant intelligence gap. West Midlands Police and its partners had launched an anonymous survey across the region seeking information from victims. Walsall was part of that survey, which would be advertised widely across the borough. Once the results were known and some conclusions and observations drawn, it would be incumbent upon the Council and its partners to look at the broader implications for Walsall and what we could do together in order to eradicate this practice.

Councillor Robertson said that an item would be put on the Health and Wellbeing Board agenda at its next meeting on 19th January 2015 which would ask the Board to agree an action plan to include amongst other things him writing to all partners to ensure that as part of the “make every contact count” initiative, front line staff, whether they worked in hospitals, general practice medicinal or dental, the Police, school nursing service were aware of FGM.

He also said that he would raise the issue at his regular meetings with Chairs of other Health and Wellbeing Boards in neighbouring authorities and that he would write to local MPs and MEPs informing them that this matter had been raised at Council and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

(2) Streetly Library

Councillor Arif asked the following question of Councillor Hussain:

“In the budget documentation it is proposed to close Streetly library which is on the periphery of the borough and has a usage of 49,678 visits for year 2013/14, far above that of the Pleck library which had 34,135 visits for year 2013/14. Pleck library is less than two miles from the Central library but is not designated for closure but Streetly is. Can the portfolio holder please advise this Council the criteria used to arrive at this decision?”

Councillor Hussain replied that the Library Service had been subject to year on year budget reductions in the past which had achieved savings without significant impact on the service to customers. The service had now no other realistic option to identify significant levels of saving than to reduce its spending on staff and buildings. This accounted for 79.3% of its controllable budget. This had led to the current proposals to save £565,722 over a two year period (£385,092 in 2015/16 and a further £180,630 in 2016/17).

The proposal to close any library was regrettable and could only be contemplated in the most serious of circumstances. It was acknowledged that the closure of a library would impact on those people for whom travelling to another service point was difficult.

The proposals would affect the provision of library services across Walsall and major consideration was given to the provision of a library service that was accessible to residents across the borough and a network of provision that was enhanced by mobile library services, housebound services, digital access and potential partnerships with community organisations.

Councillor Hussain said that in selecting the libraries named in the proposal, consideration had been given to how people living in areas where libraries might close could access the library service should they wish to do so. Under the proposal there would be a library service within a 2 mile radius of every household in the borough with the exception of the Streetly area where the distance would be 2.5 miles from the site of the current Aldridge Library.

Census information showed that more residents in Streetly had access to a car than elsewhere in the borough (90.3%) and that even though the population was predominately older than in most areas, fewer people suffered from limiting ill health than elsewhere (7%). Car availability in Pleck was 59.8% and 10.6% of people suffered from limiting ill health. In addition, those libraries named only contributed 19% of the annual visits to libraries in Walsall.

With regard to Pleck, Councillor Hussain said that it was slightly less busy than Streetly, the proposed closure of South Walsall Library would mean that Pleck was the nearest accessible library for residents in that area, being 1.5 miles away. The next nearest library was the Central Library, but was that was 2.7 miles away.

Councillor Hussain said that Pleck was used by significantly more children and young people under the age of 18 (73% of active users) who were less likely to be able to travel to another service point alone. Continued access to library services in this area would support both formal and informal learning, improve the life chances of a larger proportion of young people and increase community

cohesion in an area which had the highest concentration of ethnic minority communities in the borough. 37.1% of people in Pleck currently had no qualifications whilst in Streetly this figure was 20.3% (the average for Walsall for people with no qualifications was 33.1%).

Councillor Arif asked the following supplementary question:

Could the portfolio holder tell us based on criteria that it should be Pleck and not Streetly?

Councillor Hussain replied that he had addressed this point in the answer to the original question.

(3) Budget consultation

Councillor I. Shires asked the following question of Councillor S. Coughlan:

“I note from press reports that the controlling group are going to take time to look at the feedback from the budget consultation. Could the Leader of the Council please indicate to me and the public exactly what the timescale for this will be?”

Councillor S. Coughlan said that this was Walsall's biggest consultation ever. The breadth and scale of the budget cuts this year was far greater than in any previous year and was reflected in the wide and varied programme of consultation work that the Council was undertaking.

Consulting the public on the draft budget proposals was a key part of the Council's decision making process and was committed to listening and understanding the views of anyone who lived, worked, visited or did business in the borough. Views really counted and would be used to inform the final proposals in February.

He said that the formal consultation started on 30th October and people had been able to comment on all draft proposals up until 10th December, with some detailed surveys remaining open until 21st December and until early January for proposals relating to libraries and children's centres. So far over 5,200 had been received this year, compared to approximately 1,400 last year.

Given the scale of the consultation and responses, the Cabinet needed time to review and absorb the feedback and to formulate responses, reflecting these in the final budget proposals which would be recommended to Council. This would be done in time for the next Cabinet meeting on 4th February 2015.

Councillor Coughlan said that this year's timetable was very similar to that of last year, in that the previous administration published draft budget proposals on 23rd October 2013, reported outcomes of budget consultation feedback received to date on 11th December 2013, with final budget recommendations, informed by consultation feedback, being made on 5th February 2014.

Councillor I. Shires asked the following supplementary question:

Can you inform me and the Council where will you take funding from to balance the books?

Councillor Coughlan replied that a combination of things and timescales would allow us to do this.

(4) Budget proposals

Councillor Bird asked the following question of Councillor S. Coughlan:

“Will the Leader confirm that the budget proposals currently out for consultation are a return to the last Labour administration’s policy namely that “we shall not hesitate to discriminate against areas that do not return a Labour Councillor”.

Councillor S. Coughlan said that this was never a policy of this Council. He said he would do the right things for the people of this Council and not dogma. The more affluent areas of the borough would not be forgotten.

Councillor Bird asked the following supplementary question:

Is it not a fact that the budget proposals are an act of revenge?

Councillor Coughlan replied no. There was clear indication that there had to be criteria to close establishments. Nothing had changed since the Labour group took control. He went on to point out that the Labour group had agreed to keep the Gala Baths open.

(5) Localised Council tax reduction scheme

The Mayor asked the following question of Councillor D. Coughlan:

“Given that in a reply to a question asked by Councillor Pete Smith with regard to Agenda Item 9 at the Cabinet Meeting of 17/12/14 on Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Councillor D. Coughlan confirmed that 19,676 residents in the Borough would be affected by Cabinet’s recommendation to Council (12/1/15) which, if agreed, would ensure that every householder, however low their income, would be charged at least 25% of Council tax and further given that subsequent information received by Councillor Smith that of these 19,676 people, 15,400 of them presently pay no Council tax due to their low incomes and would therefore be faced with Council tax bills for the first time of approximately £5 per week or more, will the portfolio holder give me, this Council and the public a ward by ward breakdown of the 19,676 total figure?”

Councillor D. Coughlan replied that the numbers of working age residents currently in receipt of council tax reduction in each ward (who would be affected by the proposed change if they were still in the same circumstances in April 2015) was as follows, as at 31st December 2014:

Ward Name	Claim Count
Aldridge Central & South	491
Aldridge North & Walsall Wood	506
Bentley & Darlaston North	1303
Birchills Leamore	1763
Blakenall	1514
Bloxwich East	1117
Bloxwich West	1065
Brownhills	738
Darlaston South	1474
Paddock	350
Palfrey	1520
Pelsall	463
Pheasey Park Farm	224
Pleck	1586
Rushall-Shelfield	663
Short Heath	599
St Matthews	1710
Streetly	135
Willenhall North	750
Willenhall South	1494
	19,465

She said it should be noted that the current total figure was 19,465, rather than the figure of 19,676 quoted on 17 December 2014 (which was actually calculated using data from September 2014). The number would always fluctuate over time as a result of changes of circumstances, people moving into and out of the borough and other more technical reasons relating to data capture and collection.

The Mayor asked the following supplementary question:

How does your justification “square up” with the Labour group’s assertion that they will protect the most vulnerable in the borough?

Councillor Coughlan replied through the discount scheme.

74. **Mayorality 2015/16**

It was **moved** by Councillor S. Coughlan, seconded by Councillor Nazir and it was:

Resolved

That Councillor A. Underhill be nominated as Mayor and Councillor K. Phillips be nominated as Deputy Mayor of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council for the municipal year 2015/2016.

At 8.40 p.m., it was **moved** by Councillor Illmann-Walker, duly seconded and:

Resolved

That Council procedure rules be suspended to enable the business of the meeting to be completed.

75. **Recommendations of Cabinet**

(1) **Localised Council tax reduction scheme 2015/16**

The report to Cabinet on 17th December 2014 was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor D. Coughlan and seconded by Councillor Chambers:

- (1) That Option 1 be adopted for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to commence on 1 April 2015 (to fully disregard war disablement and war widows pensions).
- (2) That a small cash-limited discretionary scheme be introduced to assist the most vulnerable in exceptional circumstances.
- (3) That any annual up rating notified by the Department for Work and Pensions in line with the Housing Benefit regulations and Council tax reduction scheme, be adopted.
- (4) That the scheme be adopted for future years (inclusive of (1) and (2) above) until such time as the Council considers a change to the scheme is necessary.

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: S. Coughlan
Anson
Burley
Cassidy
Chambers
Clews

Against the motion - 18 members

Cllr: E. Hazell
I. Shires
Barker
C. Bott
P. Bott
Clarke

Abstained - 9 members

Cllr: Bird
Andrew
Bennett
Flower
Harris
Hughes

D. Coughlan	Craddock	James
Creaney	Harrison	Sears
J. Fitzpatrick	D. Hazell	Towe
S. Fitzpatrick	Longhi	
Hussain	Martin	
Illmann-Walker	McCracken	
Jeavons	Murray	
Jones	Perry	
Jukes	Rochelle	
Lane	D. Shires	
Nawaz	Smith	
Nazir	Wilson	
Phillips		
Robertson		
Russell		
Sarohi		
Underhill		
Wade		
Westley		
Whyte		
Worrall		
Young		

and it was:

Resolved

- (1) That Option 1 be adopted for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to commence on 1 April 2015 (to fully disregard war disablement and war widows pensions).
- (2) That a small cash-limited discretionary scheme be introduced to assist the most vulnerable in exceptional circumstances.
- (3) That any annual up rating notified by the Department for Work and Pensions in line with the Housing Benefit regulations and Council tax reduction scheme, be adopted.
- (4) That the scheme be adopted for future years (inclusive of (1) and (2) above) until such time as the Council considers a change to the scheme is necessary.

(2) **Council tax empty property discounts 2015/16**

The report to Cabinet on 17th December 2014 was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor D. Coughlan and duly seconded:

That with regard to the Council tax empty property discounts 2015/16 the following be adopted as set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report:

- (1) Unoccupied and unfurnished properties – Option 2
- (2) Unoccupied properties which require major repair work or are undergoing structural alterations – Option 1.

Amendment moved by Councillor Craddock and seconded by Councillor E. Hazell:

That with regard to the Council tax empty property discounts for 2015/16, the proposal for the option of 7 days as the period of discount for unoccupied and unfurnished properties be amended to 2 months.

(Chief Finance Officer advice: The 2015/16 draft budget proposal assumes the 7 day option. This amendment would reduce the funding available to finance the draft budget by approximately £542,000 should this amendment be carried. This will necessitate a revision to the draft budget that either reduces services by the corresponding amount, or increase Council tax.)

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost – 21 members voting in favour and 32 against.

The motion was put to the vote and declared carried – 37 members voting in favour and 20 against and it was:

Resolved

That with regard to the Council tax empty property discounts 2015/16 the following be adopted as set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report:

- (1) Unoccupied and unfurnished properties – Option 2
- (2) Unoccupied properties which require major repair work or are undergoing structural alterations – Option 1.

76. Recommendation of Personnel Committee –Pay policy 2015/16

The report to Personnel Committee on 3rd December 2014 was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor Chambers, seconded by Councillor S. Coughlan and:

Resolved

That the Pay Policy 2015/16 be approved.

77. **Amendment to the Constitution – Part 5 - Protocols**

A report was submitted.

It was **moved** by Councillor S. Coughlan and duly seconded:

- (1) That the proposed amendments to Protocol 14 – Visits by HM Government ministers and shadow ministers as set out in Appendix 1 to this report be approved.
- (2) That Protocol 16 - Use of resources by Councillors as set out in Appendix 2 to this report be approved and that personal assistants be appointed to support group leaders where that group comprises 10% of the entire membership of the Council which equates to 6 elected members (option 3).

Amendment moved by Councillor I. Shires and seconded by Councillor Barker:

That consideration of this item be deferred until the Annual Council meeting.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost.

The motion was put to the vote and declared carried and it was:

Resolved

- (1) That the proposed amendments to Protocol 14 – Visits by HM Government ministers and shadow ministers as set out in Appendix 1 to this report be approved.
- (2) That Protocol 16 - Use of resources by Councillors as set out in Appendix 2 to this report be approved and that personal assistants be appointed to support group leaders where that group comprises 10% of the entire membership of the Council which equates to 6 elected members (option 3).

At this point in the meeting, the Council sat as charitable trustees. When considering the following item (Barr Beacon Trust) Council procedure rules did not apply.

78. **Barr Beacon Trust Management Committee**

A report was submitted.

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

Resolved

That the membership of the Barr Beacon Trust Management Committee be extended to include the Councillors for the Aldridge Central and South Ward and that the Terms of Reference of the Management Committee be amended accordingly.

79. Portfolio holder briefings

(a) Leader of the Council

Councillor S Coughlan, Leader of the Council gave a presentation.

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

(b) Environment and transport

Councillor Jeavons, Portfolio holder for Environment and transport gave a presentation.

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

80. Notice of motion – Devolution

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

(1) Council notes:

- (a)** The strong and enthusiastic participation shown by the people of Scotland in a remarkable democratic process leading to the Referendum on 18 September.
- (b)** The resulting increased discussion on the devolution of powers from central government in Westminster and Whitehall.

(2) Council believes:

- (i)** That power should be devolved to the people in all parts of the United Kingdom.
- (ii)** That England is currently ruled by an over-centralised state that fails to reflect localities and regions.

- (iii) That concentrating more power to English MPs in Westminster is not the answer for English devolution and that passing power down to local areas of England is essential.

(3) Council therefore calls for:

Walsall MPs, the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet to lobby for urgent devolution of power, including tax raising and spending, from central government to the regions, counties, boroughs and districts and cities of England.

And that such lobbying should emphasise:

- That the devolution of powers and finance to English Councils be carried out in ways that enhance and strengthen local democratic bodies. This must include agreement that it shall be for local people and communities to decide their form of democratic leadership without having a specific model imposed (for example directly elected Mayors) in return for more powers.
- A recognition that English devolution must include both large cities and county areas, as the many Councils not within city regions must also gain greater powers and finance in order to build successful and prosperous futures.”

Amendment moved by Councillor S. Coughlan and seconded by Councillor Nazir:

That the notice of motion be amended as follows:

(a) Insert the following as paragraph (1) (c):

- (c) the agreement between the Black Country Joint Committee and Birmingham City Council and the discussions taking place with other councils in the West Midlands

(b) Insert the following as paragraph (2) (iv):

- (iv) That any Model of devolution that includes Walsall should deliver real benefits for the neighbourhoods, Communities and Towns that make up our Borough

(c) Delete the final bullet point in paragraph (3) and insert the following:

- **A Combined Authority has to deliver more.** It has to deliver investment, jobs, homes and regeneration in communities’ right across the Black Country and the whole metropolitan area. We want to secure more resources than we currently access and have the ability to choose to spend them where they are most needed. We must address

inequalities and make sure that everyone benefits from the opportunities we create

- **Our great industrial history now presents challenges for the next phase of growth.** We have sites that are contaminated and littered with mineshafts which need substantial financial support to deliver their redevelopment for jobs and for housing. Government can assist the CA by devolving the funds that can address this legacy once and for all and deliver jobs and homes where they would be wholeheartedly welcomed.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared carried.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and declared carried and it was:

Resolved

(1) Council notes:

- (a) The strong and enthusiastic participation shown by the people of Scotland in a remarkable democratic process leading to the Referendum on 18 September.
- (b) The resulting increased discussion on the devolution of powers from central government in Westminster and Whitehall.
- (c) the agreement between the Black Country Joint Committee and Birmingham City Council and the discussions taking place with other councils in the West Midlands.

(2) Council believes:

- (i) That power should be devolved to the people in all parts of the United Kingdom.
- (ii) That England is currently ruled by an over-centralised state that fails to reflect localities and regions.
- (iii) That concentrating more power to English MPs in Westminster is not the answer for English devolution and that passing power down to local areas of England is essential.
- (iv) That any Model of devolution that includes Walsall should deliver real benefits for the neighbourhoods, Communities and Towns that make up our Borough

(3) Council therefore calls for:

Walsall MPs, the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet to lobby for urgent devolution of power, including tax raising and spending, from central government to the regions, counties, boroughs and districts and cities of England.

And that such lobbying should emphasise:

- That the devolution of powers and finance to English Councils be carried out in ways that enhance and strengthen local democratic bodies. This must include agreement that it shall be for local people and communities to decide their form of democratic leadership without having a specific model imposed (for example directly elected Mayors) in return for more powers.
- A Combined Authority has to deliver more. It has to deliver investment, jobs, homes and regeneration in communities' right across the Black Country and the whole metropolitan area. We want to secure more resources than we currently access and have the ability to choose to spend them where they are most needed. We must address inequalities and make sure that everyone benefits from the opportunities we create
- Our great industrial history now presents challenges for the next phase of growth. We have sites that are contaminated and littered with mineshafts which need substantial financial support to deliver their redevelopment for jobs and for housing. Government can assist the CA by devolving the funds that can address this legacy once and for all and deliver jobs and homes where they would be wholeheartedly welcomed.

81. **Notice of motion – Former Willenhall Gas Works**

The notice of motion was withdrawn.

82. **Notice of motion – “Tax dodging”**

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

(1) This Council notes:

- It is estimated that the UK Treasury loses as much as £12 billion to tax dodging by multinational companies every year. Developing countries lose three times more to tax dodging than they receive in aid each year – enough to give a basic education to the 57 million children currently missing out.
- The UK has a particular responsibility to end tax dodging, as it is responsible for 1 in 5 of the world's tax havens in the British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

- The use of tax havens by UK companies is rife, with 98 of the FTSE 100 companies routinely using tax havens.
- Large multinational companies pay as little as 5% in corporate taxes globally, while smaller businesses pay up to 30%.
- Those £12 billion in losses, had they been collected, would have funded all the cuts to local government since 2010 and still have left £4 billion for investment in vital public services and Walsall Council would not have had to make £74 million of cuts.

(2) This Council believes:

- As a local authority we have a duty to provide the best possible public services.
- Our ability to provide quality local services would be significantly enhanced by the increased revenues from the government tackling tax dodging.
- All who benefit from public spending should contribute their fair share.
- The UK must take a lead role in creating a fairer tax system and combating tax dodging.

(3) This Council resolves:

To support the campaign for tax justice, supporting the motion:

“While many ordinary people face falling household income and rising costs of living, some multinational companies are avoiding billions of pounds of tax from a tax system that fails to make them pay their fair share. Local governments in developing countries and the UK alike would benefit from a fairer tax system where multinational companies pay their fair share, enabling authorities around the world to provide quality public services. The UK government must listen to the strength of public feeling and act to end the injustice of tax dodging by large multinational companies, in developing countries and the UK.”

Amendment moved by Councillor I. Shires and seconded by Councillor Barker:

That the fifth bullet point in paragraph (1) be deleted and the following inserted:

This Council notes more work needs to be done to recognise that the current coalition government has already taken action to reduce tax dodging which has resulted in an extra £10 million a year being collected than under the previous labour government.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost.

The motion was put to the vote and declared carried and it was:

Resolved

(1) This Council notes:

- It is estimated that the UK Treasury loses as much as £12 billion to tax dodging by multinational companies every year. Developing countries lose three times more to tax dodging than they receive in aid each year – enough to give a basic education to the 57 million children currently missing out.
- The UK has a particular responsibility to end tax dodging, as it is responsible for 1 in 5 of the world's tax havens in the British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.
- The use of tax havens by UK companies is rife, with 98 of the FTSE 100 companies routinely using tax havens.
- Large multinational companies pay as little as 5% in corporate taxes globally, while smaller businesses pay up to 30%.
- Those £12 billion in losses, had they been collected, would have funded all the cuts to local government since 2010 and still have left £4 billion for investment in vital public services and Walsall Council would not have had to make £74 million of cuts.

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fair share, enabling authorities around the world to provide quality public services. The UK government must listen to the strength of public feeling and act to end the injustice of tax dodging by large multinational companies, in developing countries and the UK.”

The meeting terminated at 11.07 p.m.

Mayor:

Date: