



# Walsall Council

Minutes of the **MEETING** of the Council of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough held on **Monday 13th January 2014 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House.

## Present

### Councillor M. Nazir (Mayor) in the Chair

#### Councillor P.E. Smith (Deputy Mayor)

“ Z. Ali  
“ A.J.A. Andrew  
“ D.A. Anson  
“ M. Arif  
“ I. Azam  
“ D.J. Barker  
“ O.D. Bennett  
“ M.A. Bird  
“ C. Bott  
“ P. Bott  
“ R. Burley  
“ 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  
“ M. D. Flower  
“ A.D. Harris  
“ L.A. Harrison  
“ E.F. Hughes  
“ K. Hussain

#### Councillor G. Illmann-Walker

“ D. James  
“ L.D. Jeavons  
“ T.J. Jukes  
“ P. Lane  
“ M. Longhi  
“ Mrs. B.V. McCracken  
“ J. Murray  
“ T.S. Oliver  
“ G. Perry  
“ K. Phillips  
“ L.J. Rattigan  
“ J. Rochelle  
“ E.B. Russell  
“ H.S. Sarohi  
“ K. Sears  
“ Mrs. D.A. Shires  
“ I. Shires  
“ R.M. Thomas  
“ C.D.D. Towe  
“ A. Underhill  
“ D.J. Turner  
“ S. Wade  
“ V. Whyte  
“ T.S. Wilson  
“ R.V. Worrall  
“ A. Young

78. **Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors R. Andrew, Martin, Westley and Woodruff.

79. **Minutes**

**Resolved** (Councillor Arif voting against)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2013 copies having been sent to each member of the Council, be approved as a correct record and signed.

80. **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no items to be considered in private session.

82. **Mayor's announcements**

(1) **Death of former Councillor D.B. Roddy**

The Mayor referred to the recent death of former Councillor Derek Roddy and paid tribute to his services to the town over a period of many years. Councillors Smith, Oliver and Bird also paid tribute to Mr. Roddy, following which it was **moved** by the Mayor, duly seconded and:

**Resolved**

That this Council expresses its regret at the death of Mr. D.B. Roddy a member of Walsall District Council in 1973/74 and Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council in 1974/75 and from 1988 to 1992 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.

(2) **Visit to Pakistan – 11th to 20th February 2014**

The Mayor informed members that his visit to Pakistan on the above-mentioned dates would be to hospitals, universities and schools in conjunction with the Midlands International Aid Trust and the Oak Tree Trust and that the visit would be at no cost to the Council or to the charities concerned.

### **83. Petitions**

The following petitions were submitted:

- (1) Councillor Azam – Improving road safety and pedestrian crossings in Birchills.
- (2) Councillor Burley – Queen Elizabeth Avenue Bentley shopping area – request for CCTV surveillance.
- (3) Councillor Phillips – Provision of parking at site of former Lower Farm Neighbourhood Office.
- (4) Councillor Ditta:
  - (a) Resurfacing of Lord Street, Whitmore Street and Bescot Crescent.
  - (b) Restructuring of Coroner Service – request for provision of Coroner and Deputy Coroner based permanently in Walsall.

### **84. Questions from members of the Council**

#### **(1) Ring and ride services**

Councillor James asked the following question of Councillor Bird:

“How do you prevent social isolation of elderly people or improve their health and wellbeing by recommending cutting or closing Ride and Ride services Councillor Bird?”

Councillor Bird replied that there very few people whose needs were so high that they were eligible for social care at home or well enough or independent enough to travel on public transport. Many people receiving social care at home were receiving a direct payment so that they paid for their services directly. It was important for older people to retain as much independence as possible so that they did not need support from social care. This included financial independence as well as health and wellbeing so they needed to use the most cost effective travel arrangements available to them. Ring and Ride received a grant from Centro who decided how the money was spent. Centro received a precept from the Council and it was for them to decide how that money was spent.

Councillor Bird said that West Midlands Special Needs Transport (WMSNT) – Ring and Ride was a charity operating under the 1985 Transport Act. In 2010/11 around 71% of West Midlands Special Needs Transport funding came from an Integrated Transport Authority grant of £12,115,440. From 1st April 2011 a charge of 60p per trip was charged to users to cover a reduction in the ITA grant. The grant was reduced to £10.5 million per year in line with a reduction in the levy paid to the ITA from the seven metropolitan authorities. There were currently 23,000 active users of this service, making 1.37 million journeys, with a cost per trip of £7.66 to the operator. User statistics were available for each of

the metropolitan districts, but not for individual wards. In 2012/13 there were 2,912 registered users in the borough of Walsall (compared to 24,521 West Midlands registered users).

This Council had no control over the WMSNT budget. The Integrated Transport Authority's budget consultation provided various scenarios to reduce the £10.5 million grant which resulted in a reduction of service and increase in cost at varying rates dependent on the grant reduction. Another option put forward by the ITA was to remove the grant completely and allow each district to negotiate separately for this service provision.

Councillor James asked the following supplementary question:

“Will you support sustaining maintenance of this service or recommend closure?”

Councillor Bird replied that there had been no public consultation with this Council at the present time.

## **(2) Site of Lower Farm Neighbourhood Office**

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

“October 2011 this Council demolished the Neighbourhood Office at Lower Farm, they lead the shop keepers and residents to believe a car park would be provided on the site. October 2011 I received a letter explaining a bund would be put around the site until funding became available. Can the cabinet member responsible tell me and the general public what steps have been taken to get the funding in place and see this now eye sore cleared up?”

Councillor Andrew replied that approximately 3 years ago, whg approached the Council with a proposal to construct a car park on the site of the former Bloxwich North Neighbourhood Office at Bakewell Close to serve both the Council owned shops at Buxton Road and the near-by school.

He said that funding was to come from whg from a budget they had for minor local infrastructure works. They produced some provisional designs. However, whg's budget was cut before the matter moved any further forward.

Councillor Phillips asked the following supplementary question:

“Can you tell me what steps have been taken by officers to obtain funding as I have been advised that no funds are available?”

Councillor Andrew replied that the process had been to obtain funds from whg but they had been unable to provide this money.

### **(3) 20 mph speed limits**

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

“A number of other local authorities have introduced the 20 mph speed limit in the busiest areas. It was proposed by the late Councillor Tom Ansell that same would be introduced in Walsall in 2013. However nothing more has been done in this regard although the 20 mph limit needs to be introduced in some areas in Walsall especially in parts of the Palfrey ward?

Councillor Andrew replied that a consultation exercise undertaken across a number of residential estates within Walsall had now been completed and speed limits would be implemented over the next few months. He went on to say that he had received no requests from Councillor Ditta concerning the areas mentioned in his question but that these wards would be included in the next phase of consultation.

Councillor Ditta asked the following supplementary question:

There have been a number serious accidents in the last few years in the Palfrey and Delves area. The main roads being Wednesbury Road and Broadway West. Since the implementation of the red route people were driving at higher speed also Walstead Road by the school, Weston Street, Bell Lane and West Bromwich Road, could Councillor Andrew comment on the situation.

Councillor Andrew replied and referred to his previous answer regarding future consultation.

### **(4) Resurfacing in Palfrey**

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

“Many roads in the Palfrey ward are in a bad condition and require resurfacing. In particular Lord Street between Milton Street and Broadway West, Whitmore Street, Bescot Crescent between Wednesbury Road and Broadway West. Also most of the pavements in Palfrey ward are in need of resurfacing. We were told that this resurfacing would take place in the 2012-13 programme, however 2013 is at an end but unfortunately this resurfacing has not taken place?”

Councillor Andrew confirmed that planned maintenance work to Lord Street was included in the approved highway maintenance programme for 2012/13 and was scheduled for road surfacing in the next financial year 2014/15. Preventative treatments and maintenance works to footways within Palfrey were included in the 2012/15 programme and they would be prioritised along with the remaining schemes, subject to finances and road access availability for 2014/15. There were still a few months remaining in this financial year for work to be completed.

Councillor Ditta asked the following supplementary question:

The roads and pavements in Palfrey ward are in a very poor condition in comparison to other areas in Walsall, why then has Palfrey been neglected for so many years when it comes to resurfacing and other projects?

Councillor Andrew replied that having specific regard to the Palfrey ward he confirmed that since 2006 total expenditure on planned highway maintenance within the area amounted to £1.2 million where some 28% of the total road length in the area had received treatment.

**(5) Coroner service**

This question was withdrawn by Councillor Ditta.

**85. Mayoralty 2014/15**

It was **moved** by Councillor P. Bott, seconded by Councillor Bird and:

**Resolved**

That Councillor P.E. Smith be nominated as Mayor of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council for the municipal year 2014/2015.

It was **moved** by Councillor Oliver, seconded by Councillor Phillips and:

**Resolved**

That Councillor A. Underhill be nominated as Deputy Mayor of the Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council for the municipal year 2014/2015.

**86. Recommendations of Cabinet**

**(1) West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority – new governance arrangements**

The report to Cabinet on 11th December 2013 was submitted.

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

**Resolved**

That the amended terms of reference for the West Midlands Joint Committee as set out in the appendix to this report be agreed.

(2) **Children and Young People's Plan 2013 – 2016**

The report to Cabinet on 11th December 2013 was submitted.

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

**Resolved**

That the Children and Young People's Plan 2013 – 2016 set out in Appendix 1 to the report be adopted.

(3) **Localised Council tax reduction scheme 2014/15**

The report to Cabinet on 11th December 2013 was submitted.

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

**Resolved**

- (1) That Option 4 be adopted for the Council tax reduction scheme to commence 1 April 2014 with the necessary amendments for the full disregard of all war disablement and war widows pensions.
- (2) 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 for pensioners, be adopted.
- (3) That for future years the preferred scheme, (1) and (2) above, be continued until such time as the Council considers changes are necessary.

87. **Recommendations of Audit Committee**

(1) **Annual report on Treasury Management 2012/13**

The report to Audit Committee on 25th September 2013 was submitted.

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

**Resolved**

That the Treasury Management annual report be approved.

(2) **Annual review of Treasury Management policy statement and practices and mid-year position statement 2013/14**

The report to Audit Committee on 11th November 2013 was submitted.

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

**Resolved**

- (1) That the Treasury Management policy statement and practices referred to in Appendix A of the report be approved.
- (2) That the mid-year position statement for treasury management activities 2013/14 and prudential indicators in Appendix B of the report be approved.

**88. Recommendation of Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Review of polling districts and polling places 2013/14**

The report to Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 28 November 2013 was submitted.

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

**Resolved**

That the proposed changes to polling districts and polling places be approved.

**89. Portfolio holder briefings**

**(a) 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.

**(b) Public protection**

Councillor Ali, portfolio holder for public protection gave a presentation.

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

**90. Notice of motion – Payday loans**

A report was submitted.

The following motion, notice of which had been duly given was **moved** by Councillor Jeavons and duly seconded:



That this Council:

- (i) notes that payday lenders are trapping millions of people in spirals of debt.
- (ii) believes that the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)'s new proposals for regulating payday lenders are a step in the right direction, but do not go far enough.
- (iii) further believes:
  - (a) that the FCA's proposals would not prevent payday lenders from dripfeeding new loans to people who already have payday debts and are struggling to pay them back.
  - (b) that the FCA's proposals would not prevent people from being hit with escalating penalty fees
  - (c) that the FCA's proposals would not stop payday lenders from raiding people's bank accounts without telling them
- (iv) welcomes that some of Britain's biggest debt, consumer and anti-poverty organisations – including Which?, Citizens Advice, StepChange Debt Charity, Church Action on Poverty and the Centre for Responsible Credit – and MPs from every Party represented at Westminster have come together to support the 'Charter to Stop the Payday Loan Rip-Off'.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- (i) endorse the Charter to Stop the Payday Loan Rip-Off which calls on the FCA to introduce tougher regulation of payday lenders.
- (ii) encourage residents of [local authority] to support the Charter by signing the online petition at <http://www.change.org/paydayloancharter>.
- (iii) continues to promote and further support the development of local credit unions and more affordable lending.
- (iv) work with partners on campaigns against increasing levels of personal debt.
- (v) to send a copy of this motion to Martin Wheatley, Chief Executive of the Financial Conduct Authority and to all local Members of Parliament.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried and it was:

### **Resolved**

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- (i) notes that payday lenders are trapping millions of people in spirals of debt.
- (ii) believes that the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)'s new proposals for regulating payday lenders are a step in the right direction, but do not go far enough.
- (iii) further believes:
  - (a) that the FCA's proposals would not prevent payday lenders from dripfeeding new loans to people who already have payday debts and are struggling to pay them back.
  - (b) that the FCA's proposals would not prevent people from being hit with escalating penalty fees
  - (c) that the FCA's proposals would not stop payday lenders from raiding people's bank accounts without telling them
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- (iii) continues to promote and further support the development of local credit unions and more affordable lending.
- (iv) work with partners on campaigns against increasing levels of personal debt.
- (v) to send a copy of this motion to Martin Wheatley, Chief Executive of the Financial Conduct Authority and to all local Members of Parliament.

At this point in the meeting it was **moved** by Councillor Bird, duly seconded and:

### **Resolved**

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

#### 91. **Notice of motion – Rewiring public services**

A report was submitted.

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

Council notes that England is now widely recognised to be the country with the most centralised system of government in Europe. Council also notes that devolution has brought decisions about tax and spending, and the quality of public services, closer to voters in Scotland and Wales, while English voters have not gained comparably greater influence over decision-making that affects their taxes and services.

Council considers:

- that the likely scale of change in how public services are funded and provided makes it democratically unsustainable for those changes to be decided within the existing over-centralised model;
- that services need to be reformed and integrated across local agencies to enable them to prevent problems rather than picking up the pieces;
- that voters should be given back a meaningful say on a wide range of tax and spending decisions, through place-based budgetary arrangements, the abolition of the discredited Barnett formula and the reinstatement of fair financial distribution agreed among English councils, the recreation of a municipal bond market, and the certainty of multi-year funding settlements for the life of a Parliament;
- that central government should enable that local decision-making by joining up and reducing in size Whitehall departments in order to facilitate local place-based budgets, by reducing Ministers' powers to intervene in local decisions, and replacing bureaucratic tick-box inspection regimes with local service user champions; and
- that such a new more mature settlement between central and local government should be put beyond future revision by giving formal constitutional protection to local democracy; and

Council resolves

- to support the Local Government Association's Rewiring Public Services campaign, which embodies these objectives;
- to ask the borough's Members of Parliament to support the Rewiring Public Services campaign to improve local voters' influence over services, tax and spending; and
- to make the Council's position clear to the Secretary of State.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared carried and it was:

### **Resolved**

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- that such a new more mature settlement between central and local government should be put beyond future revision by giving formal constitutional protection to local democracy; and

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- to support the Local Government Association's Rewiring Public Services campaign, which embodies these objectives;

- to ask the borough's Members of Parliament to support the Rewiring Public Services campaign to improve local voters' influence over services, tax and spending; and
- to make the Council's position clear to the Secretary of State.

The meeting terminated at 9.10 p.m.

Mayor:

Date: