



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 the NINETEENTH day of APRIL, 2010 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Dated this 9th day of April, 2010.

Yours sincerely,

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 22nd February, 2010.
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 – Proffitt Street flats (Councillor Andrew)

Given that on 4 February 2010, a written answer by the Minister of State (West Midlands), Regional Affairs, in the House of Commons revealed that with regard to the local authorities with the highest proportion of social rented dwellings that are vacant for six months or more, Walsall is rated the second highest in the country with a figure of 831 vacant properties (3.4% of social dwelling stock), can the portfolio holder tell me, this Council and the public:

- (a) how many years and months has the block of flats 79 to 101 Proffitt Street, Walsall been empty and why and
- (b) how many more years and months is the block of flats likely to remain an empty, boarded up eyesore in this residential area?

(2) Councillor Robertson – European funding (Councillor Towe)

What is the up-to-date loss to this Council and the Council tax payers of Walsall of the decommitment level of European Regional Development Grant and European Social Funds?

(3) Councillor Robertson – Telecommunication services (Councillor Towe)

What was the cost to the Council in the last financial year of telecommunication services broken down into (a) blackberries with call costs, (b) other mobile phones and call costs and (c) landline telephone costs including line rentals and the internal phone network and what level of redundant telephone lines are still in operation?

(4) Councillor Robertson – Walsall Library and Museum (Councillor Harris)

What is the budgeted costs for the refurbishment of the central Walsall library and museum with details of any cost overruns, changes in contract or investigations into the procuring process?

(5) Councillor Smith – Spending cuts (Councillor Towe)

“Would the appropriate Portfolio holder/Cabinet member tell me, this Council and the public whether he accepts that;

- (a) morale amongst the staff employed by Walsall MBC is at an all time low, no doubt exacerbated by scaremongering statements that suggest that up to 50% of the Council's workforce (approximately 5000 workers) could lose their jobs depending upon the severity of cuts made by the next Government and
- (b) that one of the motives for such speculation is to pave the way for pay cuts in real terms for local authority employees over the next few years by scaring employees into believing that the choice is pay cuts or job losses?
- (c) that a future Government could drastically minimise or even possibly avoid spending cuts to local authorities, including Walsall MBC if, instead, it made other choices such as; deciding to put greater effort into collecting the estimated £125 billions of tax avoided and evaded mainly by the very wealthy sections of our society, deciding to scrap the replacement Trident nuclear submarine programme and save approximately £97 billion over the next 25 years and deciding to pull British troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan that has so far cost the British taxpayers £18 billion as well as the priceless loss of life?"

(6) Councillor Smith – New Deal for Communities – new Pavilion in Leamore Park (Councillor Andrew)

"As the Council is the accountable body for New Deal for Communities, could the appropriate Portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public

- (a) Why it is that New Deal for Communities has not honoured its earlier commitment to build a new Pavilion in Leamore Park for which plans were drawn up and presented at public meetings some years ago and
- (b) what has since happened to the money allocated for this project, assuming that at the time, money was budgeted for it and finally
- (c) what assistance, if any, will now be given to helping the Blakenall & Leamore Senior Citizens Club to remain with a base in the Park following the closure and demolition of the Council owned old Pavilion that they had used since 1974?"

(7) Councillor Smith – New Deal for Communities – Communications budget (Councillor Andrew)

"As the Council is the accountable body for New Deal for Communities, could the appropriate Portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public;

- (a) What was New Deal's "Communications" budget for each of the last 5 financial years (2009/10, 2008/9, 2007/8, 2006/7, 2005/6)

- (b) What is New Deal's "Communications" budget for 2010/11 and finally
- (c) How much money does the cumulative amount spent by New Deal on "communications" in the above years (including the current year) equate to "per household in the New Deal's footprint area?"

(8) Councillor Smith – Senior Citizens Clubs and Sons of Rest Clubs (Councillor McCracken)

Can the Portfolio holder inform me, this Council and the public;

- (a) How many Senior Citizens Clubs and Sons of Rest Clubs there are in the Borough that are financially supported by Walsall Council's Social Care & Inclusion department, mainly with regard to premises and running costs and
- (b) which Senior Citizens Clubs and Sons of Rest Clubs have been informed that future financial support from Social, Care and Inclusion is no longer forthcoming and
- (c) whether it is the Council's intention to withdraw financial support from all of these clubs at the same time or rather to pick them off one by one if and when the time comes to condemn the buildings being used as not fit for purpose and
- d) whether you think it fair and equitable for a situation to prevail whereby some Clubs in certain parts of the Borough will continue to receive support with running costs whilst others, whose Council-owned premises have been allowed to deteriorate to a state of being "not fit for purpose" will not receive such similar support?

8. To confirm the following recommendations of the **Cabinet**;

(a) Early years strategy

That the Early Years Strategy as set out in Appendix A of the report, be approved.

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

(b) Connecting to Opportunities Fund

That approval be given to the Council acting as the accountable body for the Connecting to Opportunities Fund.

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

9. To confirm the following recommendation of the **Development Control Committee**:

That the name of the Development Control Committee be changed to "Planning Committee" from its meeting on 27th May 2010.

10. **State of Walsall debate.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

11. **Local Government Act, 1972 – attendance at meetings.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

At this point the Council to consider the following item as charitable trustees –
When the Council is acting in this capacity, Council procedure rules do not apply. A corporate trustee is a corporation which has been appointed to act as a trustee of the charity. Trustees should bear in mind that when they are dealing with the business of the charity, their overriding duty is to act in the best interests of that charity.

12. **Annual report of Barr Beacon Trust Management Committee.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

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

This Council congratulates all those who have played a part in bringing about the policy and its implementation this year which for the first time, now extends the "Brown Bin" Gardening Recycling Scheme to every household in the Borough with a garden. This will not only be welcomed by thousands more households, now able to be included in the scheme but will also add to Walsall's recycling success story to date."

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

13. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillors P. Hughes and I. Shires**:

Council notes with disappointment with the Supreme Court ruling which sees the end of the Office of Fair Trading challenge on bank charges,

This Council does not believe that bank charges are fair and proportionate.

Fairness cuts through party politics and this Council supports the Early Day Motion headed by Rt. Hon. Vince Cable MP which states “That this House notes the judgement of the Supreme Court that banks and building societies were legally entitled to charge penalty fees for unauthorised overdrafts; further notes that the Supreme Court conclusion was not a judgement on the fairness of such charges; condemns the disproportionate penalty charges levied on customers by banks and building societies; welcomes the Office of Fair Trading assessment that such charges are unfair; urges the Office of Fair Trading to continue to pursue this issue using the other powers available to it; calls on the British Bankers’ Association to amend the Banking Code to make explicit the industry’s principles on service charges; further calls on the Government to review existing pricing structures; and further calls on banks and building societies to voluntarily refund unfair and disproportionate penalty charges.”

This Council formally recognises the impact of unfair bank charges on some of the most vulnerable and financially excluded residents.

14. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillors Robertson, Phillips, Barton and Young**:

This Council notes and shares the concerns raised by local residents as to the proposed closure of The Surgery, Abbey Square on the Mossley estate, Bloxwich, following GP retirements. We therefore call on NHS Walsall to extend the current interim arrangements in order to allow full consultation and to explore options for continuing to provide primary care within the local Mossley community.

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