



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 21ST day of SEPTEMBER, 2015 at 6.00 p.m.** at the Council House, Walsall.

Dated this 11th day of September, 2015.

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 13th July 2015.
4. Declarations of interest.
5. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**
To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.
6. Mayor's announcements.
7. To receive any petitions.

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

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

(b) From members of the Council

(1) **Councillor D. Coughlan – Obesity**

“Can you explain to this Council how you are tackling obesity in the borough, what initiatives there are, especially to combat childhood obesity, and the cost to this Council?”

(2) **Councillor Worrall – Lichfield and Hatherton canals**

“Given the exceptionally welcome news that the Trust have just completed the purchase and clearance of 1 km of decades long overgrown canal bed between The Boat Inn on the A461 at Summerhill near Muckley Corner, and the aqueduct over the M6 Toll, and expect to have built a disabled friendly canal trail from Summerhill over the aqueduct through to Catshill junction at Brownhills by year’s end, would the cabinet member advise what steps the Council have taken since the notice of motion in September 2009 and Cabinet’s decision in January 2010, to support the Trust in its admirable endeavours, and what new positive steps might be taken in light of the most recent developments which bring the prospect of full restoration between Lichfield and Walsall suddenly much closer?”

(Note: In submitting his question Councillor Worrall also included the following background information:

At its meeting of 14 September 2009, Council unanimously approved a notice of motion, moved by Councillor Wilkes, resolving that:

“This Council welcomes the news that the Lichfield and Hatherton Canals Restoration Trust now has a phased, costed programme which will lead to the restoration of the Borough's waterway links to the northern canal network by relinking the canal at Brownhills Ogley Junction with Huddlesford Junction at Lichfield.

It notes in particular:

- (a) the significant regeneration benefits this will bring to Brownhills as a gateway to the Borough, and to the whole of Walsall Borough and
- (b) the recent launch of a Phase One funding appeal headed up by the Trust's high profile President, David Suchet.

The Council expresses its full support for the project to restore the eight miles of canal in question, and asks that officers enter into discussion with the officers of the LHCRT with a view to reporting to

Cabinet at an early date setting out ways in which the Council can provide meaningful support to the efforts of the Trust in bringing this major project to fruition."

At Cabinet on 13 January 2010, it was agreed, inter alia, to authorise officers to pursue the formation of an officer steering group with relevant organisations, including neighbouring local authorities (Lichfield, Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire District Councils), Staffordshire County Council, British Waterways and LHCRT, and further that the role of the steering group would be to advise the LHCRT on specific planning and strategic issues relating to the restoration of the Lichfield and Hatherton Canal links.)

(3) Councillor Robertson – Public Health grant

"Will the Cabinet member join in condemning the announcement by Central Government of a cut to Walsall in the Public Health grant of a yet unconfirmed amount of 6.2%. Do you agree that this grant, when taking into consideration the amount received by our immediate neighbouring authorities which is already showing a comparative shortfall of around £1m with Walsall currently receiving the least public health funding allocation per head of the population within its group of statistical neighbours at £58 per head as compared to an average of £73.6 per head and that if this 6.2% cut is implemented will leave us £1.8M short of a fair allocation? In addition will you also join us in condemning the £1.6M shortfall in comparison with our neighbouring authorities of the future allocation of funding to cover the commissioning of health visitors who come into the responsibility of Public Health in October 2015."

(4) Councillor Young – living wage

I am sure you welcome the introduction of an exemplar Walsall Council in introducing under the previous labour administration to pay a living wage to our employees. Will you confirm that this council makes every effort to check that all our contractors also comply to paying the living wage and of course complying with the legal requirement to ensure all are paid the minimum wage and what mechanism is in place to check on compliance?

(5) Councillor Robertson – Healthier lifestyles

"Would the Cabinet holder agree that the recent published evidence shows that the over consumption of sugar and salt is a major factor affecting the current and future health of our population and that over 70% of our residents here in Walsall do not have a healthy weight or life style with many of our young people showing early signs of type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease. Do you join with me in also recognising the need for support to those of our residents on more limited income to encourage them to adopt a healthier lifestyle despite serious economic pressures.

Will you also agree that this Council must adopt measures to ensure that every avenue under our direct influence is used to encourage and support our residents young and old, to adopt a healthier life style and that we must be an exemplar employer throughout the council ensuring good practice in the workplace including improved access to healthy food and drink. We you also join us in supporting initiatives and raising of awareness in other outlets to ensure that they follow the same principles of improving access to healthy food and drink.”

(6) **Councillor D. Coughlan – Exempt accommodation**

“When I had the responsibility for Money Home Job, I fully supported a review of exempt accommodation that attracted a lot of adverse publicity from certain providers and some criticism from certain members of this Council. Can you tell this Council what providers have been reviewed to date and the savings made so far? Are you also able to reassure this Council that the tenants who were complaining of the lack of support from certain providers are now being supported where needed?”

(7) **Councillor Robertson – Ryecroft Centre**

“What has the total cost to this Council been so far in establishing the Ryecroft centre in New Forest Road Blakenall over the past 3 years and what is the estimated cost of completing the refurbishment of the centre projected over the next 3 years? Can I have the updated business case for the viability of the centre and a breakdown of the accounts and will you agree to have these accounts independently audited?”

9. To confirm the following recommendation of **Cabinet:**

Council purpose and priorities

That the high level purpose and priorities set out in the report be adopted, pending completion and approval of the full Corporate Plan alongside the budget setting process.

(Note: Report to Cabinet on 9th September 2015 reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.)

10. To confirm the following recommendation of the **Audit Committee**:

Annual Treasury Management report 2014/15

That the Treasury Management annual report 2014/15 (Appendix A of the report) be approved.

(Note: Report to Audit Committee on 1st September 2015 reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.)

11. **Annual report of Audit Committee 2014/15.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

12. **Annual Scrutiny report 2014/15.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

13. **Report of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education September 2013 to September 2014.** Report reproduced in the reports booklet for this meeting.

14. **Portfolio holder briefings.** To receive 5 minute presentations from the following portfolio holders:

- Economy, infrastructure and development (Councillor Andrew)
- Clean and green (Councillor Harrison)

(Note: A member of the Council may ask the portfolio holder any question and another associate question without notice upon each report. Questioning by members is limited to 10 minutes for each report presented.)

15. **Membership of Committees:**

- (a) To report to the resignation of Councillor Smith as a member of the following Committees:

Audit Committee
Health and Wellbeing Board
Standards Committee
Scrutiny Overview Committee
Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny
Committee (Chairman)
Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

(Note: The above vacancies to be filled by an independent member.)

- (b) To appoint a Chairman of the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the current municipal year.

(Note: For information the membership of the Committee comprises:
Councillors E. Hazell (Vice-Chair), Burley, Ditta, Follows, Jukes, Kudhail, Perry, D. Shires, Wade and Wilson.)

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

(1) This Council notes:

- The new Government's proposal to extend the Right to Buy to Housing Association tenants, to be paid for by selling off the most expensive Council housing stock;
- With alarm the shortage of affordable rented homes in Walsall with 3,831 on waiting lists and is very concerned that the current government plans risk making matters far worse;
- The recent LGA "First 100 Days" campaign which highlighted there are 1.7 million households on waiting lists for affordable housing across England and that more than 3.4 million adults between 20 and 34 live with their parents;
- That a recent opinion poll showed that just 16% of the public believed that extending the Right to Buy to housing association tenants would be the most useful way of tackling the affordability crisis; the public's top choice was to help housing associations or Councils to build more affordable homes, selected by 46% of the public;
- The recent report from June 2015 which shows that there could be a funding gap of over £1 billion to pay for the scheme.

(2) Council opposes the forced sell off of Council housing to pay for this plan and is concerned that the Government also:

- Fails to address the situation for many local authorities which no longer have any housing stock to sell as they have transferred theirs to housing associations as is the case here in Walsall;
- Fails to address the situation in areas of high housing demand where there are often few suitable sites to build replacement social housing stock;
- Fails to recognise that this means housing associations will simply be trying to catch up with replacing homes rather than building affordable housing to give more people homes they need.

(3) Council notes that even the Conservative Mayor of London said he did not want to see Councils “deprived at a rapid rate of their housing stock” if more homes were not being built to replace them.

(4) Council recognises the desire by many to own their own homes, and suggests that proposals put forward by the Liberal Democrats over a “Rent to Own” model and Shared Ownership housing would represent a better way of reaching this goal.

(5) Council also notes that there are existing routes for housing association tenants to own their own properties – some Housing Association tenants already have the Right to Acquire.

(6) Council resolves:

- To work with other neighbouring authorities and housing associations to oppose the current government proposals;
- To write to Walsall’s 3 MPs, Wendy Morton MP (Conservative) Aldridge Brownhills, David Winnick MP (Labour) Walsall North and Valerie Vaz MP (Labour) Walsall South asking them to support the Council’s position; to speak up in Parliament for more social housing and not less and to push for a genuine “one for one” replacement but not at the cost of losing more social housing in the Borough.

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

17. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillors E. Hazell, D. Hazell and Craddock:**

(1) The Council notes:

- (a) The creation of a Combined Authority is being driven by the current Government, without the Government stating what powers will be devolved.
- (b) According to the Queen’s speech powers from local Government could be transferred to the Combined Authority. This is the opposite of devolution.
- (c) Councillors are democratically elected for a term of office and should not be making this kind of decision as it is irreversible.
- (d) A Combined Authority does not offer democracy to the people of Walsall and the West Midlands.

(2) Council opposes:

- (a) The EU led regionalisation drive to create Combined Authorities and the undemocratic method being used to implement them.

- (b) The centralisation of power and the reduction of local decision making.
- (c) The cost of setting up a Combined Authority and the ongoing costs associated with it.

(3) Council therefore calls for:

- (a) A referendum to be held on whether Walsall Council should be part of the proposed Combined Authority.
- (b) That all of the Walsall registered electorate should be given the opportunity to vote.
- (c) The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet authorise no further payments to the proposed cost of setting up the Combined Authority.
- (d) The Leader of the Council request that all Leaders of the proposed Combined Authority hold referendum in each area.

18. To consider the following motion, notice of which has been duly given by **Councillors D. Hazell, E. Hazell and Craddock**:

(1) The Council notes:

- (a) There have been a number of cases of taxis being stopped by Council officers, where disabled passengers and their wheelchairs have not been correctly strapped in or harnesses/restraints not being used.
- (b) The safety of disabled passengers and their wheelchairs should not be at a disadvantage.
- (c) The MOT manual (Section 5 – Seat Belts) does not currently require the straps and restraints for wheelchairs to be checked.
- (d) Walsall Council MOT check does not routinely check wheelchair straps and restraints.

(2) Council believes:

- (a) An additional requirement should be added to the MOT manual check as follows:
 - Additional to MOT manual. Vehicles designated wheelchair accessible must be equipped with appropriate belts for securing a wheelchair and seat belts for a wheelchair passenger.

- (b) An additional condition should be added to the MOT manual check as follows:
 - Additional to MOT manual. For vehicles designated wheelchair accessible wheelchair belts and seat belts for a wheelchair passenger must be checked for condition.
- (c) The method of checks, inspection and reason for rejection should be as stipulated in the 'MOT testing manual' of all other seat belts.
- (d) The safety of wheelchair users is as important as any other passenger.

(3) Council therefore calls for:

- (a) Walsall Licensing and Safety Committee to implement the additions to the MOT check.
- (b) The Leader of the Council and the Cabinet to lobby the central Government to incorporate these changes into the 'MOT testing manual'.

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