

Meeting of the Council

Minutes - 23 September 2015

Attendance

Mayor Cllr Ian Brookfield (Lab)
Deputy Mayor

Labour

Cllr Ian Angus
Cllr Harbans Bagri
Cllr Harman Banger
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Payal Bedi
Cllr Peter Bilson
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Ian Claymore
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Claire Darke
Cllr Bishan Dass
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Steve Evans

Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal
Cllr Val Gibson
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Keith Inston
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Andrew Johnson
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Welcome Koussoukama
Cllr Roger Lawrence
Cllr Linda Leach
Cllr Elias Mattu
Cllr Lorna McGregor
Cllr Lynne Moran

Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Judith Rowley
Cllr Sandra Samuels
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Bert Turner
Cllr Martin Waite
Cllr Daniel Warren

Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills
Cllr Patricia Patten
Cllr Arun Photay
Cllr Paul Singh

Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Andrew Wynne
Cllr Jonathan Yardley

Liberal Democrat

Cllr Richard Whitehouse

UKIP

Cllr Malcolm Gwinnett

Employees

Keith Ireland
Kevin O'Keefe
Mark Taylor
Tony Ivko
Tim Johnson
Shelley Jones
Alison Dennett

Managing Director
Director of Governance
Director of Finance
Service Director - Older People
Strategic Director - Place
Events and Marketing Officer
Interim Democratic Support Manager

The proceedings opened with Prayers

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Findlay, Councillor Mark Evans and Councillor Haynes

2 Declarations of interest

Councillors Reynolds and Bilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in item eight, the Black Country Growth Hub.

Alison Dennett, Interim Democratic Support Manager declared a pecuniary interest in Item 10, questions to Cabinet Members, relating to interim or agency staff.

3 Minutes of previous meeting

The Mayor proposed, Councillor Lawrence seconded and it was resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting on 15 July 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

4 Communications

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second

The Mayor reported Her Majesty the Queen became the longest reigning British monarch in history on September 9 and that he had attended a special service of Evensong at St Peter's Church at the request of Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of West Midlands. He thanked everyone who was able to attend stating it was a lovely service and very befitting of the occasion. The Mayor further reported Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of West Midlands had sent loyal greetings to Her Majesty on behalf of the City Council.

In addition to the church service, the Mayor hosted a tea party for 50 children at Bantock House on Saturday 12 September 2015.

On behalf of the people of Wolverhampton, the Mayor stated he would like to add congratulations to the many messages her Majesty will have already received on the special occasion.

Wolverhampton City Marathon

The Mayor reported the Eighteenth Carver Wolverhampton City Marathon was held on Sunday 6 September 2015 and reported that the event was a huge success featuring events for athletes of all ability, including; the City marathon, half marathon, Banks's 10k, Cousins 20k cycle ride, Callprint 3k walk and a childrens' run.

He reported since 1998 the Carver Marathon events have raised over £320,000 to help local charities and that this year proceeds would benefit; Samaritans Wolverhampton, Compton Hospice, Beacon Centre for the Blind and his own charity fund.

He stated on behalf of the Council, he would like to congratulate the organising committee, the sponsors, the many volunteers, the participants, spectators and everyone concerned in staging a very successful event.

Remembrance Services

The Mayor reported the Annual Festival of Remembrance would take place on Sunday, 1 November 2015, at 2pm in the Wulfrun Hall and that all proceeds from the event would benefit Mayoral charities.

The Mayor reported Remembrance Sunday was taking place on 8 November 2015 to which all councillors had been invited and gave details of the arrangements of the civic procession and the services at Drumhead and St Peter's Church and he requested that as many Councillors as possible support both of the two remembrance events in the City.

The Mayor congratulated Cllr Daniel Warren on his recent graduation from the University of Wolverhampton.

5 Combined Authority governance review and scheme

Councillor Lawrence outlined the current draft of the Combined Authority Governance Review and Scheme for the West Midlands and the West Midlands authorities' statutory governance review, which included the authority taking a wider corporate vehicle role including the work of the Integrated Transport Authority and partnership working.

Councillor Thompson indicated that whilst having some reservations, the report gave a really good message and she indicated support of the controlling group in taking the process forward. Councillor Gwinnett highlighted some reservations about how Wolverhampton would benefit from the arrangements.

Councillor Lawrence responded and clarified that the Combined Authority was about collaborative working for the benefit of all authorities across the wider area and that the local Councils would continue to be responsible for services at a local level.

It was proposed by Councillor Lawrence, seconded by Councillor Bilson and resolved:

1. That Council approve the current draft of the scheme (Appendix 1) and Governance Review (Appendix 2).
2. That Council approve delegation for the final approval of the Governance Review Scheme to the Leader of the Council (to allow timescales to be achieved).
3. That Council note a paper outlining the Devolution Deal progress to date (appendix 3).

6 Audit Committee Annual Report - 2014/15

Councillor Collingswood introduced the Audit Committee Annual Report 2014/15 and stated that it has been a successful year for the Audit Committee. He thanked the councillors who serve on the committee, together with the external and internal auditors.

It was proposed by Councillor Collingswood, seconded by Councillor Christine Mills, and resolved:

That Council receive the 2014/15 Audit Committee Annual Report.

7 Treasury Management - annual report 2014/15 and activity monitoring quarter one 2015/16

Councillor Johnson outlined details of the treasury management activities carried out in 2014/15, together with performance against the prudential indicators previously approved by Council.

Councillor Johnson advised that treasury management was playing an important role and he placed on record his thanks to the Director of Finance and his team responsible for delivering optimum use of resources:

1. That the Council note that the Council acted within the approved Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators, and also within the requirements set out in the Council's approved Treasury Management Statement during 2014/15.
2. That the Council note that revenue savings of £12.3 million for the General Fund and £6.0 million for the Housing Revenue Account were generated from the treasury management activities in 2014/15.
3. That the Council note that revenue savings of £1.8 million for the General Fund and £2.3 million for the Housing Revenue Account are forecast from treasury management activities in 2015/16.

8 Black Country Growth Deal - Grants to third parties

Councillor Reynolds outlined the position on grants to third parties to enable continuation of delivery of the Black Country Local Growth Fund monies, as part of the Culture Capital programme. He clarified that the £400,000 grant to the Grand Theatre had been match funded by the Grand Theatre itself, a total of £800,000 to carry out the changes to the building. It was noted that the Grand Theatre was a Council owned building.

Councillor Thompson spoke in respect of the working relationship between the Grand Theatre and small businesses and to the good utilisation of Government funding.

It was proposed by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Bilson, and resolved:

That Council approve the recommendations from Cabinet on grants to third parties to enable continuation of delivery of the Black Country Growth Hub and a grant to fund improvement works at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre to be funded through Black Country Local Growth Fund monies, as part of the Cultural Capital Programme.

9 **City Centre Area Action Plan - submission**

Councillor Bilson outlined the recommendation from Cabinet relating to the key issues raised during consultation on the Publication City Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) September and the submission of the Publication City Centre AAP and proposed minor modifications to the Secretary of State.

Councillor Bilson advised that the AAP will form a framework document concerning the potential of Wolverhampton over the next 20 years once adopted in April 2016.

Councillor Thompson queried how the implementation of the AAP related to Wolverhampton retail property.

Councillor Bilson welcomed comments made by Councillor Thompson, and clarified that the i10 building had been commissioned by the Council, and highlighted that other key developments were also underway as part of the AAP, such as the Youth Zone and the refurbishment of the Wulfruna Centre to reinvigorate the City Centre.

It was proposed by Councillor Bilson, seconded by Councillor Lawrence, and resolved:

That the Council approves the recommendations from Cabinet on 16 September on the submission of the Publication City Centre AAP and proposed minor modifications to the Secretary of State.

10 **Questions to Cabinet Members**

City Centre Bench

Councillor Thompson asked the following question:

Can the Cabinet Member advise Council upon the rationale for a stone bench sourced in China costing around £20,000 to be placed in the City Centre?

Councillor Bilson advised that planning permission for the Princess Street Scheme had been approved in July 2008. He confirmed that the stone bench art work was included in the scheme at no cost to the Council and had been individually designed and manufactured for incorporation in Princess Street as part of the City Centre Transport and Movement Scheme. He advised that the new bench was to be included to add distinctiveness to the square and making a significant contribution to the City Centre public art provision.

Councillor Thompson queried the five year delay to the scheme and whether the material for the artwork could have been sourced from suppliers in Ironbridge.

Councillor Bilson clarified that the stone masons were commissioned by the developers under the Section 106 agreement and that it was the developers' decision to use black granite from China.

City Centre Highways Layouts

Councillor Thompson asked the following question:

Can the Cabinet Member advise Council upon what criteria are being used to evaluate the outcomes of the new highway layout in the City Centre?

Councillor Bilson advised the City Centre Transport and Movement Scheme was being delivered in a phased approach which was illuminating frequently used shortcuts in the City but that it was too early in the process to evaluate the outcomes. He advised that success would be measured on the contribution the highway layouts make to the City centre as a shopping and leisure destination and would also lead to fewer traffic casualties.

He referred to recent engagement with stakeholders and investors to the City relating to the emerging connective places strategy and of the anticipated improvements to the Scheme through consultation.

Waste Recycling Centres:

Cllr Paul Singh asked the following question:

Can the Cabinet Member advise Council upon the full-year saving likely to be made through the current opening hours of the waste recycling centres at Shaw Road and Anchor Lane, when compared to the opening hours that applied before they were originally shortened?

Councillor Steve Evans confirmed that household waste recycling was under review and that amending opening hours of waste recycling sites may recognise savings of £38,000. He paid tribute to the way in which Amey management and employees worked with the Council to improve waste services.

Councillor Paul Singh referred to 2,500 reported fly-tipping incidents last year and asked if the likelihood of an increase in fly tipping as a result of reduced waste recycling site opening hours had been taken into account.

Councillor Steve Evans advised that a review of fly tipping had been requested to establish where and what was being tipped. He advised that there were two recycling centres available and that there should be no excuse for tipping litter. He advised that a cleaner and greener environment is a corporate priority and that action would be taken with fines of up to £20,000 for any tipping offence.

Interim or Agency Staff

Councillor Thompson asked the following question:

Can the Cabinet Member advise Council on the number of posts within the authority filled by interim or agency employed staff, at a cost to the authority of more than £600 per day or equivalent, and how many of these have been employed by the authority on that basis for more than six months?

Councillor Johnson advised that during the delivery of the transformation programme there was a need for specialist advice on a short term and temporary basis which was considered best provided by interim staff who were employed under temporary employment conditions. He advised that there were 12 interim members of staff employed at a cost of £600 or more a day and confirmed that eight of those had been employed for more than six months.

Councillor Thompson asked a supplementary question relating to careful monitoring of the interim staff and the specialist skills they provide. She requested that this issue was not lost and recognised that the Council was going through transformation and that specialist skills would be required.

Councillor Johnson advised that the Director of Finance held a senior officer group meeting to review spend across the Council and that this group closely managed spend on interim staff.