

Meeting of the Council

Minutes - 14 December 2016

Attendance

Mayor Cllr Barry Findlay (Con)

Labour

Cllr Ian Angus
Cllr Harbans Bagri
Cllr Harman Banger
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Payal Bedi-Chadha
Cllr Peter Bilson
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Ian Brookfield
Cllr Ian Claymore
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Claire Darke
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 Linda Leach
Cllr Hazel Malcolm
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Peter O'Neill

Cllr Phil Page
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr John Rowley
Cllr Judith Rowley
Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Sandra Samuels
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Mak Singh
Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Martin Waite
Cllr Daniel Warren

Conservative

Cllr Christopher Haynes
Cllr Christine Mills
Cllr Paul Singh

Cllr Udey Singh
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Andrew Wynne

UKIP

Cllr Malcolm Gwinnett

Employees

Keith Ireland
Kevin O'Keefe
Claire Nye
Linda Sanders
Julien Kramer
Colin Parr
Laura Phillips
Jaswinder Kaur

Managing Director
Director of Governance
Section 151 Officer
Strategic Director of People
Director of Education
Head of Governance
Strategic Business Manager
Democratic Services Manager

The proceedings opened with Prayers

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Christopher Haynes, Pat Patten and Arun Photey.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

3 Minutes of previous meeting

The Mayor proposed, Councillor John Reynolds seconded, and it was resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 9 November 2016, be agreed as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Mayor.

4 Communications

Resolution of Thanks

The Mayor presented a gift of appreciation to Councillor Ian Brookfield as a lasting and enjoyable reminder of his year as Mayor in 2015-2016.

The Late Former Mayor and Councillor Margaret Benton

The Mayor announced that it was with great sadness that we had learned of the death of, former Mayor and Councillor, Margaret Benton on the 6 December 2016. The Mayor extended the council's condolences to Margaret Benton's family.

The council stood in silent tribute to Margaret Benton.

Holocaust Memorial Day

The mayor invited councillors to a service of remembrance, led by Interfaith Wolverhampton, which was taking place on Holocaust Memorial Day, Friday 27 January 2017, at 11:00 am at the Cenotaph.

The Mayor wished everyone present at the meeting and across the city a happy, healthy and enjoyable Christmas.

5 Capital budget quarter two monitoring 2016/17

Councillor Andrew Johnson provided Council with an update on the 2016/17 financial performance of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programmes and the revised forecast for 2016/17 as at quarter two of 2016/17. Revisions were recommended to the current approved General Fund capital programme covering the period 2016/17 to 2020/21.

Councillor Andrew Johnson proposed and Councillor Peter Bilson seconded the recommendations.

Councillor Wendy Thompson welcomed the extension to the western side of i54, she noted that the borrowing to the West Midlands Combined Authority would not be at a detriment to the Council.

Resolved:

1. That borrowing of £30.0 million be undertaken and a capital grant be paid of the equivalent amount to the West Midlands Combined Authority – Land Remediation Fund be approved. This borrowing was required until the powers of the West Midlands Combined Authority (CA) were revised to enable them to borrow for non-transport related purposes. The CA would in return pay a revenue grant to the Council to cover the borrowing costs of interest and minimum revenue provision.
2. That the additional General Fund resources of £3.4 million be approved for;
 - i. nine new projects totalling £1.9 million.
 - ii. i54 Western Extension, a new project, of £1.5 million.

6 Treasury Management Activity Monitoring - Mid Year Review 2016/17

Councillor Andrew Johnson presented a monitoring and progress report on treasury management activity for the second quarter of 2016/17 as part of the mid-year review, in line with the Prudential Indicators approved by Council in March 2016.

Councillor Andrew Johnson proposed and Councillor Peter Bilson seconded the recommendations.

Councillor Andrew Wynn noted that the Treasury Management Report was well presented, however was concerned in relation to the economic factors which had enabled the council to forecast savings and that the council needed to proceed on the side of caution on financial engineering. He further added that the general reserve be built and replenished.

Councillor Andrew Johnson agreed with the comments made and clarified the council was moving to replenish the general reserve and that the Treasury Management Team kept a close eye on the market and external advisors also provide assurance that the council was acting decisively in the economic environment.

Resolved:

1. That a mid-year review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement had been undertaken and the Council had operated within the limits and requirements approved in March 2016 be noted.
2. That savings of £533,000 for the General Fund and £2.3 million for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) were forecast from treasury management activities in 2016/17 be noted.

7 Appointment of External Auditors

Councillor Andrew Johnson advised that following the closure of the Audit Commission the Council would be responsible for appointing its own external auditors by the 31 December 2017 for 2018/19 onwards. A number of options had been considered by the Cabinet (Resources) Panel to put in place new arrangements in time to make an appointment of new external auditors by the statutory deadline of the 31 December 2017. Cabinet Resource Panel recommended Option 3 to opt-in to a sector led body for a Council appointment.

Councillor Andrew Johnson proposed and Councillor Christine Mills seconded the recommendations.

Resolved:

That the recommendation of the Cabinet (Resources) Panel be approved to opt-in to a sector led body either jointly with the seven West Midlands Combined Authority councils or if a joint agreement cannot be reached then a sole appointment of external auditors for 2018/19 onwards for a maximum of five years and that authority was delegated to the Cabinet Member for Resources, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to award the contract when the appointment process was completed.

8 Making of Employment of Children Byelaws

Councillor Ian Brookfield recommend to the Council the making of byelaws that replace those that were made on 16 December 1998 and to revoke those made on 16 December 1998. The byelaw be amended to include that employment of a child aged 13 years in light agricultural or horticultural work was permitted by and under direct supervision of parents or guardians on an occasional basis.

Councillor Ian Brookfield proposed and Councillor Milkinder Jaspal seconded the recommendations.

Resolved:

1. That the making of the byelaw be authorised as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report, relating to the employment of children and to affix the common seal of the Council.
2. That the Director of Governance be authorised to publish in one or more local newspapers a notice of the Council's intention to apply for confirmation of the byelaw.
3. That the Director of Governance be authorised to submit the byelaw for confirmation.
4. That the revocation of the existing byelaw relating to the employment of children that was made on 16 December 1998 be approved.

9 **Written Questions**

Councillor Udey Singh asked the following question:

According to research it is widely acknowledged that children from white working class in the UK are falling behind their BME counterparts in terms of education. Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether this is also the case in Wolverhampton?

Councillor Claire Darke confirmed that the City of Wolverhampton reflected national trend.

Councillor Udey Singh asked a supplementary question:

Could the Cabinet Member advise whether a specific strategy had been developed for white working class children to ensure they do not fall behind their BME counterparts?

Councillor Claire Darke responded that all children deserved a good start to life. She highlighted that the United Nations was concerned that austerity policies had pushed children further into poverty. 85% of schools in Wolverhampton were good or outstanding and six schools had a national profile.