

## **COUNCIL MEETING**

**8 APRIL 2014**

### **PRESENT:**

D. J. Leytham (Chairman)  
D. S. Smith (Vice Chairman)

Allsopp, Mrs J. A.  
Awty, R. J.  
Bacon, B. F.  
Bacon, Mrs N.  
Barnett, Mrs S. A.  
Bland, Mrs M. P.  
Constable, Mrs B. L.  
Constable, D. H. J.  
Cox, R. E.  
Derrick, B. W.  
Drinkwater, E. N.  
Eadie, I. M.  
Evans, Mrs. C. D.  
Fisher, Mrs H. E.  
Greatorex, C.  
Hancocks, Mrs R.

Heath, H. R.  
Humphreys, K. P.  
Isaacs, D.  
Marshall, T.  
Mosson, R. C.  
Mynott, G.  
Norman, S.G.  
Pearce, A. G.  
Perkins, Ms E. C.  
Pritchard, I. M. P.  
Pullen, D. R.  
Richards, Mrs. V.  
Roberts, N. J.  
Salter, D. F.  
Smedley, D.  
Smith, A. F.

Spruce, C. J.  
Stanhope MBE, Mrs M.  
Strachan, R. W.  
Taylor, S. D.  
Thomas, T.J.  
Tittley, M. C.  
Tranter, Mrs H.  
Walker MBE, J.T.  
Warfield, M. A.  
White, A. G.  
Wilcox, M. J.  
Wilks, J. N.  
Willis-Croft, K. A.  
Woodward, Mrs S. E.  
Yeates, B. W.

**(APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from Councillors Mrs Boyle, Mrs Eagland, Mrs Flowith, Hogan and Powell).

### **PRAYERS:**

Prayers were said by the Reverend P.R. Clark.

### **287 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

The following declaration of interest was made: -

Councillor Drinkwater – Personal Interest in Item 9 of the Report of the Leader (Grant Aid and Grant Aid Plus Allocations for 2014/15) as he was the Chairman of an organisation which was in receipt of Grant Aid.

### **288 MINUTES – 24 FEBRUARY 2014:**

It was proposed and duly seconded “that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24 February 2014 (Volume 41 Part 5 Minute Book) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.”

#### **Arising on the Minutes**

#### **Minute No 247 – Report of the Chairman of the Strategic (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee**

Councillor Norman referred to the item on ICT Looking to the Future and said that the word “could” should be “should” as this is what he said.

## **Minute No 250 – Proposals from the Cabinet**

Councillor Mynott pointed out that it was Councillor Mrs Woodward rather than him that had seconded the proposal of Councillor Norman.

## **Minute No 251 – Boundary Review**

Councillor Norman considered that there should have been reference in the Minute to the fact that a paper had been submitted by Councillor Constable to the Regulatory and Licensing Committee on 18 February 2014 which had not be considered by the Working Group and was not debated by the Committee. Councillor Mrs Woodward added that she considered that Councillor Norman had proposed and Councillor Derrick had seconded that both the Labour Group and Conservative Group proposals should be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and that this should have been recorded as such.

It was then:

**RESOLVED:** That subject to the comments made by Councillors Mynott, Norman and Mrs Woodward being noted the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24 February 2014 (Volume 41 Part 5) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **289 CHAIRMANS ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

### **(a) Chairman's Gala Dinner**

The Chairman reported that the Annual Dinner held on 7 March 2014 had been very successful with nearly 200 people attending and over £2,500 being raised for Charity. The Chairman thanked all those who had provided raffle prizes for the event.

### **(b) Forthcoming Events**

The Chairman informed Members that a tour of Lichfield Cathedral, the Cathedral Library and the Close in Lichfield was being hosted on Wednesday 9 April 2014 for neighbouring Civic Representatives. In addition a Charity Afternoon Tea at Curborough Hall Farm Crafts Centre was to be held on Wednesday 30 April 2014.

### **(c) Councillor Mrs M. Stanhope**

The Chairman reminded Members that Councillor Mrs Stanhope had been awarded the MBE and informed them that she was due to receive the award on Wednesday 9 April 2014.

## **290 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON CABINET DECISIONS FROM THE MEETINGS HELD ON 4 MARCH AND 1 APRIL 2014 AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS:**

### **6 – Charging Policy 2014 - 2015**

Councillor Mynott asked the Leader when the opportunity existed for these charges to be scrutinised and sought an assurance that the delegated powers granted did not mean that scrutiny would be bypassed. Councillors Walker and Mrs Woodward supported Councillor Mynott and Councillor Mrs Woodward added that she thought that delegation should be to the Cabinet Member in consultation with the Director of Democratic Development and Legal Services rather than the other way round.

Councillor Mrs Stanhope commented that the Forward Plan provided the opportunity for Members to identify what was to be considered in the future and that they could therefore call any item in to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. Councillor Eadie reminded Members that at each Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members were given the opportunity to add any item to the Work Programme if they so desired.

Councillor Spruce confirmed that having regard to the delegation granted he would always discuss any proposals in detail with the Director.

## **7 – Progressing a Business Improvement District Development in Lichfield City**

Councillor Pritchard informed Members that he was very pleased with the Progress being made in this area and gave a detailed explanation of the background and future proposals. Councillor Mrs Woodward felt that it was a pity that Councillor Pritchard was concentrating on Lichfield when progress in the Burntwood area was also being made particularly with regard to the Ryecroft shops however Councillor Pritchard pointed out that he was dealing with the particular report that had been considered by Cabinet which was in respect of the City of Lichfield. Councillor Pritchard added that he was very pleased with the progress made in Burntwood and hoped that it would continue. Councillor Eadie commented that he had specifically mentioned at the Cabinet Meeting that schemes in Burntwood should also be developed.

Councillor Drinkwater expressed his frustration that for many years the Burntwood area had been promised various services but they had not been fulfilled. Councillor Wilcox considered that this comment was unfair as much progress was being made in that area.

## **9 – Grant Aid and Grant Plus Allocations for 2014/15**

Councillor Walker reminded Members that whilst some charities were allocated money from the recent small grants programme, some were not and asked if there were any plans to ensure that all charities would be considered for funding through an increased pot of money. Councillor Greatorex reminded Members that the scheme was over subscribed each year and that difficult decisions had been made. Councillor Greatorex added that the finance available was unlikely to increase and may in fact decrease in the future.

## **11 – Fairer Charging and Welfare Benefits**

Councillor Isaacs asked the Leader if he considered that the transfer of the Welfare Benefits and Fairer Charging Service to Districts would have a significant change to those on benefits and the ability of the District Council to undertake its duties. Councillor Spruce undertook to respond to Councillor Isaacs in detail.

Councillor Mrs Woodward referred to the Local Crisis Support Scheme managed by Staffordshire County Council and to the need for some residents to resort to Food Banks. Councillor Wilcox pointed out that this was not relevant to this particular report and that the scheme was to be retained by Staffordshire County Council.

(COUNCILLOR WHITE DECLARED AN INTEREST IN THIS ITEM IN VIEW OF HIS INVOLVEMENT AT STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL).

## **1 – Fit for the Future – Community Consultation Exercise**

Councillor Wilcox pointed out that the word “mange” should read “manage” in this item.

## **2 – Acceptance of Funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner**

Councillor Greatorex informed Members that this was a great news story which had highlighted how the Police and Crime Commissioner had been able to create additional funding by changes to the way that the Police operated. Councillor Greatorex advised that the Lichfield Safer

Community Partnership had been allocated £72k for 2014/2015 towards local projects and added that Voluntary Groups and Parishes also had the opportunity to apply to the People's Power fund.

Councillor Drinkwater stated that he felt that the Police and Crime Commissioner had an abundance of power and had not only appointed an assistant but was now handing out Government money whilst reducing jobs. Councillor Norman reminded Members that the current Police and Crime Commissioner had, when an elected Member, got rid of the handyman service which had helped people to feel safe at home by undertaking small jobs such as the fitting of locks. Councillor Isaacs suggested that the money could be handed over to the Youth Centre Service so that this would prevent Youth Centres being closed. Councillor Mrs Woodward said that she was not surprised that there was money available as cutbacks in policing resources had been made in the Burntwood area and that Community Liaison Meetings had now ceased.

Councillor Greateorex in responding to the comments made considered that the Police and Crime Commissioner was doing a considerable amount for the benefit of the community and was far more accessible through meetings at village halls and supermarkets than had been the case under previous arrangements.

(COUNCILLOR NORMAN DECLARED AN INTEREST IN THIS ITEM AS AN EMPLOYEE OF AGE UK STAFFORDSHIRE).

### **3 – Changes to the Organic Waste Service**

Councillor Norman commented on the differences between incineration and composting and the benefits involved and informed Members that proposals were again being put forward by Staffordshire County Council to close the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Ring Road in Burntwood and considered that if this was successful the use of Brown Bins would increase. Councillor Norman asked what effect this would have on the Waste Disposal Service.

Councillor Eadie informed Members that no decision had been made on the closure of the service in Burntwood and that a meeting of District Council and Staffordshire County Council representatives was due to take place on 14 April 2014 to consider the impact of any changes to the current service.

### **5 – High Speed 2 Phase 2, Petitioning the Hybrid Bill**

Councillor Norman expressed concern at the costs referred to in the report submitted to Cabinet and asked for comments on that. Councillor Pritchard informed Members that the cost could be between £5,000 and £65,000 and that a Special Meeting of the Council due to be held on 30 April 2014 would consider this matter in detail.

## **291 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE LEISURE PARKS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE:**

Councillor Mrs Tranter submitted her report on the matters considered by the Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on 5 March 2014.

### **1 – Changes to the Organic Waste Service**

Councillor Drinkwater asked when the public would receive details and education on the new service and Councillor Walker considered that information should be given to the public now so that they could adapt to any new scheme. Councillor White commented that in his experience the public took a dim view of changes particularly if they were not implemented properly and considered that education needed to be started sooner rather than later.

Councillor Eadie informed Members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was part of the

process and that the implementation of any new scheme was yet to be fully mapped out. Councillor Eadie added that Tamworth Borough Council, as a partner of the District Council in the Waste Service, needed to go through the process of considering any changes and once that had been done the public would be informed.

Councillor Mynott added that he did not consider that there was enough time to inform the public if the changes were to be implemented in October 2014 if details were not given now.

Councillor Mrs Tranter confirmed that this item would be on the next Agenda of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that they could consider how any new scheme could be implemented within the budget allocated.

## **2 – Review of the Lichfield District’s 2013 Festivals and Events Programme and Preview of 2014 Programme**

Councillor Mrs Woodward asked the Chairman of the Committee if the Members had considered the “Visit Lichfield” and “What’s on in Lichfield” Booklets which had provided a list of events within which Burntwood Wakes was hardly mentioned. Councillor Mrs Tranter informed Members that the Committee had not considered those publications.

## **3 – Fit for the Future – Public Toilet Provision**

Councillor Mrs Evans sought further information on the possible transfer of the toilets to a Bowls Club, for evidence that there had been anti-social behaviour at the Swan Island Toilets and commented that it was short sighted to close toilets at a time when work was being done to increase the footfall in shops in the Burntwood area.

Councillor Drinkwater considered that there was no evidence to suggest that the toilets were not being used and felt that whilst on the Continent shop keepers were happy to allow people to use their toilets this was unlikely to be the case in Britain. Councillor Isaacs considered that as toilet provision was part of the Community Consultation Exercise proposals to be considered later in the meeting that it was wrong to be discussing the future of the toilets at this stage. Councillor Heath asked for information about when the toilets at Sankeys Corner were open as his experience was that they were often closed and Councillor Walker reminded Members that the District Council had won awards for the best kept toilets in the country in the past.

Councillor Mrs Tranter in responding informed Members that there was interest in the toilet facility at Chase Terrace by the Bowls Club who would wish to convert it into a club house and that the evidence was that the other toilets were not being used very much. Councillor Mrs Tranter added that the toilets at Sankeys Corner were open from 8.00 am until 6.00 pm. Councillor A. F. Smith reminded Members that no final decisions had been made at the present time and that the scrutiny process was part of the examination of the future of the toilets.

## **4 – Work Programme and Forward Plan**

Councillor Mrs Woodward asked which Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider complaints and compliments and Councillor Mrs Evans supported Councillor Mrs Woodward by saying that it was necessary to know which Scrutiny Committee complaints should be directed to.

Councillor Greatorex reminded Members that the opportunity existed for items such as this to be added to the Work Programme of any relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **292 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE:**

Councillor Cox submitted his report on the matter considered by the Economic Growth, Environment and Development (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on 12 March 2014.

## **2 – Work Programme**

Councillor Mrs Woodward sought clarification of the roles of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in dealing with Environmental Issues. Councillor Cox stated that environment in the terms of his Committee meant the environment within which people lived whilst Environmental Health was dealt with by the Community Housing and Health (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee.

## **4 – Review of the Lichfield District's 2013 Festival and Events Programme and Preview of 2014 Programme.**

Councillor Mrs Woodward considered that it was necessary to establish why the Burntwood Wakes Festival had been excluded and Councillor Walker commented that the Chasewater Transport Show had moved out of the District. Councillor Mynott expressed concern about the potential duplication in that two Scrutiny Committees were looking at the same item.

Councillor Cox said he was concerned if some items had been missed out and it was not the intention that all events would be considered. Councillor Cox added that there should be duplication in the future but that it had occurred at this time because the meetings were held at a time when responsibilities of the Scrutiny Committees were changing.

## **7 – Vote of Thanks**

Councillor Cox added his thanks to Councillors Drinkwater, Mrs Eagland, Smedley and Mrs Stanhope for their work as Chairmen of the Task Groups.

## **293 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMUNITY HOUSING AND HEALTH (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE:**

Councillor Marshall submitted his report on the matters considered by the Community, Housing and Health (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee held on 24 March 2014.

### **1 – Charging for Hospital Car Parking**

Councillor Walker informed Members that it was difficult for people with disabilities such as him to access payment machines and hoped that this would be considered. Councillor Mynott asked if the presentation considered the effect of charging for hospital car parking on on-street car parking as he had received a number of complaints arising out of that. Councillor Marshall confirmed that many of the points raised had been debated at the Scrutiny Committee although on-street car parking had not. Councillor Marshall hoped that a number of the problems referred to would be sorted out shortly.

### **3 – Burntwood Health Centres**

Councillor Drinkwater reminded Members that when the St Matthews Hospital Site in Burntwood closed Burntwood was promised a number of health replacement facilities including those at the Burntwood Leisure Centre and at Greenwood House in Burntwood. However neither of those schemes had been forthcoming. Councillor Mrs Evans added that many people in Burntwood were fed up of the lack of action in bringing forward medical facilities that were necessary for the Burntwood area and added that when Hammerwich Hospital was closed similar promises were made.

Councillor Mrs Stanhope reminded Members that health facilities had been provided in Burton and Tamworth to accommodate the Psychiatric Hospital closure at St Matthews Hospital and that Care in the Community had been introduced. Councillor Mrs Stanhope emphasized that any new health centre developments would require and depend upon the co-operation and ultimate relocation of General Practitioners and without this there would be little prospect of

improved facilities being viable.

Councillor Mrs Richards mentioned that she had met a doctor at the Hudson Drive Facility in Burntwood and understood that whilst the doctors were keen to move to a new facility difficulties were being experienced in agreeing financial terms. Councillor Mrs Richards added that the temporary medical centre was only intended to be as a drop in facility but many had now registered and thus delays had occurred and referred to the current leasing arrangements.

Councillor Mrs Woodward was grateful that the Burntwood Health Centres was to be a regular item on the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and commented on future leasing arrangements.

Councillor Marshall confirmed that all comments made would be taken into account and finalised his report by noting that a vote of thanks had been made at the end of the meeting and added his thanks to any Member who had worked on a Task Group during the previous municipal year.

## **294 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:**

### **(a) Planning Committee – 10 March 2014**

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Fisher and duly seconded “that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 10 March 2014 (Minutes Nod 261 – 268) be approved and adopted.”

#### **Arising on the Minutes:**

#### **Councillor R. W. Strachan**

The Chairman took the opportunity of adding his congratulations to Councillor Strachan and his wife on the birth of their son as referred to in the Minutes. It was then:

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 10 March 2014 (Minutes Nod 261 – 268) be approved and adopted.

### **(b) Standards Committee – 18 March 2014**

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Stanhope, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 18 March 2014 (Minutes Nod 269 – 271) be approved and adopted.

### **(c) Employment Committee – 25 March 2014**

It was proposed by Councillor Humphreys and duly seconded “that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Employment Committee held on 25 March 2014 (Minutes Nod 272 – 275) be approved and adopted.

#### **Arising on the Minutes**

#### **Attendance and Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Constable stated that he had attended the meeting but was not included on the list of those present. Councillor Mrs Evans added that Councillor Thomas was shown as being present and submitting apologies for absence.

#### **Minute No 274 – Voluntary Redundancy in the Interests of Efficiency of the Service**

Councillor Mynott mentioned that two Members of the Committee had expressed concern about

the number of requests for Voluntary Redundancy and the potential effect on the service that the District Council was able to provide but that this had not been referred to in the Minutes

It was then:

**RESOLVED:** That subject to the addition of Councillor Constable to the list of those present and the deletion of the name of Councillor Thomas from the list of Apologies for Absence and the comments of Councillor Mynott being noted the Minutes of the Meeting of the Employment Committee held on 25 March 2014 (Minutes Nod 272 – 275) be approved and adopted.

## **295 FIT FOR THE FUTURE – COMMUNITY CONSULTATION EXERCISE:**

It was proposed by Councillor Tittley and duly seconded “that the final draft questionnaire as submitted and the methodological approach to the exercise as detailed be approved subject to the amendments made at the Cabinet Meeting held on 1 April 2014.” In submitting the proposal Councillor Tittley reminded Members that he was the Chairman of the Working Group tasked with looking at this item and he wished to thank all those involved in bringing this forward. Councillor Tittley advised of two proposed changes to the circulated draft of the questionnaire in order to clarify that handing leisure centres back to schools may result in changes to the public opening hours (question 5 Ideas to Save Money) and to make the statement the statement to encourage other ideas (at question 6) more positive.

Councillor Norman stated that he considered that the Chief Executive had done a good job in identifying the finance available to undertake the survey and felt that the responses would be a useful asset in formulating future decisions. Councillor Drinkwater considered that the report was very good but expressed concern about how the wider public were going to be consulted particularly those were not IT literate. Councillor Drinkwater was advised by Councillor Tittley that a variety of methodologies will be used as set out in the report and there will not be an over reliance on IT literacy. Councillor Mrs Evans referred to the prizes available which would not, in all cases, be able to be used by those with restrictive mobility. Councillor Isaacs added his concern about how the vulnerable and low income earners could be consulted and hoped that those on Housing Benefit would be assisted as they were likely to be most affected by a reduction in service. Councillor Mynott hoped that Members would knock doors and deliver copies of the survey in order to get as much response as possible.

Councillors Eadie and White reminded Members that the consultation exercise was seeking views rather than it being a referendum as the District Council remained as the decision making Authority for the provision of the services.

It was then:

**RESOLVED:** That the final draft questionnaire and methodological approach as set out in the report be approved subject to the amendments made at Cabinet at 1 April 2014.

## **296 NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA DESIGNATIONS:**

It was proposed by Councillor Pritchard duly seconded and

**RESOLVED:** That the Parishes of Burntwood, Wall and Whittington and Fisherwick be designated as Neighbourhood Areas for the purpose of preparing Neighbourhood Plans under Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).



## 297 QUESTIONS:

### Question 1

Question from Councillor Mrs Woodward to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Democratic and Legal Services

"In relation to the widely – reported case of a payment of £52,000 being incorrectly credited to an individual resident's bank account rather than Bromford Housing can the Cabinet Member for Finance please tell me:

- (i) who is the Council's "contractor" who made this "clerical error",
- (ii) what performance management measures were put in place when the contract was initiated,
- (iii) was it the Council, the contractor or Bromford Housing who identified the error,
- (iv) what sanctions will now be applied to this "contractor",
- (v) and can he give me assurances that a full report on this matter and any associated actions and investigations will be submitted to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee to ensure that this will not happen again?

Response from Councillor Spruce:

- "(i) Northgate was the Council's contractor for the provision of a managed support service for Housing Benefit Assessment on a temporary basis.
- (ii) The Council agreed as part of the contract with Northgate a requirement for a higher proportion of management checks. The contractual requirement was for a 10% check of all Housing/former Council Tax Benefit assessment completed by Northgate. In accordance with best practice, the Council's Housing Benefits Team complete a management check of a minimum of 4% of all Housing/former Council Tax Benefit claims, wherever practicable.
- (iii) It was both the Council and Bromford Housing who identified the error as part of payment checks.
- (iv) The Council has made the decision to no longer use the Northgate managed support service since the error was identified. Council Officers, including the Council's Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer commenced meetings immediately after the incident with Northgate's representatives, including their legal advisor on this matter. This matter will be resolved between the Council and Northgate when Proceeds of Crime actions have been resolved. At this stage, as there are ongoing legal processes in respect of this, the Council cannot impose any further sanctions at this time.
- (v) As I said earlier, this matter is the subject of ongoing legal proceedings under the Proceeds of Crime Act and when this action has been completed a full report on the whole matter will be reported to the Audit Committee. A verbal report was provided at a previous Audit Committee meeting and a verbal update will be given at the next Audit Committee on 29 April 2014."

Councillor Mrs Woodward asked the following supplementary question:-

"Whilst thanking Councillor Spruce for the explanation is he was satisfied with the current level of checks?"

Councillor Spruce responded:-

"I am satisfied with the current level of checks although I can never guarantee that errors

would not happen in the future.

## Question 2

Question from Councillor Norman to the Cabinet Member for Community, Housing & Environmental Health as Member Champion for Equality

"In a report from Age UK (and I declare a personal interest as an employee of Age UK South Staffordshire) on digital inclusion it stated that as at August 2012, almost all adults aged 16 to 24 years (99 per cent) had used the internet (7.17 million people). In contrast, only 29 per cent of adults aged 75 years and over had ever used the internet, representing 1.33 million people.

Again this year's Council Tax Bill did not include any explanatory leaflet on information about possible discounts and exemptions or information on how the Bill is calculated or indeed what the District Council spends its money on. Older people and others who are unable to access our website are told to write to the District Council at a non-free-post address.

As the Member Champion for Equality can he tell me a) how this complies with the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010 which requires public bodies to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work? And b) What resolution of Council or Cabinet actually stated that Council Tax Information leaflets would no longer be included with resident's bills?"

Response from Councillor Greateorex:

- a) "The Council Tax bill for 2014/15 under 'General Information' states :  
'Information on discounts and exemptions, along with an explanation of how your council Tax is calculated and spent is available [www.lichfielddc.gov.uk](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk), you may request a hard copy of this information by writing to the address below'. The bill also provides information of who to contact at Lichfield Council : the Lichfield Connects Team, for Council Tax, Benefits and Business Rates, together with a telephone number for Lichfield Connects.  
The Council does not have a freepost address and other means of contact with the Council are encouraged.
- b) At the Council Meeting on 19 February 2013, the following decision was made :  
'Endorsement of the proposal to publish online, the information supplied with demand notices and to encourage electronic billing."

Councillor Norman asked the following supplementary question:-

"Can Councillor Greateorex reconsider his response to answer Question b) as the response did not show when the decision to no longer provide Council Tax Information Leaflets with residents bills was made?"

Councillor Greateorex responded:

"There is no specific reference but there is a channel shift wherever possible to encourage website, phone and face to face exchanges and that £1,500 had been saved by the use of this method."

### Question 3

Prior to the submission of the question Councillor Awty asked if it was valid as there was no such phrase as “bedroom tax” in legislation however the Chairman considered that the intent of the question was understood and that it should proceed within that spirit.

Question from Councillor Mynott to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Democratic and Legal Services

“What steps have been taken by LDC to find out how the 18 low income households who incorrectly had bedroom tax deducted from their housing benefit coped with the loss in their income?”

Response from Councillor Spruce:

“The Council’s Revenues and Benefits Team were formally made aware of this issue as a result of an urgent circular from the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) dated 9 January 2014. The team immediately commenced work to identify those claimants who were potentially exempt from Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC). This required identifying those claimants who had been in receipt of Housing Benefit at the same property from 1 January 1996.

The initial work was completed within three working days; payments including backdated arrears were actioned in the Housing Benefit system by 14 January 2014 and paid on 20 January 2014.

Since that date the team has carried out further work to identify any other claimants eligible for this payment and as a result 2 more claimants also received payments on 31 March 2014 and 7 April 2014, respectively.”

Councillor Mynott asked the following supplementary question:-

“Following the emails sent to Members last week regarding the £52,000 mistakenly paid by Lichfield District Council to a benefit claimant and containing links to articles that reinforced stereotypes of dishonest claimants would the Portfolio Holder be prepared to offset those by sending Members details of the difficult circumstances faced by the 18 low income households who paid on average £889 each wrongfully withheld from their housing benefits?”

Councillor Spruce responded:-

“6 out of the 18 households affected by social sector size criteria contacted the Housing Benefit Team requesting application forms for the payment of discretionary housing payment. One household submitted a completed application form in March 2013 and a second household submitted a completed application form in May 2013 and applications were assessed and they did not meet the Council’s criteria for the payment of discretionary housing payment. Both households were notified of the District Council’s decision in June 2013 and the District Council did not subsequently receive completed discretionary housing payment forms from any other of the 4 households.”

## 298 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS:

**RESOLVED:** That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

**IN PRIVATE**

**299 CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON A CABINET DECISION  
FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2014:**

**1 – Friarsgate – Future Actions**

Councillor Wilcox informed Members that the content of the report was good news for the District Council as the scheme was moving forward positively and would be for the benefit of the Citizens of the District. Councillor Wilcox highlighted that key dates had been set and informed Members that further information would be issued when it was available.

(The Meeting closed at 8.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN