

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

6 May 2014

PRESENT:

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

Allsopp, Mrs J. A.	Flowith, Mrs L. E.	Roberts, N. J.
Arnold, Mrs S. P.	Greatorex, C.	Salter, D. F.
Awty, R. J.	Hancocks, Mrs R.	Smedley, D.
Bacon, B. F.	Heath, H. R.	Spruce, C. J.
Bacon Mrs N.	Hogan, P.	Stanhope MBE, Mrs M.
Barnett, Mrs S. A.	Humphreys, K. P.	Strachan, R. W.
Boyle, Mrs M. G.	Marshall, T.	Taylor, S. D.
Constable, Mrs B. L.	Mosson, R. C.	Tittley, M. C.
Constable, D. H. J.	Mynott, G.	Tranter, Mrs. H.
Cox, R. E.	Norman, S.G.	Walker MBE, J. T.
Derrick, B. W.	Pearce, A. G.	Warfield, M. A.
Drinkwater, E. N.	Perkins, Ms E. C.	White, A. G.
Eadie, I. M.	Powell, J. J. R.	Wilcox, M. J.
Eagland, Mrs J. M.	Pritchard, I. M. P.	Willis-Croft, K. A.
Evans, Mrs C. D.	Pullen, D. R.	Woodward, Mrs S. E.
Fisher, Mrs H. E.	Richards, Mrs V.	Yeates, B. W.

(**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from Councillors Mrs Bland, A. F. Smith, Thomas and Wilks).

PRAYERS:

Prayers were said by The Very Reverend Archimandrite S. Piers.

1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

No Declarations of Interest were made

2 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL 2014/2015:**

It was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Mrs Arnold and

RESOLVED: That Councillor D. S. Smith be elected Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor D. S. Smith then made and signed the required Declaration of Acceptance of Office and was invested with the Chairman's Chain and Badge of Office.

Mrs G. Smith was also invested with her Badge of Office.

Councillor D. S. Smith thanked Members for his election as Chairman.

COUNCILLOR D. S. SMITH (CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL) IN THE CHAIR.

3 VOTE OF THANKS TO RETIRING CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Awty, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That the sincere thanks of the Council be accorded to Councillor Leytham and his wife for their services to the Council and the Community during the previous Municipal Year.

Councillor Leytham and Mrs J. A. Leytham-Gain were then presented with replica Badges of Office and Councillor Leytham formally thanked those who had supported him during his term of office.

4 MINUTES – 8 APRIL 2014:

It was proposed and duly seconded “that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 8 April 2014 (Volume 41, Part 6 Minute Book), as printed and previously circulated, be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.”

Arising on the Minutes:

Minute No 291 – Report of the Chairman of the Leisure, Parks and Waste Management (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee:

It was proposed by Councillor Drinkwater and seconded by Councillor Mrs Woodward that in the Item 3 – Fit for the Future – Public Toilet Provision the words “Chase Terrace” in the final paragraph be replaced by the word “Chasetown”.

Minute No 293 – Report of the Chairman of the Community, Housing and Health (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee:

It was proposed by Councillor Drinkwater and seconded by Councillor Taylor that with regard to Item 3 – Burntwood Health Centres the words “including those at the Burntwood Leisure Centre and at Greenwood Housing in Burntwood” be deleted.

It was then:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 8 April 2014 (Volume 41 Part 6 Minute Book) as printed and previously circulated be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the two amendments proposed by Councillor Drinkwater being made.

5 APPONTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2014/2015:

It was proposed by Councillor Pritchard, seconded by Councillor Smedley and

RESOLVED: That Councillor K. P. Humphreys be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor Humphreys then made and signed the required Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Chairman then invested the Vice Chairman and his wife, Mrs M. Humphreys, with their Badges of Office.

6 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

(a) **Chaplain**

The Chairman announced that his Chaplain would be The Very Reverend Archimandrite S. Piers.

(b) **Charities**

The Chairman announced that his charities for the year would be the Cathedral East End Appeal (Herkenrude Windows), the Friends of St. Peters Church Stonnall and the Forces Children's Trust.

(c) **Civic Visit**

The Chairman informed Members that a visit to Drayton Manor for Civic Heads would take place in June 2014.

(d) **Civic at Home**

The Chairman informed Members that a Civic at Home Event for past District Chairmen and Partners with afternoon tea was to be arranged on a date to be determined.

(e) **Civic Service Cathedral Evensong**

The Chairman informed Members that a Civic Service Evensong would be held at 3.30 pm on 20 July 2014 at the Cathedral followed by tea for all of the congregation.

(f) **Carol Service**

The Chairman informed Members that the Chairman's Carol Service would be combined with the Stonnall Christmas Pageant and would be held on 5 December 2014 at Stonnall Church.

(g) **Pantomime**

The Chairman informed Members that he would be holding a Civic Event during the Pantomime at the Lichfield Garrick Theatre in December 2014 or January 2015.

(h) **Charity Night**

The Chairman informed Members that he would be arranging a Charity Night in the Garrick Studio on 16 January 2015.

(i) **Chairman's Civic Dinner**

The Chairman informed Members that the Chairman's Civic Dinner would take place at Drayton Manor on 6 March 2015.

(j) **Visit to Cathedral**

The Chairman informed Members that a Civic visit involving all Civics in the Lichfield Diocese would take place in conjunction with the Cathedral to view the Herkenrude Windows when they are installed in March or April 2015.

(k) **Procedure**

The Chairman asked Members to look at Section 4 of the Constitution regarding the procedures for Full Council Meetings as he would be following those strictly.

(l) **Written Questions and Answers**

The Chairman announced that subject to discussions between the Leaders of the two Political Groups and Councillor Mrs Bland he anticipated that written questions and written answers would be circulated to Members at the start of each meeting and would be taken as read and followed by any supplementary questions and responses. The Chairman added that this would be formally considered at the Meeting of Council on 8 July 2014.

(m) **Emergency Plan Incident**

With the permission of the Chairman Councillor Wilcox informed Members that an incident had occurred on 19 April 2014, during the Bank Holiday Period, when an explosive device had been found at a property in Princess Street Chase Terrace and that a major incident had been declared. Councillor Wilcox informed Members that Officers of the District Council called upon to assist had worked very efficiently and he thanked them for that. Councillors Drinkwater, Norman and Mrs Woodward also commented on the incident.

7 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES:

(a) **Planning Committee – 31 March 2014**

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Fisher, duly seconded and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held on 31 March 2014 (Minutes Nod 276 – 286) be approved and adopted.

8 CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS INCLUDING ALLOCATION OF SEATS AND APPOINTMENTS BY POLITICAL GROUPS:

It was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Pritchard and

RESOLVED: That subject to Councillor Mrs Stanhope replacing Councillor Smedley on Standards Committee the Constitution and Membership of Cabinet, Committees and Panels including the allocation of seats and appointments by Political Groups as submitted be approved and that the Constitution be amended to reflect the changes.

9 ELECTION OF CHAIRMEN AND APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES, PANELS ETC.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Spruce and

RESOLVED: That the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Committees and Panels as submitted be approved.

10 APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES:

It was proposed by Councillor Spruce, seconded by Councillor Eadie and

RESOLVED: That, subject to Councillor Mrs Boyle replacing Councillor A. F. Smith as the representative on the Staffordshire Playing Fields Association, the appointment of Representatives on Outside Bodies as submitted be approved.

11 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES:

It was proposed by Councillor Cox and seconded by Councillor Powell "that the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be received and agreed subject to the basic allowance for Members being increased by 1% (rounded up to the nearest pound) for 2014/2015 and that the allowance for the Chairman of Standards Committee be £570."

In making the proposal Councillor Cox, whilst appreciating the financial difficulties that the District Council faced, referred to allowances at other nearby Local Authorities and the previous decisions of the District Council to restrict increases. Councillor Cox also considered that the Chairman of the Standards Committee should receive an allowance in line with other Chairmen rather than an amount per meeting.

Councillor Norman stated that he did not consider that Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council were an appropriate Authority to make comparisons with as they were a Unitary Authority and added that the IT needs of the District Council needed to be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Mynott supported Councillor Norman and reminded Members that not all employees would get a 1% increase. Councillors Drinkwater, Mrs Evans and Mrs Woodward also spoke against the proposed increase as they felt that this was not the right time to increase allowances in the light of reductions in services and the perception of the public if Members received an increase at a time when domestic budgets are restricted.

Councillor Constable considered that the 1% increase proposed was reasonable if compared to other areas and stated that in his view the value of allowances had declined over recent years. Councillor Spruce informed Members that a 1% increase would equate to approximately £30 per year which was not a considerable amount.

It was then:

RESOLVED: (1) That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be received and accepted subject to the basic allowance being increased by 1% (rounded up to the nearest pound) for 2014/15 and that the Chairman of the Standards Committee be paid an allowance of £570.

(2) That in the event that allowances are not within existing budgets any additional costs be met from reserves.

12 QUESTIONS:

Question from Councillor Mrs Woodward to the Leader of the Council:

"Will the Leader ensure that the inspiring work of Stephen Sutton in Raising over £3m for the Teenage Cancer Trust, bringing together the whole Burntwood Community and putting the town on the world map, is recognised and supported in as many ways as possible by the District Council, its members and staff?"

Response from Councillor Wilcox:

"I thank Councillor Woodward for bringing this matter to the Council's attention.

She did in fact contact me a couple of weekend's ago on this very subject and I gave her my support and said that I would look at what we could do to support this brave young man.

We are all aware of the tremendous work that Stephen is doing to increase public awareness of the Teenage Cancer Trust, and many of us have been part of various fund raising activities within the District.

Incidentally, I attended along with Councillor Walker the final home game of Chasetown F.C. recently where a collection and proceeds from the programme sales went to the Teenage Cancer Trust.

You will also recall that at last week's Special Full Council a collection box was placed at the back of the chamber and which was referred to by our Chairman; in fact the box is here tonight if anyone would like to contribute who perhaps did not have the opportunity to do so last week.

The collection box will also be made available to staff here at the Council.

I will then ensure it is sent to the Charity and will report back to the Council the total amount given.

I have asked the Chairman to write to Stephen expressing our support for all he is doing for this cause and making him aware that we are all thinking about him and his family at this most difficult time.

I would also take the opportunity to refer to other activities supported by the District Council to raise funds for the Teenage Cancer Trust which have included an event at Princes Park in Burntwood, a Fun Run at Chasewater Country Park, a Fancy Dress three hour Body Combat Marathon organised by an Aerobics Coach at Burntwood Leisure Centre, the donation of eight Family Swim Tickets for the Auction at the "A Day for Stephen" at Burntwood Rugby Club and two sponsored football matches at Burntwood Rugby Club.

Michael Fabricant, MP has also asked a written Parliamentary Question to the Prime Minister about Stephen Sutton which read as follows "to ask the Prime Minister what representations he has received on the work of Stephen Sutton in fund raising for Cancer Charities and if he will make a statement". The response of the Prime Minister was "I was very moved to read of the outstanding fund raising work carried out by Stephen and his passion to raise money for Teenage Cancer Services to help others like him as part of Stephen's list of 50 things he wants to do, he came to Downing Street to give a speech in July last year. Although I was unable to meet him on that occasion I continue to be awestruck by his enthusiasm, his determination and achievement. His fund raising is not only incredible in itself but is also an inspiration for young people and the wider community."

Since composing the reply the Prime Minister has met Stephen Sutton at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital."

Councillor Mrs Woodward asked the following supplementary question:

"Is there anything that can be done by the District Council to encourage national recognition of Stephen Sutton to raise the profile of his charity work?"

Councillor Wilcox responded:

"I will look into that to see if anything can be done."

Question 2

Question from Councillor Norman to the Leader of the Council:

“Can the Leader confirm that one of the risks that the Auditor reported to the Audit Committee on last week was the Council’s possibility of, and I quote from the report: “The Council is considering undertaking external borrowing of approximately £2.5m. This will mean that the Council will not be debt free for the first time since 1998?” This despite that fact, as he has confirmed at a previous meeting of the Council that, and I now quote him: “At the end of March 1999 the Capital Receipts balance remaining was £25.440 million.”

Response from Councillor Wilcox:

“The Council’s Approved Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-17 assumes that the Council externally borrows £2.5M in 2016/17 to fund the Capital Programme.

The Capital Receipts balance was £25.440 million as at 31 March 1999.”

Question 3

Question from Councillor Norman to the Leader of the Council:

“At last week’s meeting of Council to discuss petitioning of Parliament on the Hybrid HS2 Bill it became clear that the previous estimate of costs for this may be much more than the £65,000 members had previously been told. Whilst all members of Council supported the need to petition there was concern raised about the total costs that might be incurred.

Does he have a maximum figure he is prepared not to exceed without further support from the Council members?”

Response from Councillor Wilcox:

“Councillor Norman will know that at this present time we are unable to quantify the total costs associated with the Petitioning process. And he will also be aware that dependant on how far our Petitioning progresses will have a significant bearing on what costs we have to bear.

But let me be absolutely clear you cannot put a price on the quality of life for our present residents and future generations to come, We would be failing in our duty as custodians of this district if we just stood idly by and did not put up any resistance to try and mitigate the damage to the whole district for many years to come.

We indicated last week at the Special Full Council Meeting that we will keep all members updated on both progress and costs, and should we feel it right to come back for further ratification then we will make that decision if and when it becomes necessary to do so.”

Question 4

Question from Councillor Norman to the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Development:

“At last week’s meeting of Council to discuss the Petitioning process for the Hybrid HS2 Bill that passed its 2nd Reading on the 28th April I asked a number of questions of the Cabinet Members responsible for HS2 matters and I greatly appreciated that he did try to answer all the questions I put to him. However I did specifically ask and it was in my amendment if we had considered using a Roll B Agent for example one of our own or a County Council Officer or similar to present our case to the Select Committee rather than an expensive Roll A professional Agent. He will recall that, with the help of a Cabinet colleague, he said a local authority had to use a Roll A Agent. Can he tell me if he still stands by that answer and if so on what basis?”

Response from Councillor Pritchard:

“I thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to correct one of my replies, which I made at last Wednesday's Special Council Meeting. In the Petitioning process I stated that, as a Local Government we had to use the services of a Roll A Agent. This was in fact incorrect. I had taken advice, and at the time, I sincerely believed this to be the case. It was never my intention, at any time, to mislead the Opposition, or indeed the whole Council.”

(The Meeting closed at 7.18 pm)

CHAIRMAN