

17 OCTOBER 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors Anketell, Ashton, Ball, Banevicius, Bennion, Booker, Bragger, Checkland, Coe, Cox, Cross, Farrell, D Ennis, L Ennis, Evans, Farrell, Galvin, Harvey-Coggins, Hawkins, Henshaw, Hill, Ho, Holland, Hughes, Leung, Marshall, Mears, Norman, Powell, Pullen, Ray, Robertson, Rushton, Salter, Silvester-Hall, A Smith, J Smith, Strachan, P Taylor, Trent, Vernon, Warfield, Whitehouse, M Wilcox, S Wilcox, Woodward and B Yeates

34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

An apology was received from Councillor S Taylor.

35 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Woodward declared an interest during item 5 as a member on the executive board of the District Councils' Network.

Councillor Henshaw declared an interest during item 15, in his question to the Leader, as a member of Lichfield Rail Promotion Group.

36 TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 were approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of a supplement detailing the breakdown of spending on a parish-by-parish basis, to be attached to item 15.

37 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair informed members that his civic and members service was taking place at Lichfield Cathedral on Sunday the 22nd of October 2023.

38 REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON CABINET DECISIONS FROM THE MEETINGS HELD ON 5 SEPTEMBER AND 10 OCTOBER AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS

The Leader of the Council submitted his report on Cabinet Decisions from the meeting held on 5 September 2023 and 10 October 2023 and Cabinet Member Decisions.

On the Cabinet decision Money Matters 2023/24: Financial Monitoring, Councillor Booker spoke of the need for Cabinet to collaborate with wards members on the allocation of funds. She requested a timeline for initiating ward-level discussions. Councillor Strachan responded that ward by ward meetings would be logistically challenging but assured that any member of Cabinet would be available to discuss such matters when contacted.

Councillor Woodward commented on the necessity of keeping local ward members informed on developments and decisions within their respective wards. The Leader agreed with this sentiment.

On the Cabinet decision Transforming Planning Service Proposal, Councillor Norman inquired whether enforcement issues would be included in the review of the planning service. Councillor Pullen confirmed their inclusion, and that the planning enforcement clearance week (20 - 24 November 2023) aimed to clear this backlog of enforcement cases which would facilitate the swift handling of new cases.

Councillor Evans questioned whether a week was sufficient to clear the backlog of cases and suggested reviewing the proposals to prevent future backlogs. The Leader stated the need for another clearance week would be assessed after the initial one was completed.

Councillor Robertson commented that salaries in planning were not as competitive due to continued pay constraints. He asked that representations to the District Councils' Network should be made to address this issue. The Leader responded that a case would be made to the District Councils' Network but factors such as talent retention should be looked at.

Councillor Woodward commented on the Cabinet item, Community and Voluntary Sector Funding 2024 – 2027, and stated that she had called-in the decision due to the fact the wording of the report was misleading. She informed the opposition that her party would be scrutinising reports to ensure transparency and accountability. The Leader and Councillor Cox agreed that the wording of the report could have been clearer, and Councillor Cox noted that reports would be monitored more closely going forward.

On the Cabinet Member Decision Variable Messaging Signs Hardware and Associated Services Contract Award, Councillor Ashton asked the Cabinet Member for High Streets & Visitor Economy to confirm that the installation would be completed and operational before the Christmas period. The Cabinet Member responded that she had been informed by officers that installation would be completed and tested by early December and the system would be ready to go live in the new year.

Regarding the Cabinet Member Decision 'Review of Fees & Charges - Garden Waste', Councillor P Taylor suggested exploring the possibility of implementing a variable charge based on rateable value of properties in the future. Councillor Pullen responded that officers had examined this option but existing data systems were not compatible and integrating them would require a significant amount of time, which led to the decision to proceed with a fixed charge.

Councillor Harvey-Coggins expressed concern about the price increase and its alignment with the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. The Leader responded that waste operations contribute significantly to our CO2 emissions and to reduce this, investment in the service needs to be made.

Councillor Bragger said that residents should be encouraged to compost their own garden waste as a primary option. The Leader agreed and stated that the Council supports a local composting scheme.

On the Cabinet Member Decision concerning the procurement process for the Birmingham Road multi-storey car park demolition, Councillor Smith sought assurance that the option to demolish the retail unit would not be activated until there is a definitive start date for the site. The Leader gave his assurance.

39 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Norman submitted the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 August and 14 September 2023.

Councillor Ashton reiterated the importance of informing ward councillors about the feedback received from stakeholders affected by the pedestrianisation trial. He also suggested relocating the taxi rank to opposite the old library using the University Car Park as the drop off area. Councillor Bragger supported this point and raised concerns about the confusion caused by different parking rules and the need for proper planning to accommodate various uses in the Market Square area.

Councillor Coe highlighted the difficulty she and others face in finding parking and emphasised the importance of including blue badge holders in the assessment of the pedestrianisation model.

Councillor Norman clarified that a task group on the pedestrianisation was being set up. He stated the task group is open to volunteers and would be investigating these issues.

Councillor Robertson raised concerns about access to information during elections and its impact on voter turnout. He noted a clear trend where wards with lower access to information had lower turnout, while those with higher access had higher turnout. Councillor P Taylor pointed out the difficulty in measuring the impact of voter ID requirements and Councillor D Ennis commented on the difficulties faced by people wanting to vote and called for a better process and continued education on how to vote.

Councillor Woodward said the Leader had undertaken to consider the views of the committee regarding the member call-in and was surprised to see that Councillor Farrell was automatically returned as board member. The Chair of the committee said he would inquire about the consideration the Leader and Deputy Leader had given this matter.

Councillor Evans expressed concerns regarding the maternity services at Samuel Johnson and requested that the vice-Chair of the Committee continue her efforts to retain the maternity unit at County Council meetings. The vice-Chair confirmed she would and noted the upcoming meeting in November.

Councillor Pullen praised the access to data provided by SPIs and asked for steps to ensure informed decision-making within the committee. The Chair of the Committee suggested the possibility of creating a task group for this and emphasised the importance of training and involvement from volunteers for task groups.

Councillor Ball, Galvin and Evans raised concerns about attendance of the Chair of the Council at events outside the district and called for responsible use of taxpayers' money. The Chair of the Council assured members that funds were used responsibly and he often attended events at his own expense and not the Council's.

40 MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND MEMBER STANDARDS COMMITTEE

It was proposed by Councillor Ho that the Minutes be approved and adopted subject to the amendment of small typographical error. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Whitehouse (20 July) and Councillor Vernon (27 September) and it was

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Audit and Member Standards held on 20 July and 27 September 2023 be approved and adopted.

41 MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Committee Chair corrected the spelling of the objector's name in connection with planning application 23/00649/FU.

Councillor Harvey-Coggins and Councillor Galvin raised concerns about the inappropriate language used by some councillors during the Planning meeting on the 31 July 2023. They asked for assurances that the members involved had been addressed. The Chair of the Committee gave his assurance and was certain that this would not reoccur again in the future.

Councillor Woodward commented that this matter emphasised the need of equality and diversity training had hoped that this would be arranged soon.

It was proposed by Councillor Marshall that the Minutes be approved and adopted. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Checkland and it was

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Planning Committee held on 31 July and 4 September 2023 be approved and adopted.

42 MINUTES OF THE REGULATORY AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Councillor Salter provided an update regarding Minute 10, confirming that the diversion order would need to be made under the Highways Act.

Councillor P Taylor gave condolences on behalf of the Council to the family of Ian Price, who tragically lost his life due to a dog attack in Stonnall. He also sent his best wishes for a prompt recovery to the two women who were attacked by a dog in Shenstone. He emphasised the importance of addressing these issues.

It was proposed by Councillor Salter that the Minutes be approved and adopted subject to Councillor Henshaw being included on the list of those present. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Checkland and it was

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Regulatory and Licensing Committee held on 25 September 2023 be approved and adopted.

43 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Councillor Farrell submitted his report recommending the withdrawal of the current Local Plan and the creation of a new one in its place. He mentioned dissatisfaction among residents and stakeholders with the current plan.

He provided a brief history of the local plan, noting that it had been submitted for examination in June 2022 and that questions had been raised by inspectors. He highlighted the opportunity for the Council to reflect on the plan since the elections in May 2023 and explore different spatial approaches for future district development.

He presented two options: continue with the examination of the current plan or withdraw it and start working on a new plan. He acknowledged that there were potential risks and issues associated with withdrawing the plan, but he believed it presented positive opportunities for the Council, as detailed in the report.

Councillor Farrell concluded by urging members to fulfil their elected responsibilities and recommended the withdrawal of the local plan. He moved the recommendations set out in the report.

Councillor Ball proposed an amendment as follows:

- An addition to be added to the end of item 2.2: "and set out a clear timetable for a new Local Plan to be established as quickly as possible and well in advance of 2029."
- Include an additional item, 2.4: "Cabinet should also clarify its intentions regarding current Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and environmental policies and obligations, in light of the withdrawal of Local Plan 2040 and subject to advice from the Planning Inspectorate."

Councillor Ball, Bragger and Woodward spoke on the clarity that the amendment would provide to residents.

The amendment was approved.

Councillor Bragger stated that the amendment provides a clear assurance to residents regarding the Council's actions and intentions. He hoped issues such as social housing for young people and environmental standards would be addressed.

Councillor Woodward said she supported the withdrawal of the local plan due to the plan's inherent flaws. She requested evidence of resident's widespread dissatisfaction with the local plan mentioned in the report, noting that, in her experience, residents were concerned with the cost of living, increases in anti-social behaviour due to inadequate policing and lack of access to healthcare services. She called attention to the significant financial implications, such as substantial expenditure and cost for taxpayers, as well as the potential risk of losing control over development and an influx of speculative planning applications.

Councillor Hill commented that residents had expressed concerns regarding the local plan, notably on insufficient infrastructure to support new housing developments.

Councillor Ball questioned how the Council found itself in the current situation, as during the development of the local plan there was no indication that there were any issues with. He highlighted the lack of social housing in the plan and the use of a dynamic model for financial viability that made it easier for developers to claim that affordable housing was not financially viable. He requested clarification on why potential judicial review was not included in the main body of the report.

Councillor Trent noted that residents raised concerns about inadequate infrastructure for housing development during the election and expressed worries about the cost and additional time required for a new local plan.

Councillor Bennion highlighted the potential impact on the villages in the district if the local plan is withdrawn, as it could lead to housing being concentrated in these areas. He questioned the potential locations for future housing developments and suggested that more thought needs to be given to the infrastructure implications, particularly in relation to transport.

Councillor Pullen stated that members need to continue to work in a cross-party manner and come up with a plan that builds communities, not just houses.

Councillors D Ennis and Ashton stressed the need for transparency and openness in the decision-making process. Councillor D Ennis expressed his desire for better coordination and communication among members to ensure a comprehensive and effective new local plan. Councillor Ashton commented that the plan's withdrawal provided an opportunity to align with future national planning policies and to address residents' concerns about infrastructure.

Councillor Farrell addressed members' concerns. He stated that during the election, residents had expressed concerns about the local plan, particularly the lack of infrastructure and the potential negative impact on communities. They highlighted issues such as the lack of schools, dentists, doctors, and frequent traffic congestion.

He noted that planning applications always carry risks, regardless of the local plan. He referred to the Secretary of State's decision to overturn the Watery Lane development as an example. Additionally, he informed members of a letter from the Housing Minister.

Councillor Farrell gave assurance that there was a sufficient supply of housing for the next nine and a half years and no risk to the Council's ability to meet its housing targets.

He explained that changes in government policy were instrumental in creating the current situation. He clarified that the specific deadline of 2029 is not the desired outcome and would be instructing officers to begin the necessary actions promptly. He mentioned that the government required plans to be reviewed at least every five years, potentially sooner based on ongoing reforms.

In response to a question about a potential judicial review, Councillor Farrell expressed confidence in the Council's robust defences.

He acknowledged the challenges of articulating the spatial strategy but agreed on the importance of avoiding housing developments being imposed on communities without adequate consideration. He acknowledged the need for a new approach, which might involve the development of a new settlement. He mentioned that the location of such a settlement would be determined in subsequent stages of the process.

Councillor Farrell concluded with a reminder that the withdrawal of the local plan does not negate the possibility of housing developments. The discussion on the location and design of developments would continue alongside the development of a design code.

Councillor Pullen provided additional information about the letter received from the Housing Minister. The letter highlighted the powers that the minister possesses under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 but clarified that she would not exercise those powers. He informed members that a meeting had been arranged with the minister and her officers to ensure a smooth progression of the local plan.

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

RESOLVED:

(1) That Full Council note the progress made in responding to initial comments and queries received from the examiner, as part of the current progress of the plan submitted for examination in June 2022.

(2) That Full Council approve and instruct officers to take all necessary steps, including giving the required notice under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), to withdraw the Local Plan 2040 from examination, in accordance with section 22 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and set out a clear timetable for a new Local Plan to be established as quickly as possible and well in advance of 2029.

(3) That Full Council approve the draft statement of withdrawal as set out at appendix A of the Council report for release.

(4) That Cabinet should clarify its intentions regarding current Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and environmental policies and obligations, in light of the withdrawal of Local Plan 2040 and subject to advice from the Planning Inspectorate.

44 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Councillor Pullen submitted his report on Amendments to the Constitution stating that the proposals were sensible and important alterations that would improve the functioning of the Council.

Councillor Robertson proposed an amendment to increase the number of members on the Member Standards Committee from nine to eleven. This was to ensure that there would always be enough members available to sit on the review panel and, the assessment panel.

The amendment was approved.

It was proposed by Councillor Pullen, seconded by Councillor Marshall and:

RESOLVED: That the following changes to the Constitution be approved:

- (i) That the Key Decision Limit for additional expenditure, income or savings be set at £150,000.
 - (ii) The acceptance of additional income over the key decision limit will be a key decision where there are significant resource implications/obligations for the Council (as determined by the Section 151 officer).
 - (iii) That a new Committee of 11 members be established following the November/December Cycle of meetings to undertake the Member Standards functions of the Audit & Member Standards Committee.
 - (iv) That provision be made for the Audit Committee to include up to two 'Independent Persons'.
- (2) That Council note that the Constitution has been updated to reflect areas of responsibility delegated to individual Members of the Cabinet.

45 POLITICAL BALANCE AND APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES

It was proposed by Councillor Pullen, seconded by Councillor Salter and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Hill be moved from Overview & Scrutiny Committee to Regulatory and Licensing Committee to maintain balance on Committees.

46 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Strachan provided a summary of the Council's treasury management activity for the past financial year. He mentioned that there were some underperformances in the Council's Capital Programme, primarily due to delays in the delivery of enabling works for the Birmingham Road Site and the cinema development. Additionally, there was a slight underperformance in the funding for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). However, he highlighted that since taking DFG back in-house the underspend had significantly reduced.

Furthermore, he noted that there were variances in the balance sheets, particularly in assets less liabilities. These variances were due to an actuarial change that required the inclusion of pension liabilities on both sides of the balance sheet. He was clarified that it was not a cause for concern and did not affect the overall financial stability of the Council.

Regarding investments, he noted that there were 'book losses' on major investment balances, which could impact the balance sheet and might necessitate a policy change in how the Council treats its investments. He assured that there would be further information and discussion on this matter in the future.

In terms of compliance, he confirmed that the Council remained compliant with all treasury limits and all the prudential indicators set throughout the financial year. He reassured Council that the Council remained a well-run and financially stable authority.

Councillor P Taylor questioned the significant reduction in the budget for electric charge points, from £80k to £10k. It was clarified that the budget cut was due to the lack of opportunity to spend the allocated funds in the previous year. This did not reflect a shift in the Council's strategy or ambition for climate change initiatives.

It was proposed by Councillor Strachan, seconded by Councillor Norman and

RESOLVED: that the Annual Treasury Management Report and Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 be approved.

47 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) UPDATE

Submitting his report, Councillor Strachan explained that the proposal aimed to increase the budget for a Community Centre in Streethay by £250k, with the intent to positively impact the community.

Councillor Robertson raised the issue of inflation and its impact on funding, specifically that voluntary sector funding had fallen short by £86,000 when adjusted for the effects of inflation. He raised concerns about the need to protect and support the voluntary sector.

In response, Councillor Strachan reassured that the issue of protecting budgets against inflation would be considered in future discussions concerning the MTFS. These discussions would consider the challenges posed by inflation and seek to ensure that resources were appropriately allocated to support various sectors, including the voluntary sector.

It was proposed by Councillor Strachan, seconded by Councillor Silvester-Hall and

RESOLVED: That the Approved Budget of £600,000 for the Streethay Community Centre be increased to £850,000 to reflect additional funding.

48 QUESTIONS

Questions under Procedure Rule 11.2 for Council

Q1. Question from Councillor Henshaw to the Leader of the Council

"Can the Council Leader consider the formation of a small task force to vigorously promote the resumption of passenger services on the Lichfield - Burton rail line. This is a line already carrying freight traffic and could be equipped for passenger trains at reasonable cost especially compared to the eye-watering cost of HS2 responsible for so much of the current congestion on the adjacent A38.

A task force would need to lobby County Council, West Midlands Railway, Network Rail, Department for Transport and the National Memorial Arboretum (site of proposed station for Alrewas) forcefully.

The benefits for the District Council's Green Agenda seem obvious.”

Response from the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Ecology & Climate Change

“I thank Councillor Henshaw for his question and he is absolutely right when he talks about the existing rail line between Lichfield and Burton carrying freight, and his desire to see passengers utilising this line has for many years been a long standing ambition of this Council. In fact County Councillor Janet Eagland has been lobbying for a new station at the National Memorial Arboretum for some considerable time with the support of the Arboretum. More recently following the decision to stop the construction of HS2 at phase one has heightened the call for a local station in Alrewas. The Staffordshire Leaders Group is one avenue where we can promote the reintroduction of passengers on this line along with the support of our MP Sir Michael Fabricant who has also been very vocal on his support of this line.

Councillor Henshaw is also correct on his assumption of the continuing congestion and the impact of traffic on the A38 (as I have first hand experience living along the slip road in Alrewas) is only going to increase unless action is taken.

We can also ensure that our New Local Plan highlights the importance of this rail line between Lichfield and Burton given the increasing number of homes and communities that will be delivered in the Plan. Given the importance and impact this could have not only on our Highways Network, but more importantly the affect this would have on our Carbon Footprint cannot be underestimated, and to this end perhaps the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny could consider setting up a Transport Working Group to investigate this further.”

Supplementary Question from Councillor Henshaw

“When can we set up a transport working group? For which I will volunteer my own time.”

Response from the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Ecology & Climate Change

“I have made suggestions to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny to consider this task group.”

Q2. Question from Councillor Norman to the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Ecology and Climate Change

“An order for 280,000 blue bags was submitted by this council on behalf of 5 authorities in Staffordshire for paper, card and cardboard recycling and distributed to residents early last year. At that time members supported the Council requesting a refund and/or replacement bags from the supplier because although the contract was for 81-litre capacity bags many were as small as 57-litres.

Can he set out what the result of that action was as I have not seen a report in the intervening 16 months?”

Response from the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Ecology and Climate Change

“A thorough review of the roll out of the new waste service was undertaken, with results reported to O&S committee on 17 November 2022. The review identified a number of problems with the purchase and roll out of the new service, and a number of important lessons to ensure the same mistakes are not made again.

Specifically in relation to the bags themselves, investigations were undertaken following initial concerns raised about the size and quality of the bags supplied to the five councils. An independent auditor was procured to test the bags, which took place in May 2022. The tests showed the bags varied in size, some of which were smaller than the tolerances applied, however a number of samples were also found over size which clearly contributed to the

concerns raised with visual differences between bags raised by residents. The independent auditor also found that measurement of the internal dimensions of the bags is almost impossible to achieve accurately and as such this was NOT recorded on the day. The volume of the bags also varied within the samples tested. The tested bags were filled to slightly below the actual top of the bags, such that closure could be achieved without spillage of the contents. The auditor was satisfied that the filled bags would 'almost certainly result in the overall average volume being equal to or greater than the 81 Ltr's specified'.

Given the outcome of these tests, and the limitations of the specification agreed by the five councils before the procurement was commenced, the council had no alternative other than to accept the bags supplied met the tolerances of that specification."

No supplementary question was asked.

Q3. Question from Councillor Norman to the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Ecology and Climate Change

"In 2019 DEFRA carried out a Consultation exercise considering the standardization of recycling in the country to which neither Lichfield District nor Tamworth Borough responded. Another Consultation was carried out in 2021 though the Government has still not published a report on that outcome. Then at the Conservative Party Conference a few days ago the Prime Minister announced that his government was not now going to force council to have seven recycling bins.

Has this council ever had any notice that we were going to make residents have seven recycling bins?"

Response from the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Ecology and Climate Change

"The Council has not received notice to 'make residents have seven recycling bins'. The legislative position for waste and recycling provision is set out in The Environment Act 2021, issued by Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra). Under the Act the various waste streams (glass, metal, plastic, paper and card, food waste and garden waste) should be collected separately, unless this is not technically or economically practicable or provides no significant environmental benefit.

Recently, however, the Government has confirmed that policy covering 'consistent recycling' will still proceed under the new name of 'Simpler Recycling'. All authorities are awaiting further guidance on the detail of what this entails, although it is expected the date for implementation will be no earlier than October 2025.

Defra has gone on to outline some of the key points, which include:

- A requirement to recycle using seven bins will not happen
- Ensure all homes in England can recycle the same materials
- Those materials won't need to be separated at home

Defra reiterated in its announcement that 'it was never the case that seven bins would be needed by households'.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Norman

"Can I confirm that the prime minister himself did say he we would not be having seven wheeled bins?"

Response from the Cabinet Member for Waste, Recycling, Ecology and Climate Change

“I can confirm that we will not be having seven bins, but we are going to make sure we increase our recycling rates. We have a presentation on the 26th October which will be looking at ways we can do this.”

Q4. Question from Councillor Banevicius to the Leader of the Council

“Does the leader believe that the proposed traffic management scheme for Sankey's can now go ahead following the cancellation of HS2 and the reallocation of funding by the Prime Minister?”

Response from the Leader of the Council

“The County Council has informed us that they are awaiting details from central government on how HS2 funding will be reallocated to other schemes. LDC officers met with Department of Transport last week who further confirmed that there is limited detail at this stage, following the announcement. Discussions are ongoing between all three councils, including Burntwood Town Council, as to how we can move forward with regeneration opportunities at Sankey's Corner.”

Supplementary question from Councillor Banevicius

“These discussions have been going on for far too long. When is the new scheme - which has already cost £78,000 in design fees - likely to be delivered?”

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Response from the Leader of the Council

“This is not a district council scheme, it's a County Council Scheme. We are working very closely with County Council and Burntwood Town Council to try to push this along.”

Q5. Question from Councillor Hughes to the Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Council

“Do you agree with me that upholding the highest standards of conduct, as set out in the Code of Conduct, and in the Nolan Principles, is vital to restoring public trust in politicians at local and national level?”

Response from the Leader of the Council

“Yes, I fully agree with Cllr Hughes, and I certainly expect that same commitment from every member of my Group too.”

Response from the Chair of the Council

“Thank you for your question. You and I have attended many Council Commitments together in our professional capacity for the District and City Council and you have continually seen how resolutely and robustly I adhere to the Code of Conduct and the Nolan Principles. It is promising that you illustrate your awareness of both as a New District Councillor.”

Supplementary question from Councillor Hughes

“I was gratified by the united response from the Leader and the Chair but given that there has been a public falling out between the Chair and the ruling group, it is difficult not to see that there may be some danger in the Nolan Principles of selflessness, accountability, and particularly leadership being compromised. Do you think there are measures that are needed

to be taken, quoting our code of conduct, 'to preserve the dignity and public reputation of the council' during the rest of the year?"

Response from the Leader of the Council

"The reasons have been documented in a short way publicly. I don't think that having an independent Chair who is not a member of the group in administration brings any of the principles into question."

Q6. Question from Councillor Robertson to the Cabinet Member for High Street and Visitor Economy

"It has now been two and half months since the implementation of your part-time pedestrianisation scheme for Lichfield City Centre as a response to significant concerns about the design of the scheme which were raised by people with disabilities, and local businesses, including health providers. Can you provide any assessment of the impact of the part-time pedestrianisation scheme has had relative to the initial full-time pedestrianisation scheme?"

Response from the Cabinet Member for High Street and Visitor Economy

"Following on from the previous ETRO and extensive consultation, we have started the implementation of a hybrid scheme that takes into account the feedback we have received.

This scheme is now informally in place while we wait for the legal process for the amended ETRO to be completed and the revised signage to be installed within the city centre.

Whilst we continue to receive feedback and respond to enquiries as a result of these changes, the formal 6 month ETRO consultation will take place when the legal work has been finalised.

The council will continue to collect data, liaise with businesses and visitors throughout. Once the revised ETRO begins additional consultation will take place and we'll continue to feedback to Members."

Supplementary question from Councillor Robertson

"The question asks very clearly 'can you provide any assessment' and the information that came back was 'we will continue to do this,' 'this is where we're at' but it doesn't actually include the words 'no we can't provide that assessment.' I asked for the data from officers a week ago and it's not available yet, so we are not currently measuring the footfall in the city centre after the introduction of this part-time pedestrianisation trial two and half months ago. That's a real concern for me and even more so a real concern for businesses in our city centre who rely on that trade to stay in business. It's going to be a real concern for the members of the community who like a pedestrianisation city centre but also like a thriving city centre and it's going to be a real concern for the members of the disabled community who do need to use those blue bay badges. So, I think the question we need to have here is when are we going to get a grip on this? When are we going to be able to see a data led response and how are we going to reassure those businesses?"

Response from the Cabinet Member for High Street and Visitor Economy

"I welcome the attention that has been given to this scheme and certainly the contributions that have been made so far this evening. With regards to the revised signage, which I think is the key element to this, that's the part where we look at putting together the statutory consultation that follows. However, in the meantime there is still that mechanism for any of the users of the city to be able to provide feedback. That feedback is being published on LDC's pedestrianisation page - whether that be from workshops and surveys - and we will continue to do so for transparency as we go forwards. So, there are some very pertinent parts of what

we're trying to do and making sure we have the legal elements of those certain before we can make sure that when we embark on the next round of the consultation that we're getting those meaningful replies. I would emphasise that the ongoing ability to be able to feedback is very much still there."

Q7. Question from Councillor P Taylor to the Leader of the Council

"In light of the recent cancellation of future phases of the HS2 project by the Prime Minister, despite years of pain for Lichfield residents, and taking his commitments to fund other transport schemes at face value; can the Leader please tell me what plans he has to take advantage of the current situation to improve local transport links - especially those bus services that I mentioned previously to allow Burntwood residents, and others, to enjoy the benefits of the proposed new cinema? Perhaps, for example, he could consider reviving the Council's previously abandoned Community Transport Scheme, to serve our community better."

Response from the Leader of the Council

"The County Council has informed us that they are awaiting details from central government on how HS2 funding will be reallocated to other schemes. LDC officers met with Department of Transport last week who further confirmed that there is limited detail at this stage, following the announcement. We are committed to working with the County Council to ensure that Lichfield District gets its 'fair share' of any transport funding opportunities that arise from this situation and that any funding is targeted to where it is needed most."

Supplementary question from Councillor P Taylor

"I thank the Leader for his response and acknowledge that transport issues like this generally are the purview of the County Council and therefore we have to work with them. I would ask him, particularly on this national community transport week, to commit to exploring using any funding we might be able to attain as District Council to apply to our priority transport issues rather than those of the County Council."

Response from the Leader of the Council

"He has my assurance."

49 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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"

50 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Norman submitted the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 August 2023.

(The Meeting closed at 9.15 pm)

CHAIR