

COUNCIL - 8 December 2020

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: A Adeyemo, M Allen, K Allsopp, S Ashraf MBE, K Blunt, M Brain, J Burn, J Butler, C Buxton-Sait, S Caudwell, D Cole, I Courts, S Davis, T Diccico, M Gough, K Grinsell, R Grinsell, B Groom, J Hamilton, K Hawkins, A Hodgson, T Hodgson, P Hogarth MBE, Mrs D Holl-Allen MBE, R Holt, D Howell, A Mackenzie, A Mackiewicz, K Macnaughton, L McCarthy, M McLoughlin, K Meeson, F Nash, M Parker, J Potts, W Qais, A Rebeiro, T Richards OBE, A Rolf, J Ryan, R Sexton, G Slater, R Sleigh OBE, K Thomas, P Thomas, J Tildesley, Mrs K Wild, C Williams and M Wilson

1. APOLOGIES.

Apologies were received from Councillor Fairburn.

2. COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2020 were approved.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR CONFLICTING INTERESTS FROM MEMBERS

Councillor Mackiewicz made a declaration of interest as a Director of AMPA Associates Ltd who provided contracts procured by Solihull Council.

Councillor Adeyemo made a declaration of interest as he was employed by a company who provided insurance to HS2 Ltd.

Councillor Hawkins made a declaration of interest in relation to the Remuneration Committee recommendations.

4. PETITIONS

Councillor Mrs Holl-Allen submitted a petition on behalf of Knowle residents in relation to the redevelopment of Wyndley Garden Centre.

Councillor McCarthy submitted a petition on behalf of local residents which requested Solihull Council abandon plans to relocate the Household Waste Recycling Centre and Moat Lane depot to Damson Parkway.

Councillor Karen Grinsell submitted a petition on behalf of residents of Stanway Road, Cropthorne Road and Welford Road requesting that a road safety audit take place at the junction of Stanway Road and the A34 Stratford Road, followed by a consultation with local residents about the options for traffic calming measures.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

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The Mayor invited Members to make a Christmas donation, as corporate parents, for looked after children and care leavers within the Borough.

The Leader of the Council made a statement on the fire that had taken place at Redwood House and responded to questions from Councillors. West Midlands Fire Service and Solihull Community House were praised for their response and support provided to local residents. The Mayor requested that a letter be sent to West Midlands Fire Service to thank them for their response to this incident.

The Deputy Leader made an announcement about the Winter Support Scheme which targeted the most vulnerable residents in the Borough during the winter with e-vouchers.

The Cabinet Member for Resources made a statement on the discretionary use of COVID-19 Additional Restrictions Business Support Grants, with a focus on the leisure and hospitality sector.

6. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 9 AND 12

Mr Cressman a resident and local business man made a deputation about business rates and the future of businesses after COVID-19. Councillor Sleigh responded that business rates were not set by the Local Authority, and they were under review by Central Government.

7. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 8

Councillor Parker to Councillor Mackiewicz, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing

“In light of a number of extra care/retirement facilities being proposed and already built in Shirley can the Cabinet Member explain what the planning policy of the Council is regarding this type of facility?”

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Housing responded that the Solihull Local Plan from 2013 did not have a specific policy on housing accommodation for older and disabled people as national policy did not require this. Therefore plans needed to be assessed on their own merits and in more general terms against the policies of the Plan, and national guidance. As Solihull had an older population and assessments undertaken considered there would be a need for more retirement and extra care housing. This would be through the existing supply and the new approach laid out in the draft Local Plan.

Councillor Parker asked how the Council Planning policy was proposed to change in the draft local plan and how it would manage the growth of the retirement facilities.

The Cabinet Member outlined that the draft Local Plan included policy P4E which specifically focused on housing for older and disabled people. This would

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enable proposals to be considered against a specific policy basis, and enable suitable accommodation to be approved and reject unsuitable proposals.

Councillor McLoughlin to Councillor Mackiewicz, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing

“Can the Cabinet Member advise when the further evidence for the Local Plan Review, dated from October 2020, was made publicly accessible on the Council’s website?”

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Housing replied that there were 150 documents available online on 30th October when the plan was published, four documents had been subsequently added which were all supplementary information. Adjustments to published documents with minor amendments had also taken place, which was common practice.

Councillor McLoughlin asked for clarification about how this information was publicised.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that changes would not be publicised as they were minor changes to ensure problems that had been identified were rectified.

Councillor K Thomas to Councillor Hawkins, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Highways

“Whilst I am delighted that Solihull Council is planting 250,000 trees, why are we not maximising the benefit of our tree planting by planting as many as possible lining streets and car parks? I was told many of the trees being planted are quite small trees - saplings which are not suitable for street locations. We need trees lining our streets and car parks to provide the shade we need as temperatures continue to rise.”

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways confirmed all planting options available had been explored. The Council was on target to plant 250,000 trees over the next 10 years as well as the shorter target of 25,000 trees in the winter planting season.

Councillor Thomas asked what could be done to plant these on car parks or roads in the future.

The Cabinet Member explained that there were challenges with planting trees in residential locations as there were underground utilities which restricted planting locations. However, there were plans to plant 350 larger trees throughout residential and tree lined urban areas as part of this year’s programme.

Councillor Wilson to Councillor Mackiewicz, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing

“The UK is one of the world’s most nature-depleted countries; last month the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust published a report highlighting the crisis, with 1 in 10 species under threat. This is the reality of the sixth mass extinction - can the

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Cabinet Member set out what SMBC is doing to help avert this natural disaster?”

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Housing outlined that the Council recognised the importance of a healthy natural environment, identified within the Climate Change Declaration made last year, the Council Plan and the draft Local Plan, which had measureable net gains in biodiversity.

Councillor Wilson noted that the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust report explained that the land contributions for wildlife recovery was 6% for Solihull, compared to the regional average of 11% and 16% for Stratford-upon-Avon. Councillor Wilson asked for a commitment from the Cabinet Member to work with the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to allocate more land to nature recovery.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that this could be explored but noted that the Borough’s land base was quite high. The draft Local Plan did allocate land for the purpose of nature recovery, and sought to work with developers to make a net biodiversity gain.

Councillor McCarthy to Councillor K Grinsell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Housing

“DWP statistics as of May 2020 showed the 4,400 people across Solihull and Meriden are entitled to Carer’s Allowance. The last ONS Census also showed that there are 24,113 unpaid carers in our borough. Many of these carers are struggling financially and a National survey by Carers UK showed that more than one third are struggling to make ends meet - many have had to use a food bank. Will the Cabinet Member write to the government to support calls for an increase of Carer’s Allowance by £20 a week, in line with the recent increase of Universal Credit, to recognise the work of our wonderful carers?”

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Housing recognised the work that had been undertaken by carers in the Borough. The Cabinet Member explained that the carers allowance was determined nationally, and was means tested. During the COVID-19 pandemic, further steps had been provided locally to support carers such as the carers direct payment was no longer means tested, carers were called to check on their wellbeing and the Carers Trust were involved in the administration of the hardship fund.

Councillor T Hodgson to Councillor Mackiewicz, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Planning and Housing

“The Covid pandemic has meant lots of people have needed to work from home, which is often reliant on good broadband connectivity to be feasible. My residents on the Berry Maud Lane development are still struggling with broadband access due to planning process failures, and are now having to raise £30,000 to resolve this. In view of this and other well-documented challenges these residents have faced through no fault of their own, will the council consider supporting them with the costs of appropriate broadband installation?”

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The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Housing acknowledged the requirement for superfast broadband and outlined the steps the Council had taken to improve coverage in the Borough. He sympathised with residents but explained that there were a number of properties in the Borough which faced similar problems. The Council would not be able to provide the necessary funding for these properties. It was suggested that a reason that the road may be unable to have the superfast internet was because the road was unadopted.

Councillor T Hodgson requested that the Cabinet Member consider the option of funding the necessary work.

The Cabinet Member reaffirmed that it was not a planning system failure and highlighted that steps had been taken since the application to improve the planning policy process.

8. COUNCIL TOPIC OF DEBATE

There was no topic of debate.

9. NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Caudwell introduced the motion which was seconded by Councillor McLoughlin.

“Multiple issues have been identified in the evidence base published in support of the Local Plan Review. The Council acknowledges that failing to correct these issues would expose the Plan to the risk of legal challenge and so jeopardise its adoption, and therefore agrees to:

1. Address the issue identified;
2. Re-issue the corrected evidence base with a schedule of corrections; and
3. Extend the consultation exercise for a period of three weeks post-reissue, to allow residents to consider and amend their responses as necessary.”

Following a debate, the motion was put and lost.

The following Councillors requested to place on record that they voted for the motion:

Councillors Ashraf, Allen, Adeyemo, Burn, Caudwell, Hamilton, T Hodgson, Macnaughton, McCarthy, McLoughlin, Sexton, Slater, K Thomas, Williams, Wilson.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

Governance Committee 16 November 2020 - Minute 5 Calendar of Meetings 2021-22

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The Chairman of the Governance Committee invited Members to approve the Calendar of Meetings 2020/21.

RESOLVED:

That the calendar of meetings for 2021/22 be approved.

Licensing Committee 27 November 2020 - Minute 4 Statement of Licensing Policy

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee invited Members to approve the Statement of Licensing Policy.

RESOLVED

That the Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.

11. REPORTS FROM CABINET

Councillor Courts – Leader of the Council

The Leader advised Council of the decisions taken at the Cabinet meetings on 1 October, 5 November and 3 December 2020 and provided a summary of the meetings and activities he had been involved in on behalf of Solihull and the West Midlands, as well as an update on the economic strategy responsibilities of his portfolio.

Councillor K Thomas asked how many Council employees would continue to work from home long term and what would the free office space be used for. The Leader confirmed that there was an expectation of 40% of the workforce returning to the office in the future, and the spare space would be used initially for staff based in other buildings.

Councillor Sleigh – Cabinet Member for Resources

The Cabinet Member for Resources advised Council of the decisions taken at the decision sessions on 20 October and 1 December 2020.

Councillor Rolf – Cabinet Member for Stronger and Safer Communities

The Cabinet Member for Stronger and Safer Communities advised Council of the decisions taken at the decision session on 27 October 2020, and provided a summary of activities since the last Full Council meeting.

Councillor Cole asked about the plans to reopen smaller libraries within the Borough, with a focus on Kingshurst Library. The Cabinet Member confirmed that libraries would reopen slowly to ensure maximum safety, and would provide a written response on the specific query.

Councillor Mackiewicz – Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Planning and Housing

The Cabinet Member advised Council of the decisions taken at decision sessions on 29 October and 12 November 2020.

Councillor Meeson – Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills.

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The Cabinet Member advised Council of the decisions taken at decision sessions on 21 October and 30 November 2020 and presented the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report.

Councillor McCarthy asked what percentage of EHCP Annual Reviews were overdue. The Cabinet Member advised he would provide a written response.

Councillor Hawkins – Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways

The Cabinet Member advised Council of the decisions taken at decision sessions on 13 October and 25 November 2020.

Councillor K Grinsell – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health and the minutes of the Solihull Health and Wellbeing Board

The Cabinet Member advised Council of the decisions taken at decision sessions on 15th October and 26th November 2020 and the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing board held on 10th November 2020. The Cabinet Member also provided an update on the current COVID-19 situation locally.

The Leader of the Council thanked everyone who worked to support the COVID-19 effort.

Councillor Richards – Cabinet Member for Growth and Infrastructure

The Cabinet Member advised Council of the decisions taken at the decision session on 22 November 2020.

Councillor Tildesley – Cabinet Member for Leisure, Tourism and Sport

The Cabinet Member advised Council of the decisions taken at the decision session on 2nd November 2020.

12. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board presented the report.

RESOLVED

That Council noted the Scrutiny Annual Report

13. MINUTES OF SCRUTINY BOARDS

The minutes of the following Scrutiny Board were presented for information:

- Resources and Delivering Value (12 October and 9 November 2020)
- Children's Services, Education and Skills (3 November 2020)
- Stronger Communities and Neighbourhood Services (4 November 2020)
- Economic Development and Managed Growth (19 November 2020)
- Health and Adult Social Care (23 November 2020)

14. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

The minutes of the following committees were presented for information:

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- Remuneration Committee (26 October 2020)
- HS2 Implementation Advisory Group (29 October 2020)
- Audit Committee (2 November 2020)
- Licensing Committee (5 November and 27 November 2020)

15. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The minutes of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee were presented for information.

16. QUESTIONS BY LEADERS OF POLITICAL GROUPS UNDER SO5 (2) (T)

There were no questions received.

17. CHIEF EXECUTIVE URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

18. QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 8

No questions remained.

19. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

That, pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business to be transacted, on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information in terms of paragraph 3 of Part 9 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

20. PRIVATE MINUTES

To receive for information the following sets of minutes:

- Appeals Panel (8 October, 5 November and 25 November 2020)
- Audit Committee (2 November 2020)
- Resources and Delivering Value Scrutiny Board (9 November 2020)

The meeting finished at 8.17 pm