

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6 March 2013, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.05pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Kinson (Chairman); Councillors Barrott, Mrs Blacklock, Boad, Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Mrs Bunker, Caborn, Coker, Copping, Cross, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Dean, Dhillon, Doody, Edwards, Mrs Falp, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford, Gill, Mrs Goode, Mrs Grainger, Guest, Hammon, Heath, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth, Kirton, MacKay, Mrs Mellor, Mobbs, Pittarello, Pratt, Rhead, Mrs Sawdon, Shilton, Mrs Syson, Vincett, Weber, Ms Weed, Wilkinson, Williams and Wreford-Bush.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davies, Dagg and Mrs Knight.

95. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

96. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 6 March 2013 were approved as a correct record, subject to the attendance being amended to record Councillor Mrs Blacklock being present and removing the apologies for absence from Councillor Mrs Blacklock because she was also present, and signed by the Chairman.

97. **COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements and communications:

- (1) The Chairman informed the Council that at their next meeting on 24 April 2013 there would be a presentation from John Archer about his recent visit to Bo in Sierra Leone;
- (2) The Chairman, on behalf of the Council, sent the best wishes of the Council to Councillor Mrs Knight who was recovering at home after being treated for meningitis in hospital;
- (3) The Chairman informed the Council that the County Music Service were looking at moving into Spencer Street Church in Leamington, so that they could bring all their services into a central location. This would of course be a key development in the cultural quarter;
- (4) The Chairman offered the congratulations of the Council to the Under 15 Rugby Team at Warwick School who had won the national schools rugby tournament at Twickenham;
- (5) The Chairman offered congratulations on behalf of the Council to Kelly Sibley on her English National Championship victory; and
- (6) The Chairman offered the best wishes of the Council to Leamington Brakes in closing out the Evo-Stik Southern League Premier Division where they were now favourites to win the league.

98. **NOTICE OF MOTION**

Councillor John Barrott proposed the following motion to Council, which was duly seconded:

"On the 1 April 2013, Warwick District Council will start to administer the Welfare Reforms being brought in by the Government. The legislation known as the Bedroom Tax will adversely affect a wide range of families within the District. This could lead to evictions and homelessness because the ability to pay has decreased.

I therefore propose that Warwick District Council call on the Government to abolish this unfair Bedroom Tax and for the Council to step in and protect all of our vulnerable residents."

Councillor Vincett proposed the following amendment to the motion, which was duly seconded and carried to become the substantive motion:

"On the 1 April 2013, Warwick District Council will start to administer the Welfare Reforms being brought in by the Government. The legislation about the under occupation of bedrooms will adversely affect a wide range of families within the District. This could lead to evictions and homelessness because the ability to pay has decreased.

Warwick District Council, through its Benefits and Housing Teams, should continue to support our vulnerable tenants by concentrating on dialogue with them and promoting our current policies of home swap, financial inclusion and discretionary grants. A joint Finance and Housing & Property Services progress status report is brought to Council in three months time before any consideration is given to writing to the government about this matter and that the letter, if required, would also include the concerns outlined at minute 158 of the Executive"

Councillor Boad proposed the following amendment to the substantive motion from Councillor Vincett, which was duly seconded

"On the 1 April 2013, Warwick District Council will start to administer the Welfare Reforms being brought in by the Government. The legislation known as the Spare Room Subsidy will adversely affect a wide range of social housing tenants who are in receipt of housing benefit with the District. This could lead to evictions and homelessness because the ability to pay has decreased.

This Council notes the unfairness of introducing the Spare Room Subsidy for social housing tenants who have registered to transfer to a smaller property but who through no fault of their own, cannot do so because of a lack of suitable tenancy being available.

The Council resolves to introduce, with immediate effect, not to introduce the Spare Room Subsidy for those tenants who have registered to downsize until one offer of suitable accommodation has been made.

This would apply for all social housing tenants who register to downsize by 17 May 2013."

The amendment lost and the substantive motion from Councillor Vincett was put to the vote and

RESOLVED that

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bedrooms will adversely affect a wide range of families within the District. This could lead to evictions and homelessness because the ability to pay has decreased.

Warwick District Council, through its Benefits and Housing Teams, should continue to support our vulnerable tenants by concentrating on dialogue with them and promoting our current policies of home swap, financial inclusion and discretionary grants. A joint Finance and Housing & Property Services progress status report is brought to Council in three months time before any consideration is given to writing to the government about this matter and that the letter, if required, would also include the concerns outlined at minute 158 of the Executive.

(The Chairman explained that there had been no submissions for consideration under agenda: item 5, Public Interest Debate; item 6, Petitions; item 8, Public Submissions; item 9, Questions to Committee Chairmen; and item 10, Questions to Portfolio Holders.)

99. **LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' STATEMENTS**

Councillor Cross, Portfolio Holder for Cultural Services, informed the Council that he was aware of the concerns regarding Sky Blues in the Community because of the financial position of Coventry City Football Club. Councillor Cross reassured Council that Sky Blues in the Community was a separate financial entity to the Football Club and was a registered charity with trustees. The charity was also supported by the Football League Foundation. The contract award was made through the appropriate process and due diligence was given to ensure they were a separate financial entity to the Football Club, to ensure if the Football Club ceased to exist that the work of the charity would continue which it would.

Councillor Shilton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, reminded Council that the new contracts for waste and recycling, property cleaning, grounds maintenance and street cleaning would all start on 1 April 2013 and he wished the contractors well for the new start.

Councillor Coker, Portfolio Holder for Community Protection and Environmental Health, informed Council that the new arrangements for the provision of health would start on 1 April 2013. The Clinical Commissioning Groups were established and operational. Warwick District Council was now represented on HiWeb at County level, as were all District Councils. The arrangements were now in place for the Street Pastors in Leamington and generally there was enthusiasm from all parties to cooperate to improve public health overall which was leading to further opportunities for public health initiatives. In addition Councillor Coker was confident that the Health Scrutiny arrangements would make our involvement in health matters more robust but the Council must remember that health implications should be considered as part of all decisions taken by the Council.

100. **QUESTIONS FOR THE LEADER**

Councillor Boad asked the Leader of the Council:

"Considering his recent success of resolving the lighting within the Council Chamber could he provide the reassurance that he would resolve the problems with the microphone system as quickly?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Doody, agreed that the problem needed to be sorted and was confident it would be sorted quickly.

Councillor Weber asked the Leader of the Council:

"If he could provide an update on HS2 considering the decision in court about the Judicial Reviews?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Michael Doody, explained that he had attended a meeting with Councillor Hammon and it was understood there was likely to be a challenge to the decision on the Judicial Review and the Council would stay on board for that challenge. There would be a cost for this but not a large amount.

Councillor Weber asked the Leader of the Council:

"Considering the commitment of £100,000 by this Council to 51m, how much more money would this challenge cost?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Doody, explained that it was residents money, that the Council had a duty to protect its residents and needed to spend this money to protect those residents. All governments had made stupid decisions and sometimes these needed to be challenged. The cost of this would be a small amount but within the budget. It would be wrong to turn round and say this was the final stage because we had a duty to protect residents from this blight.

Councillor Edwards asked the Leader of the Council:

"Considering the responses to the questions on HS2 does this mean the Council would receive a more detailed response soon?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Doody, agreed that this would be quite reasonable but reminded Members of their fundamental duty to protect residents.

Councillor Brookes asked the Leader of the Council:

"If he would agree that considering the Local Government Boundary Commission's decision it was perhaps ill advised that we suggested changing the boundaries?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Doody, explained that he would have thought that Whitehall would have recognised the Council was in the best position to comment on boundaries. The Boundary Commission obviously did not and, as a result, had not got it right. He had thought the proposals from the Council were reasonable and provided a sense of belonging and, therefore, the decision was unfortunate to see. He would now go back and talk with the Chief Executive about the matter to see if a further response would be appropriate.

Councillor Mellor asked the Leader of the Council:

"If he could explain why the Cinema provision at the Spa Centre was suspended?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Doody, explained that he was not aware of this nor the reasons so would write to Councillors with a response.

Councillor Dhillon asked the Leader of the Council:

"If he agreed that the Boundary Commission had listened to local views because they had recognised the importance of Warwick celebrating its 1100th birthday on its recognised boundaries?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Doody, explained that this was exactly the point he was making.

Councillor Heath asked the Leader of the Council:

"If he would agree that the boundary decision on Warwick Gates was a 'dogs dinner' and not clear for anyone to understand?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Doody, stated that he totally agreed with Councillor Heath. He felt that Warwick Gates had no centre or natural place of belonging and this was terrible. He felt, in his own opening, that the Council should consider giving Warwick Gates its own Parish Status.

Councillor Illingworth asked the Leader of the Council:

"That while some parts of the decision by the Boundary Commission were not suitable, that they had taken a reasonable approach in Kenilworth?"

In response, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Doody, explained that because the Boundary Commission had taken forward a recommendation from this Council, although it was not unanimous, "you have got what you wanted so do not gripe or gloat".

101. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The report of the Executive meeting of 13 March 2013 was proposed by Councillor Doody and duly seconded.

Councillor Boad, proposed an amendment to the recommendations included within Minute 158 Discretionary Housing Payment Policy to add a third resolution to the decision that read

"The Council will not introduce the spare room subsidy for those tenants who have registered to downsize until one offer of suitable accommodation has been made.

This will apply for all social housing tenants who register to downsize by 17 May 2013."

Councillor Boad requested a recorded vote on this amendment, which was supported by two Councillors and therefore a recorded vote was required. The votes were as follows:

For the Amendment: Councillors; Barrott, Mrs Blacklock, Boad, Copping, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Ms Dean, Edwards, Gifford, Gill, Mrs Goode, Pittarello, Mrs Syson, Weber, Ms Weed, Wilkinson and Wreford-Bush.

Against the Amendment; Councillors; Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Mrs Bunker, Caborn, Coker, Cross, Dhillon, Doody, Mrs Falp, Mrs Gallagher, Mrs Grainger, Guest, Hammon, Heath, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth, Kinson, Kirton, MacKay, Mrs Mellor,

Mobbs, Pratt, Rhead, Mrs Sawdon, Shilton, Vincett and Williams. Therefore, the amendment to the motion was lost.

The original proposal was put to Council and

RESOLVED that the report be approved.

102. **PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

103. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The confidential report of the Executive meeting of 13March 2013 was proposed by Councillor Doodyduly seconded and

RESOLVED that the reports be approved.

In addition to this Councillor Doody informed Council he was aware of Councillors concerns regarding items to follow and would be looking to ensure that this did not happen.

104. **COMMON SEAL**

It was

RESOLVED that the Common Seal of Warwick District Council be affixed to such deeds and documents as may be required for implementing decisions of the Council arrived at this day.

(The meeting ended at 8.05 pm)

CHAIRMAN
24April 2013