

# WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4 December 2013, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.15pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Davies (Chairman); Councillors Barrott, Boad, Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Mrs Bunker, Caborn, Coker, Copping, Cross, Dagg, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Ms Dean, Edwards, Gallagher, Gifford, Gill, Mrs Goode, Mrs Grainger, Guest, Hammon, Heath, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth, Kinson, Mrs Knight, 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 Mrs Blacklock, Dhillon, Mrs Falp, and Kirton.

## 65. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 66. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 23 October 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

## 67. **COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman informed Council that his Chaplain, Cannon Rev Aware, was on long term sick leave and he wished him well. He informed Council that Rev Anne Werrell would act as his Chaplain for the rest of the Municipal year.

The Chairman informed Council about the extremely successful welcome home parade and award of the Freedom of the District for the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers on 26 November 2013. The Parade had seen many thousands of people on the streets supporting the Fusiliers. The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for his support of the initial idea, the Council for taking the decision to award the Freedom of the District and Executive for providing the funding.

The Chairman then thanked the hardworking and enthusiastic members of staff who ensured, through their hardwork the parade was successful: Rose Winship, Tom Duckham, Chris Charman, Stuart Poole, Sam Collins, Joseph Baconnet, David Butler, Sam Ingram, Rachael Carpenter, Kieren Bodill, Fiona Clarke, Tim Hepworth, Richard Jones, Debbie Cole, Graham Leach, Roma Armstrong, Amy Carnall, Mel Rayall, Maggie Welding, Gillian Friar, Jon Young, Louise Parminter, David Guilding, Andy Copeland, Pieter Doughty, Dave Harris, Ed Bramall, Keith Harris, Cliff Wiggins, and Norman Perkiss-Small. The Chairman thanked the officers because without their help and professional abilities there would not have been such a smooth running day. Their meticulous planning and timing impressed the Army from the outset and guaranteed that the day passed successfully and memorably..

The Chairman reminded Councillors that his Christmas concert was on 14 December 2013 and he hoped to see Councillors there.

The Chairman informed Council that there would be no business under items; 5, Public Interest Debate; 6, Petitions; 8, Public Submissions; and 9, Questions to Committee Chairmen.

68. **NOTICE OF MOTION**

It was proposed by Councillor Heath and duly seconded that:

*"Warwick District Council recognises the increase both nationally and locally in the elderly population and therefore taking this into consideration agrees to include in the District Local Plan a policy that every planning application for over 50 houses should include a 10% allocation for accommodation suitable for the elderly i.e. bungalows."*

*The 2010 census states that there are 19 million over 60's in Britain and this is expected to rise to a massive 28 million by 2030. According to statistics half of private new builds in the coming years will be bought by over 65's whilst those over 85 will soar from 1.4 million now to 3.7 million by the mid 2030's. Despite this the number of bungalows being built has almost come to a halt in recent years.*

*Nationally only 1,700 were given planning permission last year, 2% of all homes built. This is compared to 27,000 a year in the 1980's. Locally Warwick Gates is a classic example, 1800 houses including affordable but how many bungalows for the elderly NONE. Developers will not build them of their own accord as they say they take up to much ground space.*

*As a planning authority we owe it to the community to have a strong policy on ALL housing not just affordable. We sit here as the elected representatives of our residents to form this policy for the next 15 years and therefore it is incumbent on us to include our ageing population. In fact Nick Boles the Coalition Planning Minister has written to all councils instructing them to build more houses for the elderly including retirement villages.*

*We as an authority are trying to persuade tenants to downsize by giving incentives to do so and by the tax on under-occupied properties.*

*By adopting this in the Local Plan it will assist the elderly currently in owner occupier homes to relocate to smaller properties thus releasing two and three bedroom homes onto the market for families wishing to move into a larger property.*

First Amendment

Councillor Barrott proposed, and it was duly seconded, that:

*"Warwick District Council recognises the increase both nationally and locally in the elderly population. Taking this into consideration, this Council agrees to include in the District Local Plan a policy that every major development planning application should include plans to provide an adequate proportion of suitable accommodation that meets the needs of our elderly population, ensuring that the application site is in walking distance of amenities such as shops, doctors and public transport."*

Councillor Doody, explained that in his view there were merits in both the original motion, the amendment and the amendment from Councillor Mrs Syson that was circulated to all Councillors and had not yet been considered by Council. Therefore

he had asked the proposer of the amendment, through the Chairman, if he was willing to accept an amendment that:

*"The proposals submitted to Council from Councillor Barrott, Heath and Syson are considered by these Councillors with Officers to see what can be progressed. This would then be reported back to the Executive in due course."*

This proposal was accepted by Councillor Barrott and the seconder of his motion. Councillors Heath and Mrs Syson also indicated their agreement to this.

On being put to the vote it was:

**RESOLVED** that the proposals submitted to Council from Councillor Barrott, Heath and Syson are considered by these Councillors with Officers to see what can be progressed. This would then be reported back to the Executive in due course.

*(Although not considered by Council, but for the sake of clarity because the information will be reported back to Executive in due course, the amendment circulated to Council from Councillor Mrs Syson was as follows:*

*"Warwick District Council recognises the increase both nationally and locally in the elderly population and therefore taking this into consideration agrees to include in the District Local Plan a policy that every planning application for over 50 houses should include a 10% allocation of open market homes designed to the Lifetime Homes Standard referred to as the 16 Design Criteria.*

*By adopting this in the Local Plan it will assist the elderly currently in owner occupier homes to relocate to more suitable properties to meet their changing needs, thus releasing two and three bedroom homes onto the market for families wishing to move into a larger property.")*

## 69. **QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

Councillor Pittarello asked the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Property Services, Councillor Norman Vincett:

"That in the light of recent energy price rises, what additional action is the Council taking to help hard-pressed tenants?"

In response Councillor Vincett explained that, this was an issue that did not stop at our tenants but affected all energy users nationally; such that the coalition Government had recognised its impact particularly on domestic users and that the average household energy bill of £1,500 included environmental taxes amounting to some £112, or more than £2 per week. We all await the expected statement from the Chancellor relating to this topic in his Autumn review tomorrow.

However, assisting, our tenants with their household expenditure and increasing their disposable income remained a priority and one that had been in the Warwick District Council Housing Strategy.

The delivery plan developed from the strategy would include a range of actions dedicated to helping tenants as, irrespective of any initiative put forward by the Chancellor tomorrow, it would seem inevitable that for the foreseeable future energy costs would continue to rise.

The actions of the Council would include investigating the benefits of energy co-operatives and utilising the buying powers of our existing customers as well as a campaign to educate and raise awareness in partnership with other local partners.

Councillor Pittarello asked a supplementary question, that he welcomed the introduction of buy co-operatives and asked when this would be moving forward:

In response Councillor Vincett explained that no specific date had been set to start this work but it would be in the near future.

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

- (A) Councillor Shilton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, announced that Rob Hoof had been appointed as Head of Neighbourhood Service on 1 December 2013. He took the opportunity to thank the previous Head of Service, Ian Coker, for his dedication to the Council over the years.
- (B) Councillor Shilton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services announced that all households would be receiving details of the Christmas waste and recycling collection service in the next week. The recycling collections would also include Christmas cards, some wrapping paper and a special Christmas tree collection from homes;
- (C) Councillor Hammon, Portfolio Holder for Development Services, announced that Tracy Darke had been appointed full-time Head of Development Services;
- (D) Councillor Hammon, Portfolio Holder for Development Services, thanked the Chairman for the Home Coming Parade and congratulated all involved. This event showed the success of the creation of an Events Team within the Council. He also congratulated the officers for ensuring that the Christmas lights switch-on events went well;
- (E) Councillor Vincett, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Property Services, informed Council that a twelve month partnership had been established between Warwick District Council, Stratford District Council and County Occupational Therapy Service. The partnership would provide a joined up service for residents of all tenures who required help and assistance to live independently at home. This initiative was an expansion of the work of the Private Sector Housing Team and would be based at Riverside House. The experiment was expected to reduce the end to end times that customers currently waited for a house adaptation and would change behaviours and lead to greater partnership working between colleagues from different organisations and professional disciplines; and reduce cost.
- (F) Councillor Coker, Portfolio Holder for Health and Community Protection, announced that the Cubbington drainage scheme arrangements were now in place and work was due to start soon.

71. **QUESTIONS FOR THE LEADER**

There were no questions for the Leader.

72. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE**

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

**RESOLVED** that the report be approved.

73. **APPOINTMENT OF LEADER**

It was proposed by Councillor Doody, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that Councillor Mobbs be appointed as Leader of the Council.

Councillor Mobbs, thanked Councillor Doody for his work as the previous Leader and thanked the Council for his appointment.

Councillors Barrott, Boad and MacKay, in turn, thanked Councillor Doody for his work as Leader and congratulated Councillor Mobbs on his new role.

Councillor Doody responded and thanked all for their kind words and wished Councillor Mobbs well in his new role as Leader.

74. **MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

It was proposed by Councillor Mobbs, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) that Councillor Doody is no longer be a member of the Executive, be noted;
- (2) Councillor Doody be appointed to Planning Committee in place of Councillor Mobbs; and
- (3) Councillor Mobbs be appointed as a substitute Councillor on the Planning Committee in place of Councillor Doody.

75. **STATEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR MRS GALLAGHER**

Councillor Mrs Gallagher addressed the Council and stated that:-

"You will all have read in the press recently about Standards and the Code of Conduct. What I would like to bring to the attention of the Council is the other side of this and the cost to the tax payer.

I have been the subject of a complaint about my conduct as a District Councillor by a Mr X for a comment I made on behalf of four of my constituents in an email about a planning application. The matter was referred for investigation under the previous Standards regime. I should point out this took 18 months and cost me both financially and in health.

Following the investigation I asked for it to go to a hearing because although a breach of the Code of Conduct was found by the Investigating Officer, I was of the opinion my views had been factually correct and therefore an apology did not seem right.

12 hours before the start of the hearing the complainant withdrew the complaint. This led to the hearing being cancelled because no complaint existed to be considered and our procedure did not permit the matter to be considered at a hearing.

Now I am sure you all wonder what my concerns are, they are:

- (1) Firstly it is unfair that a complaint should be allowed to fall in this manner and it should be for the Monitoring Officer in discussion with the Chairman of the Hearing to consider if the case should be allowed to fall or not and if the hearing should proceed; and
- (2) I took legal advice, at personal cost, both during the investigation and prior to the hearing where I was due to be represented. I feel that this Council should have an insurance scheme to repay the costs incurred by Councillors when they are found either not guilty or the complaint falls.

I would like to point out that this one complaint cost the tax payer approximately £10,000.

I would ask that these points are considered by the Working Party looking into these matters."

Councillor Mrs Bromley tried to address the Council on this matter but was not permitted to do so by the Chairman.

Councillor Pratt, as Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Working Party considering the review of the Code of Conduct, thanked Councillor Mrs Gallagher for her comments and informed her that they would be considered by the Working Party.

## 76. **COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Bromley, and duly seconded that for the sake of clarity and the avoidance of doubt, the Council amends Procedure rule 33 from:

*"The decision to record a meeting(s) of Council, the Executive, a Committee or Sub-Committee will be down to the individual body.*

*At present only Planning and Regulatory Committees have resolved to record all of their meetings."*

To read:

"That all meetings of Council, the Executive, a Committee or Sub-Committee held in the Council Chamber will be recorded."

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Mobbs, duly seconded and on being put to the vote:

**RESOLVED** that to improve communication with our residents this Council investigates the potential for recording and webcasting all public meetings.

77. **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.

78. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The confidential report of the Executive meetings of 13 November 2013 was proposed by Councillor Doody, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the reports be approved.

79. **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 7.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN  
22 January 2013