

# WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19 January 2011, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor MacKay (Chairman); Councillors Barrott, Mrs Blacklock, Boad, Mrs Bromley, Mrs Bunker, Caborn, Coker, Copping, Crowther, Davies, De-Lara-Bond, Ms Dean, Dhillon, Michael Doody, Edwards, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford, Mrs Goode, Mrs Grainger, Guest, Hammon, Heath, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth, Kinson, Mrs McFarland, Mrs Mellor, Mobbs, Pittarello, Pratt, Rhead, Mrs Sawdon, Shilton, Mrs Tyrrell, Vincett, Ms Weed, Wilkinson.

## 71. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Falp, Gill, Harris, Hatfield, Kirton and Mrs Knight.

## 72. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 1 December 2010, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman.

## 73. **COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- (a) The Chairman explained that in response to his letter to Royal Mail he had received a response which he would describe as denial of the problems and that he was composing a reply to it and would therefore appreciate any further evidence Councillors had with regard to the delivery service provided by Royal Mail;
- (b) The Chairman announced that he would be holding a textile and art exhibition and sale at the Town Hall from 11 March to 13 March to raise money for his charities. Invites to the opening would be sent to all Councillors in due course; and
- (c) The Chairman congratulated the Council's Food Safety Team on their recent accreditation for ISO 9001 2008, which was a credit to this Council because the team had sustained a high quality service for a significant length of time and demonstrated systems thinking at its best.

## 74. **PRESENTATION ON VISIT TO SIERRA LEONE**

The Council received a presentation from the Head of Environmental Health and John Archer on their recent visit to Sierra Leone as part of the Council's commitment to One World Link.

## 75. **PUBLIC INTEREST DEBATE: ALTERNATIVE VOTE SYSTEM**

The Council received submissions from both the campaign in favour and against the alternative vote system ahead of the planned national referendum on 5 May 2011.

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

After receiving the representation the Council debated the proposals the Chairman asked the Council to indicate for their preferred means of voting and on voting the majority of Councillors were opposed to the proposal for an alternative voting system.

### **76. QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

- (A) Councillor Barrott asked the Leader and Strategic Leadership Portfolio Holder, Councillor Michael Doody:

"Is it now time to discontinue the Joint Working Party that was set up with Stratford District Council looking at shared services and for Members and officers to concentrate on dealing with how Warwick District will deliver services in light of the reduction in the Revenue Support Grant over the next four years?"

In asking this question, I would like to add that I am not against shared services in principle, but only when appropriate and with the best partner."

In response Councillor Michael Doody replied that he agreed with every word that Councillor Barrott had submitted and that this Council should look at shared services at the right time with the right people and a report would be brought to the Executive about this.

The Council would continue to work with Stratford to look at the potential for shared services with CCTV and would continue to work with them on Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. It would consider shared services with other authorities where there could be a benefit to the organisation.

Stratford were now talking with another authority about shared services and senior management and for this reason the Chief Executive was asked by the Leader to inform staff of the current position with regard to shared services with Stratford.

- (B) Councillor Edwards asked the Portfolio Holder for Customer & Information Services:

"The outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review has already impacted the Citizens Advice Bureau, resulting in staff redundancies. The full impact on residents has not been felt yet, but undoubtedly the Bureau's workload will steadily increase.

Discussions between the Council and the CAB have been taking place for some time now about relocating CAB from Hamilton Terrace to the Town Hall. Given the current economic climate, the demand on CAB's services and that 13 years remain of a 25 year lease, will the Portfolio Holder accept that now is not the time for relocation, and instead honour the lease between the Council and CAB?"

Councillor Caborn explained that he was well aware of the funding difficulties faced by CAB, along with potential impacts on its staff

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

following the loss of a significant contract. He explained that he had met with them in August about a potential move to the Town Hall and this offer had been rejected in December. Councillor Caborn explained that he had invited the Chairman of CAB to a meeting to discuss this matter further to which he had not received a response and would follow this up.

Councillor Caborn responded explaining that he respected the lease CAB had in place with the Council but the Council needed to manage its assets effectively in light of the budget pressure it faced.

Councillor Edwards asked a supplementary question that surely the Council needs to consider the benefit from the sale of its assets against the interests of the clients of CAB because of the valuable independent service it provides.

Councillor Caborn responded explaining that this was exactly the reason why he wanted to meet with them.

- (C) Councillor Barrott asked the Development Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Hammon:

“In August 2010, the Executive agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Development Portfolio Holder to confirm WDC’s acceptance of the proposed expression of interest for a Coventry and Warwickshire Enterprise Partnership for submission to the Government and a further report would be received when the outcome of the expression of interest is known.

Can the Portfolio Holder please update members on the outcome and how he believes this partnership will benefit Warwick District?”

In response Councillor Hammon explained that the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was amongst those LEPs that were agreed by the Government last year. Since then time had been taken to agree the governance, in particular for the private sector and the Chair. The first meeting of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was held on Monday 17 January 2011.

The LEP represented the Warwickshire and Coventry economic area and was an opportunity for a ‘locally-owned’ partnership to play a central role in economic development; establishing priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and local jobs. It was a mechanism to bring the public and private sectors together to respond to the economic downturn and focus on recovery.

The LEP Board comprised of the:

- Chairman (Denys Shortt of DCS Europe, business leader)
- Business leaders – 5 seats
- Civic leaders – 5 seats (two Warwickshire County Councillors, two Coventry City Councillors and a representative from the District and Borough Councils)
- University of Warwick – 1 seat

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

- University of Coventry – 1 seat

Vision: "To make our area (Warwickshire and Coventry) a World Class economy in which to do business; a place to lead a great life; excel at learning; visit and return to – all supported by exceptional private, public and voluntary services."

The partnership should benefit Warwick District through:

- engagement at the sub-regional level through the LEP and ability to influence the priorities and focus;
- raise the profile of opportunities to develop in the District through wider marketing, promotion and inward investment activity;
- influence infrastructure decisions to ensure that the District was well connected;
- ensure businesses could access appropriate business support;
- ensure that residents had access to appropriate skills for the job market;
- having the tools to tackle worklessness; and
- attracting visitors and development to ensure that the town centres were vital and vibrant.

In short, from an economic development and regeneration perspective, it was better to be involved to enjoy the positive outputs of the LEP now and be aware of any opportunities in the future. Especially in areas which had a sub regional profile e.g. tourism and visitor economy and sites such as Stoneleigh, Coventry airport, etc. Equally infrastructure requirements could also be supported such as the Regional Growth Fund bid being submitted which, amongst other things would help fund a new rail station at Kenilworth.

Councillor Barrott asked a supplementary question that if this Council did not have a direct representation on the board how would the Council influence the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership?

Councillor Hammon responded explaining that the Council would be providing officer support for the LEP and the Chief Executive would form part of the officer group. In addition the District and Borough Council's representations compared to the level of the County Council and Coventry City Council on the board was being considered.

## **77. LEADERS AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS STATEMENTS**

- (A) The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mobbs, provided an update on the budgetary position of the Council. It was now predicted that there would be a budget surplus this year of £1.4million to £1.5million pounds which strengthened the position of the Council. Overall the Council's estimates for the reduction in the revenue support grant were around £200,000. This, combined with the Council's ongoing commitment to reduce costs while maintaining services meant that the Council should be confident of a balanced budget not only for 2011/12 but also for 2012/13.

The balanced budget would mean that the Council would now be in a position to not only meet its current needs but also make long terms

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

reserves for a replacement programme. Therefore the Council would be proposing no increase in Council tax in 2011/12 and there was every likelihood that in 2012/13 there would also be no increase in. This would mean that in real terms residents would have a reduction in Council Tax of 3.6% based on the Consumer Price Index.

- (B) The Portfolio Holder for Cultural Services, Councillor Mrs Gallagher announced that due to the prudential management of the Council's budgets there would be £200,000 added to the Council's budget, for play equipment replacement for this year and the next five years.
- (C) The Portfolio Holder for Customer and Information Services, Councillor Caborn announced that further to the grants review the intention was to have a Grants Scheme for the rural area of £75,000 per year and a scheme for the urban area of £75,000 per year. Details of the scheme would be brought to the Executive in due course.
- (D) The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, Councillor Coker explained that the introduction of the Dog Control Orders, by this Council, was to help tackle problems with the small minority of dog owners who were irresponsible taking into consideration the rights of all users of public open space, not just dog owners. The Council had received a significant amount of feedback and although the decision had been delegated to the Head of Environmental Services it was now proposed that a report would be brought back to the June Executive to enable open deliberation and scrutiny of the proposals and feedback.

Following a question from Councillor Kinson, Councillor Coker explained that he was aware of a number of problems and issues that had been raised as part of the consultation and that these would all be considered following the end of the consultation, as part of the evaluation process. Councillor Coker reminded the Council that the deadline for comments on the draft orders was 26 January 2011.

- (E) The Portfolio Holder for Development Services, Councillor Hammon announced that a meeting of Leaders had been arranged to discuss the position of Councils affected by HS2. The aim of the meeting was to help each Council understand the position other Councils had taken and how they could help each other.

## **78. QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

- (A) Councillor Boad asked the Leader:

"At the October Council meeting I asked "What progress has been made with regard to the register that the Council is required to publish of all expenditure over £500, and when would it be available". You replied that "Progress was being made and they would be available when they were ready".

Could Councillor Doody now please inform the Council what progress has been made on publishing online all items of expenditure over £500, when will this data actually be available for public scrutiny, and how frequently is it planned to publish this information in the future?"

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

Councillor Doody responded that the draft plan was ready and being tested ready for publication.

Councillor Boad asked a supplementary question, asking if Councillor Doody was aware that the deadline for publication of 31 January 2011 was only eight working days away? What message had Councillor Doody got for council tax payers on his failure to provide them with the financial transparency that they deserved from his administration?

Councillor Doody responded explaining that the need to abide by the Data Protection Act had led to the delay.

### 79. **EXECUTIVE**

(A) It was moved by Councillor Michael Doody, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the report of the meeting of the Executive, excluding minute 88 which had previously been considered by Council in December, held on 24 November 2010, be approved and adopted.

(B) It was moved by Councillor Michael Doody, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the report of the recommendations of the Executive of 6 January 2011, be approved and adopted.

### 80. **SPENCER HARRISON**

Councillor Michael Coker announced to the Council, with deepest regret, the death of former Chairman of the Council Councillor Spencer Harrison who was also a Kenilworth Town Councillor. The Council wished to record its sympathy and pass on its thoughts to Spencer Harrison's family.

### 81. **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 8.45pm)

CHAIRMAN  
24 February 2011