

Warwick District Council

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19 November 2014, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.05pm.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brookes, Copping, Davies, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Doody, Kirton, MacKay, Pittarello and Vincett.

49. **Declarations of Interest**

Minute 50 – Petitions

Councillor Dhillon declared an interest because he was a trustee of Racing Club Warwick.

Councillor Kinson declared an interest because he was a trustee of Hill Close Gardens.

Councillor Mrs Mellor declared an interest because she was trustee of Hill Close Gardens.

50. **Petitions**

The Council received a petition, under its petitions scheme, from the Friends of St Mary's Lands, endorsed with over 1200 signatures, which read as follows:

"To honour their earlier commitments to the residents of the town of Warwick and fully protect St Mary's Lands, Warwick, from any further development which would impact upon the open nature of the land, or reduce the amount of land available for free public recreation.

Further Details:

We demand that any future management plan for St Mary's Lands, recognises that this was Warwick's Common for hundreds of years, and the deep affection it is held in by local residents; and has no changes in land-use that are in conflict with any part of the Warwick District Council Act 1984.

We note that the existing Management Plan for St Mary's Lands, which was adopted by the full council in 2005, was drafted after extensive public consultations and the active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

We note that in 2001 there was unanimous agreement from WDC Councillors that the central area of St Mary's Lands be protected from any further development, and that a public consultation strongly supported this.

We should reasonably expect that any changes to the existing management plan, would first have to be fully justified, and then a similar transparent, public and accountable process undertaken in drafting a new management

plan; to that used in forming the 2005 plan. Which should then have extensive public consultation, on a fully costed published plan, including public meetings.

We would expect any new master plan to be an evolution of the existing management plan, and to include a full assessment on its success and to account fully for how the £3.2 million of public money was spent.

Given that St Mary's Lands was adopted as a local wildlife site in 2011, we would expect that any changes, that impact on biodiversity, have a full Environmental Impact Assessment; and this should be part of any master plan or management plan for St Mary's Lands.

The proposed changes in the GVA Report have only involved a very narrow group of leasehold tenants, and appear to be mainly driven by their financial interests, and therefore do not constitute a "master plan" fit to replace the existing management plan or to meet the criteria set out in CT7 of the Draft Local Plan."

Mr Hamilton, addressed the Council about the petition, on behalf of the friends of St Mary's Lands.

It was proposed by Councillor Hammon and duly seconded that:

"The Council notes the petition and that also a master plan for St Mary's Lands has yet to be developed but that prior to any approval of a master plan there would be full and wide ranging public consultation"

It was proposed, by Councillor Mrs Falp, and duly seconded that:

"the Council procedure rule that restricted debate on the petition to 15 minutes be suspended for this item to enable a full and open debate. "

Before the vote was called Councillor Mrs Bromley, duly supported by two Councillors sought a recorded vote on the proposal from Councillor Mrs Falp. The proposal to suspend procedure rules was approved by 35 votes to none with a single abstention. The votes made were as follows:

For: Councillors; Barrott, Boad, Mrs Bromley, Mrs Bunker, Caborn, Coker, Cross, Ms Dean, Dhillon, Edwards, Mrs Falp, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford, Gill, Mrs Goode, Mrs Grainger, Guest, Hammon, Heath, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth, Kinson, Mrs Knight, Mrs Mellor, Mobbs, Pratt, Rhead, Mrs Sawdon, Shilton, Mrs Syson, Weber, Ms Weed, Williams and Wreford-Bush.

Abstention: Councillor Mrs Blacklock

It was proposed by Councillor Barrott, and duly second that

"Given the scale of opposition to the possible changes to the openness of the land known as Warwick Common and information that officers and Councillors have received that Council recommends to the Executive that it commission a further investigation into these matters. The investigation is to be carried out by officers, members of the Overview & Scrutiny committee, members of the stakeholders groups and representatives of local residents."

At 7.00pm the Chairman adjourned the meeting to enable a discussion to take place between Councillors Barrott and Hammon with the Chief Executive.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting at 7.19pm. At this time both Councillors Barrott and Hammon withdrew their original proposals.

It was then proposed by Councillor Hammon, duly seconded and on being put to the vote;

Resolved that

- (1) the Council notes the petition and that also a master plan for St Mary's Lands has yet to be developed;
- (2) the development of the master plan be undertaken involving a reconstituted working party, including two representatives of the Friends of St Mary's Lands Group;
- (3) the resultant draft master plan be the subject of widespread public consultation; and
- (4) only following all of the above would a decision come before the Executive to be made on the master plan.

51. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2014 were taken as read and, signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

52. Communications and Announcements

The Chairman informed the Council that

- (1) a response had been received to the letter, regarding Code of Conduct sanctions, from Council in September from the Department of Communities and Local Government, which had been circulated to all Councillors;
- (2) the Jazz concert, in aid of her Charities, was due to take place on the evening of Saturday 29 November and tickets were still available;
- (3) Councillor Copping was currently in hospital following a fall and she offered the thoughts of this Council to his family; and
- (4) there would be no business under items; 5, Public Interest Debate; 10, Public Submissions; 11, Questions to Committee Chairmen; and 12, Questions to Portfolio Holders.

53. Housing & Property Services

The Council received a presentation from the Housing & Property Services management team about the work of the service and its plans for development.

54. Response to Council Motion

The Council considered a report from the Chairman of the Council in response to the resolution passed in June 2014 requesting that the Chairman of the Council brought forward proposals for Members to consider amending the constitution to enable the introduction, at the earliest possible opportunity, of a new Housing Committee.

A Working Group had been established, its membership comprising of the Leaders of the Council's four political groups and the Chairman of the Council, Councillor Mrs. Sawdon, to consider the practicalities of the resolution.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Sawdon, duly seconded and

Resolved that

- (1) a Housing Advisory Group is established;
- (2) the Head of Housing & Property Services in consultation with the existing Working Group to finalise details of the proposed working arrangements for the Housing Advisory Group and bring a report to the February 2015 Executive; and
- (3) the Interim Housing and Property Board is dissolved, and its remit is absorbed within the new Housing Advisory Group.

55. Notices of Motion

The Council considered a Notice of Motion from Councillor Mrs Higgins:

"That this Council asks officers to investigate and report to the Executive on the potential for introducing a required colour scheme for all Hackney Carriage Vehicles licensed by this authority. This would be with a view to all Warwick District licensed Hackney Carriage vehicles being this colour by the year 2020.

The purpose for introducing such arrangements would be to ensure that every passenger - be they teenagers or the elderly - know that the car outside their house, at the hospital, at the train station is a WDC badged taxicab driven by a fit and proper person.

The Council would expect the report from officers to include details of known schemes within England and Wales, the benefits these have brought and would bring for this council, the potential costs for licensees, the risks associated with the proposal from potential challenges from licensees and how this could impact on current policy."

Councillor Mrs Higgins, and her seconder, accepted an amendment that consideration should also be given to a introducing a colour scheme for private hire vehicles as well.

On being put to the vote it was

Resolved that this Council asks officers to investigate and report to the Executive on the potential for introducing a required colour scheme for all Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles licensed by this authority. This would be with a view to all Warwick District licensed Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles being this colour by the year 2020.

The purpose for introducing such arrangements would be to ensure that every passenger - be they teenagers or the elderly - know that the car outside their house, at

the hospital, at the train station is a WDC badged taxicab driven by a fit and proper person.

The Council would expect the report from officers to include details of known schemes within England and Wales, the benefits these have brought and would bring for this council, the potential costs for licensees, the risks associated with the proposal from potential challenges from licensees and how this could impact on current policy.

56. **Leader's and Portfolio Holders' Statements**

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Councillor Mrs Gallagher informed the Council that she had attended the 10th Annual Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Sports awards where there had been three winners from Warwick District. Sky Blues in the Community had won the award for Community Project of the Year for their work in West Warwick, Kenilworth Wardens Under 14s won junior team of the year and Naomi Folkard won Sports Woman of the Year.

The Leader, Councillor Mobbs, informed the Council that:

- (a) he had met with Warwick Town Council in November and was due to meet with Royal Leamington Spa Town Council and Whitnash Town Council to help us ensure we understand the views of others and help to dispel any myths; and
- (b) there was an emerging matter of a combined authority and there was to be meetings with Leaders in Coventry & Warwickshire plus local MPs to help us to understand their viewpoints. He would be asking officers to provide the Executive with facts and details on this issue. There was a meeting in early December of the Joint-Committee sign up to the joint prosperity agreement but the Leader would be asking for this to be delayed in light of the ongoing discussions regarding combined authorities. The Leader assured Council that the decisions on this were not ones for him to take but ones for Council in due course.

The Portfolio Holder for Health & Community Protection, Councillor Coker informed Council that:

- (a) work had now started on the crematorium refurbishment but the lodge was now open as the new office and reception. This improvement enabled a greater level of customer service and work was now starting on improving on the management of the woodland; and
- (b) the grants review panel work was now well underway and would be within the agreed budget of £300,000 for the work of the voluntary sector in the next three years. He thanked the Councillors involved in this work particularly Councillors Mrs Falp and Wilkinson who had stepped down from the group because of conflicts of interest.

57. **Questions to the Leader**

Councillor Williams asked the Leader if he was aware that the Leader of Coventry City Council had said that Coventry will never be part of a Birmingham super authority and that before any local authority joins there should be a referendum for the local people? In response the Leader explained that if we did not join another authority, of whatever size or shape, and moved to a combined economic prosperity board, we would be the only authority in the country in that position. Before we made any decisions we

would need more facts and while there were myths we needed to be careful. This aspect was moving very quickly, not driven by us and we also needed to be mindful of our elections next May.

Councillor Mrs Bromley asked the Leader if he was aware of a meeting between Councillor Bullen and Officers regarding the five year housing supply. She explained that evidence had been provided to officers that clearly demonstrated that the Council would more than meet its five year housing supply but officers had stated they did not have time to provide a detailed response to this data; therefore would the leader consider that it is a matter of expediency to fully establish the situation on the Districts 5 year housing supply, especially in view of further applications coming before Planning Committee? Councillor Mrs Bromley concluded by asking the Leader to ensure that officers provided a detailed response to Councillor Bullen's data as a matter of urgency. In response, the Leader said that at present the Council was not quite there, with the Local Plan, but there would be a briefing for all Councillors in December, he promised to ask for an update on the latest position to be sent now. At present the Leader was of the view that Council would consider the draft Local Plan for submission in January 2015.

Councillor Heath asked the Leader if he thought there was any point submitting the Local Plan because by the time it was approved all the planning applications would have been approved. In response, the Leader reminded Councillors that the Local Plan was not just about where houses should be built but about how we shape the District up to 2029 and it needed to be in place and it needed to be robust.

Councillor Weber asked the Leader if there was anything that this Council could do to restrict the number of letting signs in parts of Leamington, and to help ease the blight that these caused on the local street scene? In response, the Leader said that he understood that Leamington had the largest student population as a town without a university. He hoped that officers were listening to this concern and would respond on what action could be taken.

58. **Reports of the Executive**

The reports of the Executive of 3 September 2014 (excluding minute 35 as approved by Council on 24 September) and 1 October 2014 (subject to the inclusion of Councillor Mrs Grainger and Williams), were proposed by Councillor Mobbs, duly seconded and

Resolved that the report be approved.

(The Chairman had agreed to take the complete minutes of the Executive on 1 October 2014 that had been circulated after the agenda had been published to enable the report from St Mary's Lands to be seen as part of the petition being debated)

59. **Report of Employment Committee**

The reports of the Employment Committee meeting of 17 September 2014, setting out the revised Employee Code of Conduct, were proposed by Councillor Mrs Bunker, duly seconded and

Resolved that the report be approved.

60. **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.

61. **Confidential Report of the Executive**

The confidential report of the Executive meeting of 3 September 2014, was proposed by Councillor Mobbs, duly seconded and

Resolved that the report be approved.

62. **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 8.45 pm)

CHAIRMAN
28 January 2015