

# WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the annual meeting held on Wednesday 26 October 2011, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs Bunker (Chairman); Councillors Barrott, Mrs Blacklock, Boad, Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Caborn, Coker, Copping, Dagg, Dean, Dhillon, Doody, Edwards, Mrs Falp, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford, Gill, Mrs Goode, Mrs Grainger, Hammon, Heath, Mrs Higgins, Illingworth, Kinson, Mrs Knight, MacKay, Mrs Mellor, Mobbs, Pittarello, Pratt, Mrs Sawdon, Shilton, Tyrrell, Vincett, Weber, Weed, Wilkinson and Williams.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Davies, De-Lara-Bond, Guest, Kirton, Rhead and Wreford-Bush.

## 47. **MR D BUCKINGHAM AND MR M BOAG**

The Chairman announced that Mr D Buckingham a current member of staff within the benefit fraud team had passed away on 15 October 2011. Mr Buckingham had 64 years local government service and his only break had been National Service with the RAF. Mr Buckingham had worked with this Council since its inception in 1973.

The Chairman announced that Mr M Boag, a former member of the benefit fraud team, had also recently passed away.

The Chairman led the Council in a moment's silence as a mark of respect and agreed to write to the families on behalf of the Council offering their condolences.

## 48. **ONE WORLD LINK**

The Chairman welcomed officers from Bo City Council in Sierra Leone who were currently visiting the Council as part of the One World Link programme.

## 49. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 31 August 2011 were approved as a correct record.

## 50. **COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- (A) That Councillor MacKay had raised £357.90, for the Air Ambulance, from his participation in the two castles run;
- (B) That £154.86 had been raised by the MacMillan Coffee morning at the Town Hall in September;
- (C) The Chairman reminded members of her Christmas Concert on 3 December 2011;
- (D) The Chairman announced that the gala event at the Spa Centre for Councillors would be on 16 December 2011 7.00pm, a showing of Sleeping Beauty; and

- (E) The Chairman reminded all Councillors of the importance in attending one of the two events for Councillors on 1 and 2 November 2012 which were the start of events for the Local Plan.

**51. MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL**

The Council received a report and presentation from the Monitoring Officer on the Member/Officer Protocol.

The report was in response to a request from a Standard's Committee Hearing Sub-Committee that the Monitoring Officer "takes all necessary steps to make all Councillors aware of the Member/Officer Protocol".

The Chairman thanked the Monitoring Officer for the presentation and report.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) Councillors acquaint themselves with the member officer protocol; and
- (2) the Group Leaders, at their respective Group meetings, emphasise the importance of the Council members acting in accordance with both the words and spirit of the protocol.

(There were no items submitted for agenda item 5 Public Interest Debate, agenda item 6 Petitions, agenda item 7 Petitions, agenda item 8 Notices of Motion, agenda item 9 public submissions, agenda item 10 Questions to Committee Chairman and agenda item 11 Questions to Portfolio Holder and therefore they would not be considered)

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

Councillor Mrs Gallagher, Portfolio Holder for Culture, informed the Council that the Linden Arches project was now fully funded and the Friends of the Pump Room Gardens had raised the £80,000 required. Not one of the organisations or individuals had defaulted on their financial commitment. Work was being undertaken by Worralls in Warwick who would be using other local specialist contractors for some of the work. The first arch would be completed by mid January and work was well on schedule for completion by the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Councillor Shilton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, made two announcements.

- (1) The £80,000 improvement work to Covent Garden car park was now completed. This work had seen the introduction of pay on foot, improvements to parking spaces, signage and toilets. In addition the all day charge for parking was now only £3.00;
- (2) To help local businesses and encourage shopping in town centres, in the next focus magazine there would be a free parking voucher for use in Covent Garden car park on either 3, 10 or 17 December; in addition to this there would be free off street parking in District Council car parks in Warwick and Kenilworth Town Centres from 4.00pm on the evening when their Christmas lights were switched on, which was 24 and 25 November respectively.

**53. QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Councillor Alan Boad asked the following questions to the Leader of the Council:

"I note the report of the Warwick District Council Code of Conduct Hearing Decision Notice in respect of Councillor Dhillon's unacceptable behaviour having been found to have made false allegations questioning the integrity of several officers on a number of occasions. With 7 breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members in respect of 4 incidents, with 2 others having been discounted due to the passage of time, would Councillor Doody agree that this is not the behaviour that he would expect from an elected member?

I also note from the detailed independent investigators report that Councillor Dhillon appears to find it very easy to apologise time and again after each event but does not appear to change his approach. I was therefore surprised to find that one of the sanctions applied to Councillor Dhillon was to apologise yet again for his behaviour to the various officers whose integrity he had quite falsely and publically called into question.

Given the quote attributed to Councillor Dhillon, published in the Observer of 29<sup>th</sup> September, under the headline of 'Councillor apologises', " Democracy is a funny thing, it is meant to be for the people and by the people. Unfortunately when you speak up for your local residents it does ruffle a few feathers. I fully accept the findings." What value does Councillor Doody place on Councillor Dhillon's apologies?

What will be the cost of the interpersonal skills training? Who is paying?

Approximately how much time has been spent since September 2008 trying to address Councillor Dhillon's behaviour?

What is the total cost to the Council Tax payers of Councillor Dhillon's actions?

Can Councillor Doody give the Council assurances that Councillor Dhillon's behaviour is also seen as totally unacceptable by his group, and will also be addressed by the Conservative Party?"

The Leader responded explaining that the Council had appointed a Standards Committee who considered the case, it had been investigated and determined based on the evidence. Councillor Dhillon had accepted the decision and position this placed the Council in. It would show a lack of confidence if we did not adhere to their decisions. The total cost was difficult to define because officer time was not directly allocated to the matter and the course would be in the region of £3,000. Councillor Dhillon had apologised in strong terms to the Group and both Councillor Coker and the Leader had accepted and welcomed this apology because it provided a strong feeling and understanding of the position. It was now time to draw a line under this matter and to look forward rather than backwards.

Councillor Boad asked a further question of the Leader asking him to explain when the training would start and how the Council would know if it had been successful.

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

Councillor Doody responded explaining that the training had been set up, the Monitoring Officer would be overseeing this and he hoped that all would see if the training was successful.

Councillor Mrs Knight asked Councillor Doody to explain the decision making process behind the decision to use £15,000 on consultation with the public; and what was the justification of not using existing consultation channels.

Councillor Doody responded explaining that when the Conservative Group took control of the Council the Council was very much "tick box focussed" for measuring performance and while, on paper, this demonstrated that the Council was good, the person on the street was not satisfied. The citizens panels were subsequently set up, which was an improvement. However the move to Santo would enhance this further because they would use their technical knowledge and skills to ensure the Council received views that represented a cross section of the District's residents. In the long term this would be a cheaper alternative and other Council's had benefited from similar work to deliver improved service.

At the request of Councillor Mrs Knight and Councillor Barrott the Leader added that the process for the expenditure had been in line with the Council's procurement rules and that, while the Council did have some of the information set out in figures and statistics, it did not have the views of residents on these matters.

### **54. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE**

It was moved by Councillor Michael Doody, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the report and recommendations of the meetings of the Executive on 10 August 2011, 14 September 2011 (excluding minute 53 which had previously been considered) and 12 October 2011 be approved and adopted.

### **55. 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.

### **56. PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was proposed by Councillor Doody, duly seconded and

**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 paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

57. **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE**

It was moved by Councillor Michael Doody, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the confidential report of the meetings of the Executive on 10 August 2011 and 14 September 2011 be approved and adopted.

58 **SECTION 92, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - DECLARATIONS**

In addition to Members who had disclosed their interest in the minutes of the Executive and committees, the following declared their interest in respect of the items as shown. Where an interest is shown with an \*, the Member involved left the meeting during the discussion and voting on the item.

**Subject**

Minute 70 Executive 12 October 2011  
– Racing Club Warwick

**Person Declaring Interest**

Councillors Dhillon\* and Mrs Mellor\*  
Declared a prejudicial interest  
because they were Board members of  
Racing Club Warwick.

Councillor Illingworth declared a  
personal interest because he was a  
member of West Midlands Reserve  
Forces and Cadets Association

(The meeting ended at 7.34 pm)

CHAIRMAN  
1 December 2011