

# WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 29 October 2003 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Doody (Chairman); Councillors Ashford, Mrs Begg, Mrs Blacklock, Boad, Mrs Bunker, Butler, Caborn, Chander, Cockburn, Coker, Mrs Compton, Copping, Crowther, Davies, Davis, Ms De-Lara-Bond, Mrs Edwards, Evans, Mrs Falp, Ms Flanagan, Gill, Mrs Goode, Guest, Hammon, Harris, Hatfield, Ms Hirsch, Mrs Hodgetts, Holland, Kinson, Mrs Knight, Kundi, MacKay, Mrs McFarland, Offer, Pratt, Sandhar, Mrs Sawdon, Shilton, Smith, Tamlin and Windybank.

## 532. PRAYER

A prayer was offered by the Chairman's Chaplain.

## 533. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Edwards, Gifford, Kirton and Short.

## 534. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 3 September 2003, were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman.

## 535. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

(A) The Chairman reminded Councillors that a charity Christmas Concert would be held in the Town Hall, Leamington Spa on 13 December in conjunction with the Cubbington Silver Band, and that the annual Civic Ball would be held in the Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa on 17 January 2004. He invited and encouraged as many Members as possible to attend these functions.

(B) The Chairman reported that an award had been received in relation to the design and build of the greenhouse in Jephson Gardens, and he presented the certificate and trophy to Councillor Ms Flanagan, as Portfolio Holder for Cultural Services.

## 536. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES 7 (2)

(A) From Councillor M Ashford to Councillor A Boad, the Housing Services Portfolio Holder:-

"In light of the Housing Waiting List, could I ask, therefore, whether we will be looking at re-visiting the Empty Homes Strategy that this Council employed for a while as a way of bringing empty properties back into use and utilising them for re-housing vulnerable and needy families?"

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

Councillor A Boad, the Housing Services Portfolio Holder, replied:

“Environmental Health took a report to the Community Scrutiny Committee on 4 March 2003 which described the current position with regard to empty property work carried out by Warwick District Council. It traced the work of the Empty Property Officer (1996 – 1999) and the actions taken since his departure. It also gave some suggestions on the manner in which the work might have been taken forward.

The key points for future action were:

- revisit and re-evaluate the list of actions listed in the “Empty Property Exit Strategy”;
- consider offering financial assistance (by way of grant aid) to owners of property affected by Closing Orders to encourage bringing it back into use;
- take a more proactive stance with the owners of empty property which is causing nuisance to neighbours or which is adversely affecting the neighbourhood;
- consider the production of an Information Pack, maintain an up-to-date database, and provide helpful, consistent and persistent “advice” to owners of empty property;
- produce a new Empty Property Strategy to take account of local circumstances and the resources available.

It was emphasised that, in order to progress the matter and address the key points, it would be necessary to input additional staffing resources. It was suggested that a Technical/Administrative Assistant on (probably) Band G (£14,531 - £15,933) for 17½ hours per week would be needed. This would allow us to achieve the implementation of a meaningful Empty Property Strategy.

Members noted the report.

The Draft Environmental Health Service Plan for 2004 – 2007 contains a request for growth in this area, i.e. £8000 salary plus on-costs.”

The previous empty property strategy cost a total of £129,647 for the 3 year project (including salaries and all other related expenses, but excluding grants etc.) and achieved 150 units of accommodation being brought back into use.”

In a supplementary question, Councillor Ashford asked Councillor Boad:-

“Could I please ask that this should be discussed at the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee?”

In reply, Councillor Boad said:-

“It will go into bids for additional funding where all parties will have a look at it. If it competes with other bids more successfully, then it will

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

be funded. I would just draw attention to the difference in costings, so it will not be the same as we did for funding of the Empty Properties Strategy before. It is a much slimmed down version.”

### **537. THE EXECUTIVE**

It was moved by Councillor Crowther, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the reports of the Executive dated 15 September and 13 October 2003, be approved and adopted.

### **538. ECONOMIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Hatfield, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the report of the Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 9 September 2003, be approved and adopted.

It was then moved by Councillor Guest, and duly seconded that the report of the Economic and Overview Committee dated 7 October 2003, be approved and adopted.

#### **(1) Programme for Strategic Review of Public Conveniences (490)**

First Amendment                      It was moved by Councillor Coker, and duly seconded that the recommendation set out in Minute 490 should be referred back for further consideration.

On a vote being taken, the amendment was declared lost, and that the recommendation of the Committee be forwarded to the Executive for consideration.

#### **(2) Adoption of Report**

The original Motion was then put to the meeting and declared carried.

### **539. ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Compton, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the reports of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 9 September and 7 October 2003, be approved and adopted.

### **540. SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Falp, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the reports of the Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 9 September and 7 October 2003, be approved and adopted.

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

### **541. AUDIT AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Caborn, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the reports of the Audit and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee dated 11 September and 8 October 2003, be approved and adopted.

### **542. EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Crowther, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the reports of the Employment Committee dated 16 September and 14 October 2003, be approved and adopted.

### **543. REGULATORY COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Mrs McFarland, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the reports of the Regulatory Committee dated 17 September (three meetings), and 2 October 2003, be approved and adopted.

### **544. STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Davies, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the report of the Standards Committee dated 23 September 2003, be approved and adopted.

### **545. MEMBERS'/TRADES UNIONS JOINT CONSULTATION AND SAFETY PANEL**

It was moved by Councillor Holland, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the report of the Members/Trade Unions Joint Consultation and Safety Panel dated 8 October 2003, be approved and adopted.

### **546. PLANNING COMMITTEE**

It was moved by Councillor Evans, duly seconded and

**RESOLVED** that the reports of the Planning Committee dated 10 and 29 September 2003, be approved and adopted.

### **547. NOTICES OF MOTION**

It was moved by Councillor M J Kinson and duly seconded:-

## COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)

- “(1) That this Council notes the proposed European Constitution being prepared by the European Convention will have huge implications for Warwick District Council. The Constitution will give the European Union ‘shared competence’ over home affairs, transport, energy, social policy, economic and social cohesion, consumer protection and the environment, meaning overall more legislation and guidance binding on local government will be decided at a European rather a national level.
- (2) That given the Government has used referendums to approve other constitutional change affecting local and national government, including establishing regional assemblies and directly elected mayors, this Council believes that the people of the Warwick District Council area should be able to have their say on these constitutional changes in a referendum.
- (3) This Council therefore resolves to make a formal written submission to the Prime Minister, supporting calls for a national referendum on the proposed European Constitution.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5(6), it was moved and seconded that the Motion proposed by Councillor Kinson be considered at the meeting.

On this being put to the meeting, it was declared carried.

Following debate, the Motion was put to the meeting and, on a vote being taken, was declared carried.

- (B) It was moved by Councillor Mrs M A Begg, and duly seconded:-

“The present method of funding local government services does not give adequate levels of grant to Warwick District Council. The present system also exaggerates the impact of grant shortfall on Council Tax payers who have to make up the difference. A 1% shortfall in government grant requires a 4% increase in Council Tax or equivalent cuts in services.

In order to be fairer to Council Tax payers this Council:-

- (1) Calls on the Government to change the balance of funding local services so that the shortfall in Central Government does not result in disproportionate rises in local Council Tax.
- (2) Calls on the Government to replace Council Tax with a fair tax related to ability to pay.
- (3) Calls on our local M.P.s to urge the Government to make these changes at the earliest opportunity.”

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5(6), it was moved and seconded that the Motion proposed by Councillor Mrs Begg be considered at the meeting.

## **COUNCIL MINUTES (Continued)**

On this being put to the meeting, it was declared carried.

First Amendment                      It was moved by Councillor Crowther, and duly seconded that in the first line of the Motion, everything after the word "services" be deleted, and the following inserted:-

"is in need of reform. This Council welcomes the Government's "Local Government Balance of Funding Review" and supports the principles of the response submitted by the Local Government Association."

On a vote being taken, the amendment was declared lost.

Second Amendment                      It was moved by Councillor Coker, and duly seconded that in sub-paragraph (2), everything after the word "with" be deleted and the following substituted:-

"a fairer system."

On a vote being taken, the amendment was declared lost.

The original Motion was then put to the meeting and, on a vote being taken, was declared lost.

### **548. 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 9.50 pm)

CHAIRMAN