

## Minutes of the Council

### County Hall, Worcester

**Thursday, 12 January 2023, 10.00 am**

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#### **Present:**

Cllr Chris Rogers (Chairman), Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Alan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr Brandon Clayton, Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Andy Fry, Cllr Simon Geraghty, Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cllr Karen Hanks, Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Paul Harrison, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Bill Hopkins, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Dan Morehead, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tony Muir, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Andy Roberts, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Kit Taylor, Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Craig Warhurst and Cllr Tom Wells

#### **Available papers**

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. 5 questions submitted to the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (previously circulated); and
- C. The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 (previously circulated).

#### **2407 Apologies and Declaration of Interests (Agenda item 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Salman Akbar, David Chambers, Aled Luckman, Luke Mallett, Jack Satterthwaite, Emma Stokes and Shirley Webb.

Cllr Adrian Hardman declared an Other interest in Notice of Motion 2 as a recipient of a pension from the BBC.

#### **2408 Public Participation (Agenda item 2)**

Council Thursday, 12 January 2023  
Date of Issue: 31 January 2023

Mrs Hannah Windross presented a petition concerning security improvements at the Fairfield centre site, Warndon, Worcester.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Windross for her contribution and said she would receive a written response from the relevant Cabinet Member.

#### **2409 Minutes (Agenda item 3)**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **2410 Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 4)**

Noted.

A Minute's silence was held in memory of former county councillors Mr Paul Mills and Mr Bob Peachey who had sadly passed away.

#### **2411 Reports of Cabinet (Agenda item 5)**

The Leader of the Council reported the following topics and questions were answered on them:

- A38 Bromsgrove Route Enhancement Programme (BREP)
- Fair Funding For Schools 2023-24 – National And Local Funding Arrangements For Schools, and
- Resources Report – Revenue Budget Monitoring – Month 7 (31 October) 2022/23.

#### **2412 Constitutional Matters - Appointment of a Vice-Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Agenda item 6)**

Council considered the appointment of a Vice-Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In the ensuing debate, the nomination of Cllr Frances Smith was moved and seconded and commended to Council.

**RESOLVED** that the nominee of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Cllr Frances Smith, be appointed as Vice Chairman of the HOSC.

#### **2413 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 1 - Amendment to the Constitution - Removal of Time Limit for Notices of Motion (Agenda item 7)**

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Andy Fry, Cllr Jack Satterthwaite, Cllr Luke Mallett, Cllr Lynn Denham, and Cllr Richard Udall.

The motion was moved by Cllr Mel Allcott and seconded by Cllr Lynn Denham who both spoke in favour of it.

**In accordance with Procedural Standing Order no. 29.3, the Motion stands referred to the meeting of Council on 16 February pending a report by the Monitoring Officer.**

## **2414 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 2 - BBC (Agenda item 7)**

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllr Richard Udall, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Luke Mallett, Cllr Lynn Denham, and Cllr Mel Allcott.

The motion was moved by Cllr Richard Udall and seconded by Cllr Dan Boatright, who both spoke in favour of it, and Council agreed to deal with it on the day.

The following amendment was moved by Cllr Adam Kent and seconded by Cllr Marc Bayliss:

*“Council recognises and values the contribution to Worcestershire life and society made by BBC radio stations, such as BBC Hereford and Worcester. The use of BBC local radio is an important part of the council’s ability to communicate with local residents at times of emergency or natural disaster. Council calls upon the BBC’s Director General to prioritise funding for BBC local radio stations in order to maintain local programming, scheduling, reporting and broadcast quality.”*

Those in favour of the amendment commented:

- The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication highlighted the work of other local and community radio stations in Worcestershire and beyond aside from the BBC and the importance of maintaining a wide-range of local media with different views. He stated his support and concern for the future of local radio but the allocation of resources was a matter for the Director General of the BBC not the Government and the letter should be directed accordingly
- The BBC’s move to more regionally-based local radio would have a negative impact on the viability of local newspapers
- The BBC had plenty of alternative funding streams other than taxation and had sufficient funds to support local radio if it chose to do so.

Those against the amendment commented:

- Massive cuts to local radio were proposed by the BBC which would impact on this Council’s ability to communicate with its residents, particularly in a crisis. The original motion was addressed to the

Secretary of State because the reduction in the funding to the BBC was a decision that had been made by the Government

- It was queried whether the amendment negated the original motion because the meaning of the motion had been lost. The Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager explained the changes made to the original motion, most notably the plea to the Director General of the BBC rather than the Secretary of State. She advised that the overall thrust of the motion had been retained in the amendment which was to provide support and resources to local radio
- The Government had restricted the funding available to the BBC and the appointment of BBC governors was not an independent process which indicated an element of politicisation in the funding arrangements for the BBC
- The BBC did not represent a threat to local newspapers. It was an important institution nationally and locally and more was needed to be done to protect it.

On being put to a vote, the amendment was carried and put as the substantive motion.

Those in favour of the substantive motion commented:

- Local radio was an important service that could be retained in its present form if the BBC was minded to change its proposals to cut local services
- The increase in the use of social media meant that local residents used different means to access information which was not as accurate as it should be and therefore the BBC should be asked to reconsider its plans for local radio

Those against the substantive motion commented:

- The local BBC radio service had proved vital to local residents especially during the global pandemic. It also had an important role in supporting the democratic process. This role was threatened by the cuts to its budget made by the Government
- The Secretary of State controlled the finances of the BBC and she had the power to change the priorities of the BBC to ensure fair funding to support local radio.

**On a named vote the substantive motion was agreed.**

**RESOLVED ” Council recognises and values the contribution to Worcestershire life and society made by BBC radio stations, such as BBC Hereford and Worcester. The use of BBC local radio is an important part of the council’s ability to communicate with local residents at times of emergency or natural disaster. Council calls upon the BBC’s Director General to prioritise funding for BBC local radio stations in order to maintain local programming, scheduling, reporting and broadcast quality”**

Those in favour of the motion were: Cllr Chris Rogers, Cllr Alastair Adams, Cllr Allan Amos, Cllr Marc Bayliss, Cllr Bob Brookes, Cllr Brandon Clayton, Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Allah Ditta, Cllr Matt Dormer, Cllr Elizabeth Eyre, Cllr Simon Geraghty, Cllr Laura Gretton, Cllr Peter Griffiths, Cllr Karen Hanks, Cllr Ian Hardiman, Cllr Adrian Hardman, Cllr Paul Harrison, Cllr Marcus Hart, Cllr Bill Hopkins, Cllr Adam Kent, Cllr Adrian Kriss, Cllr Steve Mackay, Cllr Emma Marshall, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Tony Miller, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Dan Morehead, Cllr Richard Morris, Cllr Tony Muir, Cllr Tracey Onslow, Cllr Scott Richardson Brown, Cllr Andy Roberts, Cllr Linda Robinson, Cllr David Ross, Cllr Mike Rouse, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Kit Taylor, and Cllr Craig Warhurst. (39)

Those abstaining were: Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Martin Allen, Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Lynn Denham, Cllr Andy Fry, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Josh Robinson, Cllr Richard Udall, and Cllr Tom Wells. (11).

#### **2415 Notices of Motion - Notice of Motion 3 - Amendment to the Constitution - Submission of Amendments to Notices of Motion (Agenda item 7)**

The Council had before it a Notice of Motion set out in the agenda papers standing in the names of Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Beverley Nielsen, Cllr Natalie McVey, Cllr Tom Wells, and Cllr Martin Allen.

The motion was moved by Cllr Matt Jenkins and seconded by Cllr Beverley Nielsen who both spoke in favour of it.

**In accordance with Procedural Standing Order no. 29.3, the Motion stands referred to the meeting of Council on 16 February pending a report by the Monitoring Officer.**

#### **2416 Question Time (Agenda item 8)**

Five questions had been received by the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager and had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The answers to all the questions are attached in the Appendix.

#### **2417 Reports of Committees - Audit and Governance Committee (Agenda item 9 (a))**

The Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee introduced the report and commented that the Annual Statutory Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022 had yet to be signed off by Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditor. He hoped that this would be achieved by the end of January. To date, no other top tier authority had had their accounts signed off by external audit. He remained optimistic that this Council would be amongst the first in the country.

In response to a query about the recruitment of the post of Chief Internal Auditor, the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee explained that the Council was currently buying in an external internal audit service for 2 days a week. A Worcestershire-wide option had been considered but ruled out. Subsequently, the Council had advertised the post in the job market and it was hoped to make an appointment in due course.

The Council received the report of the Audit and Governance Committee containing a summary of the decisions taken.

**2418 Reports of Committees - Pensions Committee (Agenda item 9 (b))**

The Chairman of the Pensions Committee undertook to provide a written answer to Cllr Beverley Nielsen in response to her query about the Pension Fund's investment policy for place-based impact assessments, as well as the definition of and investment levels in place-based initiatives.

The Chairman of the Pensions Committee undertook to provide a written answer to Cllr Natalie McVey to provide an update on the latest position with regard to recruitment to the 13 vacancies in the pension administration team.

The Council received the report of the Pensions Committee containing a summary of the decisions taken.

The meeting ended at 11.50am.

Chairman .....

## COUNCIL 12 JANUARY 2023 - AGENDA ITEM 8 – QUESTION TIME

Questions and written responses provided below.

**QUESTION 1** – Cllr Richard Udall will ask Cllr Marcus Hart:

*“Local Worcestershire artists have been struggling since Covid lockdowns and some have been unable to promote and sell their work. Will he consider allowing a rolling programme, throughout 2023 of supporting and encouraging local artists by allowing individuals to have a month of free access to local libraries, to promote and exhibit their work and to promote local art; it would allow artists to place their skills on show throughout the county. Libraires are more than just a place to borrow books, such a scheme would increase footfall into our libraires and could be showcase for the service, a dedicated and organised campaign to support local artists would be appreciated?”*

### **Answer**

Absolutely.

### **Supplementary question**

It was queried whether the Council would support all artists, who had struggled through the pandemic, in finding ways to put their works on show in Worcestershire. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities responded that the Council received a modest income from charging local artists to display their work. He would do everything he could to provide support to local artists and have access to council facilities including libraries. He would liaise with Severn Arts to establish an eligibility and selection process.

**QUESTION 2** – Cllr Lynn Denham will ask Cllr Simon Geraghty:

*“I am grateful to the Council’s communication department for sharing the Leader’s Christmas message reflecting on ‘another exceptional year’. That means it has been an unusual year and the Leader seems to believe the Council has done rather well in 2022. Parents who struggling to get an Education Health Care Plan for their child and those waiting for home assessment of their care needs may disagree.*

*The Leader states that the ‘local economy is on course to grow by a third by 2025 from 2015 levels’. What measures is he relying on for this prediction? How are they likely to be affected by the increase in energy costs and inflation?”*

### **Answer**

Firstly, can I thank Lynn for her question and the opportunity to restate my thanks to our staff, partners and all those who have contributed their voluntary time during another exceptional year. I do believe that collectively Worcestershire has risen to the challenges – whether that be our One Worcestershire response to the impact of the war in Ukraine and welcoming some 1000 guests to our County, the Jubilee celebrations, or the arrangements to mark the death of HM The Queen and the accession of King Charles. They are just three examples of another exceptional year and I do believe people deserve to be thanked for their contribution, often unseen, like our gritter drivers that go out in all weathers to keep our County moving or those caring for the most vulnerable.

However, I also recognise the challenges too and specifically Lynn asks about EHCPs and our performance. This has been an area of challenge for many Councils and the Health Service that contribute to the plans. The Accelerated Progress Plan for SEND has helped drive improvement and I'm assured this January we are on course to have completed and issued the backlog of EHCPs awaiting Annual Review.

New processes and practices, including an investment to increase SEND casework staff and Educational Psychologists are in place. This will minimise delay re-occurring and respond to the assessment process needs. We will see service capacity grow during 2023, as recruitment is completed. The challenges experienced does include health agencies, where limited resources has impacted on the ability to carry out assessments in a timely manner. Processes for sharing information, tracking cases, and prioritising children are part of the WCF internal process and the Hereford and Worcestershire NHS Trust Transformation Programme.

Turning to Lynn's second point, the target to grow the local economy by a third by 2025 from 2015 levels. This is an agreed partnership measure set by Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership and my statement quoted is from our Corporate Plan. It's measured by GVA – a recognised measure of the size of the local economy – and even with the drop in GVA in 2020 we are still on track to meet the 2025 target, assuming a straight-line trajectory having exceeded the targeted year on year growth. We have also already exceeded the 25,000 additional jobs target mentioned in the plan. Therefore, whilst the economy does undoubtedly face challenges from inflation, a tight labour market and energy costs, I remain confident that by working in partnership to support businesses through our LEP and other investments in place we will achieve the targets we have collectively set.

#### Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Leader undertook to provide a written answer to Cllr Lynn Denham to explain how the Council was going to ensure that all residents including those on Universal Credit would benefit from economic growth

#### **QUESTION 3** – Cllr Matt Jenkins will ask Cllr Mike Rouse:

*“Can the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport give me an update on the progress of improving the junction of Bilford Road and Astwood Road, to both reduce congestion and improve the safety for pedestrians?”*

#### **Answer**

A written response will be provided.

#### Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport agreed to meet Cllr Matt Jenkins on site at the junction of Bilford Road and Astwood Road, Worcester.

#### **QUESTION 4** – Cllr Richard Udall will ask Cllr Marcus Hart:

*“Is the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities aware that according to the 2011 census, over 200 Worcestershire residents were born in Iran, even more are descended from or have Iranian heritage. Will he agree to consider how to celebrate the growing Iranian community in Worcestershire by celebrating Iranian culture, food and history and the close historic ties between Worcestershire and Iran. Many Worcestershire Iranians are currently very concerned about the current problems in Iran , which includes mass arrests, torture and extensive use of the death penalty for those who are protesting against the current government of Iran; many local Iranians have been unable to contact*



*their friends or family for months and are worried about their safety and welfare. Will he agree that by celebrating our support for the Worcestershire Iranian community, at this difficult time for Iran, it would help to offer our solidarity and sympathy with Worcestershire Iranians and would help them at this difficult time?"*

### **Answer**

In principle – yes. He was happy to consider anything. Notwithstanding events in Iran at the moment, it is important to put in context that we celebrate the very diverse range of citizens and residents from across the whole of our community. Cllr Udall makes reference to the 176 residents in the 2011 census. In the 2021 census, there were 268 residents from Iran with 60 in Malvern Hills and 60 in Worcester City alone. There were 2,700 plus residents in Worcestershire from India, 2,500 from Pakistan, 600 plus from Bangladesh, and 774 from the Philippines.

### Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities echoed the support expressed by Cllr Richard Udall for the slogan of the Iranian protesters "Women, Life, Freedom".

### **QUESTION 5** – Cllr Lynn Denham will ask Cllr Mike Rouse:

*"I have been on the case of the Brickfields Road disappearing bus stop since I was elected to this chamber in May 2021. Various explanations have been offered by officers but there has been no progress on delivering the promise made to my predecessor. Installation of the zebra crossing was to include relocation of the bus stop. In response to a Worcester News journalist at the beginning of December 2022, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility said he was 'confident a solution can be found'. So am I. What do we have to do to get a solution in place?"*

### **Answer**

Following road safety advice, It was not possible to re-site the removed bus stop, however we will look at alternative locations in the vicinity of Lime Avenue and Glenthorne Avenue. It was agreed that a "both sides" sticker would be placed on the downhill bus stop, adjacent to Ash Avenue, and that buses travelling towards Warndon should pick up and drop off opposite this, where safe to do so, just after Poplar Avenue. Unfortunately this was removed and replaced with a flag. This has caused some issues and we have contacted the bus operator to ensure that drivers are aware that they need to pick up on both sides of the road.

### Supplementary question

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport agreed to meet Cllr Lynn Denham on site to try to seek a solution to the issues associated with the bus stop on Brickfields Road, Worcester.

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