



<u>Committee and Date</u>
COUNCIL
13 <sup>th</sup> January 2011

<u>Item</u>
<b>3</b>
Public

## MINUTES

OF

MEETING OF SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2010  
AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mr P Adams  
Mrs B J Baker  
Mr T Barker  
Mrs J B Barrow  
Mr K R Barrow  
Mr T Bebb  
Mr M Bennett  
Mr W Benyon  
Mr T H Biggins  
Ms K Burgoyne  
Mr V Bushell JP  
Mr G Butler  
Mrs K D Calder  
Mr S Charmley  
Mr J E Clarke  
Mr S Davenport  
Mr A B Davies  
Mr T Davies  
Mrs P A Dee  
Mr A Durnell  
Mr D W Evans  
Mr R A Evans  
Mr E J Overall

Mr J A Gibson  
Mr N J Hartin  
Mrs E A Hartley  
Mr R Huffer  
Mrs T Huffer  
Mr R Hughes  
Mr V J Hunt  
Mr J Hurst-Knight  
Dr J E Jones  
Mrs J Jones  
Mr S P A Jones  
Mr J M W Kenny  
Mrs H M Kidd  
Mr C J Lea  
Mr D G Lloyd MBE  
Mr C J Mellings  
Mr D J Minnery  
Mr A N Mosley  
Mrs C M A Motley  
Mrs M Mullock  
Mrs E M Nicholls  
Mr P A Nutting  
Mr M J Owen JP

Mr W M Parr  
Mrs E A Parsons  
Mr M G Pate  
Mr M T Price  
Mr D L Roberts  
Mr K Roberts  
Mrs D M Shingleton  
Mr J Tandy  
Mr M Taylor-Smith  
Mrs R Taylor-Smith  
Mr R Tindall  
Mr G F Tonkinson  
Mr A E Walpole  
Mr S J West  
Mr M Whiteman OBE  
Mrs C Wild  
Mr B B Williams RD  
Mr M Williams  
Mrs T Woodward  
Mr L Winwood  
Mr M L Wood  
M P A D Wynn

### **103. APOLOGIES**

The Chief Executive reported apologies for absence had been received from Mrs A J Caesar-Homden, Mrs A M Chebsey, Mr G L Dakin, Mr J B Gillow OBE, Mr P F Phillips and Dr M Winchester.

### **104. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) advised that those members who considered that they had pre-determined the application which was the subject of Item 18 (Planning Appeal – Energy from Waste Facility, Battlefield, Shrewsbury) did not need to declare an interest but should leave the Chamber immediately before the commencement of any debate.

### **105. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2010 be approved and confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following addition after the Response to Minute 88(c) 3:-

Councillor P F Phillips stated by way of personal explanation that his recollection was that he did indicate that he wished to speak in public on this issue.

### **106. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **(a) Chairman's Engagements**

The Chairman referred to the list of official engagements carried out by himself and the Speaker and Vice-Chairman since the last meeting on 11 November 2010, which had been circulated at the meeting.

#### **(b) Christmas Celebrations**

The Speaker reported that 24 singers from Crowmoor Primary School, Shrewsbury and their teacher Ms Amy Murray, would be attending a 12.45 p.m. to sing a medley of carols in the foyer outside the Council Chamber.

The meeting would be adjourned at that point if the business had not been completed, so that members could enjoy the carols and partake in a festive glass of mulled wine with himself and the Chairman of the Council.

### **107. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Speaker announced that Dr G StJohn Penney had given notice of his intention to make a statement in accordance with Procedural Rule 14. A petition containing more than 1,000 signatures from people living, working and studying in the Bishop's Castle

area had also been received in respect of the Council's decision to sell land to Biomass Power.

Under the Council's recently adopted petition scheme, the organiser, Mr M Dawes would be given up to five minutes to open the debate on the subject. After this the Council then had up to 15 minutes in which to consider which of the available 10 options, including no further action, it wished to take.

(a) Statement by Dr Penney

In a lifetime as general practitioner and over 40 years on the Town Councillor, I have never previously seen such universal antagonism to any proposed change as there is to the sale of land for a biomass plant.

When the District Council failed to put the proposal before the Planning Committee there was no opportunity for local people to express their views. Instead it left the decision to be made by the Appeal Inspector. South Shropshire had already granted permission for a coal depot on the site and had promised to facilitate the sale at an agreed price of £93,000.

This feeling of not being consulted persisted until an open meeting of the Scrutiny Panel held in Bishop's Castle. That was attended by nearly 400 people--but it was notable that the applicants did not come, although it was well advertised. At last Bishop's Castle was being listened to--but Cabinet took no notice of their six recommendations.

My concerns are great and worth repeating:

**NOISE:** Because of the impracticality of a heat main, the plant will be air cooled. These fans will produce 32 decibels of noise throughout the night time hours and by day much higher noise levels.

And that is when the plant is new.

**HEALTH:** When the plant is operating below optimum temperature it will produce substances seriously harmful to health, especially the young and the pregnant. And it will operate at lower temperatures on shutting down, as when something goes wrong. Particulates penetrate cell walls and produce cancers. They can escape when a filter bursts. Low temperatures cause furan production. Any plastic entering the furnace will produce dioxins. All are dangerous.

I expect there to be genetic and other health problems before long. We all remember Thalidomide. At Corby it took local people with birth defects 18 years to get the right to put the Council in the dock after the Council permitted a waste dump to be inappropriately used. The present Council may no longer be in place in 18 years, but a heavy responsibility will be upon the present Council. Who will pay if the developers have gone into liquidation? Presumably the Council Taxpayers.

And this is planned for a site 400 feet from a housing estate and on the field next to the Community College Playing Field, the Tennis Courts and the Rugby field. On the same Business Park as the allotments.

The developers made much of the similarity to the reference plant at Eccleshall where there have been considerable pollution problems, but at Cabinet a Councillor said that Eccleshall was not in Shropshire so the

experience there was not relevant. But it is relevant. Millions have had to be spent making that plant safer. And that is not in a built up area.

Shropshire Council does not have the expertise to enforce the proposed controls and employing such experts will come at a high cost.

We understand the Officer recommendation was to pass the disposal of the whole Business Park to Bishop's Castle Town Council and we ask that this should be done instead of selling it for a Biomass Incinerator.

The Speaker thanked Dr Penney for his statement.

(b) Petition Debate

The Speaker then invited Mr M Dawes, the petition organiser, to open the debate.

Mr Dawes reminded Council that the Development Services Scrutiny Committee had decided on 28 September 2010.

- (i) That Cabinet reconsider their decision to sell the land to Bishops Castle Biomass Power for the following reasons:
  - (a) The massive weight of public opposition and the Council's commitment to localism, transparency and a listening culture.
  - (b) The Cabinet decision contradicts important strands of the community strategy.
  - (c) There is a strong and widespread perception and fear of potential health hazards and Cabinet should follow the precautionary principle.
  - (d) The tender process appears to have been too short to facilitate full engagement of all potential bodies.
  - (e) Too little attention has been given to alternative sites.
  - (f) The biomass proposals are contrary to the guidelines within the tender document.
- (ii) Furthermore, the Development Services Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that a completely new tender process for use of the land be undertaken.

For the benefit of those members not entirely familiar with the project, Mr Dawes explained that it concerned a thermal power station which was intended to burn around 100 tonnes of wood per day to generate about 1.3 mw of electricity. The plant would be located close to the Bishop's Castle Community College, new housing, playing fields and a vets surgery on the Bishop's Castle Business Park which had lain fallow for many years, due to a lack of active marketing. However, in recent times there had been signs of greater interest in the land and at least one plot had been sold. The remaining area represented the only identified employment land for Bishop's Castle so it was a relatively scarce result.

Mr Dawes then explained why he and the other petitioners objected to the sale of the land to Biomass Power with particular reference to the health and related concerns perceived by the local community. He concluded by highlighting the reasons why the Council should reconsider re-opening the tender process, as recommended by the Development Services Scrutiny Committee on 28 September 2010.

Responding, the Portfolio Holder the Economy and Waste, Mr M J Owen, stated that the Cabinet had taken full account of the views of Bishop's Castle residents, as had the Inspector who had conducted the planning inquiry in relation to the use of the site by Biomass Power. The Cabinet had also taken full account of the views of the Development Services Scrutiny Committee, but had reiterated its earlier decision to provisionally accept the offer from Biomass Power, subject to further negotiations. Mr Owen added that the interests of the inhabitants of Bishop's Castle would be protected by the 37 conditions attaching to the planning permission granted to Biomass Power which would be enforced rigorously. The Council had advertised the land locally and nationally for two consecutive weeks and details had also been available to potential buyers from the Council's website throughout that time. The Council had therefore complied with all reasonable requirements regarding the sale of the land and he proposed that no further action be taken on this matter. The proposition was seconded by the Leader of the Council, Mr K R Barrow.

Mr N J Hartin referred to the historical precedent set by the debate and the level of public feeling within Bishop's Castle and the surrounding area against the Cabinet decision. Local people had not been allowed to make their feelings known until the call-in debate in September. The petitioners were now merely asking the Council to act in accordance with the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and to re-order a new tender process for the use of the land. Failure to do so would seriously harm the Council's reputation amongst local residents.

Speaking in support, Mr A N Mosley said that he had chaired the call-in meeting and advised that the Scrutiny Committee was mindful of the rationale for disposing of the land, as well as the strength of opposition from local residents. This Committee had been unanimous in its support for the recommendations although these had subsequently been rejected by Cabinet. The Scrutiny Committee was not saying that the land should not be sold to Biomass Power, but that the Cabinet should reconsider its earlier decision in the light of public feeling and re-open the tender process.

Replying to the debate, Mr Owen explained why there was no good reason to re-open the tender process. The Council had complied with the terms and conditions relating to the proposed sale, which he considered was in the best interests of the Council. Consequently, no further action should be taken in this matter.

**On being put to the vote, the proposition was carried with 40 members voting in favour, 17 against and 1 member abstaining.**

At the conclusion of the debate, the Speaker announced that the procedural arrangements for Petitions debates would be reviewed by the Political Structures Monitoring Group and reported to a future meeting of the Council.

## **108. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

(a) Cllr N J Hartin asked the following question:

As Leader you need to be aware that Performance Scrutiny on the 18 November raised cross party concerns on the apparent lack of a coherent, holistic & joined up approach to the Medium Term Financial Plan. It is of course good news that we now have priorities & strategies in place, something we have long argued should have been in place earlier, however members from all three political parties expressed concern over the lack of information before us from which to properly carry out our scrutiny function, seemingly having to make do with merely commenting on Cabinet decisions already made.

At the meeting I evidenced the current consultation on transferring public conveniences to Parish or Town Councils as highlighting the apparent lack of a holistic approach to the way we are reacting to possible asset transfers and other budgetary savings in failing to consider economic & other knock on effects eg; the effects on tourism and the doubling of parish precepts in some cases. We need a clear overview of how each asset transfer or budgetary savings fits together as part of the whole. In these circumstances would the Leader agree to include proper full community assessments of potential budget decisions re the impact on the vulnerable as part of the consideration of all future budgetary measures?

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Keith Barrow, replied:

Thank you for your contribution to the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). As you say, we have now identified priorities that are guiding the assembly of the MTFP. And it is to this that I want to turn and discuss in more detail. It is quite usual for a Council, not to have a detailed budget for next year by early to mid-November. Indeed, given the Settlement date, which is traditionally at the end of November or the beginning of December, it would be unwise to have completed the package so early.

What we did do was to produce a list of initial savings and a broad set of principles that the Scrutiny could review. For example, the policy on income generation was quite ground-breaking. Each month, up to the final MTFP being agreed by the Council next February, the Cabinet is bringing forward further recommended savings for decision. This enables early implementation of any changes, to achieve a full year's savings in 2011-12. So, we are of the view that this offers Scrutiny Members opportunities to proffer guidance to Cabinet as to how the MTFP should develop, for example, favouring one line of action over another.

Indeed, on the agenda for this meeting there is a detailed report setting out a further phase of recommended saving for decision by Council. More will follow at the Council meeting in January. These are all capable of being scrutinised, as part of the agreed Budget preparation timetable.

I would like to reassure Cllr N J Hartin that due regard is taken of the various equality obligations under The Equality Act 2010, when proposals with regard to budget reductions are being considered.

Cllr N J Hartin asked the Leader by way of a supplementary question to explain what he meant by "due regard" in respect of the Council's equality obligations under the 2010 Act?

Replying The Leader advised that the Council had been required to because of the scale of the problem. All the Local Joint Committees had been informed of the position and the Council would give due regard to the needs of vulnerable groups within the community.

(b) Cllr T Davies asked the following question:

In the present difficult financial climate and in the context of some excellent work being carried out by Veolia optimising waste collection routes and in working with the Council to complete our network of waste management centres across Shropshire, would the portfolio holder agree to investigate with our partner Veolia some of the more innovative changes being introduced by other Councils across the Country. An example of this is the move by Daventry Council which has saved it £250,000 a year by moving to collecting waste & recycling only on Tuesdays - Fridays with the following benefits accrued

- The staff still work the same hours, just over fewer days.
- The council has cut the number of collection rounds.
- There are substantial fuel savings - and 40 tonnes of CO2 emissions
- Vehicles can have maintenance done more easily (like on Mondays)
- The crews are still available for emergencies, catch-up and training
- The staff get a 4 day week - (85% voted in favour of this)
- Reduction in disruption caused by bank holidays
- Fewer overtime payments, time off in lieu etc
- More efficient rounds. Time was saved because they can collect from more properties on each round and this reduces the time taken to travel to and from the depot.

Given that Daventry has a much smaller fleet than ours, such a move could potentially provide more significant savings than the £250K achieved by Daventry. There may of course be other examples across the Country of Councils looking hard at ways to save money by working in different ways which maximise staff resources without creating unnecessary redundancies.

Mr M J Owen, the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Waste replied:

I welcome every suggestion and opportunity to save money and reduce the risk of potential redundancies.

The Council has a very positive and honest relationship with Veolia and continues to explore with the company opportunities for cost savings.

Route optimisation is a key issue for refuse collections emphasised by the fact that refuse freighters travel over 1.3 million miles per annum in Shropshire.

Collection changes do however cause disruption to residents and therefore must be undertaken in a careful and considered way.

Veolia have already undertaken route optimisation work in North Shropshire and Bridgnorth and the Shrewsbury and Atcham area was optimised before transfer to Veolia, a few years ago. There are opportunities for further optimisation of routes in the other parts of the county, and ultimately across the whole county, as the planned waste infrastructure is built, for example the in vessel composting plant and Bridgnorth waste management facility.

Veolia do operate one four-day week contract in the UK and this does deliver benefits, a number of which Cllr Davies has highlighted in his question, but also some difficulties such as longer working days, non daylight working and reliability of the fleet. This experience is extremely useful when considering options.

As the network of new facilities is constructed and the full service is rolled out across the county, further route optimisation will be implemented and the opportunities and risks of a four-day collection considered.

The value and sharing of any savings accrued from further route optimisation would be subject to negotiation between the Council and Veolia.

(c) Cllr A N Mosley asked the following question:

Could the Portfolio holder explain to members why it has been determined that the highly regarded Street Cleansing Service is to be outsourced within a new highways, grounds and vehicle maintenance contract. The service provides low cost and high quality services to the people of Shropshire and is widely acclaimed for flexibility and responsiveness to local need.

Is this performance not particularly laudable given it is the first year of unitary operation and further improvements can be expected?

On what basis can it be asserted that an external provider will be able to provide a better and/or lower cost service to similar standards and why is an internal bid ruled out of consideration?"

Mr M Taylor-Smith the Portfolio Holder for Transport replied:

In response to Cllr Mosley's question, I can confirm that the performance of the street cleaning services within its first 18 months of operation with Shropshire Council has been of a high level. Independent analysis of performance via Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE), Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA), national and internal performance indicators support this position. Hopefully, Members will agree that this is manifested in the service outcomes and standards on the ground, and is reflected within the construction of Cllr Mosley's question.

The service performance, standard, cost of operation and outcomes of the service is not an issue; it is of high quality and is regarded as such.

Cllr Moseley will also be aware that the decision to approve the outsourcing of the "contractor" element of the service has been approved recently by



Cabinet, and was subject to debate by Members who approved this course of action.

The issue is wider in that the street cleaning service and the performance of the service should not mask the operational, strategic and financial benefits of an integrated contract, of similar and related functions for Shropshire. An integrated contract, provided by one sole supplier (highways maintenance, Grounds, street cleaning, vehicle maintenance) we anticipate will deliver wider benefits for the Council, rather than having mixed economy provisions without the scale to provide tangible benefits.

An integrated contract, with the inclusion of Cheshire West and Chester Council, will develop a £40 million contract per annum. It is envisaged that this will offer reduced costs to the local authorities on its “global” contract bottom line.

Simple examples would be:-

- Economy of scale in terms of procurement of vehicles, plant material and equipment. Additionally, on an operational level the contractor’s ability to deploy resources, and coordinate plant and equipment will reduce ongoing costs due to removal of duplication and single programming and deployment of resources.
- Economy of scale in terms of staff: staff will be able to be multi operable, and be utilised in the most efficient and economic method by the contractor.

Overall contract costs should reduce, and the benefits to the Council should be seen in the light of a competitive tender.

- Additionally, the indirect costs of back office support, administration etc will reduce for the contractor.

An internal bid was ruled out because of the points above. There is a single opportunity to pull various streams of work together and it would not be in the Council’s interests to fragment services, because of the loss of scale and operational and logistical practicalities that we anticipate a single contract will deliver.

Hence the street cleaning service is well positioned to maintain its high level of performance, benefit from an integrated service approach and command reductions in cost to the council, without detracting from its primary role of maintaining and improving the local environment , and sense of well being for our residents, visitors and businesses of Shropshire.

Cllr Mosley asked by way of a supplementary question how the Portfolio Holder was so certain that the proposed contract would produce savings and he asked for an assurance that any new arrangements would be closely scrutinised to ensure the maintenance of current standards of cleanliness and service.

Replying, Cllr Taylor-Smith stated that the matter had been considered by the Scrutiny Committee and also subject to a call-in debate. The Council would

continue to monitor the contract, as a client, and its collective nature would provide great economies of scale as well as more advantageous terms.

(d) Cllr A N Mosley asked the following question:

Could the portfolio holder please provide the following information:

1. What is the likely effect of the recent CSR announcements on DSG for Shropshire Schools?
2. Given the in-year ABG cuts, their projected effects in future years and the reduction/cessation of other funding streams to schools, what is the overall reduction in total revenue available to Shropshire Schools?
3. What is the assessment of the Government's allocation of £7B to support Early Intervention For Disadvantaged Children for Shropshire schools

Cllr A J Caesar-Homden the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People replied:

1. At the time of writing, we are not able to say what the impact of the recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announcement will be on the Dedicated Schools Grant. The announcement of the local authority settlement, which is expected to include the DSG, is due very soon. However, changes in what is included within the DSG and the way in which it will probably be presented, means that it will be some time before comparisons can be made and a clear picture given of the effect for Shropshire schools.
2. As above, it is impossible to provide an answer to this question at this time.
3. The Deputy Prime Minister has announced a "fairness premium", a total of £7 billion over the spending review period. This is described as having three elements:
  - an entitlement to 15 hours a week of pre-school education for the most disadvantaged two year-olds (this is expected to grow to £300 million a year by the end of the spending period);
  - the pupil premium which will provide additional funding to schools to target help to pupils eligible for free school meals (this is expected to grow to £2.5 billion a year by the end of the spending period); and
  - a "student premium" for the least advantaged students (this is expected to grow to £150 million a year by the end of the spending period).

The Government has also created a £2 billion Early Intervention Grant (EIG) which is expected to replace grants currently funding a range of activity such as Sure Start, teenage pregnancy, substance and alcohol misuse, anti-social behaviour, helping young people into education,

employment and training; and possibly free childcare for disadvantaged two year-olds and short breaks provision for children with disabilities. The EIG is not ringfenced and will replace various funding schemes, although it is not clear which ones these will be, and whether its total value will equal the combined sum of those streams or not. The EIG will enable councils to fund early intervention activity. It is not specifically a grant for schools and the grants that it is replacing have not generally formed parts of school budgets.

By way of a supplementary question, Cllr Mosley asked whether the Portfolio Holder would provide him with the relevant data once this was available. In her absence the Leader, gave an assurance that this would be done.

(e) Cllr J Tandy asked the following question:-

With regard to the Leaders recent statement reported in the Shropshire Star, can the leader of Shropshire Council clearly state the criteria by which an offer for the Meole Brace Golf Course would be judged "exceptional" . Could he also confirm that the public would be fully informed during any such process, and that a sale would not go ahead without a clear majority of residents and course users conferring their consent, in a properly run local referendum

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Keith Barrow, replied:

The exceptional offer referred to in my statement in the Shropshire Star would be one where both the capital receipt and additional benefits arising for all Shropshire residents were such that they had to be carefully considered. Furthermore as I have said we would carry out full consultations with all interested parties before arriving at any decision, which would be taken in accord with the constitution of this Council.

Cllr Tandy thanked the Leader for his reply, adding that he welcomed his support in this matter.

(f) Cllr P F Phillips asked the following question:-

Economic Development must be a priority for enduring prosperity in Shropshire. Will you establish a "Star Chamber" to examine comprehensively all the diverse budget proposals coming forward, to ascertain the impact on Economic Development – and if necessary ask for amendments? The Group could include yourself, your Deputy and the Portfolio Holder.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Keith Barrow replied:

Economic Development is a priority for this Administration and we automatically assess the impact of any decisions we make on the economy of Shropshire.

## 109. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2011-14

It was proposed by the Leader, Cllr K R Barrow, and seconded by Cllr T Barker that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Cllr A N Mosley proposed by way of amendment, which was duly seconded by Dr J E Jones:

### Para 2.7 – Delete existing and replace with:

Appropriate action be taken to implement a programme of widespread and meaningful consultation prior to critical decisions being made. This to include clear explanations of the impact and implications from local residents, businesses, partner organisations and Council staff.

### Para 7.1 – Insert new first bullet point

- Impact assessment to ensure the safeguarding of services to communities and social groups suffering social deprivation, and vulnerable individuals, especially taking account of the cumulative effects of national and local cuts.

Speaking to the amendment, Cllr Mosley stated that while the report was relatively “up beat” because of spin and pretence, it would condemn local people to live in a less safe, caring and beautiful place. Drawing attention to paragraph 7 of the report and the statement of new service priorities, he stated that inference given was that the Council was gaining, despite having to make cuts of £67m over the term of the plan. As a result existing priorities would be destroyed or hampered with staff and residents paying the price of Government inspired cuts.

Supporting the amendment, Dr Jones and Cllr J Tandy emphasised how the cuts would bear down hardest on the most vulnerable members of the community and called for an impact assessment on the effect that this would have on such serviced users.

Cllr N J Hartin and Mrs H M Kidd expressed their concern over the way budget information had been presented. They called for an holistic assessment of the potential effects to prevent disproportionate outcomes amongst vulnerable groups. They also stated that greater involvement for non-executive members in the budgetary process may have resulted in much fairer outcomes for all. They also pointed to a need for greater partnership working than was being suggested in the plan.

A number of members, including Cllrs B B Williams, M Bennett, P Adams and Mrs T Woodward spoke against the amendments. They explained that the uncompromising language used was necessary to ensure that everyone understood the seriousness of the Council’s financial position. During the next three years the Council would be expected to manage with a much lower level of resource than it was currently used to receiving. The Medium Term Financial Plan provided a clear framework for making some unpalatable decisions while the amendments said nothing definite and were merely a delaying tactic which should be rejected.

Cllr Mrs E A Parsons asked why there were plans to enhance or ring fence spending for business but nothing similar for voluntary or community groups? She stated that

it was vital to undertake an impact assessment of all of the planned cuts. In her opinion these appeared to have been rushed and dressed up as local choice when they were no more than Government imposed spending reductions. Many of these reductions were ideological and being implemented in an attempt to change public thinking about welfare provision. They were an insult to those people enduring long term difficulties who required ongoing support.

Replying, the Leader stated that the contents of the Medium Term Financial Plan were the legacy of 13 years of Labour policies. Consultation on the Council's proposals had begun in the late summer when it was expected that the reductions would amount to approximately £20m. That sum had now risen to £76m and the reasons for this had been made clear to the public. This was to enable the necessary steps to be taken as early as possible and ensure that the Council was able to deliver a balanced budget at the time of a freeze in Council Tax.

**On being put to the vote, the amendment was defeated by a substantial majority of members voting against.**

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That Council officers continue to explore arrangements for the shared delivery of services with neighbouring local authorities and with public sector partner agencies in Shropshire in order to achieve economies of scale and reduce costs;
- (b) That priority be given to protecting (or enhancing) resources for those service areas that members would wish the Council to continue to provide to a high standard, as set out in Sections 6 and 7 of the report;
- (c) That the "investor save" approach, set out in Section 8 of the report, be agreed to help guide future Council spending priorities;
- (d) That a new Joint Member/Officer Task Group be established quickly to co-ordinate the design of our future strategy for greater joint working with the local voluntary and community sector, including social enterprises, with the intention of giving such organisations a greater role in future service delivery;
- (e) That further work be undertaken to review the best models of future service delivery and of the scope and standards of particular services, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, including the possible transfer of community assets and facilities to be run directly by local people;
- (f) That a further report be presented to Cabinet on options for reducing the costs of staff employment in future, while seeking to avoid compulsory redundancies if at all possible; and
- (g) Appropriate actions be taken to communicate these decisions and their implications to local residents and businesses to partner organisations locally and to Council staff.

## **110. TREASURY STRATEGY 2010-11 – MID-YEAR REVIEW**

It was proposed by the Chairman of the Audit Committee Cllr B Williams and seconded by Cllr M Whiteman that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

## **111. REVENUE BUDGET 2011-12 – SAVING WITH SERVICE IMPLICATIONS**

It was proposed by the Leader, Cllr K R Barrow and seconded by Cllr R Tindall that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

Referring to Appendix 1, Cllr Mrs D M Shingleton referred to the exceptional value provided by those parish and town councils who had entered into highways agreements for snow clearance, etc. and asked that the budget provision be maintained for 2011-12 and beyond. Cllr J M W Kenny and Mrs H M Kidd made similar requests for the retention of funding for the CCTV Partnership and the maintenance of the park and ride concessions in connection with the operation of the Shropshire Link bus service. Referring to Appendix 2 of the report Cllr Mrs Kidd stated that the educational savings should not be shifted to the delegated schools budgets because this was unfair. The Council should admit that it was necessary to make service reductions due to a lack of funding.

Cllr C J Mellings asked for clarification of the position on car parking charges, with particular regard to Wem, consideration of which had been deferred by Cabinet the previous day and Mrs E A Parsons exclaimed her alarm at the implications contained within the appendices for the voluntary, community, elderly and young people's groups. Referring specifically to Appendix 2 and the proposed reductions to extended school activities, she stated that these would adversely affect many young people and their families. The equalities impacts of these proposals should be assessed quickly and considered given to them if vulnerable groups were not to be affected disproportionately.

These sentiments were shared by other members. While they agreed savings were required, the package of cuts not to be of this level of severity.

Mr J E Clarke sought clarification of the intention to remove the travel concession which allowed bus travel prior to 9.30 a.m. and pointed to the impact that this could have for elderly with early morning hospital appointments.

Mr N J Hartin proposed by way of amendment which was duly seconded by Mr R A Evans that the report be referred back to the Cabinet for further consideration, given that the consultation period for a number of the matters under consideration had yet to expire. Speaking in support, Mr R A Evans claimed that a number of consultative matters contained in Appendix 1 still had to be considered and agreed in the light of replies receiving in response to ongoing consultation.

Cllr B B Williams proposed that the question now be put in respect of the amendment. A large number of members supported the motion.

**On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared lost, with a substantial number of members voting against reference back.**

Replying, the Leader, Cllr K R Barrow, stated that the Council would continue to use parish/town councils to undertake snow clearing and the like, although the amount available under the highways agreements would be reduced. The issue concerning the integration of the park and ride service with the Shropshire link would be re-examined, but the Council would also be reviewing what was affordable up to a maximum of £4 subsidy per passenger. The continuation of the enhanced national scheme which did not commence until 9.30 a.m. was now no longer possible and would result in a saving of between £100,000 and £200,000 per annum. There had been an extensive consultation on parking arrangements on parking arrangements, including meetings with all parish/town councils during October. However ,consultation did not mean acquiescence and the paper on car parking that had been deferred would be considered by Cabinet on 22 December 2010.

**On being put to the vote, the recommendations were carried by a large majority**

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That the £3,280,000 savings with service implications recommended by the Leader and Cabinet as detailed within Appendix 1 to the report be agreed for implementation on or before 1 April, 2011.
- (b) That the £1,710,000 savings identified within Children's and Young People's Directorate and necessary to meet the loss of areas based grant in 2010-11 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be agreed for implementation by 1 April 2011.

## **112. FEES AND CHARGES INCOME 2011-12 – FINAL REPORT**

Prior to consideration of this report, Mr R H Biggins, Mr G H L Butler and Mrs C Wild declared personal and prejudicial interests and left the meeting while it was under discussion.

It was proposed by the Leader, Cllr K R Barrow, and seconded by Cllr M Bennett that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) That for 2011-12 and future years, the Council adopts a policy to inflate discretionary fees and charges by the retail price index, excluding mortgage interest payments (RPIX), as at September preceding the financial year, plus 4%.
- (b) That increases to discretionary fees and charges be implemented on 4 January 2011, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

- (c) That the statutory fees and charges over which the Council has no discretion, attached at Appendix A for information, be noted.
- (d) That the fees and charges which generate ring fenced income and trading accounts where the Council is required to set charges at a break even level, attached at Appendix B for information, be noted.
- (e) That it be noted that an inflationary increase to the Councils' discretionary fees and charges in line with the above policy will generate additional income of £2,342,000 per annum over and above the 1% income inflation assumption, as shown in the breakdown of these fees at Appendix C to the report.
- (f) That it be noted that service reviews generate additional income of £1,277,000 which has been incorporated into the budget strategy and a breakdown of these fees attached at Appendices D and E.

### **113. SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2011-12**

It was proposed by the Leader, Cllr K R Barrow and seconded by Cllr M J Owen and the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 as amended, the amount calculated by Shropshire Council as its council tax tax base for the year 2011-12, as detailed in the Appendix to the report and totalling £109,369.99, be approved.
- (b) That the inclusion of 464.84 Band D equivalents in the tax base for continuation of the second homes discounts at 10%, in accordance with present Council policy be noted.
- (c) That the exclusion of 264.47 Band D equivalents from the tax base for continuation of the long term empty properties discount i.e. awarding the full 50% discount for six months and completely removing the discount after six months, in accordance with present Council policy, be noted.
- (d) That the reduction in the council tax income raised of £311,952 as a result of continuation of the long term empty properties discount in accordance with present Council policy be noted.
- (e) That a collection rate for 2011-12 of 98.5% be approved.

### **114. ANNUAL REVIEW OF AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Audit Review Terms of Reference, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.



## 115. LOCALITY WORKING – LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEES

It was proposed by Cllr G H L Butter and seconded by Cllr M Whiteman that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

Introducing the report, Cllr Butler explained that following discussions among members during the summer, it had been decided not to reduce the number of Local Joint Committees at this time because it was believed that they were working well. It has been suggested subsequently that an alternative way of reducing costs would be to cut the number of public meetings held each year together with the number and capacity of senior officers attending.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That all LJC's reduce the number of programmed, officer supported meetings per years to between two and three.
- (b) That all LJC's combine the function of pre-agenda and debrief meetings, thereby reducing the number of additional meetings of the committee supported by officers.
- (c) That the Much Wenlock and Broseley Divisions work together to create a new LJC with two zones, each zone meeting twice per year and serviced by the same officer support team.
- (d) That the Brown Clee and Highley Divisions work together to create a new LJC with two zones, each zone meeting twice per year, services by the same officers support team.
- (e) That the six Shrewsbury LJC's remain, but meet only twice per year individually and twice per year as a collective and that each Shrewsbury LJC budget be top sliced by 30% for Shrewsbury wide determination.
- (f) That the Shifnal and Sheriffhales and Albrighton LJC's be retained as separate LJC's, meeting twice each per year and serviced by the same officer support team but be encouraged to join together for additional meetings with shared agendas, as appropriate.
- (g) That the Bayston Hill LJC be retained, meeting twice per year and encouraged to join together with neighbouring LJC's for additional meetings with shared agendas as appropriate.
- (h) That the Oswestry and surrounding area LJC's remain as current, but cluster for additional meetings with shared agendas and strategic areas issues, as appropriate.
- (i) That the parishes of All Stretton, Smethcott and Wolstaston, Cardington and Leebotwood and Longnor, join the Strettondale LJC for a period of six months/two meetings with immediate effect.
- (j) That, where more frequent or localised community engagement is needed, local members be supported to host informal neighbourhood or community forums in their division.

## 116. STREET TRADING – DELEGATION OF POWERS TO TOWN COUNCILS

It was proposed by Mrs C M A Motley and seconded by Mr M Taylor-Smith that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

### **RESOLVED:**

That, pursuant to Section 101(1)(b) Local Government Act 1972, Shropshire Council delegates to Bishops Castle, Ludlow and Shifnal Town Councils all of its powers emanating from Section 3 and Schedule 4, Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 in respect of street tradings.

## 117. MOTIONS

(a) The following motion was received from Cllr N J Hartin:

### **Budget Impact**

Council will, as part of the budget presentation in February require assessments of the impact, across the board, of the budget as a whole upon particular groups within the community with special focus on the most vulnerable. These to include:

- Older people
- Young people
- Equalities groups
- Voluntary sector

where the presentations should be offered to Council by the relevant Member Champion.

### **Localism**

Council will honour its statements concerning local choice.

Further, to ensure a holistic assessment of choices before it, Council will:

- Make no cuts or reductions in services until a comprehensive range of budget proposals is available;
- Ensure local councils and LJs are offered a comprehensive list of proposals and other public services in their area;
- Take local opinion as a key factor in deciding which services to fund locally, which should be retained and which should be forgone;
- Ensure that such choices and options are genuine and therefore assembled and consulted on at an early stage.

Speaking in support of the motion, Cllr Hartin explained that the first part concerned equalities impact assessments which all Council decisions must now

comply. He suggested that the Member Champions could be tasked with making presentations on these aspects at the budget meeting in February to provide information of need and an analysis of the effect that savings would have on the vulnerable members of the community. He advised that Part 2 of the motion was intended to emphasise the Performance and Strategy Scrutiny Committee's request for an holistic review of local opinion on the budget savings so that the full impact could be seen and appreciated.

Speaking in support, Cllr Mrs H M Kidd stated a message of real choice should be given to people. This view was echoed by Dr J E Jones who added that the parish and town councils should be involved and given real choice.,

**On being put to the vote, the motion was defeated with 20 members voting in favour and a large majority against.**

(b) The following motion was received from Cllr R A Evans:

“Council notes the discussions that are starting to take place concerning the future services at the acute hospitals in Shropshire.

Council requests the Chief Executive to organise a seminar at which all members are invited to discuss and consider this proposal prior to putting in a response.”

Speaking in support of the motion, Cllr Evans asked the Leader and the Chief Executive to consider how the Council would formulate its view on the reorganisation of local health services before its submission?

Replying, the Leader stated that this was a very important event and it was crucial that the solution provided the people of Shropshire with best possible health care. The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust (SaTH) had presented proposals to the two PCT Boards on Thursday 2 December to reconfigure hospital services across the two hospitals. The consultation on these proposals would run until mid March 2011. The proposals would also be presented by Adam Cairns, the SaTH Chief Executive, to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 13 December at 10.00 a.m.in the Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall. The Chief Executive of Shropshire Council PCT, Jo Chambers, and Leigh Griffin, Chief Executive of Telford and Wrekin PCT, would also be present at that meeting.

In addition, a full briefing for all Council members had been arranged on 17 January 2011 at 5.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Shirehall when Adam Cairns would again provide a briefing and answer any questions.

## **118. MOTIONS**

It was proposed by Mr S J West and seconded by the Speaker that the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Combined Fire Authority, held on 4 November 2010, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, be received and noted.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**119. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:**

That, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 and paragraph 10.4 of the Council's Access to Information Rule, the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following items.

**120. PLANNING APPEAL – ENERGY FROM WASTE FACILITY  
BATTLEFIELD, SHREWSBURY**

Immediately before consideration of this item the following members left the Chamber Mr P Adams, Mr T Barker, Mrs B J Baker, Mr E J Overall, Mr J Hurst-Knight, Mr J A Gibson, Mrs M Nicholls, Dr J E Jones and Mr M Whiteman

It was proposed by the Leader, Cllr K R Barrow and seconded by Cllr Mrs E A Hartley, that a copy of the confidential report which is attached to the minutes and recommendations contained therein, be received an agreed.

**RESOLVED:**

That Shropshire Council approve Veolia Environmental Services pursuing a planning appeal for the energy from waste plant at Battlefield and gives financial indemnity to Veolia for the costs reasonably incurred in pursuing that appeal in accordance with the terms of the contract, and such costs to be funded from the Waste Management Revenue Reserve.

Speaker .....

Dated .....

(The meeting closed at 12.50 p.m.)