



<u>Committee and Date</u>
COUNCIL
27 September 2012

<u>Item</u>
3
Public

MINUTES

OF

MEETING OF SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

HELD ON 19 JULY 2012

AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mr P Adams
Mr A Bannerman
Mr T Barker
Mrs C A Barnes
Mrs J B Barrow
Mr K R Barrow
Mr J T Bebb
Mr M Bennett
Mr W Benyon
Mr T H Biggins
Mrs K Burgoyne
Mr V Bushell JP
Mr G H L Butler
Mrs K D Calder
Mr S F Charmley
Mrs A M Chebsey
Mr J E Clarke
Mr G L Dakin
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 Everall
Mrs H Fraser
Mr J B Gillow OBE
Mr N J Hartin
Mrs E A Hartley
Mr R Huffer
Mrs T Huffer
Mr V J Hunt
Mr J Hurst-Knight
Dr J E Jones
Mr S P A Jones
Mr J M W Kenny
Mr C J Lea
Mr D G Lloyd MBE
Mr C J Mellings
Mr A N Mosley
Mrs C M A Motley
Mrs M Mullock
Mrs E M Nicholls
Mr P A Nutting
Mr W M Parr
Mrs E A Parsons
Mr M G Pate
Mr M T Price
Mr D W 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 J M Williams
Mr M L Wood
Mrs T Woodward
M P A D Wynn

23. TRIBUTE TO MR. JAMES GIBSON

All those present at the meeting stood for a minutes silence in honour of the memory of Mr James Gibson, Member for Church Stretton and Craven Arms, who died on 25th June 2012.

The Chairman, the Leader of the Council, other Group Leaders and many Members then joined together in paying personal tribute to Mr Gibson with great affection, referring to him as a kind, unassuming, popular, delightful and trustworthy gentleman who undertook his duties with great pleasure and fortitude, and who, having shown great courage throughout his illness, would be very sadly missed by Members and his constituents.

Members commended his service and dedication to the Council.

24. APOLOGIES

The Speaker reported apologies for absence had been received from Mrs B J Baker, Mrs A Caesar-Homden, Mr R Hughes, Mrs H M Kidd, Mr D J Minnery, Mr M J Owen JP, Mr K Ryley (Chief Executive) and Mr L Winwood.

25. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the inclusion of Mr M Whiteman in the Apologies for Absence, the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd May 2012, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

27. ANNOUNCEMENTS

27.1 Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred members to the list of official engagements carried out by myself and the Speaker since the last meeting of the Council on 3rd May 2012 which had been circulated at the meeting.

27.2 Queen's Birthday Honours

The Chairman announced that the following Shropshire residents had been awarded honours in the Queen's Birthday Honours List and that he would be writing to each one of the recipients to congratulate them on their achievement:

Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)

Dr Ian Cuthbert Bradley

For services to People with Special Needs in Pontesford, Shrewsbury and to Healthcare in Tanzania.

Jeffrey Kenneth Smith

Customer Champion, Business Tax Programme, Telford, HM Revenue and Customs.

Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

Mrs Linda Lilian Henderson

Grade E1, Ministry of Defence

Ms Emma Jones

Founder, Enterprise Nation. For services to Enterprise and Homebased Working.

Kenneth Alfred Powell

Convenor, British Standards Institute. For services to the UK Window Blind Industry.

Mrs Karen Watkins

Police Staff, Cheshire Constabulary. For services to Policing.

Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM)

Barry Thomas Ryan

Lately Caretaker, Walford and North Shropshire College. For services to Further Education.

27.3 **Queen's Award for Voluntary Service**

The Chairman announced that the following Shropshire group had been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and that he would be writing to congratulate them on their achievement:

Wem Amateur Dramatic & Operatic Stage Door Youth

Providing theatre workshops for children of all abilities and backgrounds.

Youth

27.4 **Royal Visit – 12th July 2012**

The Chairman referred to the Shropshire Diamond Jubilee Pageant held at RAF Cosford on Thursday 12th July 2012 in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh.

He expressed what a privilege it had been to have sat by Her Majesty during the day and to have proposed the toast to her.

He thanked the schools for their participation in the pageant and the school children, who did the county proud, with their excellent performances on the day. He stated that he particularly wished to thank the Lord Lieutenancy for arranging and staging such a prestigious event so excellently.

The Chairman drew attention to letters to the Lord Lieutenant and Martin Stevens, the Assistant Clerk to the Lieutenancy, received from Doug King, the Assistant Private Secretary to The Queen, indicating how much The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh had enjoyed all aspects of the event; the warm welcome they had received from the people of Shropshire; and their sincere thanks for the hard work and invaluable help of all in the Lieutenancy Office in organising such a successful visit to Shropshire.

The Chairman considered that Martin Stevens had been a credit to the Council in his contribution to the preparations for the royal visit and his work at the event on the day itself.

27.5 Presentation to the Council

The Chairman welcomed Bill Drury (Chairman of Fresh Start New Beginnings), Gerry Hendry (Governor of Shrewsbury Prison) and Kate Pready-James (Chief Executive Officer of Fresh Start New Beginnings) to the meeting.

Mr Drury explained that Fresh Start New Beginnings was a local Shropshire charity dealing with Shropshire offenders with the aim of reducing offending, re-offending and reducing crime and the fear of crime. Work undertaken by the charity in conjunction with HMP Shrewsbury included re-housing, training, mentoring and guidance for returning prisoners to the County.

To symbolise this work and to celebrate the mutual support and close working between HMP Shrewsbury and the Council in facing the challenge of resettling ex-offenders within Shropshire, Mr Drury, Mr Hendry and Ms Pready-James presented the Council with a model "Jubilee" Coach which had been made in the workshops at Shrewsbury Prison.

Mr Hendry referred to the work that HMP Shrewsbury was undertaking with Fresh Start New Beginnings in tackling lack of housing, support and employment as the main causes of re-offending. Efforts were being made to return people to the community as better citizens and emphasised the need to engage closely with the Council on this. He issued an open invitation to all Members to visit HMP Shrewsbury to

see the skills and talents of the prisoners and the efforts being made to get prisoners to engage in rehabilitation.

28. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Speaker announced that Mr Bob Welch and Mr Simon Hibbott had given notice of their intention to ask questions in accordance with Procedural Rule 14.

- (a) Mr Bob Welch asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills:

A Freedom of Information Request, which was answered in February of this year, listed grant applications that have been made to secure the homework clubs in Craven Arms, Market Drayton, Shrewsbury and Oswestry.

Could the Council please advise what are the outcomes of these applications, how much money was given direct from Shropshire Council and how much from other sources? Can as much detail, as is known, together with names be listed please? Is the future of each homework club now permanently secured and, if not, then for how long are they to continue?

Could the Council further advise if efforts have been made to seek the sponsorship of private businesses and, if not, will the Council undertake to investigate this possible source of future funding in time to prevent the discontinuation of these valuable services?

Mrs C Motley replied as follows:

“A total of £31,723 was raised to sustain the provision of four homework clubs across the county (Harlescott, Craven Arms, Oswestry and Market Drayton).

£8501 came from a number of Shropshire Council LJs (Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Craven Arms and Market Drayton).

The remaining £23,222 came from a range of Trusts and charitable organisations.

All contributions were one-off payments and will not sustain provision beyond this year. New funding is being sought. This will again include applications to trusts and charitable organisations but the involvement of councillors in supporting the involvement of local businesses would be welcomed. Local authority colleagues in the public libraries team have been asked to put together a 3 year business plan for the clubs, identifying a number of potential partners both within and outside the Council (ie community-led groups). This will be a major piece of work, as circumstances are different in each location and there is therefore no one-size-fits-all solution.

There is no doubt that the homework clubs make a valuable contribution to supporting vulnerable children and their families. A recent evaluation of the Harlescott Homework Club (which is held at The Lantern) demonstrated the

impact on learners. The views of young people, parents and schools contributed to the report which contains very clear examples of the role which the club plays in young people's safeguarding, mental health and wellbeing, community involvement, social activities and positive role modelling as well as their academic achievement.

Evaluation reports from other Homework Clubs will be submitted by the end of the term."

Mr Welch thanked Mrs Motley for the response and by way of a supplementary question, indicated that he was pleased that the value of homework clubs was recognised and enquired, given that there was no immediate prospect of funding, about the likelihood of partnerships being achieved to sustain their provision.

In reply, Mrs Motley stated that as Council funding was at a premium, efforts were being made to form new liaisons to assist organisations that the Council was unable to so that they could continue. It was anticipated that homework clubs could continue to be supported through the LJC's and recommended that homework clubs contact the Community Action Officers for the LJC's to pursue this.

(b) Mr Simon Hibbott asked the following question of the Portfolio Holder for Asset Management:

We have tenced one of three allotments to the rear of Birch Road since 2004. All three allotments are fully tenanted and the other two allotment holders have held their allotments for almost 25 years and just over a year respectively.

We grow soft fruit and vegetables, keep hens and have apple and damson trees. Our three children play there and have a swing in one of the trees. Unlike a lot of allotment holders, we don't just visit our allotment at the weekend but instead we are there at least twice a day looking after our hens and passersby often stop and chat about how nice it is to see a young family enjoying an organic way of life.

On the 10th July we received a letter from the council informing us that they intended to place some land at Birch Road Ellesmere in public auction on Friday 7th September, 2012. This was the first we had heard of this, and upon telephoning the council to enquire as to the location of the land we were devastated to discover that the land in question includes our allotment and those of our neighbours and friends. One of our fellow allotment holders has received the same letter; the second has received no communication whatsoever.

We pay only a nominal rent for the allotments and while Stephen Caplan in the Asset Management Department of the council has assured us that "There is no intention to remove you or see you be removed" it seems naive to expect that a potential purchaser is likely to purchase the land without the intention of issuing us with the required 12 months' notice with a view to developing the land or using it for alternative purposes. Land in private ownership receives no

protection under the Allotment Acts. **How does the council propose to secure our tenure, beyond the 12 month's notice period stated in our tenancy agreement?**

The Shropshire Council Asset Management Strategy Final Appendix E states that a detailed Property review and suitability assessment be undertaken before a decision is made to dispose of assets. **Can this be made available to us, and has the council made and taken into account a "robust analysis of Open Space" suggested in PPG17?**

The Shropshire Council Asset Management Strategy identifies one of its key aims as being to align property decisions with other Council objectives as outlined in local development plans, environmental and development strategies. Government Policy on allotments also has the aim that allotments should be properly preserved, promoted and cared for.

In light of this, of Section 2 subsection paragraph (b) Local Government Act 2000 – 'the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area', and of Section 2 subsection (1) paragraph (c) of the 2000 Act – 'the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area', is the council willing to reverse their decision to dispose of the land?

It is my understanding from speaking to local residents that the allotments have been in continuous use since the Second World War, and were so when North Shropshire District Council acquired them on the 28th October 1975, almost 40 years ago. As such we feel there is a strong case to be made for them to fall within the classification of Statutory Allotments, requiring Section 8 permission from the Secretary of State before disposal. The legal department of the National Association of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners is working on our behalf to establish this. We feel that in light of this, at the very least the allotments should be withdrawn from the forthcoming auction while the legal position is clarified. **Is the council willing to do this?**

As the allotments are in use and fully tenanted we feel that the current allotment holders should have been offered the opportunity to purchase their allotments, either individually or under the auspices of a newly-formed Birch Road Allotment Society. Steve Caplan of the Asset Management department stated that "we could potentially even sell to you and your neighbour, pre-auction". **Is the Council willing to do this?**

We have been told that "a number of properties that are deemed either surplus or not providing front line services to the county have been identified for sale and the land at Birch road is one such property", but please take into account that the allotments comprise only an eighth of an acre of amenity or agricultural land and come with restrictive rights of way and that as such any revenue the council generate by auctioning off the land will be far less than the health, environmental, sustainability and community benefits to our family and the other allotment holders who all live on Birch Road.

We thank you for considering all the above points and hope you can help us to safeguard our allotment.

Mr R Tindall replied as follows:

“I will answer the series of questions Mr Hibbott has raised in order as follows:

The Council has no plans to remove you or any occupiers. If the land is deemed statutory allotments the sale will not proceed. If they are not statutory, the sale is still proposed in accordance with the Council's approved asset management strategy . The tenants' terms are secure for their duration.

The Council can make the property review available for Mr Hibbott. The allotment land if defined as "Open space" cannot and should not be subject to the exclusive use of an individual occupier. The Asset management strategy aligns with the Council's priorities and medium term financial plan to transform and invest in front line services, reduce operational costs and release of non-core surplus assets to achieve this. The disposal process allows, following consultation, interested parties including tenants to purchase the assets in question.

The Council is of the opinion this piece of land can promote well-being and continue to be an asset in the community. However, the Council does not need to own the land to achieve this.

The Council is investigating the history of the acquisition and if it is satisfied they are statutory allotments then the sale will be withdrawn.

No offers to purchase have been received so the Council has no offers to consider. They have to achieve best value for disposal of their assets, subject to some exceptions, so any offers will be considered with their advisors accordingly. The occupiers can bid either individually or collectively if it proceeds to auction.

The Council will continue to investigate whether restrictive covenants exist on this land if deemed to be statutory allotments.”

Mr and Mrs Hibbott referred to a letter that their daughter Tara had written independently on the matter which Mrs. Hibbott was given leave by the Speaker to read out as follows:

“My name is Tara Hibbott I am 13 year's old I feel it right to express my feelings in a letter as I am not present at this meeting. I am righting regarding the allotments at the back of birch road I think it right to have a say in our community and on that note I will begin. I feel very strongly about the prospect of selling the allotments and want them to stay as I think many other people do as well. I love are allotment and think it is important to have them in our day to day life because as life goes on and we create more and more thing's (meaning more gadgets) the more we forget the things that really matter and help to build our community as a whole such as wildlife and growing your own produce. I would be very grateful if you could listen to this and respect my thoughts.”

Mr Hibbott thanked Mr Tindall for the response and by way of a supplementary question, indicated that he considered a collective purchase of the land by the allotment holders as the way forward and asked if Mr Tindall could provide advice on how this could be achieved.

In reply, Mr Tindall indicated that arrangements had been for the local Member, Mrs E A Hartley, to assist Mr Hibbott on the matter.

29. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

The Speaker advised that the following questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 15:

(a) Received from Mr N J Hartin:

“Is Shropshire Council affected by the artificial depression of Libor, are monies owing from banks named to have been involved in irregular fixing of the Libor rate?”

The question arises following reports in the press where the question was asked: “If Libor was pushed downwards, does that mean rates for savers were also artificially depressed”?

The answer given was as follows: “Most savings rates set by the building societies and banks have little connection with Libor, so small savers are unaffected. But if you are a big institution – such as the treasurer of a local authority or large charity – you tend to deposit your balances into short-term accounts where the interest paid is linked in some way or another to Libor. These deposits would have received a lower rate of interest than they would otherwise have earned. So they are out of pocket – and may now want the banks to repay them”.

The Leader of the Council, Mr K R Barrow replied:

“The Council does not have any exposure to LIBOR linked instruments, neither on the investment side nor on the borrowing side. Therefore it has not been affected by the artificial depression of the LIBOR rate.”

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Hartin asked whether a review would be undertaken if the Council’s finances were found to be affected by the artificial depression of the LIBOR rate.

In reply, Mr Barrow confirmed that a review would be undertaken if that was found to be the case.

(b) Received from Mr A N Mosley:

“What is the projected total costs of the proposed employment of directors at I P & E, including basic salary and OTE payments, on-costs

and recruitment. This to include projections for directors to be employed over the next two years?

What will be the total cost of support staff for the directors, their accommodation, other resources and what other set-up costs incurred by the Company?

How will any profit attributed to the Company be calculated and what profits are projected for each of the first two years of operation?"

The Leader of the Council, Mr K R Barrow replied:

"The salary for the Managing Director of ip&e ltd has been advertised at £80,000. This does not include OTE (on target earnings) as you state; payments of this nature are generally applied in sales related roles and are relevant to sales targets – which this is not. On-costs will be applied in exactly the same way as any other employee.

The only cost of recruitment has been the advert in the Sunday Times as no recruitment consultants have been used. Salary levels for any future appointments will be decided upon once the Managing Director has been engaged, but they will be lower than that of the Managing Director's.

However, for clarity, a maximum of eight Directors can be appointed – assuming that you have read the reports that were brought to Cabinet on 6th June 2012 - you will be very aware of this. This does not mean that the company is required to appoint all eight directors; it will be for the company to decide what is appropriate. There is considerably more detail within this comprehensive report, that you have a copy of, might I suggest you read it in more detail.

The Chairman will receive no allowance.

The questions seem to indicate some confusion on your behalf about where we are in the process of developing the new organisation. To-date, all that has been done is create a holding company called ip&e group and seek to appoint the Managing Director. Prior to any services being moved into the new company, a business plan will be produced and will have to be agreed by Cabinet. The business cases will cover such areas as financial projections, service delivery expectations and potential outcome targets. At this stage Scrutiny will have the option of examining the detail of the proposed transfer.

I know that you have said that you feel that £80,000 is too low a salary for the Managing Director role and that you are attempting to discredit ip&e group. You would clearly prefer to see an expensive 'council mark 2' model, but let me be very clear with you - this will absolutely not be the case. The new Company seeks to be 'local but not government'. The public profit that we seek to make is profit with a purpose, profit for the public good and profit to help us deliver quality services across Shropshire, despite the £86 million cut in our income.

This is clever, creative and Conservative and it is unfortunate that your ideology stops you from appreciating the value the changes will bring to the people of Shropshire.

It's time to look to the future to make sure that we are fully prepared for the challenges ahead of us. We have had one to one meetings together Alan, where you have sat and supported the proposal of the new company, agreeing that it was the right direction to take. But as soon as you have walked out of the door have publicly slated the proposal – which I find absolutely astonishing. Its time Cllr Mosley, that you started to do what is right by the people of Shropshire and started to have an honest dialog with the people who voted for you and the county you represent. The people of Shropshire deserve better from you than playing silly political games.

I have made commitments to the people of Shropshire - I am passionate in my belief about ensuring that people are able to continue to access quality services that are important to them, when they need them, now and in future years to come - I will not fail them.”

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Mosley indicated that, as it was doubted that £80,000 was a sufficient salary to attract the calibre of person required for the Managing Director role and he did not feel that the concerns of the staff and the public on the formation of the company had not been addressed, he wished to clarify what the total pay package would be for the Managing Director and the other directors to be appointed to the company.

In reply, Mr Barrow stated that he considered that he had answered the question clearly and was being open and transparent on the matter. He indicated that, although some people had doubted whether £80,000 was a sufficient salary for the Managing Director, over 90 applications had been received which included a number from exceptionally high quality people.

30. LEADER AND PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

The Leader, Mr K R Barrow, presented his report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, on undertaking his responsibilities as Portfolio Holder for Public Confidence and invited questions from Members.

Several Members, including Mr Hartin and Mr R Evans expressed concern that they had been unable to answer queries from their constituents on the ip&e group, due to a lack of information available on how it would operate and be monitored, and the business plan had still to be finalised. In addition, there had been a lack of knowledge within the wider Council membership about proposals for the Tri Council partnership prior to its launch. Members also commented that staff were still unhappy with the transformation process and the public perception of the Council was not great.

In responding to points raised by Members, Mr Barrow stated that the creation of the ip&e group was not the privatisation of Council services, and the administration considered that privatisation of Council services was not the model for the 21st century. He explained that the ip&e group was a holding company, owned by the Council, formed for the future delivery and continuous improvement of Council services. The Council would be interested in joining with partners to enable the best possible outcomes for the people of Shropshire but would not relinquish any more than 49% of the company to ensure that it remained under Council control. He offered to attend a meeting of the Liberal Democrats Group to address them on this in more detail and answer questions.

Mr Barrow stated that the feedback he had received from the public on the Council was that they were pleased with its performance and the Council tax and had seen no reduction in services. He considered that this was a credit to the way that savings had been achieved in the Council's budget to minimise the impact on front line services. On staff morale, Mr Barrow stated that the Council recognized that it had good and dedicated staff and efforts were continuing to be made to keep the staff pay reduction to a minimum to protect the staff as much as possible.

With regard to the Tri Council Partnership, he indicated that this had been raised in various forums at which there had been an opportunity for it to come to the notice of all Members and had also been included in the ICT strategy.

Referring once again to the comments from Members on the ip&e group, Mr Barrow indicated that the business plan would come forward for examination. He added that Shire Services was enthusiastic at its inclusion in the initiative and had already secured new contracts for its services. Mr Barrow stated that any profit made by the ip&e group was public profit which would be returned to the Council. He indicated that he would let Members have further information on this if the position was any different and undertook to respond direct to Mrs Parsons on her request for greater clarity on creating tangible profits from working with a multitude of agencies to deliver services.

On the salary for the Managing Director of the ip&e group, Mr Barrow confirmed that the salary would be £80,000 and any additional incentives would be discussed with the successful candidate.

In conclusion, Mr Barrow indicated that he had attended meetings around the County to speak about the ip&e group and was willing to continue to do so. In addition, he indicated that the Deputy Leader, Mrs E A Hartley, had put an article on the ip&e group in the senior citizens forum magazine, which had reached many senior citizens across the County.

Mrs R Taylor-Smith wished to record her thanks, on behalf of the people of Ludlow, for the great day experienced when the Olympic Torch Relay passed through the town in July.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be received.

31. REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR SERVICE TRANSFORMATION AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr M Taylor-Smith, presented his report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, on undertaking his responsibilities as Portfolio Holder for Service Transformation and Organisational Development and invited questions from Members.

In presenting the report, Mr Taylor-Smith explained that it had been structured around the key areas of the Transformation Programme and ICT, which he would address, Customer Contact and Organisation Development, which would be dealt with by Mrs T Woodward as Deputy Portfolio Holder, and Asset Management which would be dealt with by Mr R Tindall as Deputy Portfolio Holder.

Mr Taylor-Smith indicated that the Shared Services move to The Guildhall had been delivered on time and to budget and had resulted in savings being achieved in the Council's budget. He stated that new ways of working and delivering projects more effectively through a reduced bureaucracy were highlighted throughout the report. Much of the transformation programme was underpinned by the ICT Strategy and the development of the broadband network in the County through which savings were being delivered.

Some Members expressed the view that the transformation programme had resulted in a reduction in the level of Council services, reduced terms and conditions for staff and the loss of jobs. In addition, they contended that serious issues were building up for remaining Council services as a result of the Government's austerity programme.

The likelihood of the new service models outlined in the report being delivered was queried by a number of Members, and queried the amount budgeted in the transformation programme to fund the ip&e group and the critical amount of ownership of the company for the Council.

Mr Taylor-Smith referred to the investments being made by the Council to attract additional funding to enable the transformation programme to be achieved and produce the required savings in costs for the delivery of services. Measures were in place to track the accepted controllable risks in delivering service developments.

Mr Taylor-Smith re-affirmed that the controlling interest for the Council in the ip&e group would be no less than 51% and the budget of the company would be part of the Council's budget

Customer Contact

Mrs T Woodward reported that the benefits team was working on the introduction of major changes in the service and improvements to the

Council's website to enable more payment's to be made on-line and balances of Council Tax accounts to be checked on-line.

Organisation Development

Mrs T Woodward reported that the successful Graduate Programme continued to go from strength to strength and indicated that places for graduates in services were being provided as part of their budgets. It was the intention that existing staff would also have the opportunity to join the Graduate Programme,

She thanked all the staff involved in developing the organisational changes as the Council moved forward. The staff were leading the way in innovative working as the Council transformed and other authorities were looking at how Shropshire was now delivering services.

Asset Management

Mr R Tindall drew attention to the £8.3m of capital receipts achieved in 2011/12. In the rationalisation of assets the Council was now leading the way in the sharing of accommodation with partners. Further assets were being brought forward for disposal to achieve the additional£12m capital receipts required to fund a revised corporate capital programme of £74.8m. He indicated that he was looking into the best place for the revised asset disposals protocol and procedures, revised and implemented in accordance with the recommendations of Scrutiny, to be displayed.

Members asked if local Members could be informed when land and property auctions were held so that their constituents could be informed and have an opportunity to bid. Members also expressed concern that local communities were made aware of the assets to be disposed of in their area. In response, Mr Tindall indicated that the protocol should cover the notifications requested.

A Member enquired about shared accommodation with the police to reduce property costs further and assist the police in their required budgetary savings. Mr Tindall indicated that the Council was working towards greater liaison with the police on shared accommodation.

Mr Taylor-Smith indicated that Council currently utilised 40% of its assets, therefore they were being rationalised to achieve greater efficiency in the use of space.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be received.

32. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2011/12

The Chairman of the Performance and Strategy Scrutiny Committee, Mr T Barker, presented the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed

minutes, on the work of the Performance and Strategy Scrutiny Committee in 2011/12 and invited questions from Members.

Mr Barker stated that all Members were welcome to attend meetings of the Committee. He indicated that the Committee had considered an e-petition during the course of the year and this was regarded as a good way for people to express their views.

Referring to the future issues for scrutiny, Mr Barker expressed the view that great challenges lay ahead for the Committee, particularly in relation to strategic commissioning.

Mr Hartin enquired about arrangements for Members to receive monthly complaints monitoring information to assist their Ward duties. In response, Mr Barker undertook to check when this would commence.

Mr Mosley stated that the structure of the ip&e Ltd was an important matter and enquired of Mr Barker's thoughts on how he saw scrutiny's role on the matter. In response, Mr Barker stated that scrutiny would be looking at all aspects of the ip&e Ltd once details started to come forward.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be received.

33. REVENUE OUTTURN 2011/12

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

Mr Barrow drew attention to the underspend of £2.7m that had been achieved in 2011/12 through the efforts of tight budgetary control and indicated that revenue reserves continued to increase.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, it be noted that the Outturn for the Revenue Budget for 2011/12 was an underspend of £2,709,214, which represented 0.4% of the original gross budget of £661m.
- (b) That, it be noted that the level of general balance stood at £7,637,881 (inclusive of New Homes Bonus of £2.021m due to be committed in 2012/13), an increase from the 2010/11 balance of £3.731m and within the Council's policy to hold between ½ and 2% of the gross revenue budget.
- (c) That, it be noted that the level of school balances stood at £5,104,000 (2010/11 £6,239,000).
- (d) That, it be noted that the Outturn for the Housing Revenue Account for 2011/12 was an underspend of £212,201 and the level of the Housing Revenue Account reserve stood at £997,739 (2010/11 £785,538).

34. CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2011/12

It was proposed by the Leader, Mr K R Barrow, and seconded by Mrs A Hartley 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 the budget variations to the 2011/12 capital programme, totalling £146,443 included in Appendix 1&3a/Table 1, and the re-profiled 2011/12 capital budget of £68.7m, be approved.
- (b) That the re-profiled capital budgets of £79.5m for 2012/13 (including slippage of £4.69m from 2011/12), £43.6m for 2013/14, £32.2m for 2014/15 and £1.7m for 2015/16, as detailed in Appendix 2 and changes in Appendix 3b, be approved.
- (c) That the outturn expenditure position set out in appendix 1 of £63,964,384, representing 93.1% of the revised capital budget for 2012/13, be accepted.
- (d) That approval be given to the retaining of the balance of capital receipts set aside of £9m as at 31st March 2012 to generate Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £360,000 in 2012/13.

35. ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT 2011/12

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

Mr B Williams referred to the additional responsibilities of the Audit Committee in monitoring the risks involved in the arrangements for strategic commissioning and the creation of a Council owned trading company for service delivery. He indicated that Members were already receiving training in this extended aspect of their responsibilities, and the Audit Service Manager was ensuring that adequate resources were available to minimise any possibility of the risk of financial malpractice.

In seconding the proposition, Mr Whiteman indicated that arrangements were in place to pursue unpaid Council Tax. In addition, £400,000 of the former Bridgnorth District Council's £1m investment in the Icelandic bank Landbankski, that had been lost when the bank collapsed, had been recovered, and arrangements were in place to recover the remainder of the £1m.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Assurance Report for 2010/11 be approved.

36. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

It was proposed by the Speaker, seconded by the Chairman and

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the appointments of Mr. R. Evans to replace Mr. M Kenny as a member of the Strategic Licensing Committee and Mr. N. Hartin to the resultant substitute place arising be confirmed.
- (b) That the appointment of the following members to the new Standards Committee be confirmed:
Mrs. Joyce Barrow, Mr. Martin Bennett, Mrs. Pauline Dee, Mr. Roger Evans, Mr. Vince Hunt, Dr. Jean Jones, Mr. Chris Mellings, Mrs. Rosanna Taylor-Smith and Mr. Stuart West.
Substitutes: Mr. Gerald Dakin, Mr. David Evans, Mr. Roger Hughes, Mr. William Parr, Mr. Robert Tindall

37. MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT

It was proposed by the Speaker and seconded by the Chairman that, further to Minute 19 (Council – 3rd May 2012 refers), the finalised Members Code of Conduct as required to comply with the regulations for the Localism Act 2011, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the finalised Members Code of Conduct be approved.

38. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON

It was proposed by the Speaker and seconded by the Chairman that, following interviews held on 16th July 2012 for the appointment of an Independent Person as required under the amended Standards regime, the appointment of Stuart McLaren as Independent Person and Mrs. Dianne Thomas as the reserve be agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Stuart McLaren as Independent Person and Mrs. Dianne Thomas as the reserve, for the period to 30th June 2017 to ensure continuity and retention of the skills developed by the candidates and to fit with the regulations, be approved

39. REPORT OF THE WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY

It was proposed by Mr M L Wood and seconded by the Chairman that the report of the West Mercia Police Authority, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, be received and noted.

Mr T Durnell paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of Mr Ian Payne the retiring Deputy Chief Executive in the course of his service with the West Mercia Police Authority.

Concerns were expressed by Mrs D M Shingleton about the rationalisation of police stations and Mr A N Mosley on the impact of budget reductions on the level of policing on the streets.

Mrs E M Nicholls considered that local Members should be included in the discussions on the reorganisation of Local Policing Teams and how they would be best utilised in future.

Mr M L Wood indicated that decisions on the rationalisation of police stations would not be taken until after the Police and Crime Commissioner was elected in November 2012. On future budget requirements, Mr Wood indicated that Superintendent James Tozer was continuing to look at the restructuring of the force across West Mercia and the delivery of policing services in partnership with Warwickshire Police.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Speaker

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Date

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The meeting closed at 12.20 p.m.