



COUNCIL

25th February 2010

10.00 am

Item

3

Public

MINUTES

OF

MEETING OF SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2010
AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Mr P Adams
Mr P Andrews
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 A J Caesar-Homden
Mrs K D Calder
Mr S 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 Overall
Mr J A Gibson
Mr J B Gillow OBE
Mr N J Hartin
Mrs E A Hartley
Mr V J Hunt
Mr J Hurst-Knight
Mrs J Jones
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 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
Mrs E A Parsons
Mr M G Pate
Mr P F Phillips
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
Dr M Winchester
Mr L Winwood
Mr M L Wood
Mrs T Woodward
M P A D Wynn

90. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chief Executive reported apologies for absence had been received from, Mrs T Huffer, Mr R Hughes, Mrs H M Kidd and Mr W M Parr.

91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

- (a) Mr T H Biggins declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 11 - Review of council tax long term empty properties discretionary discount policy for 2010/11 - as the owner of a second property in Shropshire.
- (b) Mr G L Dakin declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 11, as the owner of a second property in Shropshire.
- (c) Mr G H L Butler declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 11, as the owner of a second property in Shropshire.
- (d) Mrs C Wild declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 11, as the owner of other properties in Shropshire.
- (e) Mr G F Tonkinson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 11, as the owner of a second property in Shropshire.
- (f) Mrs A M Chebsey declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item, 11, as her husband was the owner of a second property in Shropshire.

Each of the above members withdrew during consideration of the relevant item.

- (g) Mr R A Evans declared a personal interest in Item 14 - vehicle activated signs policy - as a member of Hanwood Parish Council, one of the pilot authorities.

92. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the apology of Mr D W Evans being recorded, the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2009 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

93. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred members to the list of official engagements undertaken by himself and the Speaker since the last meeting on 10 December 2009.

(b) **New Year's Honours**

The Chairman reported the following had received awards in the Queen's New Year's Honours list and advised that he would be writing to them all to congratulate them on the receipt of their respective honours.

Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBE)

Mrs Susan Higham - For Modernising Pay as You Earn, Telford, HM Revenue and Customs

Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

Mrs Mary Elizabeth Bromley - For charitable services in Oswestry

Mrs Sandra Irwin Davies - For services to the community in Craven Arms

Mrs Mary Beatrice Guest - For services to people with Sensory Impairment

Mrs Margaret McAlister Owen - For services to the community in Shrewsbury

(c) **Death of Mr J M Morgan**

The Speaker reported the recent death of Mr John Melville Morgan, the former Shropshire County Councillor for the Clun Division between 1989 and 1997.

Members remembered his work on numerous committees and outside bodies, principally connected with public protection, highways and transport before standing in silent tribute in respect to his memory.

94. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Speaker reported that the following question had been received from Mr P Clare in accordance with Procedural Rule 15:

"Why is this Council unwilling to accept that planning decisions permitting the development of an intensive cattle rearing facility at Lower Hendre, Maesbury Marsh, Oswestry have resulted in serious environmental consequences for the area and for the multi-award winning Canal Central eco-catering amenity in particular: and

(a) why does the Council refuse to acknowledge that an acute and persistent stench problem now exists there; and

b) why is it unwilling to take action despite mounting confirmational evidence from local residents and visitors to the tea room?"

Mr M Taylor-Smith the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transport, replied:

“The planning application for Lower Hendre Farm was considered by the Northern Area Regulatory Committee on the 28th May 2009.

The officer report referred to representations received raising concerns regarding the impact of the development on the area and specifically Canal Central.

The Committee visited the site on the 19th May to view the location of the proposed agricultural building and its impact on the surrounding area. Mr Clare spoke against the proposal at Committee.

Following consideration of the application the Committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to condition regarding landscaping.

Following complaint of odour from the proprietors of Canal Central and other parties, Environmental Health Officers have undertaken thirty six monitoring visits between the 8th July and the 5th November 2009. Visits have been undertaken at various times and during different atmospheric conditions and at times recommended by the complainants. No odour emanating outside of the immediate Lower Hendre Farm environment has been detected during these monitoring visits and no nuisance detected.

The Council considers that this investigation meets the Council's statutory obligation in respect of investigating complaints of nuisance and has advised the complainants. A course of action is open to the complainants to seek nuisance proceedings in a magistrates court in their own name and this advice has been given.

This matter has previously been raised and dealt with through the Council's Corporate Complaints process. As Members are aware, members of the public are always at liberty to refer any matter to the Local Government Ombudsman and the Council will participate in any review or investigation undertaken by that body.”

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Clare remarked that the Council seemed to hold the view that the complaint about the smell nuisance was being pressed by just two complainants, when the whole of the Maesbury Marsh area shared these concerns. He advised that he had kept a record of complaints made by a large number of people because the problem was serious and ongoing. He asked whether the Council would give local people the required support to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion?

In reply, Mr Taylor-Smith advised that the position was being monitored but should Mr Clare have any further information then this should be passed to the Council's staff for evaluation, after which a formal reply would be sent.

95. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

The Speaker advised that the following question had been received from Mr N J Hartin in accordance with Procedural Rule 15:

"Following the launch of the Green Office (Go) Champions in September, I understand that there are now more than 40 members of staff signed up from offices across the Council.

However, I understand that there are some buildings and offices, particularly the smaller ones, which do not yet have Champions - Could the Portfolio Holder explain what further work is being done to expand this initiative throughout the Council?"

Mr D W L Roberts the Portfolio Holder for Local Environment and Economy replied as follows:

Since launching the GO Champions Network in September 2009, we currently have 45 members of staff signed up in the following areas:

19 from Shirehall
3 from Guildhall
1 from Oswestry
1 from Wem
1 from Bridgnorth

The remaining staff are from the smaller offices including the AONB, the Chancery, Mayfair, Discovery Centre, Countryside Unit in Ellesmere, Shrewsbury Training & Development Centre (ie Monkmoor), Archives, The Hollies, and other Customer Service Points.

Staff were initially recruited through an intranet campaign and through "Talking Shrop" and this has been successful in recruiting most of the above staff. The Sustainability Team has regularly repeated the recruitment information on the intranet and has ensured information about the projects that the champions are involved with has been online.

The aim has been to get people to volunteer for the role and gain manager support rather than being made to take the role on, as we feel people are more motivated to take on challenges if it is something they are interested in.

To ensure we have staff across the Council in all buildings we have started to contact Heads of Service asking them to recommend people for the role where we think we are short of staff volunteers. This has been successful in some areas, less so in others.

We will continue to press those areas that are not covered and if necessary try to adopt an even more proactive stance

Mr N J Hartin thanked the Portfolio Holder for the initial response and asked by way of supplementary question whether he would work with the Portfolio Holder for Energy and Carbon Reduction to provide an opportunity for greater member involvement.

Mr Roberts confirmed that he would be delighted to do so.

96. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

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

Mr Barrow thanked the Panel for the further work it had undertaken since the previous Council meeting and commended acceptance of the Panel's further recommendations.

The Leaders of the other Groups on the Council also confirmed their acceptance of these recommendations and expressed their thanks to the Panel.

RESOLVED:

That the Independent Remuneration Panel's further recommendations on the proposed level of allowances for the 2010-11 financial year be adopted.

97. APPOINTMENT OF CABINET MEMBERS AND CHANGES TO PORTFOLIOS

The Leader of the Council, Mr K R Barrow, presented his report detailing the appointment of Mrs E A Hartley as Portfolio Holder for Energy and Carbon Reduction and other changes to the Portfolios of existing Cabinet members.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the revised composition of the Cabinet and the remits of the Portfolio Holders, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (b) That continuation of the discharge of the functions of the Council in relation to West Mercia Supplies through the West Mercia Supplies Joint Committee be confirmed and that the Council's Executive member representatives on that body, being Mr K R Barrow, Mrs C M A Motley and Mrs A Caesar-Homden, be noted.

98. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

It was proposed by the Leader and seconded by Mrs C M A Motley 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 membership of committees be amended as set out below:

<u>Committee/Body</u>	<u>New Member</u>	<u>Replacing</u>
Human Resources Committee	Mr M J Owen	Mr P A Nutting
Economic Recession Committee	Mr M G Pate Mr P F Phillips	Mr P A Nutting Mr T Davies
PFI Task Group/PFI Project Team	Mr A B Davies	Mr P A Nutting
Increasing Physical Activity in Shropshire Member Challenge Panel	Mr P A D Wynn	Mr P A Nutting
Political Structures Monitoring Group	Mrs E A Hartley	Mr P A Nutting
Employers' Joint Consultative Committee	Mr T Barker	Mr P A Nutting
Early Retirement Panel	Mr J Hurst-Knight	Mr P A Nutting

- (b) That the appointment of Mr M J Owen as Member Champion for Assets be approved.

99. SHROPSHIRE CORE STRATEGY : FINAL PLAN VERSION

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

Mr Taylor-Smith stated that this was a very substantial document, the consultation for which had commenced in June 2009. If the draft final plan version of the Core Strategy was approved by Council, it would be published on 15 February 2009 and a six week period set aside for representations. After this it would be subject to further consideration before submission, with possible changes, to the Secretary of State in July 2010.

He advised that two additional documents, the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Development Plan and also the Frequently Asked Questions sheet would be sent to the chairmen of all parish and town councils. He encouraged members to read both documents and advised that a briefing on their content would be delivered to all members on the afternoon of 22 February 2010. In commending approval of the Final Plan Version of the Core Strategy, Mr Taylor-Smith said that he had been given notice of the following amendment which he was prepared to accept and incorporate into the recommendation at paragraph C:

- C. "That Policy CS4 "Community Hubs and Clusters" should be extended to include for the provision of a defined development boundary for each hub and for each village within a cluster".

He advised that the Frequently Asked Questions paper contained a lot of information about hubs and clusters which would be important for parish and town councils, given the disquiet expressed about the lack of precise development boundaries. The amendment had the benefit of extending the policy referred to in paragraph 17 of the report so that clusters and/or villages could then consider setting development boundaries.

Mr B B Williams thanked the Portfolio Holder for agreeing to accept the amendment but stated that it was not meant to be prescriptive. Nevertheless, clusters and villages should have the right to indicate whether they wanted a development boundary and for this to be stated clearly in the site allocation document.

Mr N J Hartin also thanked the Portfolio Holder for details of the member briefing but asked whether local joint committees could also be integrated into the consultation process.

Mr D W L Roberts considered that giving the parish and town councils six weeks in which to comment on the final plan version was acceptable, but suggested that the clerks of the smaller parishes which met quarterly, should be encouraged to hold a special meeting to enable them to comment.

A number of members, including Mr R A Evans, expressed concern over the integration of the intended amendment into the formal recommendation, stating that this had not been previously presented to the Local Development Framework Working Group. While he supported the six weeks consultation period, he felt that the inclusion of the additional clause in the recommendation changed the entire thrust of the document. However, other members added that they considered the amendment to be a means of providing affordable housing in these settlements.

Mr A N Mosley questioned the need for the amendment, given that paragraph 17 of the report stated that the policy was flexible. The Leader of the Council explained that the intended amendment did not undermine the work of the Local Development Framework Working Group. And, as the Council was still at the consultation stage, he saw no difficulty in accepting it as an additional clause in the recommendation.

Speaking in response to the various comments made during the debate, Mr Taylor-Smith reiterated that the policy was not prescriptive and that the covering letter addressed to parish clerks would give every encouragement for them to convene special meetings should this prove necessary.

With a substantial majority voting in favour, five members against and with one abstention, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the draft final plan document for publication, subject to minor amendments and editing, be approved.
- (b) That authority be delegated to the Director of Development Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transport, to approve the final document prior to publication for consultation on 15 February 2010.

- (c) That Policy CS4 “Community Hubs and Clusters” should be extended to include for the provision of a defined development boundary for each hub and for each village within a cluster.

100. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL TAX LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNT POLICY FOR 2010-11

It was proposed by Mr M T Price and seconded by Mr R A Evans that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Mr Price explained that, following the discussion at the previous Council meeting, this report proposed the introduction of a revised discretionary council tax discount policy in respect of long term empty properties. If approved, this would see the retention of the full 50% discount for six months, after which it would be removed entirely. Although the policy had the potential to increase revenue by up to £500,000 per year, its principal purpose was to enhance choice by bringing back into use as many of Shropshire’s 4,400 empty homes as possible.

He added that the large number of exemptions and grants for bringing properties back into use would provide both the necessary protections and incentives to give effect to the revised policy which he commended to the Council.

Speaking in support, Mr R A Evans echoed the remarks he made at the previous meeting and emphasised the negative effects of living next door to a long term empty property which included blighting their own. He thanked the Portfolio Holder for agreeing to the policy being reviewed prior to setting the council tax base for 2011-12.

A significant number of members commented favourably on the proposal and the Leader added that the public would appreciate the cross party working to bring about this change.

Replying to the points raised in the debate, Mr Price reaffirmed that the exemptions applied to home owners who were in care, prison or whose former homes were the subject of a grant of probate and concluded by stating that the challenge was now for the owners of empty properties to bring them back into use.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, a revised discretionary council tax discount policy awarded in respect of long term empty properties for the 2010-11 financial year be approved; i.e. the retention of the full 50% discount for six months and the discount completely removed thereafter and, therefore, inclusion of an additional 421.42 Band D equivalents (a total of 1,264.25 Band D equivalents for the whole of Shropshire) in the tax base.
- (b) That the publication of a notice regarding the new discretionary council tax discount policy awarded in respect of long term empty property within 21 days of the determination be approved.
- (c) That this policy be reviewed in advance of the setting of the Council’s council tax base for 2011-12.

101. SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX TAXBASE FOR 2010-11

It was proposed by the Leader, Mr K R Barrow and seconded by Mrs C M A Motley 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, in accordance with the Local Authority's (Calculation of Council Taxbase) Regulations 1992 as amended, the amount calculated by Shropshire Council as its council tax taxbase for the 2010-11, as detailed in the Appendix to the report totalling 108,360.51, be approved.
- (b) That the inclusion of 431.54 Band D equivalents in the taxbase for continuation of the second homes discount at 10% in accordance with present Council policy be noted.
- (c) That the inclusion of an additional 421.47 Band D equivalents (a total of 1,264.25 Band D equivalents for the whole of Shropshire) in the taxbase for revision of the long term empty properties discretionary policy, be noted.
- (d) That the increase in the council tax income raised of £498,906.00 as a result of the revision of the long term empty properties discretionary discount policy be noted.
- (e) That a collection rate for 2010-11 of 98.50% be approved.

102. BUDGET VIREMENTS 2009-10 – QUARTER 3

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

Dr J E Jones welcomed the virement of £4m for achieving the decent home standards as part of the housing major repairs programme in 2010-11, but asked for clarification of the precise works.

Referring to the virement to fund the voluntary early retirement and redundancy costs associated with delivering staff reductions and budget savings for 2010-11, Mr A E Walpole asked why it was not possible to rely on such approaches as natural wastage, redeployment and/or retraining because of the long term strain on the local government pension scheme.

Replying, the Leader advised that the monies allocated to achieve the decent homes standards would be used to provide central heating, new windows and replacement kitchens in some of the council's stock. The decision to invest this money would not adversely affect the Council's affordable housing strategy. Further, the cost associated with voluntary early retirement and redundancies would be recovered within four months.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the following virements, in accordance with the recommendations from Cabinet, be approved:
- (i) To fund the voluntary early retirement costs and redundancy costs associated with delivering staffing reductions the budget savings for 2010-11 from the following sources:
- £400,000 from the VAT refunds received in 2009-10
 - £554,000 from the surplus distribution received from West Mercia Supplies
 - £400,000 from the insurance reserve
 - £250,000 from the elections reserve
 - £500,000 from the reserves and balances transferred from the district authorities
 - £116,000 from the underspend on democratic representation
 - £134,000 from the performance reward grant
- (ii) To approve allocation of capital receipts of £500,000 for Shirehall and District Headquarters accommodation changes and
- (iii) To approve budget virements of £4m allocated to affordable housing to achieve decent homes standard as part of the housing major repairs programme in 2010-11, so as to enable the Housing Team to include this in their planning for 2010-11 and achieve early spend.

103. VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGNS POLICY

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

Mr Taylor-Smith explained that speeding was a major concern for residents across Shropshire. The report proposed the introduction of a vehicle activated sign policy which would form part of the Council's speed management strategy and set out criteria for the use and funding of vehicle activated signs on the highway. It also specifically included a cost sharing mechanism for parish and town councils to use in particular circumstances. The policy had been developed following widespread consultation which had ended in September 2009 and a pilot scheme, the feedback from which had led to modifications in approach.

A number of members asked for further clarification of points of detail, including the operating costs and the methods of surveillance.

Mr E J Overall complimented the Portfolio Holder on the development of the policy, stating that it was a significant improvement on its predecessor but asked whether the costs included the requisite indemnity cover.

Replying, Mr Taylor-Smith advised that the costs of £60 per week included all insurance. He also advised that consideration would also be given to the use of covert surveillance where appropriate.

RESOLVED:

That the Vehicle Activated Signs policy, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved.

104. URBAN AND RURAL SPEED LIMIT POLICIES

It was proposed by Mr M Taylor-Smith and seconded by Mr E J Overall 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, Mr Taylor-Smith explained that the Urban and Rural Speed Limits policies also formed part of the Council's overall Speed Management strategy for Shropshire. They identified the criteria for recommended speed limit changes and the funding available to implement them. Consultation had been undertaken on these policies with stakeholders, including all parish and town councils. This had closed on 18 December 2009 and no changes were being recommended to the rural policy, as a result, although some further points of clarification were being suggested.

As regards the urban policy, he explained that further consideration would be required following the recent publication of draft guidance by the Department for Transport. The document sought to identify those urban and rural roads where it was appropriate to apply a 20 m.p.h. speed limit but emphasised that even if the Council wished to introduce them, they would not be enforced by the Police.

A large number of members, including Mr D W L Roberts, Mr G F Tonkinson and Mrs T Woodward, expressed their concerns and disappointment at the lack of police enforcement within their areas and asked whether the Council's representatives on the West Midlands Police Authority could do more to emphasise the need for the Police to act reasonably in this matter.

Responding to the points raised, Mr J M W Kenny the Council's representative on the West Mercia Police Authority, advised that current police policy was not to enforce where the three pre-conditions of education, enforcement and engineering had not been put in place.

Mr R A Evans, in welcoming the report, referred to an instance in his division where visible speed limits on the surface of the carriageway had not been replaced after recent road maintenance work and asked whether the signs could be reinstated.

In reply, Mr Taylor-Smith empathised with those members seeking greater Police interest in the enforcement of existing speed limits and confirmed that the question of reinstating signs on the surface of the carriageway after maintenance would be reviewed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the urban speed limit policy be reviewed at a future date, following consideration of the new emerging DFT guidance and further consultation with key stakeholders, particularly West Mercia Police.
- (b) That the rural speed limit policy, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved.

105. DELEGATION OF SPORTS GROUNDS SAFETY FUNCTIONS TO OFFICERS

It was proposed by Mr D W L Roberts and seconded by Mr S F Charmley that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Council amend Part 8 of the Constitution, as endorsed by the Strategic Licensing Committee on 15 December 2009 to include the following delegations:

- (i) That the Assistant Director, Public Protection and the Head of Public Protection (Area) discharge the Council's powers in relation to the following enactments:
 - Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975;
 - Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987; and
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- (ii) That the Assistant Director, Public Protection and the Head of Public Protection (Area) be authorised to issue notices, certificates, exemptions, cancellations or other directions, or take any steps on behalf of the Council and institute any legal proceedings from the operation of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 or any regulations issued under them.
- (iii) That the Assistant Director, Public Protection and the Head of Public Protection (Area) be authorised to designate officers as authorised officers for the purposes of Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975, Fire Safety and Safety of Places Sport Act 1987 and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to exercise powers of entry, investigation and enforcement and that the Strategic Licensing Committee receives an annual report detailing the exercise of delegated functions by officers. The report will briefly identify any key issues or concerns identified throughout the year as well as any action taken and general information on the performance of the sports grounds safety procedures. A summary of the exercise of delegated function will be included in the regular licensing member updates for information.

106. EVOLUTION, REVOLUTION AND INNOVATION : A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR SHROPSHIRE AND TELFORD AND WREKIN

It was proposed by Mr S F Charmley and seconded by Mr P Wynn that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

In presenting the report, Mr Charmley stated that the strategy contained a joint vision for culture across the sub-region. The Council's vision for culture was to inspire and to shape how people lived, learned, worked and played while the strategy celebrated the values most associated with Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin, namely its authentic, genuine, independent, handcrafted and green credentials.

The purpose of the seven keys aims within the strategy, was to enrich the life of all residents and visitors. It would be formally launched in March 2010, when both councils would produce a detailed action plan with timescales. These would then be monitored by both the Cultural Consortium on a quarterly basis and annually by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee.

Mr M Bennett said that, while he appreciated the difficulties in developing a strategy of this type, he was concerned at the absence of references to fun and enjoyment. The consultation process had been opaque and relevant groups had struggled to come to terms with the process. He asked how the action plans would be created, the cultural consortium funded and whether the remit given to the Scrutiny Committee to oversee this work was too wide. He suggested that it would be more appropriate for the Council to provide a more localised focus through the small arts, sports and other groups.

Mr P Adams expressed similar sentiments, stating that the strategy lacked real content. Further, the aspirational words that it contained would encourage people to believe that Shropshire was no more than a massive theme park. He regarded the strategy as a missed opportunity and suggested that its adoption be deferred to enable officers to reconsider the content.

However, the majority of members did not share these opinions and expressed positive views supporting the adoption of the strategy.

Speaking in reply, Mr Charmley explained that the strategy was intended to be a selling point for Shropshire. Concepts as fun and enjoyment were impossible to measure, but they were implicit in what was contained within the document. With regard to the clarity of the consultation process, the deadline had been extended to enable local groups to present their views and he undertook to provide a written reply detailing how the action plans would be created.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried, with a substantial majority of members voting in favour, none against and with two abstentions,

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the new cultural strategy for Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin be approved.
- (b) That the Community Services Scrutiny Committee be requested to monitor progress against the action plan on an annual basis.

107. THE MERE AT ELLESMERE ADVISORY BOARD

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council appoints three members to serve on the Mere Advisory Board, as prescribed in the Terms of Reference, attached at Appendix 2 to the report.
- (b) That the Council adopts the new terms of reference at Appendix 2, subject to Clause 3 (Membership) being amended to read:

"The Chair will be appointed from one of the Shropshire Council representatives."
- (c) That the Council appoint as its representatives the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure (Mr S F Charmley), the local member (Mrs E A Hartley) and Mr S Davenport.

108. SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL – DRAFT SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME 2010/2013

It was proposed by Mr G H L Butler and seconded by Mr P F Phillips, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendation contained therein, be received and agreed.

Presenting the report, Mr Butler stated that the draft single equality scheme brought together all equality strands and incorporated the Council's race, disability and gender equality duty action plans, as well as actions around the community cohesion agenda. In line with national policy, the single equality scheme included a shared vision with strategic objectives, priorities and a robust action plan. It also described the new organisational arrangements for developing, reviewing and monitoring equalities issues. Progress against the equalities and diversity agenda would be monitored via the established equality groups at both strategic and directorate levels. The equality scheme would also be reviewed annually and a performance report outlining the achievements against the action plan, would be presented to both Cabinet and Council,

Speaking in support, Mr P F Phillips commended the scheme to the Council, stating that considerable progress had been made during the previous 12 years. How minorities were treated was a measure of a civilised society and through education it was necessary to challenge some existing attitudes and lazy prejudices within the majority population. He therefore hoped the Council would give a lead to other public sector bodies, including the Council's Health, Fire and Police partners, as well as voluntary bodies, and the parish and town councils. He urged all members to support the scheme and concluded by requesting that a concise executive summary be produced so that this which could be used to convey the content of the policy to other organisations.

A large number of members supported and endorsed these comments, including Mr V Hunt, A N Mosley, Mrs P A Dee and Dr J E Jones, all of whom welcomed the comprehensive nature of the document and the progress being made by the Council in challenging prejudice in all its forms within the wider community.

Replying, Mr Butler confirmed that a bright, concise document with a simple message as suggested by Mr Phillips would be prepared and thanked the Diversity Officer for the contribution she had made to the development of the draft Single Equality Scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Single Equality Scheme for Shropshire be approved.

109. MOTION

It was proposed by Mr J Tandy and seconded by Dr J E Jones:

“That this Council supports free concessionary bus travel for the over 60s enjoyed by £8 million people, including many Shropshire residents, and calls on political parties to pledge its continuation based on the existing eligibility criteria.

In a rural County such as Shropshire, the social and environmental benefits of free concessionary bus travel have been particularly significant and this motion seeks to protect these benefits for the long term.”

Mr Tandy explained that the motion was to encourage all political parties on the Council to pledge their support for the extension of a service which had made a significant difference to a large section of the community.

The Leader proposed by way of amendment, which was duly seconded, that a full stop replace the comma after “Shropshire residents” and the remainder of the words from “and calls to eligibility criteria in paragraph 1 are deleted” together with the deletion of the entire second paragraph.

Speaking to the amendment, he urged the Council to keep the motion as simple as possible and reminded members that it had been the Conservative Administration which had removed the 9.30 a.m. restriction and also provided the additional funding required. The Administration was proud to have extended the hours and to have put real money into the service and it had no intention of altering the status quo.

Speaking in support of the amendment, Mr M G Pate stated that the original motion implied that the Council did not support the scheme, whereas £1 million of the savings generated by Local Government Review had been invested in concessionary travel.

Mr A N Mosley stated that the intention behind the motion was not party political, but at a national level comments were being made about the need to reduce the funding on concessionary travel generally. The purpose of the motion was to call on people at a local and a national level to maintain the funding and protect the benefit for older people in the long term.

Mr N J Hartin stated that he could not support the amendment. The original motion was perfectly acceptable and the benefits of the scheme obvious to all. These sentiments were echoed by Mr P F Phillips, who stated that he was at a loss to understand the purpose of removing the words.

Replying Mr Tandy also added that he could not see any difficulty in the Council adopting the original motion if there was a commitment to protect the benefits of the

service in the longer term. On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried with 46 members voting in favour, 18 against and with two abstentions and it was

RESOLVED ACCORDINGLY.

110. REPORT OF THE WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY

It was proposed by the Speaker 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.

Referring to Appendix 1 to the report, Mr M Taylor-Smith highlighted the Police's stated priority of reducing road casualties, adding that this commitment did not reflect current practice. Referring to the earlier debate on urban and rural speed policies, he asked whether the Council's representative on the Police Authority, the Leader and the Chief Executive could combine their efforts to remind the Police Authority of the need for them to realign their priorities to accord with those of the Council in this area.

Speaking in reply, the Council's representative, Mr J M W Kenny, explained that the West Mercia Police had always worked closely with the Council and evidenced this with reference to a number of successful joint projects across the County.

CHAIRMAN

DATED

The meeting closed at 1.00 p.m.