

COUNCIL

Wednesday, 14th December, 2011

Present:- The Mayor – in the Chair

Councillors A Heames, J Walklate, R Slater, D Cornes, B Welsh, H Johnson, R Studd, G Burnett, D Clarke, M Clarke, J Cooper, D Becket, A Beech, Y Burke, A Howells, G Cairns, E Boden, I Matthews, M Olzewski, K-N Taylor, S Hambleton, B Lewis, A Wemyss, I Wilkes, G Williams, J Williams, M Astle, A Fear, I Gilmore, P Hailstones, D Allport, A Eagles, A Kearon, J Taylor, P Waring, D Nixon, S Olszewski, T Lawton, D Loades, M Holland, R Bailey, J M Cooper, N Jones, M Reddish, D Richards, E Shenton, S Simpson, G Heesom, G Snell, S Sweeney, J Tagg, S Tagg and E Bates

1. **PART 1**

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Hailstones, Cllr Robinson, Cllr Mrs Myatt, Cllr Blair and Cllr Bannister.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **MINUTES**

Cllr Studd stated that he had not been present at the last meeting held on 19th October 2011 and was aware that his absence had been noted and he thanked those Members who had supported and explained the reasons for his absence.

Cllr Snell stated that he had asked that his comments regarding statements made by Cllr S Tagg in relation to Cllr Studd and members of the public not present at the meeting be minuted. This had not been actioned but it was agreed that it be noted that Cllr Snell had requested Cllr S Tagg's comments be withdrawn.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October be agreed.

5. **MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The annual Civic Carol Service would take place at St. Barnabas' Church, Caudon Avenue, Bradwell on Sunday, 18th December at 6.00 p.m. All Members were invited.

There would be a Mayor's Charities Rock and Roll Night at Bradwell Community Centre on the 25th February. Tickets were available from the Mayor.

The Mayor's Ball, was to take place on 30th March 2012 at Keele. Tickets would be available in the New Year.

The Mayor had received from the Chief Executive notice of a question from Councillor George Cairns to Councillor Bannister, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Active Communities under Standing Order 21(2) as follows:

“Following the recent Magistrates’ judgment against the Borough Council for failing to adequately protect users at the Whitfield Community Centre in the Westlands in 2009, can the Portfolio Holder confirm:

- What inspections have been carried out in other community centres in the Borough to check the condition of their heating equipment since 2009?
- What, if any, corrective and preventative actions have been taken by the Council to redress identified problems?

In the absence of the portfolio holder Cllr Studd responded and stated that there were robust gas safety and testing measure in place and that all gas appliances were subject to an annual check in line with government regulations. If any appliances were found to be in a dangerous state they were shut down and immediate remedial action was taken. Electric heating and wiring systems were also regularly tested.

Cllr Cairns submitted a supplemental question requesting details of the investigations that had taken place and a report on the contract that had been agreed. Cllr Studd agreed that that these were serious concerns and a written response would be provided following consultation with officers.

Resolved: That a written response be provided to Cllr Cairns.

6. **STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Concerns were raised by Members regarding the development of the Site Allocations Policy. The main area of concern centred on the consultation process that would be carried out by the Council and confirmation was sought that any consultation process would take on board the work carried out by the NDP working Group led by Cllr Loades. The Leader confirmed that the work carried out by the NDP group and its recommendations would be carried forward to the upcoming consultation regarding site allocations. It was stated that the project currently being developed focused on processes rather than specific cases and that consultation would be sought at every stage.

Regarding the Economic Development Strategy for the Borough it was stated that there would be a new Marks and Spencer’s Development on Wolstanton Retail Park which would create 350 new jobs.

The question was raised as to whether there were any proposals to carry on the excellent work regarding re housing that had been carried out through the RENEW Pathfinder Programme. It was thought that this was unlikely at the present time.

It was confirmed that Knutton Recreation Centre would be disposed of as soon as possible following completion of Jubilee 2. Members questioned whether an exit strategy had been prepared regarding this and raised concerns that antisocial behaviour in Knutton might increase leading to vandalism of the bowling green and astro turf pitch where it was thought the CCTV was no longer operational. It was

stated that there was a structured timetable and exit strategy in place and that this could be provided to Members in writing.

Members requested that answers to the following questions be provided in writing following the meeting:

- What was the usage of the Centre when Jubilee 2 was announced?
- How much money the Centre was making before it began to close?
- What facilities are available in other communities/wards?
- What steps are being taken to make the building secure following closure?
- What is planned for the 3g football pitch and Bowling Green?
- Why the CCTV is currently non operational?

A question was also raised regarding the future of the sports centre at Kidsgrove, this was not a Borough owned building but meetings were being held with the County Council regarding its future.

The Council welcomed the introduction of new boundary signs at gateway locations around the Borough illustrating the close connection between the university and the local area.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Efficiency stated that the majority of targets were being met following the publication of the figures for Quarter 2. There were still however areas of downturn such as for parking fees. A request was made that details be provided in the future of the specific areas of downturn and the areas where savings had been made.

The waste management strategy was proving very successful and the service had been recognised several times in national award schemes and had made savings of more than £500,000 annually. A note was made to thank the staff who had worked so hard over the past few years to increase the recycling rates to more than 50%.

7. REPORTS OF THE CHAIRS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Active and Cohesive Overview and Scrutiny Committee had set up a working group to look at the future of third sector commissioning and the first meeting of the group had now been held. A working group would also be established to scrutinise the public consultation regarding Bateswood Local Nature Reserve.

The Cleaner, Green and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee was currently looking at issues relating to alcohol harm reduction and would be liaising with Officers from the County Council Trading Standards department. The Committee would be looking at the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership at its next meeting and keeping an overview on the Police, Reform and Social Responsibility Act.

The Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee had set up a Working Group to investigate the future provision of Broadband in the Borough; the Group would be receiving a presentation from BT at its next meeting on 21st December 2011. The Committee had requested Scrutiny Briefs regarding The

Strategic Assets Review, the Asset Management Strategy, the Strategic Tenancy Policy and the Strategic Asset Review for its meetings in January and February.

The Performance Management Working Group set up by the Transformation and Resources Scrutiny Committee had now met three times and the constitution working party was in the process of being set up.

The Health Scrutiny Committee had completed its Scrutiny of the major trauma centres in the area and the Chair was please to confirm that a major trauma centre would remain at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire. The Accident and Emergency Department at Mid Staffs was still closed through the night but this had resulted in less ambulance transfers then expected to Newcastle. The Committee would be looking at Health inequalities in the Borough at its next meeting especially high infant mortality rates.

The Chair of the Co-ordinating Committee stated that Scrutiny appeared to be improving at the Borough with real work being carried out with tangible outcomes. The Co-ordinating Committee had consulted the forward plan and planned to carry out some work on car parking in the Borough and the future use of St Giles and St Georges and Maxims. Care would however be taken that any work carried out did not duplicate that done by the Joint Parking Committee or Conservation Advisory Committee.

8. RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

A petition was received from Cllr Mrs Shenton.

9. STANDING ORDER 18 - URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

10. PART 2

HM Lord Lieutenant for the County of Staffordshire, Sir James Hawley KCVO JP TD and Lady Susan Hawley DL were presented with Honorary Freedom of the Borough.

THE MAYOR
Chair