

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH JUNE 2010

2.30 pm – 3.25 pm

Responsible Officer Penny Chamberlain

e-mail: penny.chamberlain@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 252729

Present:

Mr K Barrow (Leader)
Mr G Butler, Mrs A Caesar-Homden, Mr S Charmley, Mrs A Hartley, Mr S P Jones,
Mrs C Motley, Mr M Price and Mr M Taylor-Smith

44. Apologies for Absence

44.1 There were apologies for absence from Mr M Owen.

45. Declarations of Interest

- 45.1 Mr K Barrow declared a personal interest in item 51 (Draft Shropshire Parking Strategy) as his daughter had a shop in Oswestry which was some distance away from the centre.
- 45.2 Mr T Barker declared a personal interest in item 53 (Former Council Housing Finance Update) as a Board member of Severnside Housing Association.
- 45.3 Mr G Butler declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 51 (Draft Shropshire Parking Strategy) as he had a business located on a high street in a market town. He left the room during the consideration of, and voting on, this item.
- 45.4 Mrs A Caesar-Homden declared a personal interest in item 51 (Draft Shropshire Parking Strategy) as a family member had a business property near Shrewsbury.
- 45.5 Mr R Evans declared a personal interest in item 53 (Former Council Housing Finance Update) as a member of a housing association.
- 45.6 Mr N Hartin declared a personal interest in item 53 (Former Council Housing Finance Update) as a member of South Shropshire Housing Association.
- 45.7 Mrs A Hartley declared a personal interest in item 51 (Draft Shropshire Parking Strategy) as she and her husband had a veterinary practice in Ellesmere which had its own car parking adjacent to the premises.
- 45.8 Mr M Taylor-Smith declared a personal interest in item 53 (Former Council Housing Finance Update) as a member of the Shropshire Rural Housing Association.

46. Minutes

46.1 RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 9th June 2010, be approved and signed by the Leader as a correct record.

47. Public Questions

47.1 No public questions, petitions or statements had been received.

48. Matters Referred from Scrutiny/Council

48.1 No matters had been referred from Scrutiny/Council.

49. Reports of Scrutiny Committees

49.1 No reports had been received from the Scrutiny Committees.

**50. Transformation Agenda – “Creating a Better Future Together”
Shropshire Council – From Transition to Transformation**

50.1 The Leader presented a report by the Chief Executive – copy attached to the signed minutes – on proposals to put in place a new framework for an ambitious, major programme of change, designed to transform the way in which the Council worked, over the next three years. The objectives of the proposed changes were to improve both the accessibility and effectiveness of those services most valued by local people as essential to improving their quality of life, and, to provide greater value-for-money by significantly reducing the Council's costs.

50.2 In commending the report to Cabinet, the Leader confirmed that in addition to himself and the Deputy Leader, the Portfolio Holders for Housing and Strategic Planning & Transport would serve on the Programme Board which would lead on the governance of the overall Transformation Programme.

50.3 During the ensuing discussion, a member in referring to the increased use of technology to provide on-line services, emphasised that equality of access problems were not restricted to just those customers without inadequate broadband coverage, but also affected other groups such as the elderly and the more financially disadvantaged who could not afford to purchase new technology. He also queried the role of individual councillors in the transformation process, and indicated that no mention had been made of the recently revised scrutiny process in the report. In turn, the Leader emphasised the importance of all members being involved in the process and in accepting the points made about other groups without access to technology, commented that the location of “Not Spots” affected whole communities across several parts of the county.

50.4 RESOLVED:

- (a) That, the proposed framework for the Council's Transformation Programme be approved, subject to detailed work-stream documentation and project plans being agreed for implementation from September 2010 onwards.
- (b) That, the governance and delivery structure for the Transformation Programme be agreed, as set out in Appendix A of the report by the Chief Executive, with a view to the new Board meeting monthly from July 2010 onwards.
- (c) That, the provision of appropriate resources to support the implementation of the Programme form part of the Council's Budget preparation process, as set out in the report by the Chief Executive.

51. Draft Shropshire Parking Strategy

51.1 The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning & Transport presented a report by the Assistant Director Public Protection – copy attached to the signed minutes - on a draft parking strategy which aimed to provide a consistent approach to parking across the county, particularly in the market towns. He explained that the availability and effective use of car parking was an important tool in managing traffic and local environmental quality, and played a role in supporting local economic vitality. He confirmed that in putting forward a number of options for consideration, any changes in parking charges as a result of the strategy proposals would need to be implemented according to agreed council procedures, including formal public consultation.

51.2 He also referred specifically to the possibility of free car parking being subsidised through local precepts, as currently occurred in Shifnal and Craven Arms, and to the Chamber of Commerce's support for parking charges in Shrewsbury to end at 6 pm rather than 8 pm in order to stimulate the evening economy of the town.

51.3 In response to a number of comments from members about car parks in their individual wards, he re-emphasised the numerous options being put forward for consideration, the proposed ending of the consultation period in September and the aim of the strategy to enhance and support local economies in all of the market towns.

51.4 RESOLVED:

- (a) That, the draft Shropshire Parking Strategy be approved for consultation purposes.
- (b) That, the draft strategy be issued for consultation with Town Councils, local interest groups and for general public consideration.
- (c) That, the draft strategy be referred to the Development Services Scrutiny Committee for consideration as part of the consultation process.

52. Proposed Market Town Revitalisation Programme

- 52.1 The Portfolio Holder for Community Working presented a report by the Assistant Director Strategy and Development – copy attached to the signed minutes – on proposals to implement the Market Towns Revitalisation Programme during the current year, in order to address the effects of the recession. The objectives were to focus on projects that would deliver the greatest economic, social and environmental impact within a reasonably short time, to the six largest towns in the county outside Shrewsbury.
- 52.2 During the ensuing discussion, confirmation was given that with the demise of Advantage West Midlands and the Regional Development Agency, the Council was looking for Shropshire to join in partnership with Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin, to form a Leadership Board across the area. It was recognised that any decisions about the allocation of grants and funds would be taken by a smaller group, thereby giving Shropshire more control over their dispersal. In response to a query in respect of Shrewsbury's position, it was noted that private sector funding might be drawn into the county town by the Shrewsbury Growth Point and Shrewsbury Vision initiatives.
- 52.3 **RESOLVED:**
- (a) That, the report of the Assistant Director Strategy and Development be agreed as a basis for a Market Towns Capital Revitalisation, and approval be given to an immediate start using the £3 million capital allocation.
 - (b) That, the outcome of the in-depth socio-economic assessment of market town vitality be noted, and approval be given to this informing the weighting of schemes and the prioritisation of the towns that were performing worst, whilst accepting that other market towns also needed support.
 - (c) That, part of the allocation be provided for a capital challenge pot, for all the remaining market towns to bid into.
 - (d) That, the Shropshire Council Community Fund be made available as an additional capital challenge pot for the remaining rural settlements to bid into.
 - (e) That, a "Larger Market Towns Reference Group" be established to include the 3 larger towns in the north and the 3 larger towns in the south to facilitate effective engagement.
 - (f) That, the delivery mechanism be approved as outlined in the report by the Assistant Director Strategy and Development.

53. Former Council Housing Finance Update

53.1 The Portfolio Holder for Housing presented a report by the Director of Resources – copy attached to the signed minutes – on the publication in March 2010 by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) of a second consultation document on the Reform of Council Housing Finance. In brief it was proposed that the present system of housing subsidy be abolished, the housing debt be transferred to local authorities and the cost of servicing that debt be met in Shropshire's case by not having to pay £4.7 million in negative housing subsidy to the Government. A draft response was for attached for approval to the report setting out suggested answers to 6 specific questions, including the key issue as to whether the Council wished to accept the settlement with possible implementation by April 2011.

53.2 Comments from the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the consultation document were also tabled at the meeting – copy attached to the signed minutes - which in addition to setting out their concerns, included the following recommendation:

“The Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers that, because of the change in Central Government and the possibility of a change in this Policy coupled with need for clarification on a number of issues as set out in the proposed response, the Council should make a “holding response” only to the CLG's consultation at the present time.”

53.3 Arising from the Scrutiny Committee's comments, 2 additional recommendations were tabled by the Director of Resources for consideration as follows:

(b) In the light of the observations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, members were asked to agree that the DCLG be requested to make clear their future proposals on housing stock transfer.

(c) Members were asked to agree that Shropshire's response to the DCLG consultation should be contingent upon the DCLG's proposals on the future arrangements for housing stock transfer.

53.4 RESOLVED:

That, the officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Chairman of the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee be authorised to formulate a response to the DCLG based on the report by the Director of Resources, the 3 recommendations referred to at the meeting and the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

54. Proposed New Arrangements for the Performance Appraisal of the Chief Executive and other Senior Staff

54.1 The Leader presented a report by the Chief Executive – copy attached to the signed minutes – on proposed new arrangements to appraise formally the performance of the Chief Executive on a regular basis with a view to extending

the process to other senior staff in the Council over the next 12 months. In commending the arrangements to members he indicated that the arrangements were intended to assure elected members that appropriate personal performance targets for key staff were being set, and their achievement properly monitored, as part of wider performance improvement processes in the Council.

54.2 RESOLVED:

- (a) That, the proposed new arrangements for the performance appraisal of the Chief Executive be adopted and implemented as quickly as possible.
- (b) That, a similar approach for performance appraisal be extended to the Corporate Management Team and other senior staff over the next 12 months.
- (c) That, an appropriate performance appraisal process be introduced for all Council staff progressively over the next 3 years, subject to consultation with the Trade Unions.

55. Exclusion of Public and Press

55.1 RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.2 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following item.

56. Ditherington Flax Mill

56.1 The Portfolio Holder for Housing presented an exempt report by the Assistant Director Strategy & Development – copy attached to the signed minutes – on the progress being made with the Ditherington Flax Mill project.

56.2 RESOLVED:

That, the recommendations set out in the exempt report by the Assistant Director Strategy & Development be approved.

(The full version of this Minute constitutes exempt information under Category 3 of Paragraph 10.4 of the Council's Access to Information Rules and has accordingly been with-held from publication.)

Signed (Leader)

Date2010