

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, WIGSTON ON TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2014, COMMENCING AT 7.00 P.M.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor F Broadley – Mayor
Councillor Mrs S A Dickinson – Deputy Mayor

Councillors: L A Bentley, G A Boulter, J W Boyce, Mrs L Broadley, D M Carter, M H Charlesworth, Mrs E M Connell, M L Darr, B Dave, R F Eaton, D A Gamble, Mrs J M Gore, Mrs S A Haq, Mrs R Kanabar, J Kaufman, Mrs L Kaufman, Mrs H E Loydall, K J Loydall, Mrs S B Morris, R E R Morris, P Swift

Officers in Attendance: M Hall, Mrs A Court, J Dickson, A Thorpe and G Richardson

Others in Attendance: Fred Jennings (Mayor's Chaplain)

Min Ref	Narrative	Officer Resp
57.	<p><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillors Mrs L Eaton, Ms M V Chamberlain and R Thakor</p>	
58.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
59.	<p><u>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</u></p> <p>RESOLVED: That</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a) The minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Council held on 3 December 2013 be taken as read, confirmed and signed; and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b) The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Council held on 22 January 2014 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.</p>	
60.	<p><u>ACTION LIST</u></p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that regulations and guidance were issued to determine vulnerability criteria.</p>	
61.	<p><u>MOTIONS ON NOTICE</u></p>	

	None.	
62.	<p><u>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENT</u></p> <p>The Mayor read out a letter from Mrs Betty Smith, the widow of Mr Geoff Smith.</p> <p>The Mayor went on to outline several charity events which he is organising, including a race night, a charity curry dinner, a Borough variety show and a bunny race at Brocks Hill. He asked Members to attend and support these events.</p>	
63.	<p><u>PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
64.	<p><u>LEADER'S STATEMENT</u></p> <p>The Leader commented on the report which had been produced by the County Council to consider the creation of a unitary authority in Leicestershire, following pressure from MP's. He felt that the report was full of errors and commented that despite the claims made in the report that Oadby and Wigston Borough Council is the most expensive District Council in terms of council tax, he felt that this was unjustified as we are the only District Council that does not have parish councils carrying out specific functions.</p> <p>Although he acknowledged that there may be a need for reorganisation in the future, he noted that this needs to be well thought out and appropriate.</p> <p>The Leader added that he felt that a unitary authority would only serve to make the democratic process less accountable and less representative. He said that this may well be a conversation to be had after the next election, but that Oadby and Wigston Borough Council would consult widely and oppose any change which was based solely on saving money at the expense of democracy.</p>	
65.	<p><u>BUDGET PROPOSALS 2014/15</u></p> <p>The Mayor noted that in accordance with recent directions from the Government, all Council's are expected to record the vote of each Member present on any decision relating to the budget or council tax, including any amendment that may be proposed at that meeting. Therefore, Members were asked to maintain their indication of vote until such time as it had been recorded</p>	

accordingly.

It was requested that the matter of recorded votes be looked at by the Constitutional task group to ensure that the processes in place for recording votes was as simple as possible and that it meets the statutory requirements of a recorded vote.

The Chief Financial Officer outlined the report and noted that the report formed the end of a lengthy budget making process. He confirmed that once approved, Members would receive a copy of the budget book.

He commented that the Council should be proud that it has achieved its aims and delivered its commitments through smarter ways of working. He added that he had a statutory duty to give an opinion on the budget and the reserves and noted that he was satisfied with both as well as being satisfied with the process which the Council had followed in setting its budget.

The Chief Financial Officer went on to note a further recommendation which was not shown in the agenda, in relation to the recently introduced national Business Rates Retail Relief Scheme. He noted that guidance had only just been released and the effect was such that qualifying retail properties with a rateable value of less than £50,000 could get a business rates reduction of up to £1,000.

The Chief Financial Officer concluded by noting that much of this information, including rent increases, the capital programme and the HRA account, had been presented to Members before and although the Council has done well with the budget this year, it would need to continue to manage the budget as further savings will be required in coming years.

It was commented that the Council was holding reserves in certain budgets in excess of the minimum required.

Members thanked officers for the hard work which had gone into the robust budgets and commended the fact that they have been able to balance the budget whilst maintaining frontline services and having a capital programme in excess of £14 million. However, it was noted that further reductions would be required in the coming years and work must start now in ensuring that the Council is prepared for this.

A question was asked regarding Section 106 agreement

	<p>receipts and what those receipts have been spent on. He confirmed that he would ensure that Officers put a process into place which facilitated quarterly reporting of Section 106 receipts to the Development Control Committee.</p> <p>The Leader was pleased to be able to say that the Council had not raised council tax during the current financial year and that this commitment would continue for the next financial year and thereafter should his party be re-elected in 2015.</p> <p>Members noted that although further savings were required, they were satisfied that the Council could continue to make these and also that there is an income profile reserve in place if required. Officers were once again thanked for their work on the budgets.</p> <p>Members requested that a training session be given on the business rates retention scheme, as this was a complicated issue but it would be useful to know more about it.</p> <p>All Members present voted in favour of the recommendations set out below.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <p>(1) Recommendations 2(a) – 2(g), as set out on page 10 of the report, be approved and adopted; and</p> <p>(2) The following additional Recommendation also be approved and adopted, namely that delegated authority be given to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Policy, Finance and Development Committee to introduce the national Business Rates Retail Relief Scheme of up to £1,000 discount for qualifying retail properties with a rateable value of less than £50,000.</p>	
66.	<p><u>COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2014/15</u></p> <p>The Mayor confirmed that in a matter of setting council tax, a disclosable interest does not arise for Members who have an interest in land within the Borough, therefore all Members could speak and vote on this matter.</p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer outlined the report and noted that the report was an aggregation of the council tax levels for the</p>	

	<p>various authorities.</p> <p>Members were once again happy to note that there would be no increase in this Council's rate of council tax and that the only increases had come from the Police and Fire Authorities. They noted their disappointment that the Police and Crime Commissioner had felt the need to increase council tax, despite their budget proposals being criticised by the panel which scrutinises them and having been elected on an extremely poor turnout. It was also noted that the increase in council tax by the Fire Authority had been forced through by a Labour majority.</p> <p>Members noted that the Borough Council has had a lower overall increase in council tax, just 7.68% over the past 8 years, than the Fire Authority (24.7%), the Police (27.7%) and the County Council (9.4%).</p> <p>Members accepted that it would be difficult to keep up the freeze on council tax levels for coming years, but noted that the Council would endeavour to continue to do so through efficiency savings and different ways of working. They commended the fact that the Council had maintained weekly refuse and recycling collections as well as introducing new recycling schemes and the fact that extra houses were being built in the Borough. They also commented on the quality workforce.</p> <p>All Members present voted in favour of the recommendations set out below.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Recommendations 1 – 5, as set out on pages 44 and 45 of the report, be approved and adopted.</p>	
67.	<p><u>LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN, CITY DEAL AND EUROPEAN FUNDING</u></p> <p>The Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager gave a brief overview of the report.</p> <p>The Leader noted that this was a complex and confusing subject, but that the simple fact of the matter was that the Council was required to put its investment plans into the process with the other District Council's in order to be in with a chance of receiving some funding. If it transpired that the system was not beneficial to this Council then the Council would pull out of the process.</p> <p>It was confirmed that in order for a decision to be made as to</p>	

	<p>whether or not the Council implement the Community Infrastructure Levy, a decision would need to be made by Full Council and that this could not be done under delegated powers.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Endorse, in principle, Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership’s Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), delegating the final approvals to the Leader and the Chief Executive; (2) Support the submission of the City Deal (whilst there are still final minor negotiations underway with the Cabinet Office), delegating final approvals to the Leader and the Chief Executive; and (3) Note the outline of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Strategy. 	
68.	<p><u>REVIEW OF POLLING PLACES AND PLACING DISTRICTS</u></p> <p>The paralegal outlined the report, noting that the Council was required under a statutory duty to review its polling places at least every four years. This review had been carried out slightly earlier than required in readiness of the European elections in May and consultation had been carried out. The only significant change was to designate Oadby Community Centre as a polling place instead of the Walter Charles Centre, as it was a more suitable venue.</p> <p>Members were fully in support of the new polling station at the Oadby Community Centre on the basis of it being more suited and, in particular, more accessible.</p> <p>The Chief Executive confirmed that the Council would look into parking arrangements on polling day and possibly allowing some leeway with short stay parking</p> <p>Members noted the objections in relation to the Glenmere School polling station and the paralegal confirmed that the Council was working with the school in an attempt to resolve any outstanding issues, but that it was the only suitable polling place in the polling district.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) No changes be made to the existing polling district 	

	<p>boundaries in the Borough;</p> <p>(2) That the scheme for parliamentary polling places, as set out in the report, be adopted; and</p> <p>(3) Members designate the Oadby Community Centre as a polling station in place of the Walter Charles Centre in Polling District No.1 (A) of Oadby St Peters Ward.</p>	
69.	<p><u>PAY POLICY STATEMENT</u></p> <p>The Director of Services explained that the Pay Policy Statement had been produced in accordance with legislative requirements, setting out the pay of senior officers and the relationship of between those salaries and the pay scales.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Members approved the Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15.</p>	
70.	<p><u>ARMED FORCES COVENANT</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive outlined the report and noted that it was a follow up to an earlier report, which focused on several issues related to the armed forces.</p> <p>This report focused on the armed forces covenant, which had been agreed and was set out in the report. It was noted that it is an evolving covenant and that a cross party Working Group would be set up to coordinate and oversee this.</p> <p>It was noted that the County Council also have an armed forces covenant and we are working with them to ensure that there is no duplication.</p> <p>Apologies were received on behalf of the Chair of the Working Group, who was unable to attend the meeting of the Council. It was noted by Members that this was an important part of the process for reintegrating ex-servicemen into the community.</p> <p>It was suggested that Alderman Michael Griffiths could be invited to the Working Group to offer his support and it was agreed that this suggestion would be taken back to the Chair.</p> <p>Councillor K J Loydall left the room during the debate, so did not vote</p> <p>RESOLVED: That:</p>	

	<p>(1) The Council formally adopts the Oadby & Wigston Armed Forces Covenant as set out in the report;</p> <p>(2) The Working Group leads the implementation, development and evolution of the Covenant and reports back annually to Members on progress; and</p> <p>(3) A formal Civic signing event is organised and that the appropriate contributors are invited.</p>	
71.	<p><u>EVOLVING THE COUNCIL'S GOVERNANCE</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive noted that this report was created in conjunction with the Leader within his remit to constantly oversee the governance of the Council. He stated that there was a commitment to present this report to Members at this meeting of the Council and appreciated that it was not perfect.</p> <p>He added that Councillors had been asked to provide feedback in December and they had tried to incorporate these comments into the report, but noted that some of the information needed to be considered in more detail before a decision could be made.</p> <p>The Leader added that the only recommendations before the Committee were to disband the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which he felt no longer had a purpose, despite having done some good work over the past 7 or 8 years, as each Committee could scrutinise its own work; and to disband the Standards Committee. He added that the report did not mention a Military Working Group, which was intended to be included in the Committee Structure also.</p> <p>The Leader commented that the most important thing to do was to include as many Members as possible in the decision making process to ensure better outcomes. He accepted that further consultation was required and stated that a further governance report would be presented to the meeting of the Full Council on 29 April 2014, which would include more detail and which would be before Members for adoption.</p> <p>He concluded that Members were requested to approve the disbanding of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Standards Committee at the present meeting in order to allow the diary of meetings for the coming municipal year to be set.</p> <p>The Leader of the opposition Conservative group thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for their work on this report. He asked that his following comments be taken in good faith as they were intended to be positive and constructive and made</p>	

with the best intentions as to high standards and expectations.

The first point made by the Leader of the opposition Conservative group was in relation to complexity of the document. He stated that this was a very important document and that, as such, it is important that the Council clarifies through this document exactly what the roles of Members are and exactly what the roles of Officers are. He expressed his disappointment that the Member/Officer Protocol formed only a small section towards the end of the report when instead it should be the basis of the Council's governance, as these are the founding principles of the organisation from which Members and Officers take their guidance. He was concerned that the report was too complex, when in fact it should have been written in the simplest way possible such that it would be an easy read for the lay person.

Secondly, the Leader of the opposition Conservative group went on to comment on the quality of the document. He noted that this was a public document and that, as such, a member of the public would be able to locate it with a simple internet search. He stated that as a member of the public or, particularly, a resident of the Borough, you would read this document and notice several basic spelling and grammar mistakes, which does not give a good impression. He felt that this was inappropriate in a document of such high importance and pointed out some basic errors in the report. He stated that a report of this significance should be rigorously checked for errors prior to its publication.

The Leader of the opposition Conservative group's third point related to the lack of clarity in the report as to resource implications. He noted that the report made reference on several occasions to a need for additional resources and it was even noted that there is a risk of "decreasing financial resources" in the implications section of the report. On this basis, he felt that it was improper for the Chief Executive and the Leader to produce this report and ask Members to make a decision without presenting the financial implications of the suggestions contained within the report. He stated that the budgetary requirements should be the first and primary consideration, as this is the core of governance.

The Leader of the opposition Conservative group went on to make a fourth point with regards consultation. He noted that the Member/Officer Protocol should be applicable at all levels and that it was about working with Officers for the benefit of the Council. He could not understand therefore how a Member/Officer Protocol could be implemented when Officers had not been consulted nor involved in the process. He

appreciated that there may have been time limits for bringing this report before Members, but he felt that this lack of consultation undermined the entire governance report. He added that it is unreasonable to have consultations take place after a decision has been made, as this was not an open and transparent process. He suggested that the report be given to all Officers with a reasonable time to allow feedback before being presented back to Members.

The final point made by the Leader of the opposition Conservative group was in relation to Member support. He noted that the report contained a recommendation to appoint an Officer whose primary duties would be to act as a Member Liaison Officer. He noted that 12 months ago he has advised Senior Management Team not to cut back on Member support as this created a “false economy”. At the time he had raised the point that Members require their own support in a different way to Officers and was surprised that the appointment of this Officer was only now being suggested, 12 months after he had made the point initially.

The Leader of the opposition Conservative group concluded by summarising his points and noting that there were also some timescales provided in the report which were unclear and did not make sense to him.

In response, the Leader noted that this report was titled “evolving governance” in that it was an ongoing process and that it had only been brought before Committee at this time as this is what had been promised. He stated that he would not comment on spelling mistakes as this was not a significant issue.

In terms of the resource implications, the Leader contested that you should instead consider what you are trying to achieve and then work out the resources required to achieve it and that as this is an evolving process the Council was not yet at the stage where resources needed to be considered. He confirmed that at the very worst, the changes would cost neutral.

He went on to note that the intention was to match the governance structure with the new Officer structure and to capture information in order to use it more effectively and efficiently. He noted that the issue is that the Council has not gone through the principles yet to identify the resources required, but again noted that the governance is intended to be evolving.

Turning to consider consultation with Officers, he stated that the intention was to speak with members first and then, once the

requirements have been agreed, that Officers be consulted accordingly. He argued that this was simply a matter of timing.

Finally, commenting on the timescales to which the Leader of the opposition Conservative group had referred, the Leader noted that the Council had a deadline to create a calendar of meetings for the coming municipal year. Therefore Members were required to make the decision as to whether or not to disband Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Standards Committee at this meeting so as to ensure that the calendar could be created in time. Beyond this deadline, there were no time constraints.

Several other Members commented that the report was very difficult to read in places, that it should have been written more clearly, that the recommendations were unclear and that generally they were not happy with the report in its current form; however, they accepted that it was an evolving document and as such looked forward to receipt of a final report at the next meeting of the Council, setting out further details and the resource implications, as they were essential.

Most Members agreed that Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Standards Committee were no longer necessary as they did not fit within the Committee Structure. However, Members of the opposition First Conserve group disagreed with the proposal to disband the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commenting that it is a powerful mechanism for overseeing the decisions of other Committees and that, without it, those other Committees would not scrutinise their own decisions.

The Leader clarified the recommendations that were intended to be before the Council, despite what was said in the report. In responding to comments about the disbanding of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, he commented that the Council had a dominant leading party and he felt that it was unnecessary to have this leading party scrutinising its own decisions. He agreed that scrutiny was required, but felt that it should be delivered by the other Committees scrutinising themselves.

In considering the Standards Committee, the Leader stated that there are two types of standards issue. The first is a party issue whereby a breach of the standards regime should give rise to an action by the political party. The second issue relates to standards issues in the public domain whereby the Council is brought into disrepute. He felt that these are better dealt with elsewhere without the requirement for a specific Standards Committee.

The Chief Executive welcomed the comments of the Members

	<p>and apologised for the spelling errors. He stated that these errors demonstrated his need for clerical support, as suggested in the report. He confirmed that the intention was to make scrutiny an integral part of all Committees without the need for a separate Standards Committee. He acknowledged the complexity of the report and commented on the difficulties of producing the report in such a short space of time, and concluded by asking that if Members did have further comments on reports in the future that they raise them prior to the meeting such that work could be carried out on the report prior to it being brought before Full Council.</p> <p>Members sought further clarification on what they would be voting on as it was not clear from the report and Councillor J W Boyce confirmed that despite what was stated in the report, Members were no longer being asked to approve the entire contents of the report, but instead they were being asked to approve the disbanding of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the disbanding of Standards Committee only, and to note the remaining contents of the report.</p> <p>Councillor D A Gamble left the meeting and therefore did not vote. Councillor L Eaton arrived during the debate and was therefore unable to vote.</p> <p>Councillors Mrs J M Gore and P Swift voted against the motion.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Note the contents of the report; and (2) Approve the disbanding of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the disbanding of the Standards Committee. 	
72.	<p><u>MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES, FORUMS AND WORKING GROUPS</u></p> <p>Members commented on a point raised in the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee, concerning a review of the switchboard and in particular the fact that the service closes at 4.00pm on a Wednesday. It was confirmed that this would be looked at by the Policy, Finance and Development Committee as to whether the service could be staffed after 4.00pm.</p> <p>It was reiterated that Members should not have to use the switchboard, but that they should have access to separate clerical support, as set out in the Evolving Governance report.</p>	

	<p>Members also discussed the changes to the Library service and it was noted that a report was likely to come before Members in the future. They confirmed that although they have been provided with usage figures for the library services by the Interim Head of Customer Services, these figures were not accurate and more information should be provided to Members in due course.</p> <p>The Chief Executive confirmed that these issues would be the subject of a full report which would be brought before the Policy, Finance and Development Committee.</p> <p>It was also noted that the Council had implemented the Living Wage for all employees and it was suggested that we could assist in ensuring that our contractors are also working towards the implementation of the Living Wage.</p> <p>The Chief Executive asked that Members be mindful of making promises in relation to budgetary matters as there will have to be some serious decisions in relation to budgets in the coming years owing to the requirements to make further significant cuts.</p> <p>The Leader discussed the pooling arrangements between the District Council's, which had been abandoned for a period of 12 months with a view to reviewing it after this time owing to several unexpected issues.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of the committees, forums and working groups as set out in the report be received.</p>	
73.	<p><u>COMMON SEAL</u></p> <p>RESOLVED: That the common seal of the Council be affixed to all contracts, orders, deeds and other documents arising out of the Minutes and Reports in the foregoing items</p>	
74.	<p><u>REPORTS OF MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE COUNCIL TO SERVE ON OUTSIDE BODIES</u></p> <p>None.</p>	

The Meeting Closed at 9.05 pm