

Council
3 October 2016

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL held on Monday 3 October 2016 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City.

PRESENT: Councillors P.Mabbott (Chairman)
L.Sparks (Vice-Chairman)

T.Bailey, R.Basch, H.Beckett, D.Bell, D.Bennett,
M.Birleson, J.Boulton, S.Boulton, H.Bower,
J.Broach, H.Bromley, A.Chesterman,
L.Chesterman, M.Cook, M.Cowan, J.Cragg,
J.Dean, I.Dean, J.Fitzpatrick, B.Fitzsimon, C.Gillett,
G.Hayes, M.Holloway, S.Johnston, T.Kingsbury,
M.Larkins, S.Markiewicz, G.Michaelides,
M.Perkins, H.Quenet, S.Roberts, B.Sarson,
P.Shah, M.Spinks, F.Thomson, K.Thorpe, R.Trigg,
J.Weston, P.Zukowskyj

OFFICIALS Chief Executive (M.Saminaden)
PRESENT: Director (Governance) (R.Baldock)
Executive Director (N.Long)
Executive Director (S.Russell)
Head of Law and Administration (M.Martinus)
Governance Services Manager (G.R.Seal)
Governance Services Officer (S.Hulks)
Senior Communications Officer (L.Bertram)

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.Beckerman, L.Brandon, K.Holman, M.Levitt, H.Morgan, N.Pace, M.Spinks and N.Taylor.

14. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 11 July 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS BY MEMBERS

Councillors L.Chesterman, M.Cook, M.Cowan, S.Johnston and P.Zukowskyj declared non-pecuniary interests in items on the Agenda as appropriate as Hertfordshire County Councillors. Councillors S.Markiewicz, G.Michaelides and R.Trigg declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda item 13 Review of the Welwyn Hatfield Community Housing Trust as Council appointed representatives on the Board and took no part in the discussion on the item.

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Councillor D.Bennett declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Agenda item 8(a) Revised Application Pack and Handbook for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers and 9(a) Length of Driver Licences and withdrew from the meeting for these items.

Councillor J.Fitzpatrick declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 8(c) Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18 as he had been in receipt of support under the scheme.

16. ANNOUNCEMENTS

16.1. Youth Council

The Mayor welcomed Youth Councillors who were attending tonight to observe the meeting and hoped they would find it interesting.

16.2. Indian Night

The Mayor reminded Councillors that tickets were still available from the Mayor's Office and on-line priced at £20.00 for her charity Indian night at the Raj of India Restaurant in Hall Grove, Welwyn Garden City at 7:30pm on Wednesday 12 October 2016.

16.3. Councillor Howard Morgan

Councillor Morgan's wife Virginia was in hospital for a major operation

The Council joined with the Mayor in passing their best wishes to Councillor Morgan that his wife Virginia makes a full recovery.

17. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

There were no questions by Members.

18. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE CABINET

The Council considered the following recommendations from the Cabinet meetings on 2 August and 6 September 2016 –

18.1. Revised Application Pack and Handbook for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers

The Cabinet had considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 July 2016 on a proposed updated driver application pack and handbook for applicants and hackney carriage and private hire licence holders, following consultation.

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The Cabinet agreed the results of the consultation process on the revised application pack and handbook.

RESOLVED:

That the revised application pack and handbook be adopted.

18.2. Hertfordshire County Council Air Quality Alert Scheme

The Cabinet had considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 July 2016 that the Council join the proposed Hertfordshire air quality alert scheme. This service was offered by Hertfordshire County Council for free to members of the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire air quality group, of which this Council was a member.

Currently members of the public were relied on to visit the group's website of their own accord to find out local pollution levels. This alert scheme would allow the Council to make contact with members of the public through various social media channels so they could be proactively informed of the air quality in their area.

RESOLVED:

That the Council join Hertfordshire County Council's air quality alert scheme.

18.3. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18

The Cabinet had agreed in February 2016 to consult on minor changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme (Minute 122 refers) and now considered the results of that consultation.

Having reviewed the consultation results and the equalities impact assessment, the Cabinet agreed to the changes in the council tax support scheme for 2017/18 in relation to abolishing the family premium for new claimants; reducing the backdating of council tax support for working age claimants from six months to one month and abolishing the payment of second adult rebate.

RESOLVED:

That the localised council tax support scheme be amended for 2017/18 abolishing the family premium for new claimants, reducing the backdating of council tax support for working age claimants from six months to one month and abolishing the payment of second adult rebate with all the other elements of the scheme remaining the same and continuing to help vulnerable claimants and those on low/no income to receive a reduction on their council tax.

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19. MATTER ARISING FROM THE ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Council considered the following recommendation from the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 July 2016 –

19.1. Length of Driver Licences

The Committee had considered bringing in a policy that decisions relating to the length of a hackney carriage/private hire drivers licence would not ordinarily be taken by individual Officers acting under delegated authority.

RESOLVED:

That where an applicant made a case for a licence to be issued for less than the normal three year period the matter of “appropriateness in the circumstances of the case” should ordinarily be decided by the Hackney Carriage Committee and that Officers prepare a policy document covering potential circumstances where this discretion might be considered appropriate.

20. CW ENTERTAINMENT - REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

At the present time all fees and charges levied for activities and services at CW Entertainment were reviewed once a year at the same time all other Council fees and charges were reviewed as part of the budget setting process.

The increasing complexity of CW Entertainment’s business since it underwent a major refurbishment in 2014, coupled with its position in a locally competitive market for its services, had led Officers to conclude there must be some flexibility to review fees and charges during the year.

As the setting of fees and charges form part of the overall budget setting process, this would require the Council to approve delegated authority to the Cabinet to agree and implement any in-year changes to fees and charges at CW Entertainment.

RESOLVED:

That delegated authority be given to the Cabinet to review and agree all in-year changes to CW Entertainment’s fees and charges on receipt of a report from the Executive Member and Director in addition to the annual review of fees and charges as part of the Council’s overall budget setting process.

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21. APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY OFFICERS AND DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO DIRECTORS

Report of the Director (Governance) asking the Council to make changes to the current appointment of Statutory Officers and interim arrangements for the delegation of authority to the Directors.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Head of Law and Administration be appointed to the statutory post of Monitoring Officer.
- (2) That the Head of Resources be appointed to the statutory post of Chief Finance Officer.
- (3) That the Principal Governance Officer continue to be designated to the post of Deputy Monitoring Officer.
- (4) That the Finance Manager be designated to the post of Deputy Chief Finance Officer.
- (5) That the delegated authority currently applicable to the Director posts, both generally and specifically, be extended to the three new Executive Director roles created under the management restructuring arrangements.
- (6) That these appointments and changes be made with immediate effect.
- (7) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend the Constitution to take account of these and any other consequential amendments required.

22. NOTICES OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 49

1. The following motion had been submitted by Councillor J.Fitzpatrick and was seconded by Councillor J.Weston:-

"Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council objects to the ongoing cuts in funding to this authority from central Government.

Therefore, the Leader of the Council will write to the Department of Communities and Local Government to make this objection known."

On being put to the vote, the Motion was lost with 19 voting For and 21 Against.

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2. The following motion had been submitted by Councillor F.Thomson, was seconded by Councillor B.Sarson and was unanimously agreed:-

"Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council has signed up to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Community Covenant making a commitment to value and support those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces.

The Office for National Statistics has begun consulting on the content for the next national census; and despite an estimated 1 in 10 of the UK population being members of the armed Forces Community, there is limited information about where they are or what their needs are.

The Royal British Legion has launched their 'Count Them In' campaign' which supports the need to include additional questions in the next census. These questions will seek to capture much needed data on the Armed Forces Community, particularly reservists and veterans, who are otherwise largely hidden from official statistics; and the information gathered would help develop a greater understanding of the Armed Forces Community's needs, location and profile.

This Council pledges its support to the Royal British legion's 'Count Them In' campaign calling for additional questions on the Armed Forces Community to be included in the next census".

23. REVIEW OF THE WELWYN HATFIELD COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST

Members were aware of the considerable work undertaken since January of this year in relation to shared management arrangements following the review of the Community Housing Trust by Campbell Tickell in October 2015. The report of the Chief Executive updated Members on the current position and proposed some amendments to the Articles of Association of the Trust to enable the Trust to continue operating effectively for the time being.

This item was withdrawn by the Leader of the Council for further discussion.

(Note: The Mayor had agreed that this was a matter of urgency in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13(r).)

Meeting ended at 9.15pm
GS