

KIDDERMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held at 6pm on Wednesday 16th April 2025
In the Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House

Present:

Councillors George Connolly (Town Mayor), John Aston, John Beckingham, Ben Brookes, Liam Carroll, Darren Chambers, Vicky Caulfield, Bernadette Connor, Mark Crosby, Helen Dyke, Nicky Gale, Doug Hine, Steve Hollands, Mary McDonnell, Shazu Miah, Fran Oborski, Mary Rayner and Mike Smith.

In Attendance

Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive Officer,
Matt Smith, Town Hall Manager.
Richard Stannard, Mayor's Attendant

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Mark Crosby to the Council and congratulated him on his victory in the recent Broadwaters by-election.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda item 5. Kidderminster and District Youth Trust:
Councillors Fran Oborski and Shazu Miah declared interests as Trustees of the Kidderminster Youth Trust.

Agenda item 13. St. George's Park Paddling Pool:
Councillor Liam Carroll declared an interest as a member of the Working Group, Councillors Mary Rayner and Mary McDonald declared their interests as members of The Friends group.

88. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor invited Mr. Steven Duffield to address the Council. Mr. Duffield told the meeting of his fund-raising activities for Acorns Children's Hospice.

89. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL HELD ON 22ND JANUARY 2025.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting of Kidderminster Town Council held on 22nd January 2025.

90. KIDDERMINSTER AND DISTRICT YOUTH COUNCIL

The Mayor invited Mr. Mike Oliver-Brooke from the Trust to make a presentation to the Council about the work that the Trust are doing for the youth of Kidderminster.

Mr. Oliver-Brooke told the meeting about the work and the activities provided at the Youth House, which were open to all ages.

The meeting acknowledged the work, passion and commitment of Mr. Oliver-Brooke and his colleagues and thanked him for his presentation.

91. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

The Council received the Town Mayor's report on Mayoral activities and events since the last meeting of the Council.

As this was the last full Council meeting before Mayor making, the Mayor extend thanked his fellow councillors for their unwavering support throughout his tenure as Mayor of Kidderminster and said that their guidance, collaboration, and dedication helped to make his Mayoral year a rewarding and memorable experience. The Mayor said that it had been an honour to serve alongside such committed individuals working in the best interests of our town.

The Mayor also gave his good wishes to all the Kidderminster Town Councillors who were running in the upcoming County Council elections.

92. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

92.1 Proposed by Councillor Mark Crosby:

"That this Council calls on The Home Office and the relevant authorities to exercise the UK Wide Blitz on illegal workers in the town of Kidderminster" (Reference: UK-wide blitz on illegal working to strengthen border security - GOV.UK)

There was no seconder for this motion.

92.2 Proposed by Councillor Fran Oborski, seconded by Councillor Helen Dyke:

" The Council notes with concern that the Police and Crime Commissioner is currently consulting staff on two proposals:

1. Reducing the operating hours of PCSO's so that they finish work at 8pm.
2. Removing the School Liaison PCSOs who are currently attached to local High Schools.

The Council believes that (1) will mean a serious loss of service to our local communities as it will reduce operational capacity during light evenings when there is often a considerable amount of ASB and that (2) will put at risk the positive relationships which have been built up between the PCSOs and Safer Neighbourhood Teams and local school students which will reduce young people's confidence in the Police.

The Council therefore calls on the PCC to reconsider these proposals and focus on back-office functions, rather than reducing services to the public"

The meeting was advised that it was the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police rather than the PCC who was consulting on these matters and the following amendment was proposed by Councillor Liam Carroll, seconded by Councillor John Beckingham and resolved:

RESOLVED: The Council notes with concern that the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police is currently consulting staff on two proposals:

1. Reducing the operating hours of PCSO's so that they finish work at 8pm.
2. Removing the School Liaison PCSOs who are currently attached to local High Schools.

The Council therefore calls on the CEO to write to the Chief Constable asking them to reconsider these proposals and focus on back-office functions, rather than reducing services to the public.

93. TOWN HALL UPDATE

- 93.1** The meeting received a report from the Council's legal advisors which asked the Council to grant an easement to Cadent Gas Limited to allow access and protect their gas main in the strip of land on which the Council proposed to construct a podium on the front of the Town Hall. The report highlighted the covenants between the grantor (KTC) and the grantee (Cadent).

The CEO explained that this was part of the process required in order to obtain a Stopping up order, allowing the Council to construct the podium.

The Council noted that the Standing Orders require all legal deeds to be executed on behalf of the Council must be authorised by a resolution.

RESOLVED: that the Council executes the deed to grant an easement to Cadent Gas Ltd and that the Council's seal be affixed to the deed.

- 93.2** The Council received the latest progress reports from the contractors and cost consultants on the Town Hall Transformation project.

94. NOMINATION OF MAYOR ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR FOR 2025-26 AND APPROVAL OF MAYOR'S CHARITIES FOR 25-26

The meeting noted the agreed convention for these nominations, based on the Council's Mayoral Succession Plan. Based on this convention, Councillor Doug Hine would be Town Mayor for the next Mayoral year, 2025-26, and Councillor Shazu Miah, his Deputy Mayor.

RESOLVED: that the Council nominates Councillor Doug Hine as Town Mayor for the next Mayoral year, 2025-26, and Councillor Shazu Miah, his Deputy Mayor, to be formally elected and appointed at the Council's Annual Meeting on 15th May 2025.

Councillor Hine advised the meeting that his chosen charities during his Mayoral year would be:

- Kidderminster & District Youth Trust (KDYT),
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, and
- Kidderminster Foodbank.

RESOLVED: to approve the Mayor's charities for 2025-26.

95. ANNUAL REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Mayor advised the meeting that risk management was an essential part of the Council's governance structure and a legal requirement. To assist in this, the Council has a Risk Register which is reviewed every year.

Members noted the report from the CEO, with proposed amendments to the Register.

RESOLVED: that the Council approves the Council's Risk Register for 2025-26

96. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES.

The Mayor told the meeting that Committees for 2025-26 would be appointed at the Annual Meeting on 15th May. Each year, memberships and Terms of reference are reviewed, before appointing the Committees.

The CEO presented the amendments to the Terms of Reference, which were relatively minor, apart from the Finance & Overview Committee, which it was recommended should expand its remit to include more "Overview" responsibility.

Regarding the number of Members on each of the other committees, it was recommended that they be set at 7, to enable the Council to make appointments on the basis of political proportionality.

RESOLVED: that the Council agrees the Terms of reference and number of places on each of the Council's Committees for 2025-26.

97. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL

Members noted the minutes of the Committee meetings held since the last meeting of the Council.

98. ST. GEORGE'S PADDLING POOL UPDATE

The meeting received the update from the Council's Public Realm and Operations Manager. The recommendation was that the Services team continue to investigate the costs around re-opening and running the paddling

pool for future years and that the Services Committee would meet in June to make a recommendation for Full Council to consider at that stage.

The Mayor invited any questions, or comments that Members might like to send to the Services Committee or the Working Group in this matter.

Councillor Oborski told the meeting that volunteers were seeking external funding for these works. She also advised that Stourport Town Council were appointing a contractor to repair their paddling pool and that this Council should contact them in this matter (perhaps the 2 Councils might be able to get a better price if the same contractor repaired both pools).

99. FULL COUNCIL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

The Mayor presented the Forward Programme and invited members to comment or propose any additions for future meetings.

It was noted that Mayor-making (The council's annual meeting) would take place on 15th May and the next ordinary meeting of Full council would be on 25th June.

Agreed:

- To ask the County Council cabinet member for Transport to a future meeting, along with representatives from bus companies providing public transport in Kidderminster,
- To add Climate Action Plan to the agenda for the October meeting of the Council.

Noted that West Mercia Police agreed to present at the June meeting.

100. ADJOURNMENT

At this stage, the mayor adjourned the meeting from 7.48 pm to 7.55 pm.

101. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that as the next item of business will disclose exempt information relating to financial and contractual information that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded.

102. UPDATE ON FINANCES FOR THE TOWN HALL TRANSFORMATION PROJECT.

The Mayor referred to the report advising members of the serious financial challenges facing the Council over the next 3 months and asked the CEO to give details around future expenditures and cash flow projections.

The CEO referred Members to the Cost Consultant's report which forecast further expenditure on the project of £2,683,963 this year and a further £159,083 in retention monies to be paid next year (2026-27).

The CEO told the meeting that while this was a challenging period, it would benefit the Council and the community in the longer term.

Members acknowledged the position as presented and stressed that the Council needed to make the Town Hall work to generate income and serve the community when it re-opens later this year.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:

- A) To seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to apply for a PWLB loan of up to £1,250,000 over the borrowing term of 25 years for the redevelopment of Kidderminster Town Hall. The annual loan repayments will come to around £96,600.

The Council notes that the loan repayments will increase next year's precept by 8%, which is an increase of £5.52 per annum per Band D Council Tax payer (11 pence per week)

- B) If approval is granted for the loan, the times and instalments of the borrowing, to be determined as required, subject to approval of the Finance and Overview Committee.

- C) That the Council holds a "lessons learned" meeting with a full report to Council.

The Mayor referred members to a confidential report regarding issuing the instructions for our contractors, Speller Metcalfe, to construct the podium in front of the Town Hall.

RESOLVED: To authorise instruction to Speller Metcalfe to proceed with Podium construction works, in full awareness of the legal and financial risks involved.

The Official business of the meeting concluded at 8.45 pm

Signed: _____
Town Mayor

Date: _____