

MINUTES of a meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 21 JANUARY 2014

Present: Councillor G Jones (Chairman)

Councillors R Adams, G A Allman, R D Bayliss, R Blunt, A Bridges, J Bridges, N Clarke, P Clayfield, J Cotterill, J G Coxon, D De Lacy, D Everitt, J Geary, T Gillard, R Holland, J Hoult, D Howe, P Hyde, R Johnson, C Large, J Legrys, L Massey, C Meynell, T Neilson, T J Pendleton, V Richichi, J Ruff, N J Rushton, A C Saffell, S Sheahan, N Smith, A V Smith MBE, M Specht, L Spence, D J Stevenson and M B Wyatt

In Attendance: Councillors

Officers: Mr S Bambrick, Mr R Bowmer, Ms C E Fisher, Mrs M Meredith, Mrs M Phillips and Ms E Warhurst

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Woodward.

58. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillors R Blunt, J G Coxon, T J Pendleton, N J Rushton, S Sheahan, L Spence and M B Wyatt declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in item 7 - Motions, as Members of Leicestershire County Council.

Councillor R Blunt declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 10 - High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2: Consultation in Respect of Proposed Route from West Midlands to Leeds - Response of North West Leicestershire District Council, as a land owner who could be affected by the proposed route of HS2.

Councillor J G Coxon declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 10 - High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2: Consultation in Respect of Proposed Route from West Midlands to Leeds - Response of North West Leicestershire District Council, as a land and property owner who could be affected by the proposed route of HS2.

Councillor C Large declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 10 - High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2: Consultation in Respect of Proposed Route from West Midlands to Leeds - Response of North West Leicestershire District Council, as an employee of Staunton Harold Estates and having interests in land that may be affected by the proposed route of HS2.

Councillor C Meynell declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest in item 10 - High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2: Consultation in Respect of Proposed Route from West Midlands to Leeds - Response of North West Leicestershire District Council, due to his association with Staunton Harold Estates, which could be affected by the proposed route of HS2.

Councillor S Sheahan declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 10 - High Speed Rail (HS2) Phase 2: Consultation in Respect of Proposed Route from West Midlands to Leeds - Response of North West Leicestershire District Council, as a property owner who could be affected by the proposed route of HS2.

59. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

With great sadness, the Chairman announced the untimely death of former District Councillor, Steve Peace, who was the ward member for the Hugglescote ward for 16

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years from May 1991 to May 2007. The Chairman invited Members to join him in observing a minute's silence in memory of Steve Peace.

Councillor P Hyde said some kind words in remembrance of Steve Peace. He recalled that they had been partners in the same ward for twelve years. He stated that he was unconventional, but that there was no better campaigner and representative for the people of Hugglescote. He referred to the number of community projects that were supported by Steve Peace, who believed in fairness for all. He mentioned the family he had inherited in his second marriage. He added that he was honoured to represent his group and the Council at the service in Whitby, and he was hoping to arrange a commemorative service in Hugglescote. He stated that Steve Peace was a good man and this was a sad loss for the District.

Councillor P Clayfield said some kind words in remembrance of Steve Peace. She had acted as his Deputy on the Policy Review and Development Board and recalled that they had worked well together. She stated that she had always found him to be fair and inclusive, and offered engagement to any Member of any political affiliation. She added that he was passionate about politics and always worked for the good of the District. She felt sad that at the age of 60, he had had no time to enjoy retirement. She stated that she had very fond memories of him.

Councillor J Geary said some kind words in remembrance of Steve Peace. He recalled that he had first met him at the opening of the Springboard Centre in 1985. He referred to his assistance in forming Mantle Community Arts, which was still going strong today. He stated that he championed the 'underman' and commented that the vast majority of his allowances were put back into the community. He added that he would bend over backwards to help anyone and everyone, and the people had lost a true champion with his passing.

Councillor N J Rushton said a few words in remembrance of Steve Peace. He stated that he was a bit of a maverick but he had appreciated him as he was a proper old-fashioned Labour Member. He added that he died too young and would certainly be missed.

60. LEADER'S AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor R Blunt reminded Members that this month marked the 25th anniversary of the Kegworth air disaster which had deeply affected the District. Of the 126 passengers and crew on board, 47 were killed and 74 were seriously injured. He reminded Members that following the disaster, the Council had dedicated a plaque to those who died, those who were injured and those who took part in saving lives. This plaque still stood on the footbridge 200 yards from the crash site. On behalf of all Members, Councillor R Blunt expressed condolences to the families and survivors.

Councillor A V Smith announced that the Council had agreed to sign up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant. She stated that by signing the Covenant, the Council was making a public statement and commitment to working with the Armed Forces community in North West Leicestershire. She added that North West Leicestershire was proud of its longstanding links with the serving and ex serving members of HM Armed Forces and was supportive of the aims of the Covenant. She recognised that signing the Covenant would allow existing relationships with the Armed Forces to be developed, particularly with the list of forthcoming significant national events starting this year with the 100 year anniversary of the commencement of World War I. She advised that the pledge would be signed by the Leader of the Council, Andrew Bridgen MP, the Chief Executive of the Council and Jim Rowlinson, Chair of the North West Leicestershire Royal British Legion Groups, representing the Armed Forces community.

Councillor J Legrys said a few words about the Kegworth air crash and reiterated the importance of remembering the people who were involved in clearing the motorway. He referred in particular to one of the first people to arrive at the site who had been deeply disturbed at what he had witnessed. He added that there were a lot of additional names that should be listed on the memorial plaque.

Councillor J Legrys wished it to be noted that the Labour Group welcomed the Armed Forces Community Covenant. He encouraged the Administration to extend the Covenant. He requested that it be noted that should the Labour Group take control of the Council in 2015, they would wish the commitment to the Covenant to continue. He spoke of his personal knowledge of fallen service personnel and expressed his desire to be involved.

Councillor G Jones spoke of the many people who were affected by the Kegworth air disaster, in particular the first firemen on the scene.

Councillor T J Pendleton spoke about the Kegworth air disaster as Kegworth and Whatton Ward Member. He added that his wife was also the County Council Ward Member at that time. He stated that it was noticeable as events unfolded that the forces were the first to arrive on the scene, and they had directed the traffic superbly to ensure there were no road accidents.

Councillor T J Pendleton announced that the proposals in respect of the Rail Freight Interchange in the District would go to public consultation next week. He reported that Roxhill had also offered to present their proposals to the Members Planning Forum next week. He invited all Members to attend.

Councillor T J Pendleton updated Members on the development of the new Core Strategy. He stated that lessons had been learned and work was progressing in earnest to prepare the document to fulfil the Council's obligations and update the development plan. He added that new data was being utilised which would put the Council in a strong position. He reported that Cabinet had agreed to appoint a new specialist advisor who had a sound understanding of current trends. In respect of the timeline, Councillor T J Pendleton assured Members that work was continuing to ensure that the Core Strategy could be resubmitted as soon as possible and he would update Council at its next meeting. He reported that Cabinet were also seeking to create a cross-party working group to ensure plans were developed in ways which gave Members an opportunity to shape them. Councillor T J Pendleton advised that he had provided Town and Parish Councils with an update, and the Chief Executive would be meeting with them and providing updates quarterly. He stated that he would provide an update at every Council meeting, by way of an announcement or a full report as appropriate.

Councillor J Legrys stated that he was personally pleased about the appointment of the specialist consultant as he had heard good reports. He added that he was particularly pleased that someone had been employed who was working on the Lyons review. He stated that he was amused by the hesitance of the Portfolio Holder to say how long it would take to resubmit the Core Strategy, as he had been advised that it would be 2015 at the earliest. He stated that the Chief Executive was working hard to obtaining new housing figures through the LLEP. He added that there would be a lot of discussion over the next year with neighbouring authorities under the duty to co-operate. In respect of the proposed working group, he advised that he would be meeting with the Director of Services on behalf of the Labour Group to discuss their concerns and he could not say at this stage whether or not the Labour Group would participate in the working group.

61. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

Chairman's initials

62. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor D De Lacy put the following question to Councillor R D Bayliss:

“It has been reported in the media that thousands of people have been wrongly identified as liable for the bedroom tax as a result of an error by the Department of Work and Pensions.

It has also been reported “that the Department for Work and Pensions has issued an ‘urgent bulletin’ saying tenants meeting certain specific criteria should have the cut in their bedroom tax removed until legislation is amended and Councils should refund deductions made since last April.”

Would the Portfolio Holder inform Council whether these reports are true and if so what action has the Council taken to identify these residents in North West Leicestershire”.

Councillor R D Bayliss gave the following response:

“The DWP has issued an urgent bulletin confirming that that some tenants can have their eligible rent calculated under the Housing and Council Tax Benefit (Consequential Provisions) Regulations 2006 rather than the provisions for the spare room subsidy.

This means that someone in continuous receipt of Housing Benefit since 1 January 1996 for the same property will be exempt from any under occupancy charge.

There may also be a number of allowable breaks in these conditions. If the tenancy has been inherited it should be treated in the same way.

We are currently taking Legal and Audit advice regarding the most appropriate way to confirm Housing Benefit entitlement over this extended period, and will be advising the relevant customers of the process to claim this exemption as soon as it has been confirmed.

The DWP has advised councils where possible to identify potentially affected claimants from their records and be fully satisfied that the claimant has met the criteria before removing the charge. If it is satisfied that the conditions are fully met the under occupancy charge should be removed and the decision revised and any underpayment to date refunded to the claimant.

The DWP has also advised that a record of the case been made because they do intend to amend the legislation so that the under occupancy charge will apply to these cases and the charge will have to be reapplied when it is made law.

Of the Council tenants identified as being affected by the under-occupation charge when it was introduced, we have identified that 45 of them (8% of the total affected) were tenants in 1996. These details have been passed to the Revenues and Benefits partnership to verify continuous Housing Benefit entitlement and make contact with the customers affected”.

Councillor D De Lacy referred to one particular case where a lady had committed suicide, allegedly as a result of the bedroom tax. He added that the cases of those 45 people in the District who had made illegal payments needed to be resolved urgently. As a supplementary question, he asked if the Portfolio Holder would ensure that these cases were dealt with at the earliest opportunity, and report back regularly on progress made.

Councillor R D Bayliss responded affirmatively to all points raised. He advised Members that this anomaly was an admitted error in the drafting of the legislation, and steps would

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be taken to regularise this. He added that he would ensure the Council took action and he would provide an update.

Councillor J Ruff put the following question to Councillor R D Bayliss:

“As a result of the present Government’s reductions in funding many low paid families were required to pay 8.5% council tax.

Now with the removal of the Government’s transitional funding this April 2014 this payment is increasing to 15% nearly double.

Could the Portfolio Holder please give the total number of households in this district who will pay the increased council tax because of these changes.

Could he also inform Council of the total number of households who have had a reduction in housing benefit as a result of the under occupancy charge (bedroom tax)”.

Councillor R D Bayliss gave the following response:

“The report presented at agenda item 11 explains the background to the proposed revision to the Local Council Tax Support scheme and the need to keep it affordable following the loss of transitional funding.

The Scheme applies to people of working age which is 3,109. People in receipt of pension credit will continue to be protected from paying any extra. The report explains that a Hardship Fund has been established which has been more than adequate in meeting the demand for assistance from eligible claimants.

We have identified 598 households affected by under occupancy charge”.

Councillor J Ruff referred to paragraph 2.10 of the related report at item 11 – Council Tax Support Scheme, which stated that the demand on the hardship fund had been less than anticipated and only 140 applications were approved. As a supplementary question, she asked if all affected persons of working age would be informed of the hardship fund. She also asked if the Portfolio Holder agreed that the Government should cover the full amount. She commented that perhaps a hardship fund should be set up for the bedroom tax.

Councillor R D Bayliss responded that everyone would be informed of their entitlement. He added that there were a number of people who were taking advantage of the hardship fund, however this number was less than anticipated, which demonstrated that people were facing up to their new responsibilities.

63. MOTIONS

Councillor T Neilson moved the following motion:

“Council understands that as a result of government cuts Leicestershire County Council have made it clear they are unable to sustain Snibston Discovery Museum and are looking to reduce the offering to visitors by redevelopment focusing on mining and the scheduled ancient monument.

North West Leicestershire District Council is ambitious for Coalville and believes that the loss of a major part of this attraction will have a significant negative impact on Coalville. The loss of footfall to the remaining colliery museum is likely to render it unviable.

We therefore support moves for a community organisation or trust to take on the running of Snibston so that current facilities can be retained and improved upon.

We call on Leicestershire County Council to realise this is a major community asset for North West Leicestershire and wider afield and to refocus their objectives for Snibston Discovery Museum towards engagement with the community to secure the future of this vital attraction”.

Councillor T Neilson spoke to the motion and stated that Snibston Discovery Museum was a jewel in the crown for Coalville and for North West Leicestershire. He referred to the petition which had been signed by over 8,000 people asking the County Council to retain the facilities on that site. He called for Members to join with the voices of residents in calling upon the County Council to look again at its apparent wish to partially close the site. He stated that the Labour Group were ambitious for Coalville and despaired at the shortsightedness of any decision to reduce the offering on the Snibston site. He expressed disgust that the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Government were making unnecessarily harsh cuts to local government, and the resultant knock-on effect for our cultural and educational offering. He added that he was equally disgusted with Leicestershire County Council for earmarking this facility for cuts rather than putting more effort into making the site more profitable. He welcomed the fact that the County Council were currently looking at maintaining the Colliery section of the museum, although this was required by law. He stated that he could not see how the museum could be viable without the accompanying facilities offered by the exhibition hall, as mining museums did not bring the masses in. He stated that Snibston had had the benefit of some diversification with the Century Theatre and the science exhibits, as well as the fashion collection, however he did not believe that the full potential of Snibston Discovery Museum had yet been realised.

Councillor T Neilson referred to the Snibston Discovery Park Business Plan from 2004 which stated that the above-average levels of user satisfaction, together with the high number of repeat visitors, suggested that any new formula for development needed to maintain the present broad range of displays. He stated that he would be very happy to hear the County Council make a commitment to retain and invest in the facilities at the Museum, however his understanding was that the political will was not there from the County Councillors to make that happen. He stated that as two of the key people on this issue also represented their constituents on the Council, he was very disappointed that this point had been reached, however there was time to change the recommendation. He urged Members to pass the motion and ask the County Council to seriously start working with local groups and businesses to ensure the facilities are retained in true Big Society fashion. He felt that if the diversity of the site was reduced, the decision would be irreversible, and one that would say to the people of Coalville that they should not have a first class museum, and should not be ambitious for the future. He stated that this was something the people of Coalville would never forget. He urged Members to take this opportunity to fight for this District, and send the message back to County Hall, close our Museum and it will never be forgiven.

The motion was seconded by Councillor J Legrys who reserved his comments.

The Chairman referred Members to the additional papers circulated at the meeting and advised that an amendment to the motion had been submitted by Councillor A V Smith. He invited Members to speak to the original motion before the amendment was moved.

There were no requests to speak to the original motion.

The Chairman invited Councillor A V Smith to put forward her amendment. Councillor A V Smith moved the following amendment:

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“Council understands that as a result of government cuts Leicestershire County Council have made it clear they are unable to sustain Snibston Discovery Museum and are looking to reduce the offering to visitors by redevelopment focusing on mining and the scheduled ancient monument. However, this Council recognises the importance of honouring the past coal mining history and heritage of this district and that the educational aspect of Snibston Discovery Park is available in the future within Coalville in a sustainable way.

We would like to see the other aspects of the museum i.e the fashion gallery, being retained and accessible to the public in a specialised facility to protect the textiles, wherever that may be.

The Council is also very keen to ensure the country park is retained and ideally enhanced. The ongoing provision of the Century Theatre would also be of significance.

We would therefore support the community and other interested groups in having discussions with Leicestershire County Council regarding their plans”.

Councillor A V Smith spoke to the motion. She stated that she was passionate about Snibston Discovery Museum. She added that the District’s museums were award winning, and Snibston was exceptional due to its diverse nature, which was why she had moved this amendment.

The motion was seconded by Councillor N Smith who reserved his comments.

Councillor J Geary stated that Snibston Discovery Museum was not just about mining and fashion, but also the industrial heritage of Leicestershire. He referred to the fashion gallery and stated that he was well aware of the conditions and infrastructure needed to protect textiles. He added that if the textiles were to be moved, there would be costs involved for the infrastructure needed to protect them, and running costs. He asked if this money would not be better spent maintaining the existing facilities. He also sought clarification on the definition of the Country Park.

Councillor D De Lacy stated that local people believed that the Conservative Leicestershire County Council wanted to get rid of the majority of Snibston Discovery Park and sell the land for housing. He added that the reason Councils were having financial difficulty stemmed back to the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Government’s cuts on local Councils. He referred to a letter written by the leader of the LGA.

The Chairman reminded Councillor D De Lacy to confine his comments to the subject matter of the amendment. He invited Councillor D De Lacy to continue.

Councillor D De Lacy stated that by the end of this Parliament, local Government funding will have been cut by 33%, and in comparison Whitehall had seen cuts of 12%. He felt that the financial difficulties were due to the Government disproportionately cutting funding to local Councils. He stated that it was right that the impact of political decisions was recognised and Leicestershire County Council had a duty to listen to local people.

Councillor J Legrys referred to the fashion collection and recognised the energy the proposer of the amendment had put into it. He added that the fashion collection was one of the largest in Europe. He stated that the reason he could not support this amendment was that the fashion collection needed specialist facilities to protect it, and therefore if it was relocated, it would not be within Coalville. He recognised that the exhibition hall was in need of repair. He expressed disappointment that the District Council was not involved and did not provide any financial support to Snibston Discovery Museum. He referred to the economic knock-on effect to the town and added that this was a further rape of the infrastructure. He expressed concerns that what was proposed would cost more, would

decimate the economy and could redistribute the fashion collection to the four corners of the United Kingdom.

Councillor D Everitt expressed concerns that once changes were made they would be difficult to reverse. He added that it had been said that the economy was going to improve, however at the same time the Council was destroying its infrastructure. He felt that a holding position was required. He stated that the Conservative Group had great ambitions for Coalville when they took control of the Council, and felt that it was not too much to ask that some ambition be retained now. He dreaded the thought of losing the site.

Councillor T Neilson exercised his right of reply. He stated that he appreciated Councillor A V Smith's attempt to save face for her dual-hatted colleagues, however he felt there were some legal issues in respect of the amendment. He added that he could not support the amendment as it did not refer to the retention of the exhibition hall, it allowed the fashion collection to be dispersed, and placed no onus on Leicestershire County Council to engage with people. He felt that if the amendment was carried, Members were being blind to the intent of the original motion. He urged Members to vote against the amendment and support his original motion.

Councillor A V Smith attempted to speak in response to the questions raised during the debate.

Councillor T Neilson raised a point of order in respect of Council Procedure Rule 14.9.3, in that the mover of an amendment has no right of reply to the debate on the amendment.

The Chairman then put the motion to the vote. The motion was declared CARRIED.

Councillor T Neilson moved the following amendment:

“Council understands that as a result of government cuts Leicestershire County Council have made it clear they are unable to sustain Snibston Discovery Museum and are looking to reduce the offering to visitors by redevelopment focusing on mining and the scheduled ancient monument. However, this Council recognises the importance of honouring the past coal mining history and heritage of this district and that the educational aspect of Snibston Discovery Park is available in the future within Coalville in a sustainable way.

We would like to see the other aspects of the museum i.e. the exhibition hall and the fashion gallery, being retained and accessible to the public in a specialised facility to protect the textiles.

The Council is also very keen to ensure the country park is retained and ideally enhanced. The ongoing provision of the Century Theatre would also be of significance.

We would therefore support the community and other interested groups in having discussions with Leicestershire County Council regarding their plans and call on the County Council to make these discussions meaningful so we can best ensure the continued use of the whole site”.

The motion was seconded by Councillor J Legrys who reserved his comments.

The Chairman invited Members to speak to the motion. There were no requests to speak to the motion.

The Chairman then put the motion to the vote. The motion was declared LOST.

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The Chairman referred Members to the substantive motion, as previously amended.

Councillor J Legrys attempted to speak again.

The Chairman put the substantive motion, as amended, to the vote. The motion was declared CARRIED.

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman called for order.

64. PETITIONS

There were no petitions received.

65. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2013.

It was moved by Councillor G Jones, seconded by Councillor G A Allman and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

66. HIGH SPEED RAIL (HS2) PHASE 2: CONSULTATION IN RESPECT OF PROPOSED ROUTE FROM WEST MIDLANDS TO LEEDS - RESPONSE OF NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Having declared a disclosable pecuniary interest, Councillors R Blunt, J G Coxon, C Large and S Sheahan left the room during consideration of this item and took no part in the debate or voting thereon.

Councillor T J Pendleton presented the report to Members, referring to the Council's objection to the proposed route due to the lack of positive impact upon the District. He added that if the Council's suggested route was not accepted, it would be necessary to represent local concerns in response to the consultation on the current route. He referred in particular to Measham, the regeneration of which would be harshly impacted by the proposed route, and the canal basin and wharf would be put in jeopardy. He added that any chance of reopening the Ivanhoe Line would also be scuppered. He urged Members to make representations in respect of the damage that would be done to the District.

Councillor N Smith felt that the need to protect Measham needed to be emphasised even more strongly. He referred to the plastics factory which employed over 500 people. He added that if the factory was lost due to the proposed HS2 route, it would not be relocated within the District. He stated that the proposed route would also have an impact on the proposed housing developments in Measham and these would need to be built elsewhere. He referred to the re-watering of the canal and felt that if HS2 was going to happen, it would be a good opportunity to secure some funding to enable these works. He asked that this be included in the submission.

Councillor T Neilson agreed that Measham would be severely impacted by HS2 and felt that it was a massive waste of money. He added that it would impact upon the industrial estate and prevent any further development of that site. He added that although the route would not require the demolition of houses in Measham, it would have a significant impact upon the houses on Amersham Way. He felt that the case had to be made about the new development which was underway in Measham. He agreed that the report highlighted the impact upon Measham very well. He added that the National Forest/Ivanhoe Line would

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affect the District as a whole. He felt that there had not been a huge commitment to getting work started on reopening the line.

Councillor J Legrys welcomed the report. He stated that the Council had been pushing for the Derby route for some time, however there were a lot of Members who did not believe it would ever happen. He expressed astonishment that the Conservatives had produced a written statement that they were going to support the National Forest Line. He welcomed this statement and the cross-party support for the National Forest Line, however felt it was uncertain whether this would be achieved. He stated that HS2 was 'pie in the sky', however the people who would be affected by it needed to be protected, as the current route would be a disaster. He hoped that the airport could convince HS2 Limited that if the route had to come to North West Leicestershire, a station under the airport should be provided.

Councillor A C Saffell referred to the recent consultation event which had taken place in Castle Donington Ward. He reported that the attendees had asked how much it was costing to allow Roxhill to go ahead with their plans. He stated that the answer was £120,000,000 and expressed astonishment that Roxhill were not being asked to pay the cost as they were a private profit-making company. He supported the suggestion that there should be a station at the airport as Toton was the wrong place for a station. He added that a station at the airport would serve all three cities, and would provide the District with some benefit. He felt that the Government should not be spending money to support a private venture.

Councillor D J Stevenson felt that an underground station would not provide any benefit as it would not improve journey times. He stated vehemently that there was no point in ripping beautiful countryside in half.

Councillor T J Pendleton stated that he was heartened by the support of the Opposition. He explained that in order for HS2 to have an impact upon journey times, it could not stop very frequently.

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor N J Rushton and

RESOLVED THAT:

The views of Cabinet as agreed at its meeting of 14 January 2014 be endorsed.

67. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Corporate Portfolio Holder presented the report to Members. He advised that the proposals had been agreed by all preceptors following the reduction in Government grant.

Councillor P Hyde stated that it was getting harder to provide the same services for less money. He felt that he could not support the proposals as this represented a 75% increase for the less well-off. He added that the majority of those affected were working families. He stated that the Government were attacking hard-working people and single parent families. He felt that recommendation 2 should not be delegated to the Cabinet and should be a decision of Council.

Councillor J Geary stated that the current position was due to a lack of funds because the Government had not provided any. He added that no one was blaming the banking system for the current economic position, but he felt that this was a contributing factor. He stated that the wealthiest people were being given tax breaks whilst the poor were being clobbered at every opportunity. He added that lots of people were having to choose between heating their homes and buying food, and food banks were the only growing industry at present. He felt that this was down to the current Administration. He referred

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to recommendation 2 and felt that delegating further powers to Cabinet was a retrograde step. He felt that the matter of raising taxes must be a responsibility of the Full Council and he wanted every decision to come back to the Chamber.

Councillor J Legrys stated that he was perplexed that there was no money, however there was money available to build HS2. He added that he was appalled by this, had shared his views and would be writing to the Leader to invite him to visit a food bank. He felt that methods other than hitting the poor should be considered. He added that this would be increasing the burden by 75% and was forcing the poor to use food banks. He stated that he could not support the proposal as it was morally wrong.

Councillor N Clarke stated that the agenda was full of items which were a direct impact of the Government. He stated that you could blame the previous Government of the banks, but the people who were not to blame were those who were affected by the policy. He highlighted that the report seemed to show a small surplus, and felt that every penny should go to support the people who were affected by the policy.

Councillor T Neilson stated that there was a cost of living crisis in Great Britain and people were still struggling. He added that payday loan companies were rife, loan sharks were prevalent and courts were experiencing a boom. He stated that at a time when everyone was feeling the squeeze, the Council was asking those who were feeling it most to pay more again. He felt that it was unfair that millionaires were being given a tax break. He wondered for how long people would continue to find the extra money when personal debt was increasing. He stated that the Council had a duty to ensure that people did not have to choose between heating or eating. He added that next year this would be a decision of Cabinet, and the Council had no voice. He stated that no one should support recommendation 2 as it was an abomination.

Councillor D De Lacy stated that the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Government had cut funding to the very poorest people by 10% and had directed these cuts at the working poor. He added that the Government was responsible for this situation. He felt that the views of those who interacted with the deprived should be listened to. He stated that the majority of the Cabinet were millionaires and did not see the issues that charities and doctors experienced. He added that the Government were arguing for bankers to receive twice their annual salary in bonuses when Europe was limited to one month's salary. He felt that the Government were in denial. He stated that he would be voting against the proposals as this was a brutal step by the Government in making the least well-off even worse off.

Councillor D Everitt stated that this was a moral question and when the Government did not support vulnerable people, there would be a backlash. He added that as a senior citizen he was embarrassed that he was exempt from the policy. He felt that the policy would have repercussions and was a reversal of everything this country had been proud of where things had become progressively better for everyone. He stated vehemently that he was appalled and if he was living in Scotland he would be asking himself if he wanted to be part of this country.

Councillor L Massey referred to her work at the Marlene Reid Centre which operated a food bank. She also referred to her previous appeal to Members to visit the centre. She stated that people did not want to be in debt and were embarrassed to have to rely on a food bank. She felt that this was a disgrace.

Councillor N J Rushton stated that everyone was in agreement about the dire financial straits that the country was in. He added that the deficit still remained and the first issue to deal with was the benefits budget. He stated that these changes were imposed by the Government a year ago, and the Council had received a transitional grant which had now been withdrawn. He added that the scheme had been agreed by all preceptors and had

to be approved as a matter of principle. He agreed that everyone should pay something and felt this was a good principle. He also felt that pensioners should be exempted. He added that a hardship fund had been established and only £5,500 out of £58,000 had been claimed, which demonstrated that this was obviously not needed. He reported that many people had paid the additional amount as a lump sum. He stated that the Labour Government had created this situation and could not criticise tough decisions as they were incapable of making them. He stated that people should not trust Labour to sort out this mess. He urged Members to support the motion.

Councillor A C Saffell stated that he was unable to vote as he disagreed with recommendation 2.

It was moved by Councillor N J Rushton, seconded by Councillor R Blunt and

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The maximum level of Council Tax Support available be reduced from 91.5% to 85% from 1 April 2014.
- b) Authority be delegated to the Cabinet to make any further changes to the scheme in future financial years.

68. STREET TRADING POLICY

Councillor A V Smith presented the report to Members, drawing their attention to the previous report to the Licensing Committee.

Councillor D De Lacy stated that he agreed with the vast majority of the document and welcomed the move to the whole of the District being a consent area. He expressed concerns regarding relaxing controls around schools and asked what would prevent a burger van selling sugary drinks outside schools and on what grounds and officer could refuse an application.

Councillor A V Smith appreciated the concerns regarding schools and added that the policy was intended to prohibit this. She advised Members that every trader would need consent and she gave assurances that officers would not be giving consents to burger vans outside schools. She added that consent could also be withdrawn.

It was moved by Councillor A V Smith, seconded by Councillor N Smith and

RESOLVED THAT:

The draft Street Trading Policy be approved.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.15 pm