

MINUTES of the meeting of COUNCIL held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford. on Friday, 27th April, 2007 at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Councillor J.W. Edwards (Chairman)
Councillor J. Stone (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. P.A. Andrews, B.F. Ashton, Mrs. W.U. Attfield, Mrs. L.O. Barnett, Mrs. E.M. Bew, W.L.S. Bowen, H. Bramer, A.C.R. Chappell, M.R. Cunningham, Mrs. S.P.A. Daniels, N.J.J. Davies, Mrs. C.J. Davis, G.W. Davis, P.J. Edwards, D.J. Fleet, Mrs. J.P. French, J.H.R. Goodwin, Mrs. A.E. Gray, K.G. Grumbley, P.E. Harling, J.W. Hope MBE, T.W. Hunt, Mrs. J.A. Hyde, T.M. James, J.G. Jarvis, Brig. P. Jones CBE, Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, G. Lucas, R.M. Manning, R.I. Matthews, J.C. Mayson, R. Mills, J.W. Newman, Mrs. J.E. Pemberton, R.J. Phillips, Ms. G.A. Powell, R. Preece, Mrs. S.J. Robertson, D.W. Rule MBE, Miss F. Short, R.V. Stockton, D.C. Taylor, Mrs E.A. Taylor, J.P. Thomas, W.J.S. Thomas, Mrs. A.M. Toon, W.J. Walling, D.B. Wilcox, A.L. Williams, J.B. Williams and R.M. Wilson

86. PRAYERS

In the absence of the Dean of Hereford, the Very Reverend Peter Haynes led the Council in prayer. The Council remembered John Arnett who had died recently. Mr. Arnett was a former Councillor with the Herefordshire County Council and the Hereford and Worcester County Council as well as being a long serving member for Bromyard. Prayers were also said for Councillors J.G.S. Guthrie and P.G. Turpin who were too ill to attend the meeting.

87. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors R.B.A. Burke, P.J. Dauncey, J.G.S. Guthrie and P.G. Turpin.

88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

The Chairman, Councillor J.W. Edwards, declared a prejudicial interest in those items that related to polytunnels: the Cabinet Report Item 8.1 (iii); the Strategic Monitoring Report, paragraph 17; and the Standards Committee Report, paragraph 10.

Councillor R.J. Phillips declared a personal interest in Item 5.1(i) of the Cabinet Report - Brilley CE Primary School.

Having sought the advice of the Chief Executive, Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes declared a prejudicial interest in Item 8.2(i) of the Cabinet Report - Outcome of Settlement Negotiations in Connection with High Court Proceedings Relating to the River Wye.

In response to a query the Chief Executive advised that all Members of Hereford City Council should declare a prejudicial interest in Item 6.1(i) of the Cabinet Report -

Withdrawal of Hereford City Council Support for Grounds Maintenance and its Impact on the Parks Service and withdraw from the Council Chamber in the event of any discussion on the item.

89. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March, 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

90. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that the Youth Council Elections had taken place in April and that a total of 25 youth councillors now represent the views of young people in Herefordshire.

He bade a formal farewell to the Director of Children Services, Mrs. Sue Fiennes and the Director of Environment, Mr. Graham Dunhill both of whom were retiring, and welcomed Ms Sharon Menghini and Mr. Michael Hainge to the posts of Director of Children's Services and Environment respectively.

He went on to thank the Chief Executive, Directors and staff for their hard work over the past four years and the Dean and the Very Reverend Peter Haynes for guiding the Council meetings.

He congratulated Councillor Mrs Barnett on her return, uncontested, as ward councillor for Mortimer.

He bade farewell to those Councillors who had decided not to stand again: Councillors Mark Cunningham, Peter Dauncey, Nigel Davies, Joyce Davis, John Guthrie, Peter Harling, Robert Manning, Charles Mayson, John Newman, Don Rule, Liz Taylor, John Thomas and Phil Turpin. In particular he referred to the exceptional length of public service given by Peter Harling, John Newman, Don Rule and John Thomas.

The Group Leaders also paid tribute to those members who were retiring.

Finally the Chairman thanked all the other members who were standing for re-election and wished them well in their campaigns. He hoped that he would see many of them at the next Council meeting which was to be held in the Shirehall on 25 May, 2007.

91. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Under the Constitution a member of the public can ask a Cabinet Member or Chairman of a Committee any question relevant to a matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties, or which affects the County, as long as a copy of the question is deposited with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services more than six clear working days before the meeting. A number of questions had been received and were included in the agenda. The questions, together with a summary of the responses, are set out below:

Questions from M and K Bucknell, Hereford

"The Council recently announced the giving away of a valuable public asset - namely the rights to the River Wye in the centre of Hereford. When appraising this decision

- (a) *What monetary valuation was reached for this stretch of the River?*

- (b) *How did the Council reach this valuation?*
- (c) *What additional factors did the Council factor in on the expenditure and loss of income?"*

Councillor D.B. Wilcox, Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) said that the Council had not given away any public assets in connection with the River Wye. There had been competing claims made by parties to High Court litigation in connection with rights over a stretch of the River Wye roughly situated between the Old Wye Bridge and the Victoria Footbridge. Upon taking senior Counsel's opinion, it was felt that the outcome of litigation was uncertain and could have been hugely costly. A compromise was reached and the Council accepted the Church Commissioners' claims in return for the grant of both mooring rights at Corporation Wharf and fishing rights for citizens under the age of 18 free of charge. The Council has agreed to pay one peppercorn per annum in respect of securing these rights.

Questions from M and K Bucknell, Hereford

"When walking through Castle Green on a summer's evening, we are aware that there are two distinct groups of young people. Firstly, the groups of young people who are sitting on the green, smoking, drinking alcohol; some of whom who get noisier throughout the evening. Secondly the group of similar aged teenagers who are learning river safety and kayaking skills at the Castle Green Canoe Training Centre.

What facilities, north of the river do the Council offer to the young people of the city of Hereford?

What plans, if any, do the Council have for the maintenance and development of facilities for the youth and future generations of young people of Hereford, particularly north of the River?

We understand that all Council buildings, including the Canoe Training Centre, are going to be sold by the Council. Why is the Council selling an excellent and unique facility with access to well trained and qualified staff who can work with our young people?

The Council has a duty of care to young people, so why is the Council reluctant to invest in facilities for them? Lack of investment is resulting in bored youngsters, using drugs and alcohol, often resulting in anti-social behaviour. What are the costs to the Council in Hereford City for the removal of graffiti, dealing with anti-social behaviour, police, primary care trust and social worker involvement caused by the actions of these bored youngsters?"

Councillor R.V. Stockton thanked the Bucknells for their kind comments on the value of our canoe centre activities in keeping young people actively engaged, but explained that resources were limited.

He spoke of some of the Council's facilities and voluntary sector facilities supported by the Council, including all the High Schools and their broad programme of after school activities as well as an array of sports fields and facilities from Aylestone Park, to football pitches to Hereford Leisure Centre (Halo).

He went on to say that he thought the question referred to Youth Club / Service facilities in North Hereford. He advised that the Youth Service's main location is at Close House in the Centre of town from which a range of activities are run both in

the building and in other venues and locations in North Hereford City area. The Canoe Centre was one such facility very well used by young people from across the County.

Through The Herefordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (HCVYS) the Council indirectly supports a number of scouts and guides in the area as well as faith-based youth groups.

He advised that the Council was already involved in the Community Consultations currently underway in the North Hereford (Tupsley) area and would wish to support the process bearing in mind that the building or facility must be multi-use, flexible and open to a range of providers and activities. He stated that revenue funding is the key to sustainability, particularly in resourcing the activities.

He said that there was no plan to sell all council buildings, however, the Asset Management Plan does include a schedule of assets for disposal that includes the training centre at Castle Green. It is anticipated that the training facilities will ultimately be re-provided when the Council has the opportunity to rationalise office accommodation. The training centre at Castle Green is an expensive building to run and maintain due to its character. Parking provision is limited to just two disabled parking spaces and it is not possible to provide access to the upper floors of the building in compliance with disabled discrimination legislation.

He advised that there had been significant investment in Youth Service buildings over the last three years: nearly £300,000 at both Hinton Youth Centre and Ross on Wye Youth Centre and significant refurbishment and equipment renewal at the Canoe and Sailing Centres. He admitted that Hereford City is not well served by suitable facilities for young people and or youth work delivery, however, buildings are not the panacea for youth issues. Skilled trained staff are needed to run suitable programmes for young people as are resources to fund buildings and staff.

He stated that removal of graffiti costs the Council £4,400 every month. He could only answer the final part of the question by taking a very global calculation for the cost of each young person in the youth justice system. The Prince's Trust estimated in their 'Cost of Exclusion report 2007' that in 2004 the total cost of youth crime in the UK was £1 billion.

Questions from Ms D Maber on behalf of the North Tupsley Action Group, Hereford

"As a newly formed Community Association for the Whittern Way and surrounding areas, we have been requested by our members to find out why there has been no investment in North Tupsley.

The dog bin situation is an ongoing problem which no-one at Herefordshire Council seems able to resolve, despite the best efforts of our local councillor. The dog mess situation near to Broadlands Primary School is a health issue. There is a neglected and abandoned play area, which is sited in the wrong place, but no facilities for the young people in the area nor for anybody else for that matter.

In order to provide a community focus, we are in the process of compiling a Business Plan in order to purchase the lease on the White Horse public house in Whittern Way. This pub has been on the market for upwards of two years but is in need of refurbishment. We have been in contact with the owners and they are very interested in letting us have it. This building would be eminently suitable as it has huge potential and has sufficient capacity to be converted into a community building, right in the very centre of the estate.

We really need Herefordshire Council to partner us in this huge endeavour. Would you be able to help us?"

Councillor P.J. Edwards, Cabinet Member (Environment) advised that a Dog Warden had regularly visited the area referred to in the question and a number of "Dog Fouling" signs have been replaced. On the day of the last visit there was very little evidence of dog fouling, and in particular the area around the school was clean. There are two dog and litter bins in the area, which are being used.

In view of the ongoing complaints one of the Dog Wardens will be available to undertake some regular visits to the area with members of the Community Association (perhaps twice a week for a month or two) to review the problems in the area. The Council would then be in a better position to determine whether or not the problem is best resolved by enforcement or the provision or resiting of bins.

He stated that the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Service currently spends nearly £15,000 a year to empty approximately 140 dog bins, countywide.

The Council will be advertising the fact that it is acceptable to use litter bins for the disposal of dog faeces.

Councillor Stockton, Cabinet Member (Community Services) advised that the Council owns a very small piece of land at Piggot Close which contains a play area. The play area is small and not ideally placed, but is far from neglected. It was resurfaced last year and some minor works took place to comply with ROSPA recommendation. Ideally the play area would be re-sited to land belonging to Herefordshire Housing who appear willing to partner a community group. In the meantime the play area will remain open.

Aylestone Park will provide significant open space in the area as does the land at Tupsley Quarry and Gorsty Lane. There are plans to significantly upgrade these facilities in the next two years. In terms of indoor facilities there is the potential of dual use existing sites such as Aylestone School / Broadlands School and the College facilities. Hereford Sixth Form has well established joint use with both sports hall and a fitness suite. Other opportunities may exist with the Arts Studio and the former Tupsley Youth Centre.

Councillor Stockton was aware that the North Tupsley Action Group had already been in contact with Council officers about the proposal for the White Horse Public House to become a community building. The Council can offer, or signpost to partners who can offer, business planning advice, project development support, advice on social enterprise and advice on planning issues. He said it would be advisable to undertake further work to demonstrate viability and sustainability. The Council has grants available to support this feasibility stage, although this would be subject to successful appraisal and approval, and would be for up to 50% of the costs or £2,000 whichever is the lesser.

92. QUESTIONS TO THE CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Councillors may ask questions of Cabinet Members and Chairmen of Committees so long as a copy of the question is deposited with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. A list of questions, set out in the order in which they had been received, was circulated at the beginning of the meeting. Councillors may also, at the discretion of the Chairman, ask one additional question on the same topic. The questions and a summary of the answers are set

out below.

Questions from Councillor A.C.R. Chappell

"Can the Cabinet Member explain the tendering process recently undertaken by the Council for the stabilising of headstones in Council owned cemeteries? How many stonemasons tendered for the work and was the successful tender the least expensive?"

£140 per headstone has been given as the successful tender. Is the Cabinet Member aware that at least two private quotes have been obtained from one stonemason in Hereford quoting £84 for the safe stabilising of one headstone.

Does he agree that with over 6000 headstones to be stabilised in Council owned cemeteries, some of whose owners will not be traced, that the council tax payer appears to be overcharged by some £56 for this service?

In the light of this will the Cabinet Member review the tendering process and ensure that the council tax payer gets value for money."

Councillor P.J. Edwards, Cabinet Member (Environment) confirmed that, when memorial testing began it had been decided that there would be benefits in securing the services of a monumental mason to undertake repair work at a fixed standard price.

This meant that monumental masons did not have to quote each time they undertook a repair; families, including those who do not live in Herefordshire, were able to secure the services of a mason easily, at a guaranteed price; and the Council would effectively organise the repair. The Council did not receive any payment from this service.

All monumental masons on the Council's registered list were asked to provide a quote on refixing a standard memorial. Four replied and the quotes varied between £120 and £350 - the companies were asked to tender for a standard price to repair a standard lawn memorial. The price of the chosen contractor was not the lowest, it was £20 more expensive than the cheapest quote submitted, but the mason chosen was the one that provided the best specification and thereby reduced the risks of there being any further long-term issues with the safety of re-fixed memorials.

The Memorial Safety Programme started in a part of the cemetery where the headstones were of almost identical construction. This is because, on the initial risk assessment, the headstones in this area consistently showed higher levels of failure than other parts of the cemetery. Because of the circumstances in this part of the cemetery it has been relatively straightforward to commission a mason to provide a fixed standard price

The Council has facilitated a number of repairs through this process and have received compliments for the way the service and the monumental mason handled the matter.

Because we are moving to an area of the cemetery where the memorials are not standard we will not be able to continue with the fixed price arrangement. It is apparent that it may be possible to repair some of these memorials at a lower cost than the £140 fixed charge while others may be considerably more. Bereavement Services are aware of the issue Councillor Chappell has raised, and are aware that the memorial referred to is not a "standard lawn memorial" and it would be anticipated that the cost of repair in this particular case would be lower than the

standard price. As a result of this Bereavement Services have reviewed the position and have now withdrawn the offer to organise the work for a standard price.

Councillor Edwards said that Councillor Chappell's estimate of 6,000 was an extremely high estimate for the number of memorials that will require refixing. The Council's own estimate is that the number requiring refixing will be no more than 4,000. This is because the areas of the cemetery with the highest numbers of failures have been tackled first and it is anticipated a reducing proportion of memorials will require attention, as the programme continues.

Councillor Chappell said that the matter had not been deal with sensitively, and asked for an urgent review to be carried out. He was concerned about the costs, especially for those families who had a number of headstone that needed to be stabilised. Councillor Edwards said that it would be for the new administration to consider whether it should carry out a further review.

Question from Councillor AL Williams

"I would like to know what length of time and process was used by the Health and Safety executive when testing the gravestones at Hereford Cemetery and what does the yellow and green scaffolding ends signify?"

Councillor P.J. Edwards, Cabinet Member (Environment) replied that in 2004, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had written to all local authority Chief Executives drawing attention to the need to act in relation to unstable memorials. The HSE have used enforcement powers against local authorities when necessary to require testing programmes, and to require an increase in testing rates and has in some cases the closure of cemeteries. Testing in some councils has been by hand but in Herefordshire the test applied is by using a pressure tester, used only by trained operatives. This is a British Standard and is adopted by the National Association of Memorial Masons, the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and the Association of Burial Authorities.

Councillor Edwards advised that there was no significance to the different coloured plastic caps used on the temporary supports – they were simply from different batches.

Question from Councillor AL Williams

"Can you please tell me when and why disabled parking ceased after 10.30 in Broad Street opposite Barclays Bank and outside Greggs?"

Councillor D.B. Wilcox, Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) said that, following the permanent pedestrianisation of Widemarsh Street in 2006, the section of Broad Street north of West Street / East Street junction is not legally accessible by vehicles between 10.30am and 4.30pm during the daytime closure of Widemarsh Street. However, a number of vehicles were making an illegal and potentially unsafe manoeuvre by either making a left turn from West Street or reversing up Broad Street to access the area during the closure period.

Traffic Management arrangements in the Broad Street area have been reviewed and changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders in the area were introduced on 30th March, 2007. This included preventing the use of the disabled parking bay between the hours of 10.30am and 4.30pm in Broad Street opposite Barclays Bank and outside Greggs to tie in with the times of

the daytime pedestrianisation of Widemarsh Street. In addition, the disabled parking bay on the east side of Broad Street immediately south of the junction with East Street has been extended to provide some additional disabled parking provision.

The changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders were introduced on an experimental basis that allows for representations to be made over the following six months and considered prior to making the changes permanent. The changes have only recently been introduced and are still in a settling in period. As such, a pragmatic approach is being taken to enforcement. New signs make clear the restrictions that now apply and public notices are in place indicating the details of the experimental order. The Council has already been made aware of concerns regarding this aspect of the changes. The effect of all the changes to the orders in the area is being monitored and all representations will be considered when deciding whether to make the changes permanent in their current form or whether to introduce modifications.

Questions from Councillor Mrs A. Toon

"How many Penalty Notices have been issued in the last 6 months to parents of pupils at secondary school for not attending school?"

What support was given to these parents/children by education welfare?"

Where are these children now?"

Which secondary schools have the highest number of penalty notices issued?"

Why is it that in one case, when the education welfare section gave no support or assistance for over 5 months, then issued a penalty notice and then within a matter of weeks allowed the young person to now go on extended study leave without any home study support or organised work placement?"

Would the Education Dept consider refunding Penalty Notices where there is clear evidence that the parent made every effort for the child to attend and it is shown that the Education Dept and the School failed the child?"

Councillor D.W. Rule, Cabinet Member (Children and Young People).advised that 44 Penalty Notices had been issued since September 2006.

He stated that there is always support offered to pupils and parents before (and indeed after) a Penalty Notice is issued. If a parent does not pay a Penalty Notice the Council has to take the case to Court and Magistrates are very keen to see in what ways the Education Welfare Service has engaged or tried to engage with the family.

He stated that all of the children should be in school. A number of them will be in year 11 but should still be attending until exams or study leave arrives.

He gave the following breakdown of the Penalty Notices issued:

Aylestone High School - 17
Bishop of Hereford's Bluecoat School - 1
John Kyrle High School 6

John Masfield High School – 4
Lady Hawkins High School, Kington – 3
The Minster College – 3
Queen Elizabeth High School – 2
Weobley High School – 1
Wyebridge Sports College – 3
Pupil Referral Units - 4.

He said it would not be appropriate to talk about individual pupils, however, the principle is that the Education Welfare Service worked with the families and schools with regard to extended study leave and the academic support they receive. He reminded Council that these decisions are not made by the Education Welfare Service but by headteachers, and there is little we can do to change a decision made by a headteacher.

He reminded Council that the service works in partnership with families and schools, and aims to resolve issues of non-attendance at an earlier stage. It is only when all previous attempts have broken down that prosecution is resorted to as the final option. It would, therefore, not be appropriate to consider refunding the fine.

In response to a query about a particular case, the Cabinet Member asked Councillor Mrs. Toon to give him the details outside the meeting and he would investigate the matter.

Questions from Councillor W.L.S. Bowen

"Considering that this Council is able to set its own requirements for insulation and energy efficiency in all new buildings - why is it that much higher levels of insulation and energy efficiency in all new build are not being demanded?"

Are you aware that other Council's already do this?

Are you aware that we are 25 years and more behind most other European Union countries, such as Sweden, Belgium and Eire?"

Councillor P.J. Edwards, Cabinet Member (Environment) said that submissions for Building Regulations must achieve the levels of insulation and energy efficiency as set out in the regulations and detailed in the relevant approved document. As with all building regulations the (minimum) standard set may be exceeded if the applicant wishes, but the Council has no authority to insist on higher standards.

He said that the Building Regulations requirements for levels of insulation and energy efficiency had become far more stringent in recent years and in particular with the introduction of higher standards in April 2006, which also recognised the importance of measuring carbon dioxide emissions. The Government is committed to a further review of this area of the Building Regulations by 2010.

In response to a request from Councillor Bowen that the Council sets its own standards, Councillor Edwards advised that the Council worked with the UK standards and cited two examples of recent developments where the standards had been exceeded and carbon emissions reduced, namely, Whitecross High School and the block of 24 apartments at Barton Yard, Hereford.

Questions from Councillor W.L.S. Bowen

"Why is that so little is being done by this Council to encourage local biomass power

generation?

Is this Council aware that most of Herefordshire biomass production is to be exported to Eire as they have made a rapid and determined commitment to this sustainable source of energy?

Is this Council aware that up to 5,000 acres of biomass will be grown and exported, and that all of this could, potentially, be used in Herefordshire?"

Councillor P.J. Edwards advised that a plant at Lyonshall now has its Waste Management Licence and is up and running, powering poultry units with waste cooking oil.

Pontrilas Renewable Energy have planning permission for 2 x 5MW burners (permission granted Jan 07) - but are affected by changes in grants available.

He said that the local planning authority cannot promote or encourage any particular development, it can only make recommendations based on adopted policy on applications presented to it, and is therefore entirely dependent on developers coming forward with suitable and acceptable proposals.

However, biomass energy generation is supported in principle (subject to acceptable environmental protection and mitigation, along with Environment Agency approval), and permissions have been granted for energy generation from waste wood/sawdust/forestry waste, and also from waste cooking oil.

Question from Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes

"In order to improve the role of the Councillor, is it proposed in the next term to promote and continue with training of the Members' Development Working Group?"

Councillor Mrs. J.P. French, Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services and Human Resources) thanked Councillor Mrs. Lloyd-Hayes for her involvement with the Members' Development Working Group and said that some preparatory work was being undertaken to support the continuance of the Working Group, but that that decision could only be taken by the new administration.

Councillor Mrs. Lloyd-Hayes asked why reports of the meetings were not submitted to Cabinet or Council.

Question from Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes

"As suitable premises have recently become available on the boundary of Tupsley and Aylestone Wards, will this Council seriously consider investing in young people and the community by purchasing or leasing this local property thus providing a much needed community facility serving several thousand people?"

Councillor R.V. Stockton, Cabinet Member (Community Services) re-iterated the reply he had given earlier in the meeting and went on to say that the Council takes a corporate approach to asset and capital planning and resources are therefore allocated in line with corporate priorities.

Councillor Mrs. Lloyd-Hayes said the Council should support these community-led projects and transfer £380,000 from the sale of the youth centre back into youth services.

There were no Notices of Motion.

94. CABINET

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R.J. Phillips, presented the report of the meetings of Cabinet held on 22nd March and 12th April, 2007.

In relation to Item 3.2 - Connexions Transition Plan and Commissioning Arrangements - In response to a query the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) confirmed that a location for the meetings had not yet been decided.

In relation to Item 4.1(i) - Gender Equality Scheme - In response to a request that female councillors should not have their title (Mrs. Ms or Miss) included on the nameplates, the Leader agreed that this would be looked at again following the election.

In relation to Item 4.1(iv) - Election Costs - In response to a query the Chief Executive advised that, in his role of Returning Officer, he would be unable to answer specific questions about the elections at the Council meeting, other than questions related to the item in the report, as it could be seen to be giving undue advantage to those Councillors who were seeking re-election. He did, however, confirm that, as Returning Officer, he would be held personally responsible for any costs associated with a successful legal challenge to the election. He said he would be willing to answer questions from individual candidates, both those who were serving Councillors or not, outside the meeting. A number of Councillors commented on the late despatch of postal votes and errors on the ballot papers.

In response to a question on the allocation of election costs he advised that the Council had consulted with the Herefordshire Association of Local Councils on the costs, and it was a request for some late revisions to the proposals that meant it had not been possible to inform parish councils sooner. He went on to say that the Council have been advising parish councils for some time, to make provision in their annual precept for elections which were normally held every four years, but many of them still did not do this.

In relation to Item 8.2(i) - Outcome of Settlement Negotiations in Connection with High Court Proceedings Relating to the River Wye - In response to a query, Councillor D.B. Wilcox, Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) said that the Council had agreed to pay £30,000 towards the legal costs of the Church Commissions, following advice that the Council would be unlikely to win should the case proceed. He confirmed that the agreement would have no effect on the accessibility of Corporation Wharf. It would be up to the new administration to decide whether it wished to improve the access. He confirmed that the Angling Association controlled the fishing rights for those over the age of 18.

The Leader reminded Council that, with the exception of the advice of Counsel, all the reports and discussions on this matter were open to the public.

Councillor Mrs. M.D. Lloyd-Hayes, having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this item, left the chamber for the duration of the discussion.

In relation to Item 10.2(iii) - Local Government Association Briefings on the Lyons Report and Budget - In response to a comment, the Leader agreed that the report was a disappointment and did not do local government justice.

In a closing speech he thanked the Cabinet Members for their support over the past

four years, and also thanked Councillors Anne Gray and Jenny Hyde for their support to the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People). He also mentioned Councillor Joyce Davis. He went on to thank the Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and all staff with a special mention to the secretarial staff and his own secretary, Mrs. Jean Wood who would be retiring shortly.

The Chairman also thanked Mrs. Wood.

RESOLVED: That the reports from the meetings of Cabinet held on 22nd March and 12th April, 2007 be received.

95. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Mr. Robert Rogers presented the report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 12th February, 9th March and 13th April, 2007. In doing so, he drew attention to the Committee's Annual Report which had been very well received both locally and at a national level. He felt Herefordshire had demonstrated a very high level of ethical standards.

He thanked Miss Heather Donaldson, Democratic Services Officer and her colleagues for arranging to publish the papers for the Committee on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 12th February, 9th March and 13th April, 2007 be received.

96. STRATEGIC MONITORING COMMITTEE

Councillor T.M. James presented the report of the meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 30th March, 2007.

Councillor W.J.S. Thomas, Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee paid tribute to the officers involved in the work of his scrutiny committee, in particular: Sara Siliko, Jenny Goldsbury and Tim Brown. He warned that the Council would need to respond to the challenge of new legislation and the resultant strain on the resources of the Scrutiny officers.

Councillor James thanked the members of the Strategic Monitoring Committee and those officers who had supported the scrutiny function. In particular he mentioned the contribution of Tim Brown, Committee Manager (Scrutiny) for his stoicism, diplomacy, extraordinary knowledge and support.

RESOLVED: That the report of the meeting of the Strategic Monitoring Committee held on 30th March, 2007 be received.

97. PLANNING COMMITTEE

Councillor T.W. Hunt presented the reports of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 2nd March and 20th April, 2007.

He thanked the staff involved in the planning committee process for their hard work and professionalism .

RESOLVED: That the reports of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 2nd March and 20th April, 2007 be received.

98. REGULATORY COMMITTEE

Councillor R.I. Mathews presented the report of the meetings of the Regulatory Committee held on 20th March and 10th April, 2007.

One member welcomed the introduction of pedicabs to Hereford city centre and asked if waiting taxi drivers could be persuaded to switch off their engines while waiting for fares.

Councillor Matthews thanked the members of the committee and the staff who supported them for their work over the past few years.

RESOLVED: That the report of the meetings of the Regulatory Committee held on 20th March and 10th April, 2007 be received.

99. AUDIT AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor A.C.R. Chappell presented the report of the meeting of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee held on 13th April, 2007.

He thanked Mrs. Sonia Rees, the Director of Resources, Mr. Tony Ford, Audit Services Manager and the other officers involved with the committee.

RESOLVED: That the report of the meeting of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee held on 13th April, 2007 be received.

The meeting ended at 12.02 p.m.

CHAIRMAN