

WCBC Full Council Meeting - Wednesday 23rd March 2016

In the Chair - Deputy Mayor Cllr John Pritchard (JP)

Elaine Guntrip-Thomas (**EGT**) and Marcus Jones (**MJ**) on behalf of Save Our Heritage Wrexham are invited to put forward their questions.

Cllr David Kelly declares an interest and removes himself.

MJ: "Hi, my name is Marcus, I am not going to go through the questions as you see it.. question of asbestos...Pre demolition order items 3.1 to 3.2.0 can you confirm that the asbestos has already been removed?"

JP calls on the leader Mr Mark Pritchard (MP) to answer.

MP: "Can I thank you for the question this afternoon."
The work specified in the report has not yet been carried out, it has been tendered and..

JP: "Can you stand up please?"

MP: "Apologies - I am reading and am used to sitting in that chair."

"The work specified in the report has not yet been carried out, but has been tendered and a specialist contractor is ready to undertake the work. The building has been secured since it ceased to be used by education. The council removed asbestos from all other structures on the site prior to demolition. When negotiations began with Coleg Cambria to sell the site the council passed the asbestos report to the college to allow it to consider options for removal based on its plans for the building. When the negotiations came to an end in November 2015 the responsibility for the removal of the asbestos came back to the council to manage. Thank you Deputy Mayor"

JP: "Thank you Mark"

MJ: "Can I respond to that please?"

"I did actually ask that question via the Freedom of Information request, initially I did get a reply via e-mail, which basically said there was no asbestos in any of the buildings and when I tried to clarify that statement to whether or not it was the building that had been demolished or the buildings that hadn't been demolished I got no reply. So have now put in another FOI request for the very same answer, but it strikes me that I shouldn't have to bring this simple question to a full council meeting to get a yes or no answer. So with that in mind I am just wondering why it is that the whole asbestos issue has been very elusive and it doesn't seem that anyone was prepared to give me a straight answer so thanks for that."

Chair appears to invite a response from MP.

MP: "Yes -- Thank you deputy mayor. I can only apologise that the information didn't come to you as fast as you seem to think it should have, what I would say in future is if you contact me direct I will give you a straight answer within a certain time scale. I can only say that - the information that is off officers I do believe that they have responded to you and that's where I am with it. But I have answered your question here this afternoon In future if you send me a direct e-mail, I'll answer you."

JP: "Thank you we will now move on to question 2"

EGT: "Right. Thank you. My name is Elaine Guntrip Thomas and on behalf of the Save Our Heritage Group I would just like to express our concern that the planned demolition of the former Grove Park County School for Girls has been made prior to the consultation pertaining to the growth requirements for Alexander School. Should a primary school or schools be situated on the Grove Park site what effect will that have on Alexandra's school's intake and should the proposed demolition be deferred until the strategic plan for the school placed planning in Wrexham is completed? Thank you"

JP: "Call on Cllr Michael Williams (**MW**) now to answer that"

MW: "Thank you Mayor. Just to give you some background information, Alexandra school is a main stream school with an assessment centre, and resourced provision for children who have special education needs. Some are from other schools and once their needs have been assessed and strategies decided upon they will return to those schools, but the bulk of them remain within the school itself. Now the children are taught around about the middle of the school, I don't know if you know the school but it's a longish sort of building and the conditions under which these children are taught even though it is a modern school are not suitable for their needs. The school was built to maximise the use of their big space within the school which includes corridors; the corridors are large and the classrooms are small.

Now for people who know exactly the needs of children with SEN, these conditions are not suitable. Some money became available as a result of economies in our present builds through the 21st Century schools project which allowed us to be able to put an extension onto the Alexander school and that extension will increase the school population of children by 50% and as a result of that we are required by legislation, statutorily, from Welsh Government to undertake an assessment with parent's of the school because they would need to be satisfied that the needs of the children in the school will be met as the school expands.

Once the facilities are built the school will increase as I have said from 210 pupils to 315. However, given the projected increase in school population the likelihood of Alexandra being able to soak up the additional number of projected pupils who are going to come into this authority within the next 10 years far exceeds that limit and as a result we are going to have to put another school or plan to put another school onto the Groves site in order to meet that. Thank you"

EGT : "I have to say that I am not at all together sure that you answered the question once again Councillor Williams. I'm concerned also, the second part of the question was 'Should the proposed demolition be deferred until the strategic plan for the school placed planning in Wrexham is completed?'

MW: "I will simply answer the question by letting you know that there is no need to undertake a full assessment, we are taking part in a strategic planning exercise at the minute and that will be reported to the Executive Board over the next few months. But what I'm explaining to you is and I had to read in to the question because I found it difficult to understand exactly what you wanted as well, is the fact that there is not going to be any movement of children from Alexandra to any new school in the future because the numbers of children that will need to be sited into a new school will far exceed the numbers that we would be able to take generally from schools which are just at full capacity. "

JP: "Thank you..."

EG: "I'm sorry but that still does not answer the question about the demolition does it?"

JP: " Well that's it - er, thank you very much for your questions, we move on to..."

- 2) Apologies
- 3) Brussels attack - one minute silence
- 4) Last council meeting for three senior officers - wish the the best for future etc
- 5) Councillors wages (extensive discussion)
- 6) Minutes from 24th Feb 2016 agreed

Cllr Kevin Hughes speaks re the minutes:

KH: "From my recollection of the meeting on 24th February 2016 right at the beginning of the meeting a number of the members attempted to raise questions regarding the Groves Girls' School site and I recognised that and at the time you regarded it as inadmissible, but there is no reference to it in the minutes I would just like to say that."

Point of order Mr Chair ... silent discussion

JP: "As I understood it, it wasn't an agenda item at the time, and it wasn't a matter of the business being discussed on that evening"

KH: "I accept that but, shouldn't there not be a reference to it in the minutes?"

"Well the minutes are a record of the business of the meeting and the Dep Mayor has said that wasn't part of the agenda of the meeting so that's why it hasn't been minuted. It is of course on record on the webcast."

<35 mins in>

Dr Helen Paterson (Chief Executive) (**HP**):

HP: "Correct a matter of fact given by Cllr Arfon Jones ... remind councillors the council chamber is not the place to discuss the competence of serving officers..."

Agenda item 6) no questions or issues to raise ... so move to agenda item 7.

Agenda Item 7) Notice of Motion

The attached Notice of Motion has been received from Councillors:

Kevin Hughes (Ponciau, Labour),	Dana Davies (Ruabon, Labour),
Krista Childs (Coedpoeth, Labour),	Anne Evans (Rhosnesni, Labour),
Gareth Griffiths (Coedpoeth, Labour),	Arfon Jones (Gwersyllt, Plaid Cymru),
Malcolm King OBE (Wynstay, Labour),	Andrew Bailey (Gresford Labour),
Brian Cameron (Whitegate, Labour),	Derek Wright, Paul Blackwell (Plas Madoc, Labour),
Graham Rogers (Hermitage, Labour),	Colin Powell (Queensway, Labour) and
Keith Gregory (Smithfield, Plaid Cymru)	<i>(Pages 19 - 20 of Agenda Pack)</i>

Cllr Dana Davies to move and Cllr Kevin Hughes to second motion, (wait for Cllr David Kelly to leave).

Cllr Dana Davies (**DD**)

DD: "Thank you Mr Dep Mayor, I wish to formally move the motion as outlined under agenda item 7 and reserve the right to speak on the motion until the Deputy Mayor exercises his decision in allowing the debate to take place. We would ask that a debate does take place this evening as remitting back to the executive board result could result in the motion failing as there is now no political balance on the executive board and therefore no opposition members to move and second this motion. Hence the signatories determining to bring this motion before full council. Thank you."

JP: "Could I have second to that please"

KH: "I have pleasure in seconding that .. and reserve the right to speak during the debate at some point as well"

Cllr Bob Dutton (BD)

BD: "Could I ask a question - this is not an agenderd item, and I admit it is in your gift to make the decision as to whether the matter should be put before the council but this has not been tabled."

JP: "I am going to explain that now Cllr Dutton. I have listened carefully to what the mover and seconder of this motion have to say but I am mindful of the content of the council standing orders on this which state where the subject matter of any motion comes within the province of any committee it shall upon being moved and seconded it shall be referred without discussion for consideration and report. Although I know I have a discretionary right to permit the debate at council. In the light of the news today that the Welsh Minister is mindful to list the Groves Building, the matter will have to be further considered by the exec board and so in my judgement should also be considered by the board so motion will be referred to the next meeting of the Executive Board at 10.00 am on Tuesday 12th April for consideration and report. Dana?"

DD: “Thank you Mr Deputy Chair. In view of today’s developments I am sure you will allow me the opportunity to congratulate the minister in recognising the importance of this building when the Executive Board failed to do so. What we are seeking now is the assurance that the building will not be demolished in the interim whilst the listing is being progressed. Thank you “

JP: “ O.K. point taken .. move on to agenda item no. 8....

Cllr Malcolm King (**MK**)

MK: “Point of order chair....”

JP: “What’s the point of order Malcolm?”

MK: “Well the point of order is that the move of the motion who I am sure is extremely disappointed that it won’t be heard given the struggle that we have had to have this debate in public so that all members can take part in it equally. That she made a quite reasonable request for some sort of assurance that the council wouldn’t rush towards demolishing the building just before it gets listed and I think to just move on without replying to that given there is a large number of the public here on a matter of great public interest. No chair this council is dodging the issue... “

.....public shouting from the gallery....

JP: “Refrain from shouting ...”

MK: “It does the reputation of this council no good what so ever if you look at the constitution, this is not what we are required to do. This is a matter of importance to Wrexham, its’ heritage and its’ economic future and dodging the issue as you are constantly trying to do, does not do any good for democracy in Wrexham, and it’s a disgrace.”

JP: “Malcolm I am not dodging the issue , the news that has arrived” .

... applause for MK...

JP: “Moving on to agenda item 8 ... Malcolm do you mind?” Interruption .. Malcolm

...Public gallery - “Answer the question on No. 7”...

...Public gallery - “Answer the question”...

JP: “I’ve told you – the news that came today has made a difference to the decision..”

MK: “Will you misuse the processes of this council to avoid the will of the Welsh Government is the question.”

JP: “Mark Agenda item no. 8 please...”

Cllr Mark Pritchard (**MP**)

MP: “Dep Mayor I will move on to agenda item 8 but if you would just give me a little bit of leeway here with regards to Malcolm’s comments and others members and member’s of the public

JP: “Be quick”

MP: “ What I would say is ...the common sense approach that you have taken this evening is the right approach. Nothing will be done with the building until a decision has been made on the listing for obvious reasons. Thank you Deputy Mayor.”

...Public gallery - interruptions .. “Will it be protected that’s what I want to know?”....

JP: “ Members of the public - while someone is speaking ... you are out of order”

MP: “Thank you Deputy Mayor. As I have just said we will wait for a decision to be made by CADW and I think that’s where we are, I can’t say any more. With regards to a listing that decision is not within our gift that is in the decision making of CADW and I think what you have said and I will just say it again, I think the approach is a sensible approach. It will come back to the Executive Board and hopefully by then a decision will have been made. Thank you Deputy Mayor.”

Agenda item 8 ... Silence ...

Issue of empty homes and council tax report 3.1 and 3.2.....

Cllr Andrew Bailey (**AB**)

AB: “....Remiss of me to not thank him for his comments on the previous item another empty building, even if it is the motion that forced the issue...Hopefully either CADW or English Heritage will make a decision on this one...”