

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership) held at 2.00
pm on Thursday, 4 December 2014

Members Present:

Councillor A Lucas (Cabinet Member)
Councillor J Blundell (Shadow Cabinet Member)

Employees (by Directorate):

S Brake, People Directorate
F Collingham, Chief Executive's Directorate
M Rose, Resources Directorate
J Venn, Chief Executive's Directorate

Public Business

7. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interest.

8. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th September 2014 were agreed and signed as a true record.

9. Response to petition calling for the Palestinian Flag to be flown at the Council House

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided a response to a petition requesting that the Palestinian flag be flown from the Council House to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian population.

An e-petition bearing 17 signatures was received demanding that, as a city of peace and reconciliation, given the high number of Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza including a large number of children, the Palestinian flag is flown from the Council House to demonstrate solidarity with the Palestinian population. The Petition Organiser was invited to the meeting but did not attend.

The Council had long held strong views about the need for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East; an end to the suffering of the people of Gaza; and the resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. This summer, in response to conflict in Gaza, a letter to the national press on 8 August 2014 was sent by the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council; the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor and other senior councillors; the Lord Bishop of Coventry and the Chair of the Coventry Muslim Forum urging the United Nations and the British Government to play an urgent part in bringing about a ceasefire and seeking a permanent solution to the conflict.

Coventry was rightly proud of its worldwide reputation as a city of peace and reconciliation, born from the devastation of its Cathedral in the Second World War. Since then the highly skilled and expert staff at Coventry Cathedral had led the city's work in the field of peace and reconciliation and this leadership continued under the guidance of Bishop Christopher, with the Council ensuring it supported the Cathedral's work on behalf of the city.

The report indicated that the Council followed the protocols for flying flags outside the Council House, as laid down by the Flags Institute and the Flags and Heraldry Committee in their publication "Flying Flags in the United Kingdom". The Cabinet Member noted that during the winter months no flags were flown on the front of Council House building, other than the Union Flag on the main Council House flag pole which was flown at all times, subject to specific variations during certain occasions such as funerals, international visitors and independence days, as appropriate.

It was recommended that this guidance continued to be followed, which would ensure a consistent and clear approach to the flying of flags.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership):-

- 1. Reaffirms the Council's concern about the suffering of Palestinian people, as expressed in the open letter signed by leading councillors, the Lord Bishop of Coventry, the Right Rev Dr Christopher Cocksworth and the Chair of the Coventry Muslim Forum, Dr Abdullah Shehu and issued on 8 August 2014.**
- 2. Continues to support the internationally respected work of Coventry Cathedral in seeking to end conflicts across the world, including Palestine and Israel.**
- 3. Confirms that the Council should continue to follow national protocol and local guidance for the flying of flags outside the Council House, which means that the Palestinian flag will not be flown outside the Council House specifically as a mark of solidarity.**

10. Appointment of Special Advisor on Child Protection Issues to the Leader of the Council

The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Executive Director, People, which set out proposals for the extension of the appointment of Mr Donald Hamilton (retired Designated Family Judge) as the Special Advisor on Child Protection to the Leader of the Council.

On the 10th October 2013 an Extraordinary Meeting of Council was held to consider the Serious Case Review Report into the death of Daniel Pelka. Daniel Pelka (a Coventry child) was murdered in March 2012 by his mother and her partner; Daniel has sustained a long history of abuse leading up to his death. A Multi- Agency Serious Case Review was commissioned to investigate and analyse the circumstances into Daniels abuse and death.

The Serious Case Review made 15 recommendations to local partners, covering domestic abuse, referral and assessment processes, training of staff, practise in schools and health as well as the requirement to disseminate messages to the Children's workforce.

In addition to the resolutions made by Council at the Extraordinary Council meeting, the Leader advised the Council that she had appointed His Honour Judge Hamilton (Retired) to be her Special Advisor on Child Protection Issues, with immediate effect. Mr Donald Hamilton, as a retired Designated Family Judge, has a wealth of experience and knowledge around Child Protection and was ideally placed to offer the Leader an independent and experienced consultative role in this challenging area. Mr Donald Hamilton has the authority and experience to command the respect both internally within the City Council and externally with a range of partner organisations such as the West Midlands Police, Health Services and other agencies.

It was proposed that, as the improvement plan for Children's Social Care in Coventry continued its implementation, the Leader of the Council's oversight of the increased measures being introduced to protect those children in Coventry who are at risk of harm or suffering harm would be enhanced by the continued support of Mr Donald Hamilton as her Special Advisor on Child Protection.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Member (Policy and Leadership):

- 1. Endorses the extension of the appointment of Mr Donald Hamilton as the Special Advisor on Child Protection to the Leader of the Council until 31st December 2015.**
- 2. Recommend to the Corporate Parenting Board (Cabinet Advisory Panel) the invitation of Mr Donald Hamilton, in his role of Special Advisor on Child Protection to the Leader, to attend the Corporate Parenting Board, and other meetings of relevant council bodies where permitted.**

11. Outstanding Issues

There were no outstanding issues

12. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.15 pm)