

Wyre Forest District Council
CABINET
Thursday 16th December 2004

PRESENT: Councillors: S J M Clee (Leader - Chairman), M J Hart (Deputy Leader - Vice-Chairman), Mrs M B Aston, J-P Campion, J W Dudley and N J Desmond

OBSERVERS: Councillors: G W Ballinger, C D Nicholls, Mrs F M Oborski, J A Shaw and M J Shellie.

CM.565 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CM.566 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

CM.567 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 25th November 2004 and 8th December 2004 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

CM.568 CALL INS

No decisions had been called in since the last Cabinet meeting.

CM.569 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CM.570 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made the following announcements:

(i) Information Technology (I.T.)

The I.T. Section (Information Technology Section) would be contacting members shortly to inform them of training that was proposed for the 24th and 26th January 2005.

(ii) Waste Treatment Plant, Hartlebury, Worcestershire

Worcester County Council's Planning Committee had granted unanimous approval for a new waste treatment plant at Hartlebury. This news was warmly welcomed.

CM.571 INTERIM COMPACT WITH COMMUNITY ACTION WYRE FOREST

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that reported on the interim Compact 'Wyre Forest Working Together' which had been developed in partnership with Community Action Wyre Forest (CAWF). The Government wished to see the development of Local Compacts and required all local authority areas to have one published by April 2005. To progress this matter, CAWF (Community Action Wyre Forest) the District's Council for voluntary services, in partnership with this Council, co-ordinated the production of the Interim Compact which focused on the 5 key themes of :
Partnerships/Consultation/Funding/Volunteering and Equal Opportunities.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- a) **The interim Compact with CAWF (Community Action Wyre Forest) as contained in the report be endorsed.**
- b) **It be recommended to Full Council that the Interim Compact be adopted and**
- c) **Cabinet be advised of progress made in the development of other local Compacts via Wyre Forest Matters, the LSP (Local Strategic Partnership) and the Worcestershire Partnership.**

CM.572 DRAFT CONSULTATION STRATEGY 2005 - 2008

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that reported on the Draft Consultation Strategy 'Building a Better Future Together' 2005-2008. The Draft Consultation Strategy provided a clear framework to underpin the planning, delivery and reporting of consultation exercises. It would help to improve how the Council co-ordinated consultation activity so it would have a lasting impact on shaping public policy and the delivery of quality and effective services.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- a) **The draft Consultation Strategy '*Building a Better Future Together*' 2005-08 as contained in the report be endorsed.**
 - b) **It be recommended to Full Council that the draft Consultation Strategy be adopted.**
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CM.573 DELIVERING EFFICIENCY SAVINGS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT - THE CHALLENGE FOR WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that outlined the Government's plans for delivering efficiency savings across public services and Local Government in particular and the implications of this for Wyre Forest. The report also gave an update on investigative work regarding shared services in Worcestershire as one possible route to the delivery of efficiency savings.

DECISION:

- a) **The potential impact of the Government's Efficiency Review on Wyre Forest District Council be noted.**
- b) **The investigatory work into the delivery of shared services across Worcestershire be endorsed.**

CM.574 BUDGET REPORTS (references to page numbers refer to the Budget Book circulated separately from the Cabinet agenda)

Eight Budget Reports from the Head of Financial Services were considered and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Affairs made reference to each of the reports in turn as follows:-

1. The Three Year Budget and Policy Framework 2004/2008

The Three Year Budget and Policy Framework was the major report that identified the Council's Projected Base Budget Expenditure and Income, the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement Formula Grant, Council Tax Income and Consequential Reserves needed to balance the budget.

2. Base Budget Variations

The report outlined the Base Budget Variations and identified all the major variations from original to revised 2004/2005 that had resulted in a £590,000 reduction in this year's budget.

The most significant item was the use of the earmarked reserves set aside from the 2003/2004 Final Accounts. The report also identified the changes in the Base Budget from the Revised Budget 2004/2005 to next year's original.

3. Calculation of Council Tax

The report outlined the calculation of the Council Tax Base. It identified the number of Band D equivalent properties through the District. Council Tax Base was £34,105 an increase of 281 properties over the current year. The report also identified the extra income that the Council raised through reducing discounts from 50% to 25% on second homes and long-term empty properties.

4. Capital Programme 2004/2005 Onwards

The report gave details of the updated Base Capital Programme which had been amended to take into account slippage. The report also identified available Usable Capital Receipts for new schemes and gave an update on the Council's Capital Strategy.

5. Prudential System of Local Government Finance and the Treasury Management Strategy Report 2005/2006

Since 2004/2005 the Prudential System had enabled Councils to borrow for new capital expenditure providing the borrowing was prudent, affordable and sustainable.

The second part of the report contained details regarding the Treasury Management Strategy. It identified how the Council would borrow and invest its reserves and provided a schedule of approved organisations for investment purposes to maximise security and liquidity whilst seeking the highest rate of returns on investments.

6. Expenditure Service Options

The report was broken down into 3 parts:-

The first part of the report contained the scoring of each option under the Council's Prioritisation Process. The second part of the report contained those options for reconsideration which approved in principle last year by Council but insufficient resources were available. The third part of the report contained this year's Service Options compiled by Heads of Service and Policy Panels for consideration as part of the budget process. It was noted that the cost of approving the 2 lists of options would far outweigh the resources that were available to the Council and as a consequence, careful consideration and consultation would be needed prior to approval.

7. Income Service Options

The Income Service Options report contained proposals to increase fees and charges and consequential income for Council.

8. Risk Management and the Budget Process

The report identified the major risks that the Council had to consider in arriving at a new Base Budget for 2005/2006. It also identified the risk and impact, and the action taken or action that needed to be taken as part of the budget process.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The Cabinet having considered the Budget Reports set out in the separate volume including the Service Options 2005 - 2008 onwards which present information and proposals for a Three Year Budget Strategy up to 2008 recommend to Council the following:-

1. THREE YEAR BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2005/2008

- 1.1 A balanced and sustainable Budget and Council Tax increase in line with the Council's Finance Strategy and Corporate Plan Priorities.
- 1.2 **Endorses** the contents of the Three Year Budget and Policy Framework Report, and in view of the late notification of the Finance Settlement, defer consideration of the level of Net Expenditure for 2005/2006 and resultant Council Tax Levy until the Cabinet Meeting on 13th January 2005.
- 1.3 **Reaffirms** our commitment to :-
- Setting a Council Tax increase with regard to the current rate of inflation (RPI);
 - Reinstating Bewdley Museum and Stourport Community Centre into the Base Budget;
 - Encourage and promote economic development within the District including a cinema;
 - Continue our support to the Parishes;
 - Provide adequate Town Centre parking for residents and visitors to the District;
 - Promote electronic working within the Authority for members and staff;
 - Continue to promote partnership working;
 - Working towards a Single Site;
 - Working with RSL's to provide additional social housing within the District.
- 1.4 **Promote** efficiencies within the Council through organisational change to enable us to divert funding to front line services and away from bureaucracy.
- 1.5 **Reaffirms** the Council's policy relating to Working Balances, Reserves and Provisions and notes the amount of Reserves and Provisions available
- 1.6 **Reaffirms** the Council's updated medium term Finance Strategy. (pages 24-30)
- 1.7
- **Agrees** that the Consultation on the Cabinet Final Budget Strategy to be recommended on 13th January 2005 be as follows:-
 - Media Release - including inviting members of the public to attend the Finance & Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel to give their views.
 - Web Site
 - Staff Bulletin
 - Business Ratepayer Statutory Consultation
 - Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel

2. BASE BUDGET VARIATIONS (pages 35-38)

- 2.1 **Note** the Budget Variations identified between Original and Revised Budgets 2004/2005 and between the Revised Budget 2004/2005 and the Original for 2005/2006.
- 2.2 **Heads of Service** continue to monitor closely their Budgets and the Head of Financial Services continue to report to the Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

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3. **COUNCIL TAX BASE (pages 39-43)**
- 3.1 **Approves** a Council Tax base for Wyre Forest District of 34105 as detailed in the report on Calculation of Council Tax Base 2005/2006.
- 3.2 **Council Tax Discounts** for Second Homes and Long Term Empty Properties continue at 25% for 2005/2006 onwards.
4. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/2005 ONWARDS** (pages 44-60)
- 4.1 **Approves** the Base Capital Programme and Vehicles and Equipment Renewal Schedule.
- 4.2 **Notes** the availability of the unallocated Capital Receipts and the ability to use Prudential Borrowing for new Capital Service Options.
- 4.3 **Considers** the approval and funding of Capital Service Options (including Vehicles and Equipment) at the Cabinet on 13th January 2005 having considered the Council's Capital Strategy and the Implications on the Revenue Budget.
- 4.4 **Reaffirms** the Council's Capital Strategy.
- 4.5 **Delegated Authority** continue to be given to the Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs to determine the most advantageous option of how to fund vehicle and equipment renewals in order to obtain value for money, by means of either medium term borrowing (based upon anticipated life of vehicle and equipment) or by Leasing.
- 4.6 **Continue** to dispose of surplus assets in order to generate new usable capital receipts, where this is proven to be economically viable in accordance with the Asset Management Plan.
5. **PRUDENTIAL SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE AND THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2005/2006 (Pages 61-73)**
- 5.1 **Adopt** the Prudential Indicators and limits within Sections 3-6 of the Report.
- 5.2 **Approve** the Treasury Management Strategy 2005/2006 within Sections 7-11 and associated Prudential Indicators within Section 12 of the Report.
- 5.3 **Revisit** these Indicators following the approval of the Council's Budget Strategy as the indicators are based upon current approvals.
6. **EXPENDITURE SERVICE OPTIONS** (pages 74-90)
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6.1 **Further considers** Expenditure Service Options at the Cabinet on 13th January 2005 taking into account any views expressed by the Finance & Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 21st December 2004.

7. **INCOME SERVICE OPTIONS (pages 91-114)**

7.1 **Further** consider the Income Service Options including revisions to fees and charges at the Cabinet on 13th January 2005, taking into account any views expressed by the Finance & Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 21st December 2004.

8. **RISK MANAGEMENT AND THE BUDGET PROCESS** (pages 115-121)

8.1 **Endorse** the Budget Risk Management process identified in the Risk Management and Budget Report and *Note and Endorse* the Budgetary Response to identified risks as detailed on the Budget Risk Matrix Appendix 1 of the Report.

8.2 **Monitor** ongoing Budget Risk quarterly as part of the Budget Monitoring process.

CM.575 **12 MONTH REVIEW OF BEWDLEY ALCOHOL RESTRICTION ZONE (JULY 2003 - JULY 2004)**

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that reported on the key findings of the 12 month review of Bewdley Alcohol Restriction Zone (ARZ) which had been undertaken by Priority Research Ltd on behalf of Wyre Forest District Council and the West Mercia Constabulary.

Sections 12 to 16 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 came into force on 1st September 2001, providing local authorities with an adoptive power to restrict anti social drinking in designated public places and also provided the Police with powers to enforce this restriction.

A formal request was received from Bewdley Town Council on 8th July 2002 that the District Council should consider the use of this power within Bewdley Town Centre. Following statutory procedures and consultation an Alcohol Restriction Zone (ARZ) was introduced to Bewdley Town Centre in July 2003.

The aim of the review was to ascertain the positive/negative effects of the Alcohol Restriction Zone and to consider whether the Zone needed to be extended.

The key findings of the review was that the Zone had been successful and supported the reduction in incidents of anti-social behaviour/reduction of young people drinking on the streets/improved perception of safety and public reassurance and had resulted in a change in local culture.

The major concerns were those of dispersal. This resulted in the dispersion of young people from the Zone to other areas both to the periphery of the Zone and onto estates.

Extension of the zone would be subject to formal consultation procedures. In order to ensure future success public awareness would have to be enhanced, the current signage would have to be reviewed and more targeted policing in the Zone was necessary.

DECISION:

- a) **The comments made on the Bewdley ARZ (Alcohol Restriction Zone) Review by the Community and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel on 11th November 2004 as contained in the report be noted.**
- b) **Bewdley Town Council's request of 3rd November 2003 for extending the Bewdley ARZ (Alcohol Restriction Zone) to include Bewdley Leisure Centre, as set out in the report (Appendix A) be endorsed.**
- c) **Delegated responsibility be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services to:**
 - i) **Hold further discussions with Bewdley Town Council and West Mercia Constabulary regarding the extension of the ARZ (Alcohol Restriction Zone) and to identify any other adjacent open spaces that should also be considered in view of the findings from the review;**
 - ii) **Lead the statutory consultation procedures required under Sections 12 to 16 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 for the proposed extension area(s) to the Bewdley ARZ (Alcohol Restriction Zone) and to report these findings back to Cabinet; and**
 - iii) **Review with Bewdley Town Council and West Mercia Constabulary the points listed in paragraph 6.5 for ensuring the future success of the ARZ (Alcohol Restriction Zone), and to agree, where required, an appropriate plan of action.**

CM.576 WYRE FOREST COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP AUDIT AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT 2005-2008

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that reported on the key findings of the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership's third crime and disorder audit, which would inform the development of the new District Community Safety Strategy (2005-2008).

Every three years the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory responsibility on the Responsible Authority of Community Safety Partnerships to produce a local Strategy to tackle crime and disorder, including anti social behaviour and the misuse of drugs. A new Community Strategy had to be published by the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership in April 2005.

The key priorities for the next Wyre Forest District Community Safety Strategy were:

- Fear of Crime
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Violent Crime

Over the next two months specific targets for each of the above issues would be negotiated with Government Office for the West Midlands. In the meantime, four multi-agency working groups were being established to plan the type of interventions that would need to be delivered in order to meet the above targets.

DECISION:

- a) The key findings of the third crime and disorder audit as contained in the report be noted.**
- b) The proposed priorities as set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report for inclusion in the new District Community Safety Strategy for the period 2005 to 2008 be endorsed.**
- c) Agreed that the key issues for prioritisation were:**
 - Fear of Crime
 - Drugs and Alcohol
 - Anti-Social Behaviour and
 - Violent Crime

CM.577 DRAFT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME FOR WYRE FOREST

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that informed Members' of the requirements of the new Planning system under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and outlined the need to prepare a Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the District. This should ideally be submitted by the end of February 2005.

DECISION:

The Revised Draft Local Development Scheme (dated 02.12.2004) as detailed in the report be agreed as the basis for informal consultation with Government Office for the West Midlands.

CM.578 DECISIONS MADE BY AN INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

No decisions had been taken by an individual Cabinet Member.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANELS

CM.579 Housing, Health and Rural Affairs Policy & Scrutiny Panel 12th October 2004

Parish Charter

The Chairman of the Housing, Health and Rural Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel was in attendance for this item. He considered it was good news that the Government was looking more favourably at the lower tiers of Council. The Charter set out how the three tiers of Council namely County, District and Town and Parish Councils should aim to work together.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that the Policy Panel for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs had also considered the Parish Charter. The Panel were also in favour of the Charter being adopted by Council. She commented that she had attended some Parish Council meetings already and said that other Cabinet members would look to attending Parish Council meetings in the future.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The Parish Charter for Worcestershire be signed on behalf of the District Council and sent to Council for endorsement.

CM.580 Community and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel - 11th November 2004

Skateboarding

The PolicyHolder for Community and Leisure Services commented that it had been brought to his attention by some Members that further evidence was needed in order to complete the scrutiny exercise on skateboarding.

It was suggested that further consultation should take place with the Chair of the Youth Strategy Group, the Skateboarding Group, the Fun Box Committee, and residents and users in Offmore and Comberton. It was felt that a lot more of the people actively involved in skateboarding should be asked to give evidence for the scrutiny exercise.

DECISION:

Skateboarding be referred back to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee to examine further.

CM.581 Environment & Economic Regeneration Panel 1st December 2004

Part-Time Access Officer

The Chairman of the Environment and Economic Regeneration Panel was in Attendance for this item. She commented that this Council did not have an Access Officer dealing with Disability Discrimination Act compliance. The Panel had considered a report from the Access Officer from another local authority. Members of the Panel considered that with the Disability Discrimination Act coming on stream shortly it would be wise to have a part-time officer who was funded to look at access issues part-time and who was employed in another Department for the rest of the time eq. in Environmental Health/Building Regulations.

DECISION:

The possibility of appointing a Part-Time Access Officer to examine DDA (Disabled Discrimination Act) issues be considered as part of The budget process.

Local Development Scheme

The Chairman of the Environment and Economic Regeneration Panel commented that the Panel had considered a report on the Local Development Scheme and endorsed everything contained in the report to Cabinet. She commented that the Planning Department were now gearing up for a Local Plan Review.

DECISION:

It be noted that the Environment & Economic Regeneration Panel recommend that the Revised Draft Local Development Scheme be agreed as the basis for informal consultation with Government Office West Midlands. (Item 9.1. above refers).

PART 2

***Exempt Information
Not open to Press and Public***

CM.582 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on the 25th November 2004 and 8th December 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

CM.583 SUMMARY OF MINUTES

Provision of New Cemetery

A report was considered from the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services regarding the proposed new cemetery site.