

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
THURSDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2004**

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

OBSERVERS: Councillors: J Baker, G W Ballinger, Mrs P V Hayward, Mrs A T Hingley, M B Kelly, C D Nicholls, Mrs F M Oborski, Mrs J L Salter, J A Shaw and S J Williams.

PUBLIC OBSERVERS: Mrs J Powick, Mr A Page and Mr R Palmer.

CM.475 WELCOME

The Leader welcomed everyone to the meeting which was one of many being held in rural areas of the community.

CM.476 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs M B Aston.

CM.477 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N J Desmond, Portfolio Holder for Community & Leisure Services declared a personal interest in agenda item 8.3. as he is a member of the Licensing and Environmental Committee.

Councillors J-P Campion, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Affairs, S J M Clee, Leader, N J Desmond, Portfolio Holder for Community & Leisure Services and M J Hart, Portfolio Holder for Commercial Services, declared a personal interest in agenda item 9.1. as they are members of the Planning (Development Control) Committee.

CM.478 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28th October 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CM.479 CALL INS

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

CM.480 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CM.481 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made the following announcements:

(i) Bewdley Tourist Information Centre

Bewdley Tourist Information Centre had been held in high regard by its visitors with 86% proclaiming the service provided as 'excellent.'

(ii) Suspected Outbreak of Cryptosporidiosis

On the 19th November 2004 a warning had been received from the Health Protection Agency of a suspected outbreak of cryptosporidiosis. This was an infection that caused diarrhoea and it had been linked to Franche First School's swimming pool. Eight pupils had been affected.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer, together with the Primary Care Trust and Health Protection Agency undertook steps to stop the spread of the disease. All public and community pools in the district had water samples taken for analysis.

On the 24th November 2004 the pool at Franche Road was declared fit to reopen. It was noted that 12 cases of cryptosporidiosis had been confirmed in Wyre Forest area and it was anticipated that the outbreak would be declared over in the next 2 weeks.

(iii) Changes by Central Trains to the Snow Hill Line Timetable

The Cabinet welcomed important changes made by Central Trains to the Snow Hill line timetable from the 12th December 2004. At peak times Kidderminster passengers would have additional trains running every 10 minutes between Kidderminster and Birmingham Snow Hill.

(iv) Bewdley Park and Ride Scheme

As from Saturday 27th November 2004 the Bewdley Park and Ride Scheme would commence. This was a joint project that had been organised by the District Council, the Environment Agency and Opportunity Bewdley. A shuttle bus would run every 10 minutes between Bewdley High School and the town centre. The cost for using the service was £1.

(v) Outdoor Market

The Leader was pleased to announce that the outdoor market in Kidderminster had been relocated in Vicar Street from Worcester Street. The market had reopened in its new venue that morning and had been very successful.

(vi) **Laptops for Members**

All 42 Members of the Council had received laptops for their Council work. Eleven members required home visits to arrange connection to the internet.

(vii) **Birthday Wishes**

The Leader wished Councillor Mrs F M Oborski a very happy birthday.

CM.482 SALE OF THE FORMER MORTUARY BUILDING, WORCESTER ROAD, STOURPORT

A report was considered from the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services that sought Cabinet approval for the disposal of the Old Mortuary Building, Worcester Road, Stourport-on-Severn.

The building had been used as a store for archive materials but was now empty and had become surplus to requirements.

DECISION:

That the former Old Mortuary building, Worcester Road, Stourport-on-Severn, be declared surplus to requirements and sold on terms to be agreed.

CM.483 ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2004 - 2006

A report was considered from the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services that sought approval of the 2004-2006 Asset Management Plan.

It was noted that the Asset Management Plan had been considered by the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel and that the Government Office West Midlands had rated the Plan as 'good'.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- 1. The 2004-2006 Asset Management Plan be approved.**
 - 2. The action taken by the Head of Cultural, Leisure & Commercial Services under the Scheme of Delegation be noted.**
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CM.484 HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS DEBT POSITION AS AT 30TH SEPTEMBER 2004

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that informed Members of the Housing Benefit Overpayment Debt position as at 30th September 2004.

It was noted that the figures related to rental payments and did not include Council Tax benefit. Although the amounts outstanding had increased slightly, an extra member of staff had been taken on to pursue these debts. The amount of overpayment equated to 3% of the £15 million paid out in benefits by the Finance Department.

DECISION:

The Benefits Overpayment Debt level, age of debt and performance against targets as at the 30th September 2004 be noted.

CM.485 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that reported on the Freedom of Information Policy that set out the context in which the Council would comply with its statutory requirements under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The Freedom of Information Policy, as referred to in the report, be adopted.

CM.486 SEX SHOP LICENSING POLICY

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that recommended a draft Sex Shop Licensing Policy be adopted by the Council.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

The Sex Shop Licensing Policy, as referred to in the report, be adopted.

CM.487 STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that recommended to Council that the Statement of Licensing Policy for the Wyre Forest District be adopted.

The Head of Planning, Health and Environment informed Members that as part of the Licensing Act 2003 the Council was required to prepare and publish a statement of its Licensing Policy. Consultations had been ongoing during the past 3 months on the draft policy which had been agreed by Council. It was necessary to have the final policy in place by February 2005 as this was when the Council would be required to consider licensing applications.

Members commented on the excellent training they had received but were disappointed how few members of the Licensing Committee were present. It was felt that this placed an onerous duty on those members of the Licensing Committee who had completed the necessary training. However it was recognised that further training would be made available. Members asked about the scale of charges that were proposed. It was noted that the proposed charges had recently been received for consultation and the Leader agreed to pass these on to Members.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- 1. The Statement of Licensing Policy for the Wyre Forest District, as detailed in the report, be approved.**
- 2. The Leader send all Members a letter attaching the Government's suggested charges for licensing matters that had been circulated to Councils for consultation.**

CM.488 IMPLEMENTING THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC HOUSING PRIORITIES

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that proposed improvements to the Council's funding arrangements for housing by integrating different funding streams into a single housing capital pot and providing a longer term commitment to meeting the Council's strategic housing objectives. The report also highlighted significant changes to the Council's private sector housing role and the need to develop new policies and actions in light of the changes. It was also proposed to appoint a private sector housing initiatives officer to carry forward this work.

DECISION:

- 1. The strategic proposals, as detailed in the report, for developing the Council's Private Sector Housing responsibilities be agreed.**
- 2. The principle of developing a Single Housing Capital Pot be agreed.**
- 3. The proposed Single Housing Capital Pot and the Private Sector Housing Initiatives Officer be put forward as Service Options for 2005/06.**

CM.489 REVIEW OF JOINT STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES, HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND HEAD OF PLANNING, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT RELATING TO AWARD OF COSTS IN PLANNING APPEALS

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that advised Members of changes to the Joint Statement. It clarified the procedure to be followed if a refusal of planning permission by the Planning (Development Control) Committee was likely to result in an award of costs against the Council.

The report recommended changes to the existing protocol. It would enable officers to negotiate with those persons seeking costs to see if it was possible to modify their plans and thus receive subsequent approval.

DECISION:

- 1. The revised Joint Statement by the Head of Financial Services, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Head of Planning, Health and Environment, as referred to in the report, relating to Award of Costs in Planning Appeals, be agreed.**
- 2. The revised Joint Statement be adopted.**

CM.490 THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING CONFORMITY PROTOCOL

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that recommended to Council that the West Midlands Regional Assembly Development Planning Control Conformity Protocol be adopted.

Members noted that, to ensure consistency across the West Midlands Region, a Regional Spatial Strategy Conformity Protocol had been drawn up between the West Midlands Regional Assembly (the regional planning body) and the Strategic and Local Planning Authorities of the West Midlands Region. All County and District Local Planning Authorities across the West Midlands Region were being invited to sign up to the protocol.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

The West Midlands Regional Assembly Development Planning Conformity Protocol, as referred to in the report, be adopted.

CM.491 DECISIONS MADE BY AN INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

No decisions had been made by any individual Cabinet Members.

CM.492 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL 28TH SEPTEMBER 2004

Grants to Voluntary Bodies

The Chairman of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel attended for this item. He commented that whilst the amount of money available for grants to voluntary bodies was small, a contingency sum should be made available to provide 'pump priming' funding for small voluntary organisations.

DECISION:

Consideration be given to including a contingency sum of £1,000 within the Grants Budget at the earliest opportunity for “pump priming” grants to voluntary organisations.

CM.493 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC REGENERATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL 3RD NOVEMBER 2004

Lorry Parking

The Chairman of the Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel was in attendance for this item. She commented that the former Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Environment & Economic Regeneration) had not been successful last year in securing a service option to convert the former Toc H building into a shower and toilet for lorry drivers. She therefore wished the Cabinet to reconsider this in this year's budget process.

She also commented on the concerns of residents about the amount of lorries that were parking at night in inappropriate places (eg. Baggeridge Brick, Humphries Drive, Harvington and other areas of Wyre Forest). She had asked the Scrutiny Officer to contact the Highways Partnership Unit and ask that a letter be sent out on lorry restrictions by weight limits in the areas affected. However the Chairman was dissatisfied with the unsatisfactory response that had been received from the Highways Partnership Unit and it was therefore her intention to forward that response to the Cabinet. The activities of the Highways Partnership Unit were now being scrutinised by a Task and Finish Group set up by her Panel. She felt that it would be useful if the Cabinet would ask the County Council to be active in restricting the inappropriate parking of lorries.

The Chairman referred to the inadequate signposting for lorry parking. It was apparent that the sign posts for a lorry park were only permissible one junction before a lorry park and one junction after it. Therefore in the case of the A449 and A456 there were no appropriate signs for lorry drivers to see. The Leader stated that he would take this matter up at the Leader's Group at the County Council.

Stourport Relief Road

The Chairman of the Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel commented that she had attended a meeting at Worcestershire County Council and was aware that due to various issues around government funding it had now become apparent that they would not be progressing with the proposal for a Stourport Relief Road. However there was some possibility of elements of the proposal being achieved through Section 106 agreements. It was noted that the proposed new Stourport bridge could not be funded through such agreements and this was the vital part of the proposal.

DECISION:

- 1. A Service Option be again considered to convert the former Toc H building into a shower and toilet, operating on a key system similar to the RADAR system.**
- 2. The need for lorry parking restriction, if necessary by use of weight limits, in Humphries Drive, Kidderminster and other specified areas be raised once again with the Highways Partnership Unit.**
- 3. Support be given to a cross party petition for Stourport-on-Severn to be given a relief road. Such petition to be sent direct to the Government.**

PART 2

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

CM.494 SUMMARY OF MINUTES

The following matters were considered after the press and public had been excluded from the meeting:-

Exempt Minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 28th October 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

Lease of Land Rear of 10 to 14 Church Street, Kidderminster

A report was considered from the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services that sought Cabinet approval to grant a new lease of car parking spaces.

Provision of Arts Facilities - Kidderminster Town Hall

A report was considered from the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services that informed Members of three studies carried out on the possible conversion of Kidderminster Town Hall into an Arts Centre and sought in principle, approval of the scheme.

The meeting ended at 6.52 pm.,