

Wyre Forest District Council
CABINET
Thursday 13TH January 2005

PRESENT : 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.

CM.633 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CM.634 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

CM.635 MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 16th December 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

CM.636 CALL INS

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

CM.637 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CM.638 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made the following announcements:-

(i) Thanks to Wyre Forest Community Housing

The Leader thanked Wyre Forest Community Housing for hosting the meeting.

(ii) Housing Presentation

A presentation on the work of Wyre Forest Community Housing will be held for all Members on Thursday 27th January 2005 at 6 pm in the Board Room at Wyre Forest Community Housing.

(iii) Application for Town Council Status

The Secretary of State had rejected an application by Kidderminster Charter Trustees for Town Council Status. This was the third time that a bid for Town

Council status by Kidderminster Charter Trustees had been rejected.

(iv) **ISO9001**

The Building Control Section of Wyre Forest District Council were congratulated by the Cabinet on attaining a quality award - ISO900. It was noted that this was a similar award to the Investors in People Award.

CM.639 PETITION - SUTTON PARK FIRST SCHOOL, KIDDERMINSTER

A Petition from the parents and staff of Sutton Park First School that had been referred from Council on the 8th December 2005 (Council minute number CM.533 refers) was considered. The Petition asked for support for a barrier to be erected across the school drive to prevent vehicular access during the start and end of the school day as it was felt that this would enhance the safety of pupils and staff.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial Services commented that as soon as he had received the Petition he had held a meeting with Officers of Worcestershire County Council and Wyre Forest District Council. At that meeting agreement had been reached that the County Council would install gates that would be locked for short periods at the commencement and end of the school day. This would ensure the safety of pupils and staff. The Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services would be asked to reflect these arrangements in allotment agreements on the adjacent allotment site to the school.

DECISION : 1. It be noted that the County Council has agreed to install gates at Sutton Park First School, Kidderminster which would be locked for short periods at the commencement and end of the school day to ensure the safety of pupils.

2. The Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Portfolio Holder for Community and Leisure Services, be authorised to reflect the new safety arrangements regarding the locking of gates in future allotment agreements for the adjacent allotment site.

CM.640 THE ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER (2003/04)

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that outlined the contents of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter that had been produced jointly by the Audit Commission Relationship Manager and External Auditor.

DECISION:

1. That the contents of the Annual Audit Inspection Letter, (placed in all Group Rooms) be noted;

2. That regular progress reports be given on implementation of the recommendations set out on pages 19 and 20 of the Annual Audit Inspection Letter (attached as an Appendix to the report).

CM.641 REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET/COUNCIL TAX LEVY

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Affairs commented on the report that was circulated around the table that outlined the Cabinet's proposed Revenue and Capital Budget/Council Tax Levy. He outlined some of the proposals contained in the report:-

- He commented that the increase in Council tax was in line with inflation.
- Bewdley Museum and the Stourport Community Centre had been reincluded into the base budget to ensure their long term future.
- The Base Budget gave a long term view of finances and included the need to seek external funding to help the Museum to be a shining star in this area.
- Refurbishment of the Rowland Hill Shopping Centre was proposed.
- Additional funding for 3 more cleansing staff was proposed for the summer months.
- The Cabinet wished to support and provide activities to encourage young people off street corners and would be providing funding for the Fun Box across the District and rural areas;
- They supported the White Wickets Changing Facilities.
- Support would also be given to the Parishes in the form of a £600 grant for the upkeep of graveyards and churches.
- Support was also recommended for:
 - the work on the Stourport on Severn Basin
 - the Shopping Centre Project
 - a Single Site for the Council
 - Tourism and Business Promotional Activities
 - Wyre Forest Bus Quality Partnership
 - Electronic working within the authority to streamline how the Council works
 - Funding of approximately £2 ½ million to enable social housing to be built
 - Funding to continue grants to voluntary bodies

The fact that planning approval had been granted for a cinema was also warmly welcomed by the Cabinet.

BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL :

1. COUNCIL TAX LEVY 2005/2006

A Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property be £174.66 for 2005/2006 (£168.04 2004/2005) an increase of 3.94% (£6.62 over 2004/2005).

2. THREE YEAR BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2005/2008

(*Page references relate to the pink book of budget reports 2005/2006 circulated with the Cabinet Agenda of 25th November 2004.)

2.1 The contents of the reports of the Head of Financial Services on the Three Year Budget and Policy Framework 2005/2008 and Base Budget Variations (*pages 1-38) be endorsed and the Revised General Fund Budget for 2004/2005 be approved.

2.2 The following General Fund Revenue Budget be approved, including Expenditure and Income Service Options identified in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report circulated at this meeting:-

	Revised 2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
2007/08			
	£	£	£
£			
Net Expenditure on Services (per paragraph 4.1, of the Budget & Policy Framework Report Page 3)	11,886,610	12,445,840	13,210,590
13,826,510			
<u>Less</u>			
Capitalisation of Revenue Expenditure as per paragraph 10 of Budget & Policy Framework Report Page 7)		266,000	
Income Service Options identified in Appendix 2 of the report	<u>-</u>	<u>80,910</u>	<u>100,490</u>
<u>100,490</u>			
circulated at the meeting (attached)	11,886,610	12,098,930	13,110,100
13,726,020			
<u>Add</u>			
Expenditure Service Options identified in Appendix 1 of the report		459,500	371,410
530,060			
circulated at the meeting			
<u>Less</u>			
Use of Reserves	<u>546,320</u>	<u>476,450</u>	<u>960,790</u>
<u>1,266,960</u>			
Net Expenditure	11,340,290	12,081,980	12,520,720
12,989,120			
<u>Less</u>			
Business Rate, Government Grant and Collection Fund Surplus (the Budget & Policy Framework Report Page 3)	<u>5,656,510</u>	<u>6,125,200</u>	<u>6,266,200</u>
<u>6,421,860</u>			

Council Tax Levy	<u>5,683,780</u>	<u>5,956,780</u>	<u>6,254,520</u>
<u>6,567,260</u>			

Wyre Forest District Council Tax Level assuming 3.94% increase for 2005/06 and 5% 2006/07 onwards	£168.04	£174.66	£183.39
£192.56			

The Council:

- 2.3 **PROMOTE** efficiencies within the Council through organisational change in accordance with 'Gershon' principles, including the completion of an annual efficiency statement to enable the Council to divert funding to front line services and away from bureaucracy, together with the need in future years to maintain a balanced and sustainable budget.
- 2.4 **REAFFIRM** its policy relating to Working Balances, Reserves and Provisions and note the amount of Reserves and Provisions available for use in the Budget process. (*pages 22-23)
- 2.5 **REAFFIRM** the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (*pages 24-30)
- 2.6 **APPROVE** the Capitalisation of revenue expenditure identified in paragraph 10.2 of the Budget Strategy Report (*page 7) in order to generate additional revenue resources in 2005/2006. This has been accounted for by means of a Capital Service Option.
- 2.7 **RESTORE** its participation at future Local Government Association Annual Conferences.
3. **COUNCIL TAX BASE** (*pages 39-43)
 - 3.1 **APPROVE** 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 **CONTINUE** Council Tax discounts for Second Homes and Long Term Empty Properties at 25% for 2005/2006 onwards.
4. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/2006 ONWARDS** (*pages 44-60)
 - 4.1 **APPROVE** the Base Capital Programme and Vehicles and Equipment Renewal Schedule.
 - 4.2 **NOTE** the availability of the unallocated Capital Receipts and the ability to use Prudential Borrowing for new Capital Service Options.
 - 4.3 **APPROVE** Capital Service Options and associated funding as identified in the schedule of proposed Expenditure Service Options, identified in Appendix 1 of the report circulated at the meeting.

4.4 **REAFFIRM** the Council's Capital Strategy.

4.5 **CONTINUE TO DELEGATE AUTHORITY** 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 the anticipated life of vehicles 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 within the pink budget book.

5.2 **APPROVE** the Treasury Management Strategy 2005/2006 within Sections 7-11 and associated Prudential Indicators within Section 12 of the Report within the pink budget book.

5.3 **REVISE** 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)

6.1 **APPROVE** Expenditure Service Options and associated funding as identified in Appendix 1 (attached).

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

7.1 **APPROVE** Income Service Options and associated fees and charges as identified in Appendix 2 (attached).

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 contained in the pink budget book and **NOTE AND ENDORSE** the Budgetary Response to identified risks as detailed on the Budget Risk Matrix at Appendix 1 of the Report contained in the pink budget book.

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

9. **ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES 2005/2006**

9.1 APPROVE the following Annual Improvement Priorities for 2005/2006 :-

- 1. Financial Accountability**
- 2. Environment and Economic Regeneration**
- 3. Worcestershire Hub**
- 4. Single Site**
- 5. Cinema**

(Appendix 3 attached sets these in the context of national, regional and countywide priorities.

Appendix 4 (attached).

DECISION:

CONSULTATION AND SCRUTINY

The Cabinet:

1. REAFFIRM the Consultation Strategy agreed by the Cabinet on the 16th December 2004:-

- **Media Release - including inviting members of the public to attend the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel on 3rd February 2005 to give their views.**
- **Web Site.**
- **Staff Bulletin.**
- **Business Ratepayer Statutory Consultation.**
- **Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel.**

2. AGREE that proposals contained in Recommendations 1 to 9 above be subject to consultation as agreed in Decision 1 above and scrutiny by the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel and its Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

3. NOTE that the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel will not make recommendations until it has received the Cabinet's Budget and Policy Strategy and the outcome of the deliberations of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

4. AGREE that further consideration of the Budget Strategy proposals be made at the Cabinet on 17th February 2005 following feedback from the Consultation and Scrutiny exercise.

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that outlined the proposed arrangements for the Council to enter into direct residential leasing with private landlords to provide temporary accommodation for homeless applicants.

It was noted that the Council, as part of its housing function, had a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to provide suitable temporary accommodation to homeless applicants.

DECISION:

- 1. That the Head of Planning, Health and Environment, in consultation with the Heads of Financial Services, Legal and Democratic Services and Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services, finalises the working arrangements necessary to implement a Private Sector Housing Leasing scheme as required during 2005/06 on an 12 month trial period.**
- 2. That the cost of operating a Private Sector Housing Leasing scheme be contained within the relevant Planning Health and Environment base budgets.**
- 3. That a report on the outcomes of implementing any Private sector Housing Leasing scheme is made to the appropriate committee on completion of a trial period.**

CM.643 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS DISTRICTS (BIDS)

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that advised on the development of Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) which was a Government initiative. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration commented that Business Improvement Districts had been tried out in several authorities in the United Kingdom over the last 12 - 18 months. It was noted that Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) were a North American initiative designed to raise revenue from the private sector in defined geographical areas, to pay for additional services in those areas which could not be financed and provided as public services. The Sandy Lane Business Association was formed to address problems facing the estate and it had expressed an interest in working with the District Council and others to look at the possibility of working up a BID (Business Improvement District) for the estate.

Wyre Forest District Council would be one of the first authorities to explore the possibility of setting up a Business Improvement District (BID) with a Business Association. It would be an industrial development and it had been discovered that it might lead to some additional funding being available.

DECISION:

The developments of the Business Improvement District Initiative be noted and authorisation be given to the Economic Development and Tourism Manager to work with Sandy Lane Business Association,

Stourport-on-Severn, to develop a pilot BID Scheme in partnership with the District Council.

CM.644 WORCESTERSHIRE CREDIT UNION

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that advised the Cabinet of the formation of a Worcestershire Credit Union. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration commented that other North Worcestershire Districts had also set up Credit Unions and he felt it was advisable that one should be set up in Wyre Forest. The District Council and Wyre Forest Community Housing had been approached to assist with funding to launch a Credit Union in the Wyre Forest district. It was noted that Credit Unions were financial co-operatives owned and controlled by their members and regulated by the Financial Services Authority. The key concept behind Credit Unions was to encourage people to be responsible with their money. It enabled people with limited resources to borrow money at a low rate of interest.

DECISION:

- 1. To note the formation of the Worcestershire Credit Union and**
- 2. To note the Service Option for 2005/06 following a request from the Wyre Forest District group being set up locally to support the new organisation, to contribute towards its development.**

CM.645 BID TO ENGLISH HERITAGE FOR A PARTNERSHIP IN CONSERVATION AREAS SCHEME FOR STOURPORT ON SEVERN

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that informed Members of a proposed two-stage bid to English Heritage for funding under a Partnership in Conservation Areas Scheme for Stourport-on-Severn.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration commented that Conservation Areas were designated by local authorities under the Planning (Listed and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and comprised areas of special architectural and/or historic interest - the character and appearance of which it was desirable to preserve or enhance.

Members noted that Market Town Status had already been achieved in Stourport-on-Severn and British Waterways had recently submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery under the Capital Programme Bid grant regime for works to be undertaken to the Canal Basins and surrounding buildings in their ownership. A bid was now suggested in two stages to English Heritage for funding under the Partnership in Conservation Area Scheme for Stourport-on-Severn. The proposed partnership scheme would be focused on Bridge Street, New Street and part of York Street.

DECISION:

- 1. That Cabinet agree to the submission of a two-stage bid to English Heritage for funding under the Partnership In Conservation Area Scheme**

for Stourport-on-Severn and authorise the Head of Planning, Health and Environment to undertake the bid preparation and submission;

2. That Cabinet agree the carry over of the £40,000, already in the capital programme for conservation works to 2006/07 to act as match-funding for the first year of the Partnership Scheme.
3. That Cabinet consider a service option for years 2007/08 and 2008/09 for £30,000 per annum to match fund years two and three of the bid.

CM.646 REPRESENTATIONS ON ADJACENT AUTHORITY LOCAL PLAN AND UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROPOSALS

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that sought approval to the submission of representations on the Malvern Hills District Local Plan - second deposit and the Dudley Unitary Development Plan - proposed modifications.

DECISION:

1. That the Cabinet agrees the submission of supporting representations on the Malvern Hills District Local Plan and the Dudley Unitary Development Plan, as outlined in this report.
2. That the Cabinet agree to delegate to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration, and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs, as appropriate, the power to respond to other Planning Authority Development Plan consultations and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister consultations where such responses are in accordance with Council policy.

CM.647 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANELS

It was not possible to consider the recommendations from the Commercial and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel meeting held on the 6th January 2005 as the Chairman was not present to inform Cabinet of the recommendations concerning Community/Street Wardens. It was therefore recommended that the Chairman of the Commercial and Leisure Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel be asked to attend the February meeting of Cabinet to explain the recommendations.

CM.648 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC:

DECISION

"That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "exempt information" as defined in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CM.649 SUMMARY OF MINUTES

The following proceedings were considered after the press and public had been excluded from the meeting. A summary of the minutes relating to these items have been made as “exempt information” would be disclosed if the minutes were published in full.

Minutes

The Exempt Minutes of the Cabinet held on 16th December were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

Remedial Work to the Retaining Wall Adjacent to St. Mary's Church, Kidderminster

A report was considered from the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services regarding the need to carry out urgent remedial works to the retaining wall adjacent to St. Mary's Church, Kidderminster. The Cabinet agreed to carry out these arrangements.

National Land Information Services (NLIS) Hub - Land Charges Searches

A report was considered from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding pricing for local Land Charges Searches. The new structure was agreed.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.,