

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,
KIDDERMINSTER
16TH FEBRUARY 2006 (6PM)

PRESENT:

Councillors: S J M Clee (Chairman), J-P Campion, N J Desmond, J W Dudley and Mrs A T Hingley.

OBSERVERS:

Councillors: G W Ballinger, C D Nicholls, Mrs J L Salter, J A Shaw, and K J Stokes.

CAB.193 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M J Hart (Vice-Chairman).

CAB.194 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S J M Clee declared a personal interest in agenda item number 7.4. relating to Acquisition of Wooded Land at QEII Gardens, Bewdley, as he is the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Affairs at County Hall.

CAB.195 MINUTES

DECISION:

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 26th January 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.196 CALL INS

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

CAB.197 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.198 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

CAB.199 LYONS INQUIRY - CONSULTATION PAPER AND INTERIM REPORT

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that informed Members of a consultation document issued by the Lyons Inquiry into the role, functions and funding of local government.

The Leader commented that a Group Leaders' meeting would be held at the end of February 2006 where a response would be considered for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

DECISION:

- 1. The contents of the Lyons consultation paper and interim reports be noted.**
- 2. Future developments with the Inquiry be reported to Members.**

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

A response agreed by Group Leaders be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by 13th March 2006.

CAB.200 SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that outlined the key issues of the recent 'Local Strategic Partnerships - Shaping Their Future' consultation paper from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. A response to the consultation was required by the 3rd March 2006.

Suggested responses had been included in the report. However the Leader commented that if any Member disagreed with these, they were at liberty to send in their own individual response.

DECISION:

- 1. The comment on the contents of the consultation paper 'Local Strategic Partnership LSPs - Shaping the Future' as outlined in the report be noted.**

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- 2. That the suggested response in Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as the Council's response to the consultation "Local Strategic Partnership: Shaping Their Future".**

CAB.201 FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2006/07 - 2008/09

Further to minute number CAB.173 of its 22nd December 2005 meeting, the Cabinet considered a report from the Head of Financial Services that outlined the Cabinet's proposed Budget and Policy Framework 2006 - 2009 and included some proposed amendments.

A report outlining the recommendations of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel from its meeting held on 31st January 2006 was considered in conjunction with the above report.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs commented that the revised paper had taken into account the wishes of some of the other political parties. He considered the proposals to be very measurable and straightforward in approach.

Recommendations from the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel, 31st January 2006

A report was considered that outlined the recommendations of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel from its meeting on the 31st January 2006 regarding the Cabinet's proposed Budget and Policy Framework Strategy 2006/2009.

The Chairman of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel presented the Panel's recommendations. He commented that the Panel had looked at the proposals in some detail and had generally been very content with the proposed package. The Panel was aware that a larger than anticipated settlement had been received from the Government which was good news.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- 1. The amended Budget and Policy Framework Strategy 2006 - 2009, as contained in the report to Cabinet, be agreed.**
- 2. The recommendations of the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel on the Budget and Framework Strategy from its meeting held on 31st January 2006 be included in the Cabinet's proposed Budget and Policy Framework Strategy 2006 - 2009.**

CAB.202 CONSULTATION ON THE CABINET'S BUDGET PROPOSALS 2006 - 2009

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that reported on the outcome of the budget consultation exercise. The consultation had been carried out in accordance with guidance issued by the Deputy Prime Minister.

The outcome of the consultation was that no representations had been received either in writing or electronically. However the Council's Website had received 32 individual hits.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs had made a presentation on the Cabinet's Budget Policy and Framework Strategy 2006-2009 at the 26th January 2006 Cabinet Meeting. Four members of the general public had attended the meeting and no questions had been raised following the presentation.

DECISION:

The report be noted.

CAB.203 REPORT ON THE FINAL DETERMINATION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT FOR 2006/2008

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services on the Final Determination of Wyre Forest's Finance Settlement from the Government for 2006/2008.

He advised that the settlement largely confirmed the proposals set out in the provisional settlement as identified by the Head of Financial Services report to Cabinet on the 22nd December 2005. There was an increase of £5,260 in Government Grant for 2006/2007 and a provisional increase of £17,460 for 2007/08 over that previously announced.

The effect for Wyre Forest was similar to that proposed in December 2005 and varied slightly due to the updating of data used in the calculations.

DECISION:

The results of the Final Determination of Wyre Forest's Finance Settlement be incorporated into the Council's Budget Strategy and resultant Council Tax Levy for 2006/07.

CAB.204 THE PRUDENTIAL SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE AND THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY REPORT 2006/2007

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that provided Members with background information on the Prudential Code for Capital Finance and sought approval for the Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial year 2006/2007. Approval was also sought for the Council's Treasury Management and investment Policy and Strategy for the financial year 2006/2007.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- 1. The updated Prudential Indicators and limits, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**

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2. **Approval be given to the updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy 2006/07 and associated Prudential Indicators, as set out in the Appendices to the report to Cabinet.**

DECISION:

The Prudential Indicators be revisited following the approval of the Council's Budget Strategy as the indicators are based on current recommendations.

CAB.205 BUDGET MONITORING

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services on the monitoring of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003 and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) guidelines.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs commented that it was a legal requirement to make reports of this nature. However he was pleased to announce that there were no problem areas which needed to be drawn to the attention of the Cabinet.

DECISION:

1. **The projected budget variations and comments outlined within the report to the Cabinet be noted.**
2. **Heads of Service continue to monitor closely the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme.**
3. **The Head of Financial Services submit future reports to the Cabinet on a quarterly basis.**
4. **It be noted that the Revised Prudential Indicators 2006/2009 have been considered as part of the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Report 2006/2007.**
5. **The revised Budget Risk Management Matrix at Appendix 4 of the report to the Cabinet be noted.**

CAB.206 VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION OF TITLE TO ALL COUNCIL LAND AND BUILDINGS AT LAND REGISTRY

A report was considered from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that advised the Cabinet of the intention to voluntarily register the Council's land and property portfolio with the Land Registry and seek delegated authority for its officers to agree minor adjustments to the boundaries of Council owned land should it prove necessary.

As the majority of the Council's land and property was not registered at the Land Registry, and as the Council's Deeds were mostly large bundles of very old Deeds, which contained very old and damaged plans, they were almost or completely illegible. In order to comply with e-conveyancing and the wholesale compulsory registration of land, the Land Registry was offering assistance to Councils. It was prepared to place staff in the Council's offices to help assemble title Deeds and prepare the Land Registry applications for registration with assistance from Legal and Terrier staff.

The Council would save revenue expenditure under this project. Whereas it would normally cost £165 to register a large parcel of land, under the reduced registration fee service it would cost approximately £7.50.

DECISION:

1. **The Head of Legal and Democratic Services be asked to undertake the voluntary registration of all land in the Council's ownership, the project to commence in April 2006.**
2. **Authority be delegated to the head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs and the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services to authorise minor adjustments to boundaries which would either decrease or increase the Council's land holdings as necessary.**
3. **Any major discrepancies in the boundaries which may result in the loss of a substantial portion of land, or will affect the Council undertaking their current activities), be reported to Cabinet. Any discrepancy involving land in excess of 150 sq. metres be regarded as a major discrepancy.**

CAB.207 ACQUISITION OF WOODED LAND AT QEII GARDENS, BEWDLEY

A report was considered from the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services that sought the approval of Cabinet to acquire land at the QEII Gardens in Bewdley, and, if necessary, to dispose land at Bone Mill Quarry, Stourport-on-Severn.

It had long been a desire of Wyre Forest District Council to acquire the wooded area of land adjacent to QEII Gardens. The land was currently fenced off as it was unsafe and it had been inaccessible to local people for many years.

It was proposed to acquire the land as Urban Open Space and incorporate it into the QEII Gardens. It was therefore suggested that a land swap take place. This would entail Wyre Forest District Council receiving land at QEII Gardens in return for the County Council receiving land at Bone Mill Quarry, Stourport, so that it could extend the household waste transfer site.

DECISION:

- 1. The Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to agree terms on a freehold basis or on a long leasehold basis with Worcestershire County Council to acquire land at QE II Gardens as shown on Plan 1 of the report to the Cabinet.**
- 2. If the freehold land swap option be considered the most advantageous option then the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services be authorised to agree that the land shown hatched on Plan 2 of the report to the Cabinet be disposed of to the County Council for the improvement of its household waste transfer site.**
- 3. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services be given delegated authority to complete the transaction, by which the District Council acquire either the freehold or take a long leasehold interest in land at QEII Gardens in Bewdley as shown on Plan 1 in the report to the Cabinet and, if necessary, dispose of land at Bone Mill Quarry, Stourport-on-Severn as shown on Plan 2 in the report to Cabinet.**

CAB.208 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that informed Members of the process by which the Council's Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan had been updated and sought approval to publish the finalised documents.

The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on Local Housing Authorities to produce Homelessness Strategies based upon a review of local circumstances. In particular there was a need to focus on homelessness prevention.

Since the Council had published its Homelessness Strategy in July 2003 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister(ODPM) had issued guidance, research and best practice which Local Authorities were required to follow. More recently the Head of the ODPM's Homelessness Directorate had written to all Local Authorities urging them to review their Homelessness Strategies.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs informed that Cabinet that officers worked closely with Wyre Forest Homelessness Forum. The Council had also funded a range of initiatives to prevent homelessness and these included, Wyre Forest Nightstop, Wyre Forest Community Housing Rent Deposit Scheme, Citizen's Advice Bureau debt counselling and support for Womens' Aid.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The revised Wyre Forest District Council Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003-2008, as referred to in the report to the Cabinet, be adopted.

CAB.209 ENSURING A PATIENT-LED NHS - CONSULTATIONS

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment giving details of three consultation papers under the heading 'Ensuring a Patient-Led NHS.'

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that the Government was keen to change the way services were commissioned by front-line staff in the NHS and had placed greater emphasis on patient choice. The three consultations concerned changes to the geographical boundaries for the Strategic Health Authority (SHA), the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and the Ambulance Service. The changes that had been proposed would be the defining factor in determining whether the NHS could sustain continued improvements towards its fundamental aim of delivering a better, more responsive Health Service, that gave people the control and choice they had a right to expect as patients and tax payers.

The Chairman of the Housing, Health and Rural Affairs Panel was in attendance to present the recommendations of his Panel that had been made in response to the 3 consultations at its meeting on 24th January 2006.

With regard to Ambulance Trusts, he commented that the Panel felt that as long as the current services were maintained, especially the Ambulance Centre at Bransford, Nr Worcester, and existing Midlands Stations in the District, then no problem was seen with the proposed reconfiguration of services.

Similarly, with regard to Strategic Health Authority arrangements, having one large strategic Health Authority was very similar to the old West Midlands Regional Health Authority.

He commented that the recommendations the Panel had made with regard to Ambulance Trusts and the Strategic Health Authority were mirrored at a public meeting that had been held in the Town Hall, Kidderminster recently.

With regard to Primary Care Trusts, the Panel had more reservations. Primary Care Trusts had not been in existence very long. The Panel agreed with the Parliamentary Health Panel that Primary Care Trusts should be given the chance to continue to prove their worth. However the Chairman of the Panel conceded that this point had not been part of the consultation.

Out of the 4 options that were open for consideration in the consultation regarding Primary Care Trusts, Option 2 was considered to be the best for Worcestershire. This option allowed for 4 Primary Care Trusts. It would create Worcestershire and Warwickshire PCTs and leave Herefordshire PCT and Coventry PCT as at present. This would involve merging Wyre Forest PCT, Redditch and Bromsgrove and South Worcestershire PCTs and maintaining the existing arrangements in Herefordshire PCT.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs endorsed what the Housing, Health and Rural Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel had recommended. However she wished to add that the Council would like to ensure that the funding increases for Wyre Forest as planned for 2007/08 would continue. She also wished to make it clear that the consultations that had been considered had nothing to do with problems associated with the Worcestershire Acute Hospital Trust.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

1. **The proposal to reduce the 31 Ambulance Trusts in England to 11 larger, integrated Ambulance Trusts be supported, subject to:**
 - **The current level of local service provision being retained especially at Bransford.**
 - **Each local Ambulance Station in the District being retained.**
 - **The use of the drug Tenecteplase, previously only used by Hereford and Worcester ambulance crews, to assist with thrombolysis, be used by the integrated Ambulance Trusts.**

 2. (a) **The Council feels strongly that the status quo, namely Wyre Forest PCT be retained to provide stability for PCTs to develop.**
 - (b) **From the option presented in the consultation document, Option 2* namely Worcestershire PCT (see below), is considered to be the best as it is the closest to the current system, subject to the following reassurances:**
 - **That a local focus for the Wyre Forest District, which guarantees local service delivery and maintains relationships with Wyre Forest District Council for the delivery of Public Health Services be maintained.**
 - **That commitments to funding increases for 2007/08 be honoured.**

 3. **The creation of a single West Midlands Strategic Health Authority, combining the existing three Strategic Health Authorities in Birmingham and the Black Country, Shropshire and Staffordshire and West Midlands South be accepted.**
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**(Option 2 : four PCTs : create Worcestershire and Warwickshire PCTs and leave Herefordshire PCT and Coventry PCT as at present. This would involve merging Wyre Forest PCT, Redditch and Bromsgrove and South Worcestershire PCTs and maintaining the existing arrangements in Herefordshire PCT).*

CAB.210 RESPONSE TO ODPM CONSULTATION PAPER ON NEW PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 3 (PPS3) : HOUSING

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment on the details of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) paper on the new Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3).

PPS3 introduced important proposed changes in the approach to planning for housing. It had significant implications for the second stage of the partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), the work of the South Housing Market Area Partnership (SHMAP) and the delivery of the Council's core strategy and site allocation proposals through the Local Development Framework.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration commented that the draft proposals in PPS3 implied a single solution approach to all areas which did not recognise a variety of problems across the regions.

DECISION:

The proposed responses to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Consultation Paper on the new Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3), as set out in Appendix 1 to the report to the Cabinet, be agreed.

CAB.211 CONSULTATION DRAFT - WORCESTERSHIRE TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL GUIDE

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that informed the Cabinet of the publication of the Worcestershire County Council Consultation Draft Transportation and Development Control Guide and sought approval for the submission of representations.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration said that the consultation gave an opportunity to make representations on the County Council's proposed approach and drew attention to inconsistencies with the adopted policies of Wyre Forest District Council and emerging national good practice.

The Vice-Chairman of the Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel said that the Panel had considered the consultation at its meeting on the 8th February 2006. The Panel had scrutinised each section very carefully. Flaws had been identified in the document. The Panel was keen not to endorse Chapter 5, Section 6-7 and Chapters 12-15 as the Panel wished to recommend that the District Council would continue to use the adopted policy of the Wyre Forest District Design Quality when considering development proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration thanked the Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel for presenting her Panel's recommendations. The recommendations were agreed.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The summary of representations and further detailed comments set out in Appendix B of the report to the Cabinet be submitted to Worcestershire County Council as the District Council's response to the consultation exercise on the Draft Transportation and Development Control Guide.

CAB.212 BID TO HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND FOR A TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE (THI) 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 the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding under a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) for Stourport-on-Severn and sought approval to undertake the necessary work for this bid.

It was noted that a Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme would involve partnership working with the Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver a grant project over a five-year period, starting from April 2007, aimed at owners of buildings within the defined area (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet). The bidding process would be in two stages. The first would be submitted at the beginning of May 2006. The second, if Stage 1 were successful, by October 2006.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration commented that the project was similar to one that had been undertaken in Bewdley. The project there had made a big difference to the buildings in Load Street, High Street, Severn Side North and South.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- 1. Approval be given to the submission of a two-stage bid by the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding under a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) for Stourport-on-Severn, as detailed in the report to Cabinet and the Head of Planning, Health and Environment be authorised to undertake the bid preparation and submission.**

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2. **Approval be given to the slippage of £40,000, allocated to Conservation in the Capital Programme to 2007/08 to act as match funding for the Townscape Heritage Initiative.**

CAB.213 KIDDERMINSTER TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP - TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT BUSINESS PLAN

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that advised Members of Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership's proposals to establish and fund a Town Centre Manager.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Economic Regeneration reminded the Cabinet that Council had, at its meeting on 20th April 2005, approved the Kidderminster Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy. Two of the aims of the Strategy were to appoint a Town Centre Manager and work up proposals to create a Business Improvement District. It was considered that a Town Centre Manager would be a focal point and provide a much needed dedicated resource to co-ordinate the many and various businesses, groups, organisations, events, issues and needs of the town centre. This would enable Kidderminster to adapt itself to meet the retailing, commercial and leisure challenges of businesses, shoppers and visitors.

He pointed out that Kidderminster was still undergoing regeneration. There were still problems in Worcester Street and Blackwell Street and consideration needed to be given as to how to regenerate these streets.

DECISION:

1. **The Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership's Business Plan for establishing and funding a Town Centre Manager be endorsed and supported.**
2. **The associated District Council Officer support that will be required to deliver the Plan be noted.**

CAB.214 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM HOUSING, HEALTH AND RURAL AFFAIRS POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL, 24TH JANUARY 2006

The recommendations from the Housing, Health and Rural Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel were considered in tandem with agenda item number 8.2. and were agreed. (See minute number CAB.210).

CAB.215 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC REGENERATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL, 8TH FEBRUARY 2006

The recommendations from the Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel were considered in tandem with agenda item number 9.2. and were agreed. (See minute number CAB. 211).

CAB.216 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

DECISION

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 paragraph 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB.217 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 has been made as "exempt information" would be disclosed if the minutes were published in full.

Exempt Recommendations from Environment and Economic Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Panel 23rd November 2006

Re : 23-24 Bridge Street and Bridge Street Partnership Project

The recommendations were noted.

The meeting closed at 6.35 p.m.,