

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN**

**15TH NOVEMBER 2006 (6.00PM)**

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**PRESENT:**

Councillors: J W Dudley (Chairman), J C Simmonds (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, J Baker, G W Ballinger, J-P Campion, S J M Clee, N J Desmond, Mrs H E Dyke, P Dyke, Mrs L Edginton, G H Eeles, Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis, B T Glass, P B Harrison, M J Hart, Mrs P V Hayward, Mrs S M Hayward, M A W Hazlewood, Mrs A T Hingley, J Holden, Mrs L Hyde, W G Jones, M B Kelly, Mrs R L Lewis, H J Martin, C D Nicholls, Mrs F M Oborski, M M G Oborski, Mrs J L Salter, M A Salter, J A Shaw, M J Shellie, D R Sheppard, K J Stokes, N J Thomas, S J Williams, G C Yarranton.

**C. 68 PRAYERS**

Prayers were said by the Reverend Hugh Burton, Saint George's Parish Team, Kidderminster.

**C. 69 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Mrs M H Baillie, Miss M A Mason, Miss S C Meekings and R Wheway and Honorary Alderman Councillor Mrs G E Mills.

**C. 70 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

**Agenda Item No 9b – Recommendation from the Cabinet – 26th October 2006 regarding the Public Realm Design Guide, Stourport-on-Severn (Minute No. C.76(b)(iii) refers)**

Councillor J A Shaw declared a personal interest in view of being the Council's representative on Stourport Forward.

**Agenda Item No. 9d - Recommendation from the Efficiency Policy Panel – 8th November 2006, regarding the Business Case for Shared Services for Revenues and Benefits in Worcestershire (Minute No. C.76(b)(iii) refers)**

Councillor J Fairbrother-Millis declared a prejudicial interest in view of a relative by marriage being employed in the service.

Councillor Mrs L Hyde declared a personal interest in view of her husband

being Chairman of the Wyre Forest branch of UNISON.

Councillor W G Jones declared a personal interest in view of a niece by marriage working in the Revenues Section.

Councillor J C Simmonds declared a personal interest in view of a friend and a relative working in the service.

**Agenda Item No 10, Motion The Community Housing Group – Midlands Excellence Award and No. 14 - Worcestershire Local Area Agreement for Housing (Minute Nos. C.77 and C.80 refer)**

Councillors Mrs H E Dyke, Mrs L Hyde, Mrs F M Oborski, M J Shellie, J C Simmonds and S J Williams declared personal interests in view of being the Council's representatives on the Board of The Community Housing Group.

**Agenda Item No 18a, Recommendation from the Cabinet – 26th October 2006 regarding the Indoor Netball facility at Stourport Sports Club (Minute Nos. C.84(a) and C.86(a) refer.)**

Mr A Dickens, Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services declared an interest in view of being a Board Member of Stourport Sports Club.

**C. 71 MINUTES**

**DECISION:**

**The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006 and the extraordinary meeting held on 25th October 2006 be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.**

**C. 72 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public had given notice to speak in accordance with the Council's scheme for public participation at meetings of Full Council.

**C. 73 QUESTIONS**

The Council received a report setting out a range of questions from Councillors H J Martin, Mrs F M Oborski, M M G Oborski, J A Shaw, K J Stokes and N J Thomas, directed at the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members. The questions and answers are set out in full in Appendix 1 (attached).

**C. 74 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Council received a list of functions attended by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman since the Council's last meeting. The Chairman thanked

the Vice-Chairman for attending functions on his behalf whilst he was in hospital recently.

The Chairman made the following announcements:

**a) Hereford and Worcester Cadets' and Reserve Forces' Association**

He had missed the November 2006 meeting of the Hereford and Worcester Cadets' and Reserve Forces' Association as he had been given inaccurate information as to the meeting arrangements. This was very disappointing as he was the Council's appointed representative on this organisation.

He had brought a copy of the Association's booklet to be placed in the Members' Lounge for information. If Group Leaders would like a copy they should contact the Principal Committee Officer.

**b) Chairman's Carol Service**

The Chairman's carol service would be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2006 at 4pm. It would be a traditional service and mulled wine and mince pies would be served. All councillors were invited to attend.

**C. 75 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORT**

The Leader of the Council made no announcements on this occasion.

With the Leader's consent, Councillor M M G Oborski then addressed the meeting. He firstly apologised that he had been unable, due to ill health, to submit his report on scrutiny issues as Chairman of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee (Agenda Item 12). He then gave the Council an update on his state of health, as he was aware that there had been speculation about it recently.

**C. 76 POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK – MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE A DECISION BY COUNCIL**

**a) Recommendations from the Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006 –**

**i) Disability Equality Scheme 2006 - 2009**

The Council considered a recommendation from the Cabinet on the Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009.

The report of the Chief Executive at agenda item 12, entitled "Disability Equality Scheme – 2006/2009 – Consultation Feedback" was considered in conjunction with this recommendation. This provided feedback from the promoting disability equality event "Countdown to Disability Equality in Wyre Forest" held at Duke House Kidderminster on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2006.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs, who was the Council's Disability and Equality Champion, presented the recommendations. He advised that the adoption of these proposals, particularly, the appointment of an Equality and Diversity Officer would demonstrate the Council's commitment to this important issue. On behalf of the Council, he thanked Mark Lawley of Disability Action Wyre Forest, who was present at the meeting, for his assistance in shaping the proposals.

Members endorsed the recommendations. They also highlighted the benefits of a "joined up" approach by local authorities in the county and the need to support events arranged by other authorities and agencies in relation to disability. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs explained that officers had looked at ways of appointing an Equality and Diversity Officer jointly with neighbouring authorities, but it had not proved possible.

**DECISION:**

- 1. The Disability Equality Scheme and action plan, as detailed in the report to the Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006, be approved and published on the Council's website subject to the incorporation of appropriate points arising from consultation.**
- 2. An Equality and Diversity Officer be appointed to ensure the development and implementation of the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.**
- 3. The post be either for a two year fixed term, or permanent, and be funded in the current year from existing budgets and future funding be included as part of the 2007/08 budget process.**

**ii) Officers' Licensing Code of Good Practice**

The Council considered a recommendation from the Cabinet on the Officers' Licensing Code of Good Practice. This had originated from a recommendation of the Licensing and Environmental Committee at its 4<sup>th</sup> September 2006 meeting.

**DECISION:**

**The Officers' Licensing Code of Good Practice, as appended to the report to the Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006, be approved for use by officers when dealing with licensing issues.**

b) **Recommendation from the Cabinet – 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

i) **Local Government (Early Termination Of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England And Wales) Regulations 2006**

The Council considered a recommendation from the Cabinet on a revised policy relating to cases of early termination of employment on the grounds of either redundancy, or in the interests of the efficient exercise of the Council's functions.

**DECISION:**

**The change of Policy regarding Local Government (Early Termination of Employment)(Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006, as detailed in the report to the Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006, be adopted with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006, or as advised by Government Regulation.**

ii) **Street Trading Policy**

The Cabinet considered a recommendation from the Cabinet on the adoption of a Street Trading Policy. This had originated from a recommendation of the Licensing and Environmental Committee at its 16<sup>th</sup> October 2006 meeting.

**DECISION:**

**Following the recent consultation with relevant stakeholders, the Street Trading Policy for the District, attached as Appendix 1 of the report to the Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006, be approved.**

iii) **Public Realm Design Guide – Stourport-on-Severn**

The Council considered a recommendation from the Cabinet on the adoption of a Public Realm Design Guide for Stourport-on-Severn, as part of the Stourport Pride project.

The recommendation incorporated proposed amendments to the draft guide, as put forward by the Prosperity Policy Panel at its 4<sup>th</sup> October 2006 meeting. These were explained to Council by the Panel Chairman.

A Member drew attention to the fact that the Council's contribution to Stourport Pride would attract match funding, giving a total of £50,000 for projects to enhance Stourport Town Centre and Stourport Basin. The Chairman of the Prosperity Policy Panel accepted his proposal that the Panel should seek to identify these projects and maintain an overview, so that the District Council could help to drive them forward

and promote a sense of pride in the area.

**DECISION:**

1. **The draft Public Realm Design Guide: Stourport-on-Severn, as set out in Appendix A of the report to the Prosperity Policy Panel on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2006, as amended by Appendix C of that report, and its proposed adoption as a 'Companion Guide to Wyre Forest District Design Quality Supplementary Planning Guidance (July 2004)' be approved.**
2. **The following comments and amendments made by the Panel be approved:**
  - a) **Page 3 of Appendix B: "Options to include a ramp should also be considered, but if this is not possible, suitable sign posting should be provided to help those unable to use steps to find the existing ramp adjacent to the Black Star public house." Members felt that, although technically, this would comply with the Disability Discrimination Act, it would be unfair for visitors to have only this access. As public authorities, the Council and British Waterways should be responsible for doing more than the minimum.**
  - b) **Approval be given to the re-wording on page 33 as follows: "Pedestrian routes need to be wide enough to permit two wheelchairs or two side-by-side twin pushchairs to pass in opposite directions."**
  - c) **With regard to page 5 of Appendix B, "Litter bins subject to funding", Members hoped that Stourport Forward could organise sponsorship of this type.**
- c) **Recommendations from the Audit Committee – 26<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

**Expanded Terms Of Reference**

The Council considered a recommendation from the Audit Committee on the expansion of its terms of reference.

**DECISION:**

**The expanded terms of reference of the Audit Committee, numbered 11, 12 and 13, relating, respectively, to Risk Management, Procurement and External Funding, as set out in the appendix attached to the report to Council, be approved.**

d) **Recommendations from the Special Efficiency Policy Panel 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006-**

**Business Case for Shared Services for Revenues and Benefits Services in Worcestershire.**

**Having declared her prejudicial interest in this item in accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillor Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis left the meeting at this point (6.49pm) and took no part in this item.**

The Council considered a recommendation from the Efficiency Policy Panel that the Council should not support the proposed formation of a shared service for Revenues and Benefits in Worcestershire.

The Chairman of the Efficiency Policy Panel presented this recommendation. He stressed that the proposal was the most significant issue that the Council had dealt with for a number of years. He gave a detailed resume of the Panel's scrutiny exercise over a series of meetings, as recorded in its minutes, with reference to information received from other local authorities and partner organisations, the Council's employees and trade unions.

Members noted that the shared services initiative was designed to achieve significant savings which could be utilised for the benefit of residents by means of enhanced front line services or lower Council Tax payments. However, the Panel had questioned the viability of the business case, particularly the potential to realise either the financial savings or the efficiency gains as predicted.

Members supporting the Panel's recommendation agreed that they were not against shared services, as such, but felt strongly that the Revenues and Benefits services, which had such an impact on vulnerable people, should not have been chosen to pilot the initiative.

In the course of the ensuing debate, these Members endorsed a range of concerns raised by the Panel and reiterated by its Chairman. For example, they were conscious that the Council's Revenues and Benefits Services were already in the top quartile for performance and maintained a low level of arrears. There were doubts that the operation of shared services, from Wychavon District Council's premises at Pershore, would result in efficiency gains. It was felt that further efficiency savings could be achieved without shared services.

Attention was drawn to the impact on the Community Housing Group if rent arrears rose and to the value of local knowledge in combating benefit fraud. Uncertainties were raised about staffing matters, such as estimates about reduced staff numbers and the implications for staff required to relocate to Pershore. There were also concerns that the computerised system for the Revenues and Benefits shared services

organisation had not yet been written.

At the conclusion debate, the motion as recorded in the decision below was carried. It was of the subject of a named vote in accordance with Standing Order C3 (4).

Members voting for the motion:

Councillors: G W Ballinger, Mrs H E Dyke, P Dyke, Mrs L Edginton, G H Eeles, B T Glass, P B Harrison, Mrs S M Hayward, M A W Hazlewood, Mrs L Hyde, W G Jones, M B Kelly, Mrs R L Lewis, H J Martin, C D Nicholls, Mrs F M Oborski, M M G Oborski, Mrs J L Salter, M A Salter, J A Shaw, M J Shellie, D R Sheppard, J C Simmonds, K J Stokes and N J Thomas.

Members voting against the motion:

Councillors: J Aston, J Baker, J-P Champion, S J M Clee, N J Desmond, J W Dudley, M J Hart, Mrs P V Hayward, Mrs A T Hingley, J Holden, S J Williams and G Yarranton.

Members abstaining from voting:

No members abstained from voting.

**DECISION:**

- 1. The Council welcomes the principle of Shared Services and notes the drive for efficiency as set out in the White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities.**
- 2. However, having considered and carried out a full scrutiny on the detailed business case, including receiving feedback from members from other local authorities and partner organisations, the Council's employees and trade unions, the Council, in view of the risks involved, does not support the formation of a Shared Service for Revenues and Benefits in Worcestershire.**

Councillor Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis returned to the meeting at this point (7.54pm).

**C. 77**

**MOTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. D1 (1)**

**The Community Housing Group – Midlands Excellence Award**

The following motion was moved in recognition of the Community Housing Group's outstanding achievement in gaining an award of national significance.

"THIS COUNCIL wholeheartedly congratulates the Wyre Forest based



Community Housing Group on receiving the “Best All Round Performing Large Company In the Midlands” Award at the Midlands Excellence Awards Ceremony held at the Birmingham International Convention Centre on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

COUNCIL notes that this is not simply another important “Award” but represents a truly major breakthrough for the national standing and reputation of the Community Housing Group - generally better known colloquially to local residents as “Wyre Forest Community Housing”.

COUNCIL believes that this is a truly remarkable achievement and that the Community Housing Group deserves our support and admiration both for securing the Award and for all the hard work and initiative that has gone into meriting the Award in the first place.”

Members endorsed the motion and looked forward to continued close co-operation with the Community Housing Group in the interests of Wyre Forest residents. They also expressed appreciation for the contributions made by Councillors representing the District Council on the Community Housing Group.

**DECISION:**

**The motion, as recorded in the preamble above, be approved.**

**C. 78      URGENT MOTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. D1 (7)**

No notices of motion were received in accordance with Standing Order D1(1).

**DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME – 2006-2009  
CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

This item was dealt with at Minute No. C.76(i) above.

**C.79      REPORT FROM THE CABINET SCRUTINY CHAIRMAN**

This item was withdrawn.

**C. 80      WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT FOR HOUSING**

The Council considered a report from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment which sought the Council’s endorsement of the Worcestershire County-wide Local Area Agreement policies and targets for housing.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Planning, Health and Environment stressed the importance to the Council of affordable housing and the increasing difficulty in earmarking suitable sites for new

developments. She urged Members to support the recommendations, detailed in the decision below, to assist the Council to meet its housing and sustainability objectives. She accepted a Member's proposal to amend the first key housing priority to refer to "social" as well as "affordable" housing.

Members welcomed these recommendations. A Member in her capacity as the Chairman of the Community Housing Group endorsed the recommendations, particularly the provisions for increasing domestic microgeneration of renewable energy. She regretted the current low number of such schemes and was concerned that the Low Carbon Buildings Programme had used up its current funds. She stressed that low income families needed the ability to reduce their energy bills.

**DECISION:**

**1. The three key housing priorities be endorsed:**

- a) to increase the use of public sector and partnership land for social and affordable housing;**
- b) the development of a programme of renewable domestic energy systems across Worcestershire;**
- c) a countywide scheme for the release of capital from private housing to improve housing conditions and maintain people's independence;**

**and contribute through its policies to delivering the Housing Local Area Agreement outcomes.**

- 2. The Worcestershire Local Area Agreement Housing Management Team (on which the Council is represented) develop the priorities on behalf of the Worcestershire Partnership Members and agree targets in consultation with the Government Office for the West Midlands.**
- 3. The priorities and outcomes be agreed as part of the wider review and refreshment of the Worcestershire Local Area Agreement.**
- 4. The Head of Planning, Health and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Health and Environment, consult with the relevant Heads of Service to consider how the Council's existing plans and strategies may need to be reviewed to meet the requirements of the Housing Local Area Agreement priorities.**

**C. 81**            **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

a) **Worcestershire Hub Board**

**DECISION:**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs and the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services be appointed to represent the Council on the Worcestershire Hub Board.

b) **Dudley Group of Hospitals' Council of Governors**

**DECISION:**

The appointment of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Health and Environment to the Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust's Council of Governors be confirmed.

**C. 82**            **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**DECISION:**

Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "exempt Information" as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**C. 83**            **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.

**C. 84**            **MINUTES**

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**C. 85**            **POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK – MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE A DECISION BY COUNCIL**

a) **Recommendations from the Cabinet – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

**Indoor Netball Facility At Stourport Sports Club**

The Council approved a recommendation from the Cabinet regarding

the funding of a new indoor netball facility at Stourport Sports Club/Stourport High School.

**b) Recommendations from the Cabinet – 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

**Funding Of Play Area Equipment At Springfield Park, Kidderminster And Northwood Land, Bewdley, Play Areas**

The Cabinet approved recommendations from the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2006 meeting of the Miscellaneous Functions Committee, regarding funding for the provision of play equipment at Springfield Park, Kidderminster, and Northwood Lane, Bewdley, play areas.

The meeting ended at 8.18 p.m.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**COUNCIL MEETING – 15<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2006**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6**

**QUESTION TIME AT COUNCIL MEETINGS - STANDING ORDER A5**

**Questions from Councillor H J Martin**

To the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs

1. “Is the Cabinet Member now able to inform Council of the final cost of the Town Hall redevelopment and whether or not this is above the original budget?”

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

Members will know that the Hub opened yesterday. They will also be aware that there are some outstanding issues with the contractor and therefore the final account has not been closed.

What Councillor Martin is getting at is that fact that there might be an overspend. I can reassure Council that I don't anticipate the Hub Project exceeding the budgetary figure that Council has approved. I refer Council to the report to Cabinet dated 25<sup>th</sup> August 2005 and the exempt report to Council of the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2005, Minute CM 66, which gives the exact figure for the project. I would also refer you to the Budget Book page 133 which also gives the same amount.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor H J Martin**

I am referring to the use of money and I believe the original estimate was £1.2 million and increased to £1.5 million. I await the outcome of the final spend which is about what you get for £1.5 million.

Since the estimate for the redevelopment of Stourport-on-Severn is well under £1.5 million and will include a town centre Hub development, I wonder what people will get for their money and I ask for the Cabinet's view?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

I am neither a building expert nor a quantity surveyor, nor am I an expert on building civic centres or Worcestershire Hubs. That is why the Administration, unlike previous administrations, employs external expertise. I ask the question, as to how much things cost, and they come back with answers. This was discussed fully at the last Council meeting in the exempt session.

What I will say, as reassurance, in relation to Stourport, is that the experts allocated a certain amount of money. We considerably increased that, to make sure people in

the area get what they deserve. The development will be driven by a project board of councillors, who will consult with local people, and develop a civic hall, theatre, Worcestershire Hub and accommodation for the town centre that this town deserves.

- 2. “Can the Cabinet Member please advise what contingency plan he has in place to strengthen staffing at the Hub if this should prove necessary in the light of experience? Furthermore, in this eventuality, can he advise what the expected increase to the Revenue Budget will be?”**

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

As I mentioned earlier, the Hub opened yesterday. Everything went smoothly yesterday and today. We have only two days’ experience of how it is working.

I cannot look into a crystal ball to see what will happen in the next twelve months, but the advice of the appropriate expert is that we have the staffing structure in place to cope. We have regular meetings with CMT to ensure that problems are identified easily and resolved at the earliest opportunity.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor H J Martin**

**Given that there was some discussion at a meeting last week that the staffing would be inadequate, I await with interest to hear whether we need more staff and where will they be put.**

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

I would assume any staff we put in the Hub will go into the Hub. That was an over simplified question. The services referred to are perhaps County services or extra services which are not planned for at the moment. We would ask any organisation wanting to use the Hub in relation to local service delivery to provide extra resources. I do not anticipate asking for additional resources. I think we have got it right, but time will tell.

### **Questions from Councillor M M G Oborski**

#### **To the Leader of the Council**

- 3. “Given the Leader of the Council’s comment in a recent issue of The Kidderminster Shuttle that “all councillors have been invited to partake in the distribution of the energy-saving devices. Unfortunately, only half the councillors have bothered to take up the offer, so only 4,200 residents will benefit.”**

**Will the Leader accept that I fully agree with him, on the basis of the figure he gives, that the uptake is scandalous?**

**Will he also accept, however, that I do object to him gratuitously blackening everyone in sight?**

**Will he confirm that all seven members of the Liberal Group have seized the opportunity and are busy distributing the items concerned, as far as the limited stocks will go, to the elderly and those on benefits in the Wards they represent?**

**As all seven Liberals have taken up the challenge, and there are nineteen Conservative Councillors on a 42 seat Council, and if Councillor Clee literally means that only half the Councillors have taken part, then is he aware that this would presumably mean that at the very least, five Conservative Members have NOT taken up the challenge?**

**As he has chosen to publicise the issue in broad and misleading brush strokes, will Councillor Clee now take the opportunity to list those members, of all parties, who have taken up this challenge?**

**Finally, will the Leader join with me in congratulating and thanking those Officers who have done such a good job in securing these power saving and environmentally friendly items for distribution?"**

*(Note from Councillor M M G Oborski: " In asking the question I apologise that the question should refer to four rather than five Tory Councillors.")*

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

I congratulate the Liberal Group on all their members taking up the light bulb offer. Twenty three members in total applied. Some members applied after the cut off date and were unable to get the bulbs and water tubs.

I will issue to group leaders a list of the members who took up the offer. I would very much like to congratulate staff for putting together the light bulbs offer and would like to particularly thank Lynette Jones, Senior Health and Sustainability Officer.

**To the Leader of the Council**

**4. "Given the fact that we have always been told that:-**

- (a) what the Council wanted alongside the new ramp outside Kidderminster Town Hall was simply a Victorian style cast iron banister in keeping with the style of the building, and;**
- (b) the final glass and chrome finished banister monstrosity was forced upon us by English Heritage;**

**will the Leader of the Council now give a definitive explanation of how we ended up with the current glass monstrosity following the statement from English Heritage reported by the Express and Star on November 8<sup>th</sup>:-**

**"We were consulted on the plans to remodel the entrance."**

**"The original designs included hand rails of stainless steel and glass."**

**"The use of these materials in the final design has not been at the insistence of English Heritage." "**

### **Answer from the Leader of the Council**

I will pass this to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs.

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

I am pleased to reaffirm to Council that the provision of the glass panels and railings at the front of the Hub was resolved in consultation with, and the direct involvement of, the Head of English Heritage.

### **Response from Councillor M M G Oborski**

I would suggest that the Portfolio Holder might like to contact English Heritage and point out that this sort of comment is very misleading. Whether you like the barriers or not there are a lot of members of the public incensed about this, who need to know who made the decision.

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

It may be helpful for Council to know that Mr Alan Taylor of English Heritage has been contacted and the frontage is what he wanted to see there.

### **Questions from Councillor K J Stokes**

#### **To the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

5. "Indications have been given to Council that English Heritage had requested the new steel framed glass panelled Town Hall frontage. An English Heritage spokesperson has stated that the use of these materials in the final design had not been at their insistence. Who is responsible?"

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

I would refer you to the previous response.

6. "Wrought Iron is used on both the front of the Town Hall and the Music Room Building. Why was glass used on the Town Hall front ramp?"

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

I would refer you to the previous response.

### **Supplementary question for Councillor K J Stokes**

What will be the cost of the glass panelling and steel frame work around the panel when it is complete?



### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

I do not have the exact cost of this, but if Councillor Stokes would be happy, I will supply him with the exact costings and the rest of the Council if they so wish.

### **Written Answer from Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs**

Following consultation with our Project Managers, I can confirm that the cost of the glass panels and railings is £22,425.

### **Questions from Councillor Mrs F M Oborski**

#### **To the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services**

7. “Can you tell me since the installation of CCTV in Kidderminster Town Centre:

How often and for what duration each camera has been “out of action”?

#### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services**

There have been a number of technical difficulties with certain cameras in the town centre. The problems concern cameras in New Street, Vicar Street and Bromsgrove Street, as these cameras have only partial movement. The physical movement of the cameras is important and it is the physical movement of certain cameras which has been impaired. The arrangement with the maintenance engineers is that, if a camera cannot be repaired on site, then it will be taken away for repair and a replacement camera will be installed. However there have been problems with certain operators due to the lack of replacement cameras.

Obviously we are fully aware of the problem and it needs to be addressed. That is why a meeting is being arranged during the later part of this month with all interested parties. This will enable particular issues to be ironed out.

#### **Supplementary question from Councillor Mrs F M Oborski**

**I understand the problems. Could you perhaps give some information to shop keepers when the cameras are out of action, because I am aware of an incident in New Road when a trader asked the police to look at a camera to identify someone and he was told that the camera was out of action? The shop keeper had not been aware of this.**

#### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services**

I obviously take on board Councillor Mrs Oborski's comment. I would like to reiterate that we are concerned about the problem and it needs to be addressed, hence the meeting at the end of the month.

CCTV cameras are not a total panacea. Even if the camera was working, during the incident in question, it might not have picked it up, but I take on board the issue.

**To the Cabinet Member for Planning, Health and Environment**

8. **“Local Bangladeshi Restaurateurs are finding it increasingly difficult to access Health and Hygiene Certificate courses for new employees many of whom will have previously been unemployed.**

**Is it possible for the Council’s Environmental Health Section to help resolve this issue? What would be the minimum number of participants needed for a course and what would be the cost per participant?**

**Local Bangladeshi Restaurateurs should be congratulated on their positive approach to this issue and surely deserve our support.”**

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Planning, Health and Environment**

Thank you for bringing this to my attention. The Food and Safety Team work hard to promote clean food. This is evidenced in the work on the Clean Food Award. Bangladeshi Restaurateurs participate in these. Eighteen local takeaways and restaurants were offered places on the basic food initiative training. Only two took this up.

All will be invited to the free “safer food better business” training. This involves a three hour seminar and a three hour one to one coaching session at their place of business. A translator is offered, free of charge, where required. The sessions are regularly held in the Earl Baldwin Suite.

We will continue to offer food hygiene training courses to all businesses at a cost of £55 plus VAT.

I would urge all Councillors who have an eating business in their ward to encourage the use of these courses to improve standards. This will give the public reassurance in the service they receive.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Mrs F M Oborski**

**I thank the Cabinet Member for this answer. However I am surprised at the cost of £55 per participant. I understand from Bangladeshi restaurant owners that the cost is considerably less in Birmingham at £30 per head.**

**These restaurateurs are not making large amounts of money. Will you agree to look at the costings as other authorities offer lower cost options than we do?**

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Planning, Health and Environment**

I will do so.

### **Question from Councillor N J Thomas**

#### **To the Leader of the Council**

9. "In view of the fact that the people of Stourport have already paid for our Civic Centre, can we have an undertaking from the Leader that these same people will have first option to purchase it at a peppercorn purchase price?"

#### **Answer from the Leader of the Council**

We will not go down your route. We need to get the maximum receipt for our assets.

### **Supplementary from Councillor N J Thomas**

Why should people in Stourport be robbed because a few greedy people in Kidderminster want a Civic Centre as well as a town hall?

#### **Answer from the Leader of the Council**

I wish to put on record that this Civic Centre and the Hall next door were paid for by District Council ratepayers when Wyre Forest District Council was formed. Money was borrowed to build the Civic Hall. There are members in the chamber tonight who will be aware of the debt that Wyre Forest District Council inherited and paid off. The tax payers paid for it. We are District Councillors and represent the whole of Wyre Forest and therefore you should not be biased in any way in any comments you make.

### **Questions from Councillor J A Shaw**

#### **To the Leader of the Council**

10. With reference to the motion about Streetscene and Townscape in Kidderminster and Stourport, adopted as Council policy on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2006, has action been taken yet:-

(a) to improve partnership working with the County Council?

and

(b) to carry out an audit of the current state of repair of public and privately-owned buildings in Kidderminster town centre?

#### **Answer from the Leader of the Council**

As you know, we discussed this in September. Following the meeting and a recommendation from a Policy Panel, I and representatives from Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services met with Worcestershire County Council. The joint working arrangements referred to two agreements with the County Council:

The first agreement related to the Worcestershire Hub, the flagship of the District Council, which was launched yesterday. We also have an agreement that traffic islands can be sponsored throughout Wyre Forest. There has been a problem with the County Council about the planting of traffic islands. However we have negotiated terms and conditions and will go ahead in the spring.

In relation to public and private land, we have a list compiled by officers in Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services and will be working in partnership with senior partners in Kidderminster to make improvements.

**Supplementary question from Councillor J A Shaw**

**When you refer to 10a regarding partnership work you have identified, will that mean no weeds by highways in the town centre, or the ring road next year?**

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

I hope this will be the case and I am pursuing this.