

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

THURSDAY 25TH JANUARY 2007

EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, KIDDERMINSTER

Present:

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

Observers:

Councillors: G W Ballinger, Mrs H E Dyke, P Dyke, Mrs F M Oborski, J A Shaw and G C Yarranton.

CAB.166 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.167 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J-P Campion declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda item number 10.1. (ii) relating to Partners and Communities Together (PACT), as he is a member of the West Mercia Policy Authority.

CAB.168 MINUTES

DECISION:

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the 21st December 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.169 CALL INS

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

CAB.170 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

In accordance with the powers vested in him under the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Council's Constitution, the Leader agreed to consider a report on ICT Projects Resources as a matter of urgency by virtue of special circumstances. In this case the software was required in preparation for the May 2007 elections.

CAB.171 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Opening of The Hub

The Leader wished to record his thanks to all staff regarding the launch of The Hub. He reported that it had been a successful opening and he thanked Members of the Council for their attendance. He also advised the Cabinet that Paul Coen, Chief Executive of the Local Government Association for England had visited The Hub and had been impressed by it.

CAB.172 ICT PROJECTS RESOURCES

A report was considered from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that requested approval for the utilisation of £23,400 from the capital expenditure reserve. This was necessary because the Electoral Registration Officer had identified two further projects that needed additional investment to enable them to be implemented in a reasonable timescale. The projects were:

1. Postal Voting - Signature Recognition Software
2. Replacement of Electoral Registration and Elections Management domain software.

DECISION:

Approval be given for the utilisation of £23,400 for ICT electoral software from the capital expenditure reserve approved by Council on 23 February 2005.

CAB.172 BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Leader welcomed members of the public to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs introduced himself and stated that the Council had advertised its budget consultation both on its website and in the local press. He stated that any representations received would be included in the final recommendations to Cabinet on the 22nd February 2007.

He outlined the Council's areas of priority and stated that the performance indicators measured how well the Council spent its money, invested and delivered outcomes. He outlined the areas where the Cabinet intended to provide extra services and other services that were under consideration.

He gave a breakdown of the Government Finance Settlement. It was noted that the grant from the Government for 2007/08 had increased by 5.5. %. He informed the meeting that certain charges would increase but the District Council's element of the Council Tax itself would only increase by 2.5%. He anticipated efficiency savings being made of approximately £627,000.

Following the presentation, members of the public were given an opportunity to raise any questions they wished regarding the Council's budget. Three members of the public were in attendance and the following issues were raised:

1. Concerns about the cost of watering the proposed hanging baskets, rats in Tesco's car park and problems with drainage.
2. It was queried whether the unit that was currently available for occupation at Bewdley Museum had become available as a result of falling visitor numbers. He also queried whether the Park and Ride Scheme would also include the possibility of free first hour parking.

The Leader gave an opportunity for Members who were present to raise any points that they wished to raise on the budget. Councillor Mrs F M Oborski thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs for taking on board and giving consideration to some of the issues that her Group had raised and she welcomed his open approach to the consultation.

DECISION:

The budget proposals as outlined by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs to stakeholders and members of the public be noted.

CAB.173 DEVELOPMENT OF A SHARED SERVICES STRATEGY

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that asked the Cabinet to approve the development of a Shared Services Strategy as this would ensure a consistent and effective approach to Shared Services.

A Member reiterated the need to share services. She suggested that when the Council's new depot was being requisitioned, the possibility of sharing it with the Community Housing Group be considered, as she perceived there could be economies of scale if such a partnership was entered into. She also believed that the Community Housing Group might have access to land which would not be available to the Council.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The approach to the development of a Shared Services Strategy, as outlined in the proposals in Section 5 of the report to Cabinet, be approved and a draft strategy be prepared for consultation with partners from 1st April 2007 or such other date as may be advised.

CAB.174 UPDATE ON THE WYRE FOREST MATTERS COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2004-2014

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that reported on the implementation of the Wye Forest Matters Community Strategy and its forthcoming review.

With regard to the Horsefair/Broadwaters/Greenhill Delivery Plan, the Cabinet noted that the County Council had managed to negotiate the transfer of a rent free lease on the school building in Radford Avenue, Kidderminster, and it appeared that the lease would be transferred to the Community Housing Group. As the building was adjacent to the park it would mean that events could be run in the park and could be serviced from that building.

DECISION:

- 1. The progress made by the Wyre Forest Matters Partnership in the implementation of the Community Strategy (2004-2014) be noted.**
- 2. The forthcoming review of the Wyre Forest Matters Community Strategy be noted.**

CAB.175 POLLUTION CONTROL SERVICE PLAN

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that recommended that the Cabinet formally adopt a Pollution Control Service Plan in order to assist in delivering a more efficient service.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs stated that the Plan would set out a code of practice regarding objectives, implementation and performance targets in order to improve the public's perception of the Pollution Control Service. The report outlined the key service improvements that had been identified for the next three years. These included maintaining service delivery standards and undertaking a full review and risk assessment of LAPPC work in compliance with the requirements of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

DECISION:

The Pollution Control Service Plan 2007-2010) as set out in the separate appendix to the report to Cabinet be adopted.

CAB.176 THREE PART-TIME COMMUNITY SPORTS COACHES

A report was considered from the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services that advised on a successful application to Sport England and other partners to provide three part-time Community Sports Coaches and sought approval for their appointment.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services said that it was intended that the coaches would work for seven and a half hours per week. They would be responsible for building a wide range of skills and activities across the District. In particular, it was anticipated that a multi-skills club would be operated. The coaches would also work with schools in the area to deliver taster sessions to children in key stages one and two. Sports England would be providing the funding for the posts together with funding from other partners.

DECISION:

1. **Approval be given to the appointment of three two-year fixed term part-time community sports coaches (7½ hours each post per week) from 1st April 2007, to be funded from grant aid and existing budgets.**
2. **The base budget be amended in the financial years 2007/08 and 2008/09 to reflect this initiative.**

CAB.177 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PROSPERITY POLICY PANEL 10th JANUARY 2007

The Chairman of the Prosperity Policy Panel was in attendance at the meeting and presented the recommendations from the Prosperity Policy Panel from its meeting held on 10th January 2007.

(i) Visitor Economy

She stated that she was grateful to members of the Prosperity Policy Panel, who had responded enthusiastically to the scrutiny exercise on the visitor economy. She went through each recommendation in turn and made the following comments:

- The Task and Finish Group had been concerned to discover that some local estate agents were not aware of NNDR rate relief for small shops.
- It seemed essential that Kidderminster town centre should have a dedicated coach drop off point.

In response to a question from the Cabinet Member for Commercial Affairs, she clarified that whilst it was recognised that Stourport and Bewdley would require additional toilet provision, Kidderminster was the town which needed the most improvement. A report on tourism in Kidderminster had condemned the town centre's toilet provision. She remarked that the only adequate toilet provision in the town had been in the old bus station which had now been demolished for the construction of Weaver's Wharf. When a scrutiny exercise had recently been undertaken on the night time economy, it had been evident that there was a need for extra provision between Yates' Wine Bar and Dixon Street in Kidderminster, as it had been observed that, due to the lack of facilities, people had been urinating in shop doorways.

DECISION:

The recommendations listed below be noted:

- 1. Whilst accepting that some further expenditure has already been committed to improving public conveniences in the District, further investment be made to upgrade toilet facilities in the District, especially to the town centres.**
- 2. The Council's website be translated into the languages of the twin towns and of those communities living within the District.**
- 3. A letter be sent to Stourport Forward, Bewdley Trust and the owners of the www.wft.co.uk website suggesting that they use foreign languages on their websites.**
- 4. As part of the Council's commitment for the town centres, Town Centre Partnerships be encouraged to work with visitor destinations to actively encourage people into the town centres.**
- 5. The Economic Development and Tourism Manager produce a paper for all local estate agents drawing attention to the availability of National Non Domestic Rate Relief (NNDR).**
- 6. A letter be sent to Stourport Town Council requesting them to encourage local traders to brighten up the shop fronts and to reconsider the use of hanging baskets.**
- 7. Heritage signs with the Kidderminster crest be erected in Kidderminster Town Centre.**
- 8. The activities of Blackwell Street Revival Group be noted and commended.**
- 9. The new owners of the Swan Centre be encouraged to decorate the centre (perhaps with hanging baskets).**
- 10. The Council liaise with the new owners of Weavers Wharf to put the public triangle at Weavers Wharf to some appropriate use.**
- 11. A letter be sent to churches within the District drawing their attention to the "Best kept churchyard scheme" and encouraging them to brighten up walls and the churchyards.**
- 12. A designated coach drop off point and coach parking facilities be available in Kidderminster town centre.**

13. The Council encourage proposals for hotel development in KTC3 to help provide budget accommodation in Kidderminster.

ii) Partners and Communities Together (PACT)

The Chairman of the Prosperity Policy Panel presented the Panel's recommendations on Partners and Communities Together (PACT).

She said that a large number of people had made up the panel that had considered the Partners and Communities Together initiative. The panel had been enhanced by representation from PACT Panel Chairmen and tenancy chairmen. She was particularly grateful to the Kidderminster Shuttle who had supported the exercise by printing questionnaires. She also wished to thank the police who had also been very supportive.

She told the Cabinet that the recommendations that had been drawn up were very detailed. She ran through each recommendation and made the following comments:

- She reiterated the need for a protocol for PACT meetings.
- PACT is a police initiative and should remain as such.
- She emphasised the need for Councillors to automatically be invited to become members of PACT groups.
- The need for have an independent chairman was reiterated.
- It was essential as far as possible to have continuity of police representation.
- There was need for administrative support for chairmen of PACT panels.
- Meetings should be later than 7 pm to allow Members to attend their Council commitments.
- Youth Cabinet Members should be invited to attend PACT meetings because Members of the County Council often criticised young people and it would give them a chance to present their views.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs responded that in the first twelve months of their existence, over 4,000 individuals had attended PACT meetings. He perceived this to be very positive. However he expressed his concern regarding the formality of meetings and felt that an informal approach would be more acceptable. He thanked the Prosperity Policy Panel Chairman for her presentation.

The Leader responded that the recommendations that had been presented would be useful when he and the Chief Executive had discussions with the Chief Constable.

DECISION:

The recommendations below be used to help shape discussions with the Chief Constable and Fora across the County:

1. Due to capacity implications, Council Officers will not routinely attend PACT meetings. However, if there is a specific issue which requires specialist officer input, this can be provided, subject to the agreement of the appropriate Head of Service.
2. Consideration be given to establishing a modest Community Leadership Fund for specific grants to Ward areas to enable the reduction of crime, disorder and quality of life issues to be promoted.
3. An annual report be presented to Cabinet by the PACT Panel Chairmen, (with administrative support), charting progress of priorities agreed at PACT meetings and highlighting Council involvement and outcomes achieved.
4. Consideration be given to a Fitness Check that helps build community leadership capacity to support Members in representing and championing a range of communities and to respond to local issues.
5. The Cabinet make the following recommendations to West Mercial Police Constabulary:
 - (a) The PACT policy be reviewed to include a protocol for PACT Panels explaining:
 - The purpose and process of the Panel, including a list of who the partners in the PACT are;
 - How the members of the Panel, including the Chairman are appointed and how often this membership should be revised. It is suggested that Panel selection should be based upon what the individual can bring to the process;
 - The roles and responsibilities of Panel members;
 - How often Panel meetings will take place in order to provide more consistent frequency;
 - The circumstances under which a person can be told to leave a meeting;
 - PACT, whilst involving partners, is a police led initiative and as such funding must be lead from the police;
 - (b) Councillors automatically be invited to become members of the PACT Panel affecting their Ward or Division.

- (c) While the merits of independent Chairmanship are recognised as being an element of good community leadership, Councillors be eligible for Chairmanship of PACT Panels if necessary.**
- (d) Ensure there is always a police officer, and, if possible, a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) available to attend PACT meetings and where possible, keep the same Police Officer and PCSO to ensure consistency at meetings.**
- (e) The Divisional Police Commander for the Wyre Forest District hold a six-monthly meeting with PACT Chairmen to review progress and share best practice and learning between the Panels. Where appropriate, other partner agencies be invited to attend.**
- (f) Training for the Chairmen of panels be available to support them with their role.**
- (g) PACT panel membership and contact details be issued to partner organisations to enable communication channels to be developed where appropriate.**
- (h) Where good practice exists, this be shared across PACTs in Worcestershire eg. Via the Community Policing Board.**
- (j) A Media Strategy be developed to provide a robust framework on all communication matters including pre-publicity of PACT meetings.**
- (k) To ensure better Councillor attendance at PACT meetings, it is suggested that meetings be held later than 7 pm to avoid clashes with other Council meetings.**
- (l) The frequency of meetings be decided by individual PACT Panels but should allow sufficient time between meetings for issues to be addressed.**
- (m) Consideration be given to other forms of reaching parts of the community who would not want to attend a meeting, such as on-street surveys etc.**
- (n) Youth Cabinet Members be invited to attend their local PACT meetings and their attendance be facilitated so that they can represent young people at the meetings and put forward their views.**
- (o) The Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership be a formal partner in PACT and provide an efficient and effective delivery arm for those matters of a community safety nature.**

- (p) Dialogue with existing community groups dealing with community safety/quality of life issues be undertaken by the local Policing Team on a regular basis to avoid duplication or clashes with meetings.
- (q) With the exception of schools, sector specific PACT meeting should be abandoned in favour of Police and Councillor attendance at County Council Disabled and Older People's For a.

CAB.178 Recommendation from Licensing and Environmental Committee, 8th January 2007

(See decision at 8.1. above)

CAB.179 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

DECISION:

That under Section 100(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 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB.180 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 had been made as 'exempt information' would be disclosed if the minutes were published in full.

CAB.181 MINUTES

The exempt minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the 21st December 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.182 BID FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING THROUGH THE CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Cabinet noted the action the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs had taken with regard to funding affordable housing through the Council's Capital Strategy.

The meeting ended at 7 pm.,