

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,
KIDDERMINSTER
26TH JULY 2007 (6.00PM)

PRESENT:

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

OBSERVERS:

Councillors: G W Ballinger and Mrs F M Oborski.

CAB.31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N J Desmond.

CAB.32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.33 MINUTES

DECISION:

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28th June 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.34 CALL INS

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

CAB.35 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

The Leader announced that he would be considering a report which related to the Flood Recovery Grant Scheme.

CAB.36 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. FLOODS

The Leader discussed the second bout of flooding that had occurred during July 2007. He commented that an urgent Leaders' meeting had been convened with the Chief Executive of Worcestershire County Council in order that a cross-County response could be co-ordinated. During the current flooding, in excess of 200 properties had been affected. He reported that he would be asking the Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services to update Members on the situation when the report on the Flood Recovery Grant Scheme was considered.

2. FORTHCOMING WEDDING OF COUNCILLOR N J DESMOND

On behalf of the Cabinet and Chief Management Team, the Leader conveyed best wishes and congratulations to Councillor N J Desmond, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, who was getting married the next day at Chaddesley Corbett Parish Church.

3. SENIOR COMMITTEE OFFICER - CONGRATULATIONS ON COURSE RESULTS

On behalf of the Cabinet and Chief Management Team, the Leader congratulated Diana Glendenning, Senior Committee Officer, on achieving excellent results in an HNC course in public administration.

CAB.37 HOUSING BENEFITS - OVERPAYMENTS POLICY - UPDATE

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services regarding the Housing Benefits -Overpayments Policy. It was noted that the current Policy had been approved in July 2005 and, in order to ensure that the Policy remained current, it had been updated.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The Housing Benefits - Overpayments Policy - July 2007, attached at Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be adopted.

CAB.38 SECTION 136 GRANT AID BEWDLEY TOWN COUNCIL

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that outlined a request from Bewdley Town Council for payment of its £11,064 Section 136 Grant Aid for 2007/08 under Section 136 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Leader commented that the request by Bewdley Town Council was in accordance with the criteria agreed by the former Executive in March 2003, i.e. that grant aid should be used for projects that benefited the local community.

DECISION:

The Section 136 Grant Aid Application for 2007/2008 from Bewdley Town Council be approved.

CAB.39 HARDSHIP RATE RELIEF - SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY (HOLDINGS) PLC

The Leader informed Members that during the first bout of flooding there had been approximately 45 'devastations' to the Severn Valley Railway line which led to the line being closed past Bewdley. He was not fully aware of the situation following the current bout of flooding but he commented that in excess of £2 million of damage had been sustained. He was pleased to report that Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) PLC had received significant grant funding from other sources and he perceived that any help the Council could give to the company would be welcome.

A Member requested that consideration be given to rate relief for other businesses - particularly those on Comberton Hill, Kidderminster, as they had been affected by the extensive works that had been undertaken in that area by Severn Trent which had resulted in a loss of business for the traders there.

The Leader stated that all applications for hardship rate relief would be treated equally using the same criteria. He thanked the Ward Member for drawing his attention to this issue.

The Chief Executive commented that any businesses that were experiencing a down turn in business as a result of the work being carried out by Severn Trent, should approach Severn Trent direct as there were statutory procedures in place to deal with such approaches.

The Head of Financial Services also stated that the rateable value of properties would be affected by the work undertaken by Severn Trent and the businesses would have their rates reduced accordingly during the period that the work was carried out.

The Leader asked the Chief Executive to ensure that the relevant information was passed on to the businesses concerned,

DECISION:

- 1. Instalments be immediately suspended in respect of The Severn Valley Railway National Non-Domestic Rates .**
- 2. Delegated authority be given to the Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council to approve up to 100% Hardship Relief in the 2007/2008 Financial Year.**

CAB.40 FLOOD RECOVERY GRANT SCHEME

A report was considered as a matter of urgency from the Head of Cultural Leisure and Commercial Services. The report concerned the Flood Recovery Grant which had been received in relation to the flooding that took place within the District between 19th June and 1st July 2007.

The Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services presented the report. He commented that the grant that had been received was only for the flooding that had occurred in June 2007 and did not cover the recent flooding. He was awaiting details of the grant for the flooding in July 2007.

One hundred thousand pounds had been received under the Flood Recovery Grant Scheme for the flooding in the District during the month of June 2007. Fifty thousand pounds had been put into the revenue account and fifty thousand pounds into the capital account. The money was to be spent in agreement with those affected by the flooding. He commented that he had attended two meetings with communities affected by flooding.

A meeting would be held to work out a package regarding allocation of the money. Current indications were that communities would prefer the money to be spent towards flood alleviation rather than through retrospective aid. He commented that the main problem had been that culverts had collapsed and these were the responsibility of the land owner through which the culvert travelled. In the flooding in the Queensway, Bewdley, he stated that the problem had been with sewage backing up into the properties.

He outlined details of the flooding in the south of the county which had been hit harder by the flooding than Wyre Forest. In Wyre Forest, seven different brooks that fed the Stour and Severn Rivers had burst their banks. The River Severn and River Stour had also burst their banks. He commented that 674 residential properties had been affected by flooding with approximately 230 of them having had various amounts of water inside and 18 business premises had been affected.

Cabinet Members were informed that there had also been a land slip in Northwood Lane, Bewdley and a full evacuation may be necessary for properties in this area. Currently an exclusion zone had been made around this area. A meeting would be held the next day to ascertain hardship for the property owners concerned.

The Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services told the Cabinet that he had been informed by engineers that the slips were very considerable in terms of tonnage of debris that had fallen on the Severn Valley Railway line. He told the meeting that extra crews from his department had been available from Friday to Sunday during the recent flooding and sandbag supplies had been exhausted. However, more sand bags had been issued than during the 2001/2002 floods and some had been sent to the Fire Station in Gloucester to assist with the overwhelming flooding that had occurred in that area.

The Leader wished to convey thanks from himself and the Cabinet to all members of staff from the Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services Division who had worked days and nights during the flooding. The Chief Executive also wished to record his thanks to Mr Dickens and his staff for their diligence during the crisis. He commented that the Council would await notice from the Government as to what relief would be allocated to the district.

A discussion ensued on issues regarding the flooding. It was noted that the rivers were no longer dredged and it was queried whether the flooding would have been as extensive if they had been.

DECISION:

- 1. The receipt of £50,000 Revenue and £50,000 Capital funding which was received as part of the Government's Flood Recovery Grant Scheme, in relation to the flooding that took place in the District between 19th June and 1st July 2007 be noted.**
- 2. The Head of Financial Services allocates these resources within the Council's Budget, to be used specifically for the support of flood alleviation works and community recovery.**
- 3. The Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, be given delegated powers to**
 - (a) agree a package of support for the local community, following community meetings which are due to take place on 31st July and 1st August 2007. The allocation of the monies be reported back to Cabinet in September.**
 - (b) take any other appropriate action which may arise from the meeting of Leaders and Chief Executives on 26th July in respect of the floods on 20th July 2007 and onwards.**

CAB.41 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE (2006/07) OF THE WYRE FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT 2 (LPSA 2)

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that reported on the end of year performance (2006/2007) of the Wyre Forest District Local Public Service Agreement 2 (LPSA 2), which focused on crime and fire reduction targets.

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, the Chief Executive commented that the Cabinet received performance reports on a quarterly basis. The report showed that the district was below target on crime reduction but it was anticipated by the time of the next report that the district would be back on target.

A Member suggested that some of the problems at night in the district were caused by people who were merry on alcohol and this fuelled criminal damage. There was concern that some public houses served people who were drunk and it was queried whether it would be possible to obtain figures from the Crime Reduction Partnership concerning the number of incidents in the town centre and whether cautions could be issued by our Licensing Officers or by the Police.

DECISION:

- 1. Performance of the LPSA 2 targets be reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.**
- 2. The capacity review into the delivery of the LPSA 2 targets by the Council's Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee be welcomed and recommendations from this be welcomed.**

CAB.42 WEST MIDLANDS ECONOMIC STRATEGY (WMES) REVIEW 2006-2007 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT STRATEGY

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that updated Members regarding the review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) and set out proposed responses to the latest round of consultation.

The Leader commented that the recommendations on this matter from the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee would also be taken on board.

- 1. The recommended responses to the West Midlands Economic Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 (Part One) to the report to Cabinet be submitted to Advantage West Midlands as the Council's consultation response.**
- 2. Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be submitted in full to the Worcestershire Partnership for information.**

CAB.43 **WOLVERLEY CONSERVATION AREA RESULTS OF CONSULTATION ON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment regarding the results of the public consultation on the draft management proposals and the draft character appraisal for the Wolverley Conservation Area.

The Chairman of the Community and Regeneration Committee commented that she had been disappointed in the number of responses received.

The Cabinet also considered the recommendation from the Community and Regeneration Committee on 11th July 2007 that the proposed recommendations as set out in the report to Cabinet be adopted and this was agreed.

DECISION:

The draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be supported and officers be authorised to undertake a public consultation on the Appraisal before reporting back with a further recommendation.

CAB.44 **UPPER ARLEY CONSERVATION AREA - DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that presented Cabinet with a draft Conservation Area Appraisal for the Upper Arley Conservation Area and sought authority to undertake a public consultation on the proposals.

The Cabinet also considered the recommendation of the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee from its meeting held on 11th July.2007. The recommendation as set out below was agreed:

A public consultation be undertaken to gauge the opinion of all affected persons, with a report back to Members at the end of the consultation period to indicate the level of public support for character appraisal.

DECISION:

The draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be supported and officers be authorised to undertake a public consultation on the Appraisal before reporting back with a further recommendation.

CAB.45 KIDDERMINSTER TOWN CENTRE MANAGER

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that asked the Cabinet to consider the benefits of appointing a Town Centre Manager and to seek approval to the appointment of a Town Centre Manager for Kidderminster.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Property commented that the appointment of a Town Centre Manager for Kidderminster was an exciting prospect as it was something that had been talked about for a long time. He commented that the Town Centre Management Committee had not had the necessary funds to pay for a Town Centre Manager. However, the Council had negotiated with the new owners of KTC1 who had considered the appointment of a part-time manager and therefore it had been decided to go into partnership with them to fund a full time position.

DECISION:

- 1. The Head of Planning, Health and Environment, in conjunction with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to enter into an Agreement with Henderson Global Investors or their managing agents Savills, for the appointment of a Town Centre Manager.**
- 2. The post be funded for a 3 year period by the Council for 50% of the salary and subject to agreeing a Job Description for the post and a Service Level Agreement setting out the operation of the post between the two partners. The cost of the project in 2008/09 and 2009/10 be included in the Council's Base Budget and be met from the Council's LABGI Grant.**

CAB.46 'PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE' - WHITE PAPER CONSULTATION BY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that sought the approval of Cabinet for a proposed response to the Communities and Local Government White Paper Consultation 'Planning for a Sustainable Future.'

DECISION:

- 1. Approval be given to the proposed response to the White Paper**
- 2. Authorisation be given to the Head of Planning, Health and Environment to submit the Council's response to the Department for Communities and Local Government by the closing date of 17th August 2007.**

RE : UPDATE ON THE 'NO SURPRISES PROTOCOL'

DECISION::

Approval be given to the following recommendations to the Cabinet from the former Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on 19th October 2006:

- 1. "The following Ward Members' Communication Protocol be agreed and be disseminated to Council Officers through means of Team Briefs, Council Intranet, Divisional Management Team meetings, Induction and the Council Communications Strategy:**
 - a) Local Members have a crucial role to play in representing the District Council in the electoral wards, responding to the concerns of their constituents, in meetings with partners and serving on external bodies and organisations.**
 - b) It is absolutely essential for the proper running of the Council that members should be fully informed about matters on which they may be required to make decisions or which affect their electoral wards.**
 - c) It is the duty of each Chief Officer to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the requirement to keep local Members informed and that the timing of such information allows Members to contribute to those discussions. Local Members should also be kept informed about matters affecting their wards during the formative stages of policy development.**
 - d) Wherever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider local issues, all Members representing the electoral ward(s) affected should, as a matter of course, be invited to attend.**
 - e) Wherever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider local issues, all Members representing the electoral ward(s) affected should, as a matter of course, be invited to attend.**
 - f) Similarly, whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultation exercise, the local Member(s) should be notified at the outset of the exercise with every opportunity to be involved in helping to form the content of any consultation material.**

g) Members should also be notified of the outcomes of the consultation.

2. The Ward Members' Communication Protocol be incorporated into the Wyre Forest District Council Communication Strategy at i review."

CAB.48 CORPORATE SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 19TH JULY 2007

RE : TOTAL PRINT SOLUTION

DECISION:

The recommendations as printed below be agreed:

1. Progress towards a Total Print Management Solution be noted.
2. Approval be given to the implementation of a Total Print Management Solution, as detailed in the briefing paper to the Corporate Performance and Scrutiny Committee on 19th July 2007, subject to:
 - a) confirmation of savings, and
 - b) approval being given to an exception to Standing Orders relating to Contracts in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Part 4, Contract Procedure Rule number 8, to permit the selection of a total print management supplier using a Framework Agreement offered through OGC buying.solutions, the procurement arm of the Office of Government Commerce (OGC).

CAB.49 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE MISCELLANEOUS FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE 19TH JUNE 2007

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

An amendment be made to the Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewal Schedule 2007/2008 to delete the skip lorry at a value of £55,000 from the Schedule.

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.