

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**THURSDAY 25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2007**

**EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, KIDDERMINSTER**

**Present:** Councillors: J-P Champion (Chairman), M J Hart (Vice-Chairman), N J Desmond, Mrs A T Hingley and J Holden.

**Observers:** Councillors J Aston, G W Ballinger, Mrs F M Oborski and Ms T Onslow.

**CAB.87 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S J M Clee.

**CAB.88 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.89 MINUTES**

**DECISION:**

**The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.90 CALL INS**

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

**CAB.91 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.92 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader had no announcements to make but welcomed Ms Linda Collis the new Head of Community and Partnership Services to the meeting.

**CAB.93 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS OF THE CABINET**

A report was considered from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that asked the Cabinet to give consideration to extending the public speaking scheme to cover Cabinet meetings as well as Full Council meetings.

The Leader commented that it was important to ensure that members of the public were given the opportunity to engage in the political process and that it seemed timely to extend the public participation scheme through to Cabinet meetings. He perceived that it was important to hear the views of the public and that it was a positive step to allow the public to make a statement, present a petition or ask questions.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:**

- 1. The public speaking scheme that is currently operational for Full Council be extended to cover Cabinet meetings as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet.**
- 2. The Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution be amended accordingly.**

**CAB.94 HOUSING STRATEGY REFRESH AND ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that reported progress on the refresh of the Council's Housing Strategy 2004-2007 and associated Action Plan.

The Cabinet Members for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that the report outlined the action plans for the period 2007/08. The appendix to the report outlined the priorities to meet affordable housing needs, housing options and maintaining the independence of older people and vulnerable people. In the light of new guidance being brought forward in accordance with Government Office recommendations, a light touch review of the strategy had been completed.

The Cabinet also considered a recommendation from the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee from its meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007, (see below) which was agreed:

The Housing Targets for 2007/08 as detailed in the briefing paper to the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007 be agreed and the refreshed Housing Strategy be developed and consulted upon over the forthcoming months.

**DECISION:**

**The Housing Action Plans for 2007-08 be agreed and that officers progress and consult upon the Housing Strategy Refresh before the end of the 2007/08 financial year, subject to any further guidance on the development of a sub-regional Housing Strategy.**

**CAB.95      REFRESH OF FLOOD DEFENCE POLICY**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that presented the current, revised Flood Defence Policy and advised on the process to carry out a full review of the policy.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that once agreement had been reached the policy would undergo a full review and consultation.

The Head of Property and Operational Services commented on the fact that the County Council had not included some areas in its report on flooding. He recognised that the Wolverley and Riddings Brook were two areas that had suffered severe flooding. He stated that the problems that had occurred in these areas were not matters for this Council as the floods had occurred as a result of blocked culverts which were the responsibility of the Environment Agency.

**DECISION:**

- 1.      The Flood Defence Policy 2007 be adopted pending a review of flooding issues in the District during the next year.**
- 2.      The Policy be amended to include Riddings Brook and Wolverley, which the Cabinet recognises were two areas that were significantly affected by flooding but are not within the authority's responsibility.**

**CAB.96      REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY PHASE 1 - THE BLACK COUNTRY STUDY :  
PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that outlined the suggested response to the consultation on the Secretary of State's proposed modifications to the first phase in the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands, which looked specifically at the Black Country. The report sought the approval of Cabinet for representations to be submitted to Government Officer for the West Midlands (GOWM).

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity, the Forward Planning Manager went through the report and highlighted key areas. Support was sought for two representations to Government Office West Midlands - on the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 1 relating to the black country area which was now reaching the final stages of alteration to the strategy, whereby the Secretary of State had proposed alterations in the light of recommendations from an independent panel. There were two areas of significance - one being the Brierley Hill/Merry Hill area which is designated as a strategic centre which this council opposed but conditions had been put on future retail expansion. The council supported this form of redress as it would hopefully lead to a more even playing field and not hamper the council's own regeneration efforts. He commented that another issue was where the panel had recommended a number of pointers be put down to guide future transportation proposals in the Black Country. Consideration was being given to reopening a heavy rail line between Stourbridge and Walsall with a potential for it being used for passenger transport in the long term.

**DECISION:**

**The comments and suggested representations set out in Appendix one of the report to Cabinet be agreed as the formal representations to Government Office for the West Midlands.**

**CAB.97**

**HARVINGTON CONSDERVATION 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 Harvington Conservation Area and sought authority to undertake a public consultation on the proposals.

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Regeneration and Prosperity, the Forward Planning Manager went through the main areas of the report. He stated that the report sought the authorisation of Cabinet to undertake local consultation relating to the draft character appraisal for the Harvington areas. The areas had been designated as a conservation area in 1991 and a character appraisal was required to guide development control in the area and highlight the area as a special architectural area. The Parish Council, together with local amenity groups and landowners would be consulted and Cabinet would be apprised of the consultation exercise.

The Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007 had recommended the following to Cabinet which was agreed:

1. A public consultation be undertaken on the proposed Character Appraisal for Harvington Conservation area to gauge the opinion of all affected persons.
2. A report be submitted to Members at the end of the consultation period, to indicate the level of public support for the Character Appraisal.

## **DECISION:**

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

### **CAB.98 WORCESTERSHIRE HUB UPDATE**

A report was considered from the Customer Services Manager that provided Cabinet with an update of the Wyre Forest Customer Service Centre since opening in November 2006 and the results of Customer Service Satisfaction Surveys carried out in June/July 2007.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Customer Services reported that the Hub had been a success story in Wyre Forest. He was pleased to report that there would be increased efficiency when the opening hours at Bewdley were increased from 8.30 am to 5 pm.

The Chairman of the Corporate Service and Performance Scrutiny Committee commented that the Committee had scrutinised the Hub and its services and perceived them to be a great success. Although Wyre Forest had been last to complete its Hub, the Council had learnt some valuable lessons from other Councils in the area who had established their hubs earlier. He commented that as a result of the Hub being established in the Town Hall it had brought the Town Hall back into active service.

### **CAB.99 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

**(See decisions from Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007 at CAB.94 and CAB.97)**

### **CAB.100 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LICENSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE**

No recommendations were received from the Licensing and Environmental Committee from its meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2007.

The meeting closed at 6.23 pm.