

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,
KIDDERMINSTER
24TH APRIL 2008 (6.00PM)**

PRESENT:

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

OBSERVERS:

Councillors: G W Ballinger and Mrs F M Oborski.

CAB.200 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.201 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Holden declared a personal interest in agenda item 7.3. relating to Section 136 Grant Aid to Stourport-on-Severn Town Council as a member of the Town Council.

CAB.202 MINUTES

DECISION:

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 26th February 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.203 CALL INS

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

CAB.204 ITEMS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.205 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public had asked to participate at this meeting of the Cabinet.

CAB.206 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Expression of Thanks

The Leader wished to take the opportunity to thank members and officers for their help and support to Cabinet in making a success of key projects. He particularly wished to thank members of the Cabinet and the two scrutiny Chairmen for their support and involvement.

2. Launch of Bewdley Hub

The Leader announced that there had been a public launch of the Bewdley Hub facilities. The Hub allowed a full range of services to be accessed in Bewdley. The Bewdley Hub had been opened by the Chairman of the Council and the Leader wished to compliment the Head of Property and Operational Services for concluding the project on time. He also commended the Head of Human Resources for his Team's handling of the event.

CAB.207 HARDSHIP RATE RELIEF – SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY (HOLDINGS) PLC

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services regarding an application for hardship rate relief from Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) PLC. The Leader commented that the Severn Valley Railway attracted a quarter of a million visitors a year but had been dramatically affected by the devastation to its tracks by the summer floods. He stated that the Council had supported the company through NNDR hardship rate relief within the confines available to them. He was pleased that the company had attracted funding through other government bodies as well. He perceived that the rate relief that had been given to the company had been good value for money as it aided regeneration of the local vicinity and brought in tourists to spend money in the district.

DECISION:

- 1. Instalments that were suspended in respect of the Severn Valley Railway National Non-Domestic Rates recommence on 1st July 2008.**
- 2. Hardship relief in the 2008/2009 financial year be allowed in respect of rate.**

CAB.208 SECTION 136 GRANT AID TO STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN COUNCIL 2008/2009

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that requested approval of the payment of Section 136 Grant Aid for 2008/09 to Stourport-on-Severn Town Council.

The Leader of the Council explained that he had delegated authority to approve the grant of the monies once he had received notification of the projects proposed.

DECISION:

The application by Stourport-on-Severn Town Council for payments of its £22,444 Grant Aid for 2008/2009, under Section 136 of the local Government Act 1972, be approved in principle with delegated authority to the lead of the Council to approve, following agreement of the actual proposed projects.

CAB.209 DIVISIONAL SERVICE BUSINESS PLANS

A report was considered from the Head of the Chief Executive's Office that requested the Cabinet to approve the Divisional Service Business Plans for 2008/09.

DECISION:

The Divisional Business Plans circulated separately be approved for 2008/09.

CAB.210 SHARED SERVICES STRATEGY

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that recommended to Council that the final Shared Services Strategy be adopted.

The Leader of the Council stated that the Strategy built on previous work that the Council had undertaken on shared services. The purpose of the strategy was to set out what the council wished to achieve from shared services. The Strategy provided a framework and guidance to ensure that the council was clear about the purpose of new and existing shared services and only took forward new initiatives with sound principles.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The final Shared Services Strategy as contained in Appendix A to the report to Cabinet on 24th April 2008 be adopted.

CAB.211 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE

A report was considered from the Head of the Chief Executive's Office that outlined the management arrangements for the Tailoring our Equality and Diversity Strategy for Worcestershire partnership project ('TEDS').

It was noted that the aims and activities of the project were consistent with those contained in the Council's own Single Equality Scheme. Certain functions to be carried out under the TEDS Project would support developing practices (e.g. equality impact assessments) which form part of the Council's own Scheme.

DECISION:

The relevant Cabinet Member and Head of Chief Executive's Office be nominated as members of the TEDS Project Steering Group with delegated authority to make decisions, including decisions relating to expenditure, within the partnership's Terms of Reference and budget.

CAB.212 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING ENFORCEMENT POLICIES

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment regarding new environmental health and licensing enforcement policies. The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that a new regulators compliance code had come into force during April 2008. She commented that the adoption of these enforcement policies would help the council meet its statutory obligations and enable it to work more efficiently.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The Enforcement Policies attached as appendices to the report to Cabinet on 24th April 2008 be adopted.

CAB.213 WORCESTERSHIRE TELECARE STRATEGY

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that outlined the Telecare Strategy which provided a structure within which new services could be provided to help maintain people's independence in their own homes. The Cabinet Member for Housing Health and Rural Affairs commented that grant funding would be available from March 2009 to develop and roll out this strategy across the county. She commented that the Community Housing Group had taken over telecare and that it would be a subsidiary of the Housing Group in due course.

DECISION:

The Countywide strategy for Telecare 2007-2011 which has been developed using a partnership approach with Worcestershire County Council, the District Council's and the Worcestershire Primary Care Trust and other stakeholders be agreed.

CAB.214 COMMUNITIES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CLG) HOMELESSNESS FUNDING 2008/2009

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that proposed arrangements for the council to utilise priority need order funding for 2008/09. The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that the funding was ring fenced until 2010/11. She stated that the Council had reduced homelessness levels significantly through working with partners.

DECISION:

The proposed spend of the Communities for Local Government's Priority Need Order Funding for 2008/09 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet) to be approved.

CAB.215 AMENDMENT TO PRO-ACTIVE PLANNING ENFORCEMENT POLICY AND SCHEME OF DELEGATION

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that sought approval to amend the existing scheme of delegation for the pro-active planning enforcement policy. The proposals concerned changes to the way in which enforcement cases may be closed which would allow officers to concentrate resources on those cases where the unauthorised development is causing serious harm. It would also avoid the need for committee meetings where there were no significant new cases to report to members.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

1. The following be adopted:
 - a). The amendments to the Scheme of Delegation, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report to Cabinet on 24th April 2008.
 - b). The amendments to the Pro-Active Enforcement Policy as set out in Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet on 24th April 2008.
2. Authority be given to the Head of Planning, Health and Environment to amend Development Control Practice Note 13 – Public Speaking at Development Control Committee in accordance with paragraphs 4.1 to 4.3 of the report to Council.

CAB.216 BROOME CONSERVATION AREA – DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that outlined a draft conservation area appraisal for Broome and sought authority to undertake a public consultation on the proposals..

DECISION:

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

CAB.217 THE CHURCHILL CONSERVATION AREA – RESULTS OF CONSULTATION ON CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that asked the Cabinet to consider the results of a public consultation on the draft character appraisal for the Churchill conservation area and to agree the final document. It was noted that the consultation on the Conservation Area Appraisal for the Churchill had not identified any significant issues.

DECISION:

The Churchill Conservation Area Character Appraisal be approved.

CAB.218 DRAFT WEST MIDLANDS RAIL VISION : NETWORK DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION FEBRUARY 2008

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that sought the Cabinet's retrospective approval of comments and representations on the consultation document which were submitted to Centro-WMPTA by the response deadline of 25th March 2008. The Draft Vision set out both the network wide and route-specific schemes that Centro-WMPTA viewed as essential to developing and establishing high quality rail services that would support the economic development of the city region.

DECISION:

Approval be given to the schedule of comments set out at Appendix 1 to this report as the District Council's formal response to the West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority's (Centro-WMPTA) consultation on the Draft West Midlands Rail.

That, in instances where consultation deadlines fall outside scheduled Cabinet meeting dates, Cabinet delegates authority to the Cabinet Members for Planning, Regeneration & Prosperity and for Housing, Health & Rural Affairs to submit responses, within the consultation deadlines, in conjunction with the Head of Planning, Health & Environment and to report the response to the next available Cabinet meeting for information.

CAB.219 REVISION TO CONFORMITY PROTOCOL OPERATING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that advised the Cabinet of the changes to the Conformity Protocol operating in the West Midlands. The West Midlands Regional Assembly had requested that all local planning authorities in the West Midlands adopt the revised Protocol.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The West Midlands Conformity Protocol, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet on 24th April 2008, be endorsed for use in the Local Development Framework and Development Control processes.

CAB.220 Recommendation from Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee 5th March 2008

Re : Finding the Right Solutions : The Future of the Lea Castle Centre – Consultation by Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust

The Leader of the Council commented that the views of all parties had been presented on the future of the Lea Castle Centre. He wished to thank Councillor Mrs Oborski for her excellent chairing of such a difficulty issue.

DECISION:

The recommendation as set out below be retrospectively noted:

Option 2 of the consultation document, entitled “Finding the Right Solutions: The Future of the Lea Castle Centre” be recommended to the Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust subject to a condition that, in seeking alternative accommodation for the residents of the Lea Castle Centre, any alternative placement must be acceptable to the family of the individual and must be agreed and in place before the closure.

CAB.221 Recommendation from Corporate Service and Performance Scrutiny Committee, 1st April 2008

(1) Proposed Implementation of Photography Consent Forms

The Chairman of the Corporate Service and Performance Scrutiny Committee commented that the reason for devising the system was to gain a more corporate approach. Thus if a person included in a photo did not consent to its use it could not be reproduced and any consent would only be valid for five years.

DECISION:

The recommendation, as set out below, be AGREED:

The proposed Council photography consent form for the general public, officers and members, as set out in Appendix A of the briefing paper to the Corporate Service and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 1st April 2008 be approved.

(2) No Barriers Review Panel

The Leader wished to express his thanks to Councillor Howard Martin who had chaired the Review panel. He stated that the first awards evening would be held at the Community Housing Group on 9th May 2008. It was intended that it should be an annual event. He thanked Peter Jones, his team and Cabinet for the work that had been undertaken on the No Barriers Scheme.

The recommendation, as set out below, be AGREED:

Approval be given to the following arrangements for the No Barriers Award Panel and Awards Ceremony:

1. Venue for Awards Ceremony

The awards ceremony be held in the Community Housing Group Board Room at Foley House, Stourport Road, Kidderminster on 9th May 2008.

2. Awards Panel

(a) The Awards Panel be asked to ensure that:

- (i) The awards are intended for people or organisations who have “gone the extra mile” to help people with disabilities, as opposed to people who provide support as part of their normal duties; and**
- (ii) The purpose of the scheme is to give awards and not to decide on a winner.**

(b) The Council’s Access officer be invited to attend meetings of the Award Panel in view of his specialist knowledge.

(3) Single Equality Scheme

The Leader commented that the scheme had now been finalised. The scheme incorporated six current equality issues and would meet the Council’s legal obligations with regard to equality and diversity.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The draft Single Equality Scheme, as circulated to the Corporate Service and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 1st April 2008, be approved.

(4) Newsyre Review Panel

The Leader thanked Councillor Mrs Edginton for chairing the Review Panel. He commented that a series of good meetings had been held and that a number of people had been interviewed. He thanked the Panel for the work that had been undertaken. and stated that the recommendations would be noted

DECISION:

The recommendation, as set out below, be NOTED and that a further paper would be brought back to Cabinet with a more full bodied strategy in the new municipal year.

- 1. The format of the Newsyre publication be altered to an A4 format magazine, in order that the publication is more attractive to residents.**
- 2. An Editorial Group, made up of officers, be created to complement the Member Editorial Group.**
- 3. Membership of the Member Editorial Panel be revised to comprise the Chairman of the Council, the Leader of the Council and one representative from each political group.**
- 4. Alternative methods of delivery for the newswire Publication be investigated, including a review of the Shuttle distribution costs in comparison to using the Chronicle, to reduce the cost of distribution, for those households who do not receive a copy of the Kidderminster shuttle; and local Parish Councils be involved in the investigation.**
- 5. Worcestershire County Council be formally approached to negotiate the development of County pages in Newsyre.**
- 6. The number of published editions of Newsyre, per calendar year, be determined once the future format of the publication is agreed and the exact costs are known to the Council.**

(5) Corporate Plan

The Chairman of the Corporate Service and Performance Scrutiny Committee stated that there had been a lot of consultation on the corporate plan both at member and officer level.

The Leader of the Council stated that he was grateful for the work that had been undertaken on the scrutiny of the document. He commented on the passion that had been shown by members on the subject. He stated that the Corporate Plan represented the Council's views and he felt that it was a deliverable plan and could bring about some real improvements to the district of Wyre Forest.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs stated that he would like to pay homage to the Head of the Chief Executive's office and his team for the work they had undertaken on the Corporate Plan.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

The contents of the draft Corporate Plan 2008, as circulated to the Corporate Service and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 1st April 2008, be approved.

CAB.222 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE, 17TH MARCH 2008

RE: INTERNAL AUDIT – ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2008-2009.

The Head of Financial Services commented that the Inspection Plan had been presented to the Audit Committee and had identified a shortfall in audit inspection days.

The Leader of the Council stated that the recommendations from the Audit Committee, as set out below, would be NOTED and he asked the Head of Financial Services to look at providing the extra days through existing funding.

DECISION :

- 1. Approval be given to the Internal Audit – Annual Audit Plan 2008-2009 attached as Appendix 1 of the report to Audit Committee, noting the shortfall in days available.**
- 2. The Head of Financial Services be asked to investigate ways of meeting the shortfall identified in the Annual Audit Plan 2008-2009.**

CAB.223 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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB.224 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.

CAB.225 MINUTES

The Exempt Minutes of the Cabinet held on 26th February 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

CAB.226 PREMISES AT BEWDLEY

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment regarding options for bringing forward the regeneration of premises in Bewdley. A further report would be brought back to the Cabinet once investigations had been completed.

CAB.227 DISPOSAL OF PROPERTY, STOURPORT

A report was considered from the Head of Property and Operational Services regarding the sale of a council owned property in Stourport-on-Severn. The Cabinet viewed the sale as an excellent capital receipt and it meant that liabilities would be removed from the council for the upkeep of the property.

CAB.228 COUNCIL TAX AND NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES WRITE OFF OF AMOUNTS OUTSTANDING

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that asked the Cabinet to write off a sum in respect of Council Taxes and National Non-Domestic rates. It was noted that all cases had been significantly pursued and that the Council had an excellent record for the recovery of debts.

The meeting closed at 6.48 pm.