

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,
KIDDERMINSTER
18TH DECEMBER 2008 (6:00 PM)**

Present:

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

Observers:

Councillors: G W Ballinger, Mrs H E Dyke, P Dyke, P B Harrison, H J Martin, Mrs F M Oborski, S J Williams.

CAB.133 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.134 Declarations Of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.135 Minutes

DECISION:

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20th November 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.136 Call Ins

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

CAB.137 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.138 Leader's Announcements

No announcements were made.

CAB.139 Budget Strategy

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that identified the Budget Strategy and associated timetable to deliver the budget for 2009/10.

The Leader explained that at this time of year the administration would normally declare its first proposals for the budget. However, due to unprecedented times, and notwithstanding the Icelandic Bank situation, which had been challenging for the Council, he announced that he was not in a position to present the initial budget strategy. The Chairman of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee had accordingly been advised of this and the budget strategy would now be presented to the January 2009 meeting of the Cabinet. He commented that time would be allowed for a full scrutiny of the budget to take place. The appendix to the report had therefore been amended to reflect the situation.

DECISION: The Proposed Budget Timetable attached at Appendix A of the report to Cabinet be approved.

CAB.140 Calculation of the Council Tax Base 2009/2010

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that outlined the Council Tax base for the Wyre Forest District as required under Section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The Leader informed the Cabinet that it was good to report that the administration had a buoyant tax base with the additional bonus of receiving extra council tax this year from Band E properties.

DECISION:

That pursuant to the report of the Head of Financial Services and in accordance with the above Act and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the Council Tax base for Wyre Forest District for the financial year 2009/10 shall be:

Parish Properties

| | | |
|--|--------------|--|
| Bewdley | 3719 | |
| Broome | 170 | |
| Chaddesley Corbett | 731 | |
| Churchill and Blakedown | 747 | |
| Town of Kidderminster | 18070 | |
| Kidderminster Foreign | 394 | |
| Ribbesford | 196 | |
| Rock | 1213 | |
| Rushock | 73 | |
| Stone | 260 | |
| Upper Arley | 335 | |
| Stourport on Severn | 7127 | |
| Wolverley and Cookley | 1781 | |
| Tax Base for Wyre Forest District | 34816 | |

(Note: The Tax base for 2008/2008 was 34653)

CAB.141 Treasury Management Update

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that updated Cabinet Member on the current situation with regard to treasury management. The Leader commented that the administration had endeavoured to keep Members informed with regard to treasury management. He stated that the report updated Members on the situation and he anticipated receiving some information from meetings concerning the Landsbanki Bank that had been held earlier in the week in Iceland. With regard to the 2 UK registered banks, the Council had received a restated balance sheet and both these were looking in a surplus position. The Council would watch to see what dividend it would receive as part of the settlement. The Leader wished to add an additional recommendation to those contained in the report to the effect that another update would be issued at the January 2009 meeting of Cabinet.

DECISION:

- 1. The current position in relation to the recovery of funds from the three banks which the Council has investments be noted.**
- 2. The impact of the proposed Capital Finance Regulation in relation to the accounting arrangements surrounding the Council's Icelandic Investments be noted.**
- 3. A further update report be made to the January 2009 meeting of Cabinet.**

CAB.142 Housing Benefit Overpayment Debt Position as at 30th September 2008

A report was considered from the Head of Financial Services that informed Members of the Housing Benefit Overpayment Debt Position as at 30th September 2008.

The Leader informed Members that the details of the debt position were contained in the appendix to the report. He noted that there was a slight increase in overpayments but taken in the context of the millions that the department handled it was an acceptable increase. It was perceived likely that in the current economic climate and with the associated increase in benefit claims that there would be an increase in the overpayment figures.

DECISION: The Housing Benefit overpayment debt level, age of debt and performance against targets, as at the 30th September 2008, be noted.

CAB.143 Worcestershire Substance Misuse Strategy 2008 – 2011

A report was considered from the Head of Community Services that recommended to Council that the Worcestershire Substance Misuse Strategy 2008 - 2011 be adopted.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services commented that this was the first County wide strategy to address substance misuse issues. It had been signed off by all key partners and set out the key ambitions and priorities.

RECOMMENDED to Council: The Worcestershire Substance Misuse Strategy 2008-11 be adopted.

The Chairman of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee commented that this item had been reviewed by her Committee.

DECISION: The Recommendations from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee (as set out below) were AGREED:

The Worcestershire Substance Misuse Strategy be adopted.

CAB.144 ICT Strategy and Implementation Programme

A report was considered from the Head of Human Resources that updated the Cabinet on the development and implementation of the ICT Strategy and Implementation Programme.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services stated that in July this year a report had been presented to Council that set out the reasons for the Council investing £2 million on its IT infrastructure. He commented that this report set out the process with regard to how the money would be spent in order to improve processes within the Council.

A key piece of the strategy was electronic document management whereby the Council would be working towards a paperless environment. As part of the Strategy there would be one central database for all departments instead of the current disparate system. There would be one central location for documents and they would be held in one format. He commented that the strategy would allow staff to work more flexibly at home and this would help lower sickness levels and save on office space. The strategy encouraged greater self service for the Council's customers and employees. Technology would be in place that would ensure easier and quicker access to documents through the internet. Licences and bills could be paid for on line which was not possible at present. The strategy presented a radical advancement for the Council to work smarter and more efficiently whilst delivering financial savings across the authority.

The Leader complimented the Information Technology Manager and his Team in the role they had played in the strategy. He was excited by the potential savings and commented that a further report would be made to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee to ensure that Members were kept fully informed with regard to implementation of the strategy.

A lengthy discussion ensued on the strategy where the Leader emphasised the benefit of the CAIRO system for members to access Council documentation. This system had saved the Council a considerable amount of money in terms of paper equating to approximately £20,000 per annum in savings by sending documents electronically to Members. He alluded to the fact that Members had access to a range of printers within the Council whereby they could print out papers from the CAIRO system. Members were advised that in year 4 savings would be made by implementing the strategy and this money could then be reinvested into front line services.

DECISION:

- 1. Approval be given to the ICT Strategy and Implementation Programme 2008-2012.**
- 2. To retain SOCITM consulting to advise on the preparation and implementation of a detailed ICT Strategy.**

CAB.145 Implications of the Pitt Review on Flooding

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that asked the Cabinet to consider the implications for the Council of the recommendations of Sir Michael Pitt's report into last summer's floods.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that this report flagged up the implications of 92 of the recommendations of the review into the floods of 2007. The comments that had been submitted by the Council ran in tandem with those of the County Council and the Fire Service. She commented that this was a far reaching review and included statutory and operational matters which had possible financial implications for the Council.

It was noted that a robust scrutiny of the Pitt Review had taken place by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee commented that the meeting had been well attended by members of the public who had contributed towards the debate on the Pitt Review. Concern was expressed that money had not been forthcoming from the Government for this area.

DECISION:

- 1. Agreement be given to the comments and recommended actions, as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report to Cabinet.**
- 2. Consideration be given to any consequential budget implications arising from (1) above as part of the forthcoming budget setting process.**

The recommendations of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee were also considered and AGREED as set out below

1. **The report on the Implications of the Pitt Review on Flooding take account of recommendations from the Joint Scrutiny Exercise. Consideration be given to recommendations from the exercise and the officers proposed responses to the Pitt Review in so far as they relate to the District Council.**
2. **A letter be written to the Environment Agency supporting voluntary groups' requests for training and the provision of insurance.**
3. **A letter be written to the Local MP expressing concern that the Queen's speech did not include details on funding provision for flooding.**

CAB.146 Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire Refreshed Issues and Options Consultation Response

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that sought the Cabinet's approval of representations submitted on the Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire, Refreshed Issues and Options Consultation, September 2008.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise commented that a discussion forum had been contained within an edition of the Express and Star Newspaper and concern had been expressed about the use of waste barges on local canals.

DECISION:

The comments and representations, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet, be agreed as the District Council response to the Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy (Refreshed Issues and Options) Consultation.

CAB.147 Exclusion of the Press and Public

DECISION:

That 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of "exempt information" as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB.148 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.149 Licence for the Occupation of a Car Park

A report was considered from the Head of Property and Operational Services that asked the Cabinet to consider issuing a licence for the occupation of a car park.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm.