

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,

KIDDERMINSTER

26TH MARCH 2009 (6:00 PM)

---

**Present:**

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

**Observers:**

Councillors: J Aston, G W Ballinger, A J Buckley, Mrs H E Dyke, P Dyke, P B Harrison, J Holden, Miss S C Meekings, Mrs F M Oborski, M W Partridge, M A Salter, N J Thomas and G C Yarranton.

**CAB.213 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N J Desmond.

**CAB.214 Declarations Of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.215 Minutes**

**DECISION: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 24th February 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.216 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.217 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items that required urgent attention.

**CAB.218 Leader's Announcements**

**1. Audit Commission Press Statement re: Icelandic Banks**

The Leader informed Members that the Audit Commission had released a press statement outlining its investigation into the collapse of Icelandic Banks and the effect on local authorities who had invested money in them.

He was pleased to inform Members that this Council was not one of the seven Councils who had been admonished as this Council had followed the necessary policies and procedures.

A Member asked the Leader when he anticipated the Council getting back the money that had been invested. The Leader confirmed that an interim report had been received that intimated that the return of the money was imminent and the report also confirmed that the dividend return would be significantly higher than had previously been anticipated. The dividend payment were expected at the start of summer 2009.

**2. Driving Standards Agency**

Members were informed that a public meeting had been held with the Driving Standards Agency concerning the proposed closure of the Kidderminster Testing Centre. Since the meeting a letter had been received to confirm that the Testing Centre would be closed as from 25<sup>th</sup> May 2009. The Leader commented that the Action Group were still exploring options open to them and that the level of public interest in the matter was still high,

**3. Council Restructuring**

It was noted that a number of staff would be leaving the authority through voluntary redundancy and that the Corporate Management Team would also be made smaller.

Members were informed that the Head of Operational Services was on leave and would be leaving the authority at the end of the month. The Leader wished to place on record his thanks for his service to the Council. The Head of the Chief Executive's Office would also be leaving the authority at the end of March 2009 and he was thanked for his contribution to the Council.

The Head of the Chief Executive's Office was presented with a gift from the Cabinet. He thanked the Leader for the gift and commented how much he had enjoyed working for the authority over the last 19 years.

**CAB.219 Revised Data Protection Policy 2009-2011**

A report was considered from the Head of Community and Partnership Services that outlined updates that had been made to the Council's Data Protection Policy. In the absence of the Cabinet Member, the Leader presented the report and commented that the updates to the policy covered electronic and manual records ensured that the policy was in accordance with current legislation and good practice.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:**

**The revised Freedom of Information Policy 2009/2011 be adopted by the Council and the next review of the policy be carried out in 2011.**

**CAB.220 Revised Freedom of Information Policy 2009-2011**

A report was considered from the Head of Community and Partnership Services that outlined changes that had been made to the Council's Freedom of Information Policy. In the absence of the Cabinet Member, the Leader informed Cabinet Members that the updated policy reflected changes in current legislation.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:**

**The revised Freedom of Information Policy 2009/2011 be adopted by the Council and the next review of the policy be carried out in 2011.**

**CAB.221 Recommissioning of Home Improvement Agency Services and Kickstart**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that informed Members of proposals to recommission the current Care and Repair Agency Services in partnership with Worcestershire County Council, Supporting People, the Worcestershire PCT and the six District Councils in Worcestershire.

**DECISION:**

- 1. To confirm the participation in the joint recommissioning of a new countywide Home Improvement Agency and to authorise the Head of Planning, Health & Environment, in consultation with the Head of Legal & Democratic Services, to finalise the necessary contractual arrangements for the commencement of the new service.**
- 2. To support the new HIA through the use of revenue and capital base budget contributions that are committed to the current service arrangements with the North Worcestershire Care & Repair Agency.**
- 3. Approve the roll out and implementation of the Kickstart Scheme across Worcestershire as set out in section 5 of the report**

**Cab.222 Communities for Local Government (CLG) Homelessness Funding 2009-2010**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that outlined the proposed arrangements for the Council's utilisation of the CLG's Priority Need order Funding for 2009/2010.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that extra money had been made available to Local authorities for homelessness related work. Much work had been done with Wyre Forest Community Housing to reduce homelessness levels and priority need order schemes had made a big contribution to this. It was noted that ring fenced funding of £67,000 per annum had been granted until 2010/11.

**DECISION:**

**The proposed spend of the Communities for Local Government's Priority Need Order Funding for 2009/10 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet) be approved.**

**CAB.223 The Department for Transport consultation on Improving Access to Taxis**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that asked the Cabinet to agree a response for the Department of Transport (DfT) consultation on 'Improving Access to Taxis.'

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs commented that the consultation had been published in February and responses were required by the end of April. The document was aimed specifically at improving access by disabled people to taxis and had been launched as a result of concerns from user groups and other consultations. It was noted that the document completely supported the Decision of Council made in 2005 to deregulate taxis over a 3 year period and adopt new policy conditions for wheel chair accessibility. Regulating a certain proportion of the taxi fleet would be unworkable and open to legal challenge as there would be practical implementation problems. Moreover the Council agreed with the element of impact assessment.

**DECISION: The Consultation Responses as set out in Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet be agreed.**

**CAB.224 The List of Buildings of Local Architectural and/or Historic Interest (The Local List) – Draft Proposals for Wolverley and Cookley Parish**

A report was considered from the Head of planning, Health and Environment that requested authority to undertake a consultation on the proposals for Wolverley and Cookley Parish.

**DECISION: The draft Local List for the Parish of Wolverley & Cookley, as set out in Appendix 2 of the Cabinet Report, be supported and that officers be authorised to undertake a public consultation on the Draft List before reporting back with a further recommendation.**

**CAB.225 Recommendations from the Regeneration and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee 18<sup>th</sup> March 2009 re: Rural Areas Local List Phase 1 (Wolverley and Cookley)**

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Regeneration and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee regarding the Local List (Wolverley and Cookley).

**DECISION: A public consultation to gauge opinion of all affected persons be undertaken with a report to Members at the end of the consultation period to indicate the level of public support to the list.**

**CAB.226 Stourport Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas Boundary Amendment**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that asked the Cabinet to agree a draft amendment to the existing boundary for the Stourport-on-Severn Partnership Scheme in conservation Areas (PSiCA).

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise commented that the proposal altered the existing boundary to include part of New Street, York Street and Lombard Street. The Cabinet were informed that English Heritage supported the proposed boundary changes.

**DECISION: The boundary amendment as shown in Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report be approved for the purposes of offering grants from the Stourport-on-Severn Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas.**

**CAB.227 Wyre Forest District Revised External Funding Monitoring Policy**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that asked the Cabinet to approve the revision of the External Funding Monitoring Policy.

**DECISION: That the revised External Funding Monitoring Policy be approved.**

**CAB.228 Recommendations from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee 4<sup>th</sup> March 2009 re : External Funding Monitoring Policy**

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee regarding the External Funding Monitoring Policy.

**DECISION: The revised External Funding Monitoring Policy be adopted.**

**CAB.229 Recommendations from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee 4<sup>th</sup> February 2009 re: External Funding Review Panel**

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee regarding the External Funding Review Panel. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee commented that these recommendations had been referred from the February 2009 meeting of Cabinet so that they could be considered with the new External Funding Monitoring Policy. It was noted that officers applied for funding on a regular basis and these would be discussed at quarterly scrutiny briefing sessions.

**CAB.230 Recommendations from the Audit Committee 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009 : Re Revised External Funding Monitoring Policy**

The Cabinet considered a recommendation from the Audit Committee.

**DECISION: The revised External Funding Monitoring Strategy be adopted.**

**CAB.231 Shropshire Council Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Response**

A report was considered from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment that sought the Cabinet's endorsement of representations submitted on the Issues and Options Consultation Paper for the Shropshire Core Strategy.

**DECISION: The representations submitted to the Shropshire Council on the Shropshire Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper, as set out at Appendix 2 to the Cabinet report be endorsed.**

**CAB.232 Recommendations from Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009 re : No Surprises Review Panel**

A report was considered from the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee that outlined recommendations regarding the No Surprises Review Panel.

The Chairman of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations and made the following comments:

The Panel had made 7 recommendations and it was hoped these would be supported as it was perceived that Members should be kept fully apprised of the business of the Council.

**DECISION:**

1. **An awareness campaign be arranged for officers and members for "Think Local Member". This would include posters and possibly a sticker which would remind Officers to inform Members on what was happening in Council wards.**
2. **An abbreviated copy of the Council phonebook be made available to all Members.**
3. **A quarterly item be added to the Members Bulletin asking for feedback to go to the Strategy, Partnerships & Communications Manager.**
4. **The No Surprises Protocol be amended.**
5. **Officers be requested to include all Council events and activities on the media planner which is on the Council's intranet.**
6. **The responses to the No Surprises questionnaire be included in the Members Bulletin.**
7. **A standing item on the Members No Surprises Protocol be included in the monthly Core Brief.**

**CAB.233 Recommendations from Community Services Scrutiny Committee re: Countryside Service and Implications of Taking on Additional Land**

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Community Services Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee informed the Cabinet that the matter had been discussed fully. Members were aware of the amount of land that the Council owned and managed and it was recognised that this was increasing. It was recognised that currently only a small amount of staff were in place to deal with the land and it was perceived that additional manpower was required.

**DECISION: The proposal to utilise Section 106 monies, to ensure that sufficient manpower resources are available when new land is acquired be endorsed.**

**CAB.234 Recommendations from the Audit Committee 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Audit Committee on the following items:

**Strategic Audit Plan 2009 - 2012**

The Chairman of the Audit Committee commented that the internal audit service worked in partnership with external auditors to minimise the cost to the authority. The cost of the contract this year was likely to be lower than in previous years due to the restructuring of the authority. As part of the Plan high risk areas would be considered.

**DECISION: Approval be given to the updated Terms of Reference for the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Section attached as Appendix 1 of the report to the Audit Committee.**

**Report on Internal Audit – Terms of Reference - Update**

The Chairman of the Audit Committee informed the Cabinet that the Terms of Reference had been updated in order to comply with new legislation and best practice.

**DECISION: Approval be given to the updated Terms of Reference for the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Section (as contained in Appendix 1 of the report to the Audit Committee).**

**CAB.235 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 paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.**

**CAB.236 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.237 Minutes**

The Exempt Minutes of the Cabinet held on 24th February 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

**CAB.238 Cost Implications of Planning (Enforcement) Committee Resolution to take Direct Action**

A report was considered from the Head of planning, Health and Environment that sought a Cabinet decision on the potential financial implications of the Planning (Enforcement) Committee's resolution to take direct action in respect of a property in Blakedown.

**CAB.239 Partnership with Wyre Forest Leisure Community Association Ltd/DC Leisure**

A report was considered from the Head of Community and Partnership Services that asked the Cabinet to approve negotiations with DC Leisure regarding the partnership agreement.

The meeting closed at 6.56 pm.