

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,
KIDDERMINSTER
16TH FEBRUARY 2010 (6:00PM)**

Present:

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

Observers:

Councillors: G W Ballinger, H E Dyke and F M Oborski.

CAB.167 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.168 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.169 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19th January 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.170 Call-Ins

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

CAB.171 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.172 Public Participation

No members of the public had registered to speak.

CAB.173 Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised the Cabinet that at the forthcoming Council meeting he would be giving an update on the Council's Icelandic investments. He also notified members that they would be issued with a briefing note on new waste arrangements.

CAB.174 Financial Strategy 2010/2013

Members considered a report from the Director of Resources that outlined the Financial Strategy for 2010/2013.

The Leader advised that since the Financial Strategy had been considered on 22nd December 2009 three amendments had been received from the Labour, Liberal/Liberal Democratic and Independent Community and Health Concern Groups. The Leader was pleased to inform Members that there had been no substantial changes to the original strategy and was delighted to report that considerable savings had been made during formulation of the strategy. He was also pleased to note that there had not been any significant political opposition to the way that the administration planned to spend the Council's resources and where possible, the administration had endeavoured to incorporate suggestions from the other political groups. The Leader welcomed the involvement of Members in the scrutiny process. He commended the quality and strength of the scrutiny process that had been undertaken on the budget.

The Cabinet Member for Resources echoed the comments of the Leader. He perceived that the scrutiny process of the budget had been emboldened. He commended the work that had been undertaken in what were very difficult financial circumstances. He wished to place on record his thanks to the key participants in the budget process in particular the Director of Resources and his Team, the Corporate Management Team, Diane Tilley, Interim Chief Executive and Councillor G W Ballinger who had chaired the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee. He commented that he had found the prioritisation model that had been used during the budget scrutiny to be particularly helpful. He considered that Wyre Forest had adopted a successful and unique 'bottom up' approach to its scrutiny of the budget. Of note in the proposed budget was the recommendation to grant aid to the Parish Councils which had been strongly recommended during the scrutiny process. It was also highlighted that there had been inclusion of £6,000 for a lengthsman scheme for the Kidderminster area and the amount of money paid to Members for mileage would be reduced from 52p per mile to 40p per mile.

The Chairman of the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee commended the Administration for incorporating recommendations from other political groups into their proposed budget. He alluded to the fact that the scrutiny of the budget had involved Members from all parties. He also commended the Cabinet for not having had any call-ins for the sixth year running and he attributed this to the fact that the Administration listened to suggestions from other political groups.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: The proposals as contained in Appendix 1 (attached) be agreed.

CAB.175 Results of Budget consultation

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that informed the Cabinet of the results of the budget consultation exercise that was launched following the presentation of the Financial Strategy 2010/13 to Cabinet on 22nd December 2009.

DECISION: The results of the budget consultation exercise as detailed within the report to Cabinet be noted.

CAB.176 Report of the Director of Resources in respect of Sections 25-28 Local Government Act 2003

A report was considered from the Director of Resources in respect of statutory duties placed on the Local Authority Chief Financial Officers in relation to budget setting and monitoring.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: The opinion of the Director of Resources regarding the budget proposals, recommended by the Cabinet on 22nd December 2009, as detailed in the report to Cabinet be noted.

CAB.177 The Prudential System of Local Government Finance and the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy Report 2010/2011

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that sought approval for the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for the financial year 2010/2011.

The Cabinet Member for Resources referred to the guidance from Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) which had been changed this year. Members were informed that within the guidance was a suggestion that a Panel be established to scrutinise the Treasury Management Strategy and he stated that this requirement would be addressed in the Corporate Governance report to Annual Council. Discussions had taken place about the pertinence of the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee scrutinising treasury management matters. He also alluded to the need for the Council to have appropriate training arrangements in place for Members and staff engaged in treasury management. Members were also advised that the Council would be undertaking a competitive procurement exercise to appoint treasury management consultants when the current contract with Butlers ended on 31st August 2010. The Council was also required to give consideration to further measures of credit quality to apply to counterparties. Finally he advised Members about a strategy going forward which covered the Council's debt and investment protocol and the Council's borrowing and investment strategy.

Members noted that the Council's Treasury Management Review Panel had considered the report prior to it being presented to Cabinet and had endorsed all the recommendations contained within it.

Agenda Item No. 3

A debate ensued on the most appropriate committee/panel to consider treasury management issues. It was generally considered that the Audit Committee was probably not an appropriate committee to scrutinise treasury management issues. However Members were assured that this issue would be considered again in the new municipal year. One Member wished to give particular thanks to Tracey Southall, Financial Services Manager, as they had been impressed by the way she had advised Members on treasury management.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- 1. The updated Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2009/10 Revised, 2010/2011 to 2012/2013 be adopted.**
- 2. The updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy 2010/2011, the associated Prudential Indicators and the detailed criteria included in Appendix 6 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**
- 3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP be approved.**
- 4. The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator be approved.**
- 5. As part of Budget Monitoring, the Prudential Indicators be revisited following the approval of the Council's Budget Strategy as the indicators included within the report to Cabinet are based on current recommendations.**
- 6. To continue to keep the current Treasury Management Practices (TMP) under review with the assistance of the Council's Treasury Consultants.**
- 7. The Financial Regulations and Constitution be amended to adopt the recommended clauses in the revised CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice issued in November 2009 as set out in Appendix 9 and Section 10 of the Report to Cabinet.**

CAB.178 Re-commission of Home Improvement Agency Services

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that updated Members regarding the proposal to re-commission the current Care and Repair Agency Services in partnership with Worcestershire County Council, Supporting People, The Worcestershire Primary Care Trust and the six District Councils.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services informed Members that at present the work that was undertaken to keep people in their homes via the giving of grants was currently carried out in Wyre Forest by the Home Improvement Agency for private clients and the Community Housing Group for the public sector.

Agenda Item No. 3

Members were advised that in the South of the County there was a simpler procedure in place for the giving of grants and it was proposed that Councils in the north of the County fell in line with the arrangements that were in place in South Worcestershire. This would result in there being a County-wide Care and Repair Group and would result in reduced paperwork as only one company would operate the scheme. Members also received an update on the progress regarding joining the Kickstart Programme.

Members noted that the proposals had been scrutinised by the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 3rd February 2010. The Chairman of the Committee wished to extend her thanks to Kate Bailey, Strategic Housing Services Manager, for her report and stated that there had been considerable interest in the matter from Members and a lively debate had ensued.

DECISION:

- 1. To agree the commencement of the new Countywide Home Improvement Agency from April 2010 in accordance with the specification at Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet.**
- 2. That the Director of Legal and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services finalise and enter into the necessary contractual arrangements for the commencement of the new service.**

CAB.179 Recommendations from the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting 11th February 2010 : Draft Workforce Plan

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee regarding the Draft Workforce Plan.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the draft Workforce Plan 2010-12 be adopted by Council.

CAB.180 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.181 Bewdley Town Centre Regeneration Project

A report was considered from the Director of Legal and Corporate Services that sought Members' approval for the sale of land in Bewdley as part of the proposed Bewdley Town Centre Regeneration Project.

The Cabinet Member for Legal and Corporate Services informed Cabinet Members that the Project was now moving forward to the planning stage. The Project had been undertaken in conjunction with a number of partners.

DECISION:

- 1. The revisions to the overall scheme concept as set out in the report to Cabinet be agreed.**
- 2. The Director of Legal and Corporate Services be authorised to agree the terms for the Freehold disposal of a plot of land subject to the granting of appropriate planning permission and the creation of replacement parking spaces.**
- 3. The Director of Resources include in the Capital programme reinvestment of part of the capital receipts from the sale of the land in the refurbishment of the public toilets.**

The meeting finished at 6.40 pm.