

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
CABINET  
THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,  
KIDDERMINSTER  
23RD MARCH 2010 (6:00PM)**

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**Present:**

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

**Observers:**

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

**CAB.182 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N J Desmond.

**CAB.183 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.184 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 16th February 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.185 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.186 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

The Director of Legal and Corporate Services advised that there was an urgent item which would be considered under the Council's urgency rules (as contained in the Constitution) at agenda item 10.2.

**CAB.187 Public Participation**

The Leader of the Council received a petition from Mrs C Styles who represented some of the allotment holders in Kidderminster.

Mrs Styles addressed the Cabinet and raised a number of queries:

- Why the rent increase was so large?
- Whether members had noticed the deficit in the budget before 2009?
- Whether Members from Stourport and Bewdley had voted on the increase in rent on allotments in Kidderminster?
- If this was the case why had the rent on Stourport allotments not been increased?
- Whether the Cabinet Member was aware of any other council where such a huge rent increase had been imposed with no additional facilities being provided.

The Cabinet Member for Community And Partnership Services responded to the queries. He stated that historically the Council had subsidised the allotment service as the rent had not covered the cost of the service. However, in view of the current economic climate the Council was no longer in a position to subsidise the service and the decision to increase the rent had been taken in the 2009/2010 budget. The increase amounted to a 94% increase in rent. He commented that despite the increase in the rent the cost of an allotment would be less than £2 per week which he considered to be value for money. He stated that the Council was no longer in a position to subsidise the service due to the constraints on its budget. With reference to Councillors in Bewdley and Stourport voting on the proposed increase in rent for allotments in Kidderminster, he commented that the Council did not own any allotments in Stourport and that these were owned by Stourport Town Council. He offered an opportunity to meet with Mrs Styles and some representatives from the allotments together with the Director of Community and Partnership Services in the next couple of weeks.

**Decision: The petition be received and acknowledged by the Chief Executive.**

**CAB.188 Leader's Announcements**

The Leader drew Members' attention to the fact that the Council had won an award for procurement. The Council's Procurement Officer had drawn up a collaborative insurance contract for 6 District Councils in Worcestershire and South Staffordshire District Council which had resulted in savings of £1.7 million for the authorities concerned. The Leader was pleased to note that the Council had beaten other finalists including 3 County Councils and a London Borough. The Leader asked the Director for Resources to extend his thanks to the Procurement Officer for his excellent work on the Collaborative Insurance Contract.

**CAB.189 Grants to Voluntary Bodies**

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that asked the Cabinet to give consideration to a request from Bliss Gate Playing Fields for a grant from the Pump Priming Fund to assist the funding of initial running costs.

**Decision:**

1. **A Grant of £300 to Bliss Gate Playing Fields be made.**
2. **The allocation of future grants be delegated to the Leader, in consultation with the Director of Resources.**

**CAB.190 Housing Assistance Policy**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that asked the Cabinet to agree the proposed Private Sector Assistance Policy 2010.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services informed the Cabinet that the Council currently committed £800,000 to Disabled Facilities Grants. This included a payment of £429,000 in Government Grant and £120,000 for decent homes assistance for owner occupiers. Members were advised that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grants would be undertaken through a newly commissioned Home Improvement Agency managed by Festival Housing.

**Decision: The Wyre Forest Private Sector Assistance Policy 2010 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be adopted.**

**CAB.191 Supporting People Strategy 2010-2013**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that outlined the new Supporting People Strategy 2010-2013 which had been developed by the Supporting People Team and was supported by the Supporting People Commissioning Body, of which Wyre Forest District Council was a Member.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services advised the Cabinet that the detail in the strategy that related specifically to Wyre forest was contained in pages 131-135 of the Strategy.

**Decision: Delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services and the Cabinet Member for Housing & Environmental Services, to approve the final strategy.**

**CAB.192 Charging Policy for Home Choice Plus**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that provided the Cabinet with details of the work and cost involved with the operation and management of the sub regional choice based letting scheme Home Choice Plus.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services advised the Cabinet that the scheme had originally been set up by the Council using Government money, but no money was available from the Government for its ongoing maintenance. Given the costs of the scheme, other authorities in the partnership had decided that they would start to charge their RSL (Registered Social Landlord) partners and this was in line with other local authorities across the County who were either charging to cover their costs for the administration and use of the Choice Based Lettings system by their RSL partners.

**Decision: Delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services to negotiate charges, as set out in the report to Cabinet, with all RSL (Registered Social Landlord) partners who advertise properties on Home Choice Plus in the Wyre Forest area.**

**CAB.193 Communities for Local Government (CLG) Homelessness Funding 2010-11**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that outlined the proposed expenditure of the Communities and Local Government's Priority Needs Order Funding for 2010/11.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services advised the Cabinet that £67,000 of funding was available. Members were advised that the money the Council had received previously had assisted the authority in reducing the number of homeless acceptances and the number of households in temporary accommodation. Details of the proposed expenditure were included in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet.

**Decision: The proposed spend of £67,000 Communities and Local Government's Priority Needs Order Funding for 2010/11 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet) be approved.**

**CAB.194 Ribbesford Conservation Area Appraisal – Consultation Responses**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that outlined the results of the public consultation on the draft management proposals and the draft Character Appraisal for the Ribbesford Conservation Area.

**Decision: The Ribbesford Conservation Area Character Appraisal, as amended by the recommendations contained in Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report be approved.**

**CAB.195 Stourport Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas**

A report was considered under the Council's Urgency Rules from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that asked the Cabinet to agree the virement of additional funds from within existing budgets to support the last of the Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (PSiCA) projects. Members were advised that the match funding was due to end in March 2010. This was an opportunity for the Council to ensure the effectiveness of its PSiCA initiative with English Heritage by approving four further grant applications and the financial support for them before the scheme finally closed for application on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

**Decision:**

1. **The four outstanding applications under the PSiCA (Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas) Scheme (as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**
2. **A sum up to a maximum of £50,000 be vired, firstly from the unallocated LABGI (Local Authority Business Growth Incentives) and then supplemented with Planning Delivery grant budgets as described, to meet the additional grant funding required in connection with the schemes approved pursuant to 2.1. above.**

**CAB.196 Recommendation from Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee re: Flexible Retirement Policy**

The Chairman of the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee presented a recommendation regarding the Flexible Retirement Policy. Members were advised that the revised policy would allow staff to take their pension whilst continuing to work on lower hours or a lower grade. This had not been possible in the previous scheme.

**Recommended to Council: The draft Flexible Retirement Policy be adopted by Council.**

**CAB.197 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.198 Property Matters**

A report was considered from the Director of Legal and Corporate Services that sought approval regarding a Deed of Grant for land in Stourport-on-Severn.

**Decision:**

**The Director of Legal and Corporate Services be authorised to agree the following terms:**

- (i) A Deed of Grant to facilitate the laying of electricity cables which will increase the utility capacity in servicing the new conditioning suite, floodlight provision and cycle track store.**
- (ii) The Deed of Grant will be subject to an Agreement for Lease between the freeholder and intended leaseholder which is not yet formally documented.**
- (iii) All legal and associated costs incurred by the electricity network company, if demanded, will be borne by the leaseholder named in the report.**
- (iv) The electricity network company will covenant to go on site to lay cabling and make good the disturbed ground upon completion.**

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm.