

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,

KIDDERMINSTER

15TH JUNE 2010 (6 PM)

Present:

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

Observers:

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

CAB.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M J Hart.

CAB.2 Declarations of Interest

Councillors S J Clee and J Phillips declared a personal interest in agenda item 8.1 regarding Section 136 Grant Aid to Bewdley Town Council 2010/2011 as they are members of Bewdley Town Council. Councillor S J Clee also declared a personal interest in agenda item 9.1 regarding Bewdley Town Market as he is a member of Bewdley Development Trust.

CAB.3 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20th April 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.4 Call Ins

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

CAB.5 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.6 Leader's Announcements

1. Government Cuts to Grants to Local Authorities

The Leader referred to the announcement made by Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 10th June 2010 which alluded to the £600 million cuts to grants to Local Authorities. A note had been circulated to Members from the Director of Resources that set out the 3 main areas where Councils would not receive grants namely £17,500 from the social cohesion area based grant, £36,500 from LAGBI and £89,000 from the planning delivery grant. The administration recognised that the Council faced a period of austerity which had been marked by this first round of cuts and would react accordingly. The Leader commented that it was fortunate that large elements of these grants had not been allocated as part of the budget for 2010-2011. It was noted that the Government would announce its emergency budget on 22nd June 2010 and the grants to local authorities would be announced in the autumn. The Director of Resources and the Administration would continue to communicate information as it was received.

2. Changes to the Council's Refuse and Recycling System

The Leader advised Members that there had been some difficulties regarding the new system for recyclates and that queries from residents were likely. He commented that the changeover period would commence on 5th July 2010 and that there would be varied times for different areas when recyclables would be collected. He suggested that if Members received any queries they should direct them to the Hub. It had been unfortunate that 15,000 properties had been notified of the right day for collection but the wrong week. This had now been rectified by a card that had been sent correcting the information.

3. Democratic Officer support to Cabinet

The Leader announced that the Principal Committee Officer would no longer be providing Democratic Officer support to the Cabinet as a result of staff in Democratic Services changing the committees they supported. He thanked her for the support she had given to Cabinet over the last 7 years.

CAB.7 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that advised Cabinet on new governance and electoral proposals contained within the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The Leader commented that the Council was required to consider whether it required a new style Leader and Cabinet Executive or an elected Mayor. There was also an opportunity for the Council to consider whether it wished to change its electoral cycle. He commented that a Seminar had been held on 7th June, facilitated by a Councillor from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the relevant issues had been discussed to help Members to inform their thinking. He stated that there were a wide range of issues to be addressed and advised that the process would conclude with a Special Council meeting in December 2010 where a decision would be made.

Decision:

- 1. The timetable in appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet for consideration of the issues be endorsed;**
- 2. The Director of Legal and Corporate Services be given delegated authority to commence a consultation (lasting 3 months) to enable the local electorate and interested parties to have an opportunity to express their views on the preferred form of governance and preferred electoral cycle;**
- 3. A further report be presented to Cabinet in October that outlines the outcome of the consultation on the two proposed forms of governance, and options for electoral arrangements, to enable it to make recommendations to a Special meeting of Council.**

CAB.8 Worcestershire Partnerships – Terms of Engagement

A report was considered from the Chief Executive that asked the Cabinet to ratify the Terms of Engagement that had been adopted by the Worcestershire Partnership.

Decision: The Terms of Engagement for use in progressing future significant decisions on Wyre Forest's budget and service design be ratified.

CAB.9 Section 136 Grant Aid to Bewdley Town Council 2010/2011

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that asked the Cabinet to give consideration to a request from Bewdley Town Council for payment of their £10,251 Section 136 Grant Aid for 2010/2011.

The Cabinet Member for Resources drew Members' attention to appendix 2 of the report that set out how Bewdley Town Council proposed to spend the money.

Decision: Delegated approval be given to the Cabinet Member for Resources to approve the Grant Aid application to Bewdley Town Council for 2010/2011 following the receipt of further information.

CAB.10 Housing Benefit Overpayment Debt Position as at 31st March 2010

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that informed Members of the Housing Benefit Overpayment debt position as at 31st March 2010.

The Cabinet Member for Resources commented that given the financial downturn the housing benefit overpayment debt position had risen and thereby increased by 10%. However, he put into context the current position by explaining that the total housing benefit expenditure for 2009/10 was £27.4 million. Thus having debts of £759,585 outstanding from a budget of £27.4 million was quite small. He commented that every effort was made to retrieve the debts and the report demonstrated the excellent record the Council had in retrieving them.

Decision: The Housing Benefit overpayment. debt level, age of debt and performance against targets, as at the 31st March 2010 be noted.

CAB.11 Final Accounts 2009/2010

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that asked the Cabinet to approve the pre-audit summary of the Council's Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2009/2010.

The Cabinet Member for Resources reported that there was a positive position to report in that net expenditure was just over £1 million less than had been expected. He drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 of the report which detailed the savings made which he considered had been down to excellent financial management. He wished to record on behalf of Cabinet his thanks to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) for their efforts in reducing inefficiencies and making much needed savings. The Value Added Tax (VAT) refund had been significant and he wished to thank the Director of Resources and the Financial Services Manager and their team for their efforts in retrieving this money. He commented that the Cabinet set the overall vision and that CMT matched the vision and made it happen and he wished to place on record his grateful thanks to the CMT.

Members were also informed that significant savings had been made with regard to repairs and maintenance and also through vacancies not being filled. However, Members were advised that there should be caution, in that although this was a good news story, it was not a good idea to become complacent. It was perceived that there would be many more difficult and challenging years as the Government lowered its deficit.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnership Services wished to comment on the amount of hard work that had gone into the savings that had been achieved within her portfolio. She drew Members' attention to two items, namely the reduction in bed and breakfast usage, which she perceived had been due to the hard work of the Strategic Housing Services manager and her team. This had resulted in a better service for homeless people. She also commented that there had been a £63,000 saving in grounds maintenance and she wished to thank the Parks and Green Spaces Manager and his team for bringing forward some good initiatives that had resulted in savings.

A Member queried the position with regard to the Council's investments in Icelandic Banks. The Leader responded that he had updated Members at the Council meeting in July 2010 and that the position had not changed since then. The Director of Resources clarified that a challenge had been lodged by the Council for which it had several weeks in which to prepare its case and present it to the Courts in August 2010. It was unclear how long the Icelandic Courts would take to make a decision having received evidence from both sides., However, he undertook to inform Members of any news as soon as there was any.

Decision: It be noted that the additional reserves of £1,088,510 generated from the 2009/10 surplus will be reconsidered in accordance with the Council's Finance Strategy, as part of the 2011/14 Budget Process.

CAB.12 Bewdley Town Market

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that asked for continued delegated authority to be granted to the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services for third parties to hold a weekly market on the Quayside, Bewdley.

Decision:

- 1. The Director of Planning & Regulatory Services be given delegated authority to grant permission to third parties to hold a market on the land shown in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet in accordance with the conditions set out in Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet.**
- 2. The Director of Planning & Regulatory Services be given delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Regeneration, to consider and agree any proposals for an extension to the current boundary of the market or to any suggested alternative location.**

CAB.13 Recommendations from Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee 15th July 2010

(a) Recommendations from the Parking Review Panel

The Cabinet considered recommendations from the Parking Review Panel. The Chairman of the Review Panel presented the recommendations. He informed the Cabinet that there had been particular problems in Bewdley where a number of penalty charge notices had been given to residents and season ticket holders. During the review it also transpired that neither Members nor the public were aware that the passes were subject to the 23 hour maximum stay rule despite the passes having been in existence since the mid 70's. The penalty charge notices had been issued when enforcement officers patrolled the same beat for 2 days.

Members were advised that the Review Panel held approximately 6 meetings and had consulted the public for their views. The Chairman of the Parking Review Panel wished to stress that the recommendations were not written especially for Bewdley but should apply to all towns within Wyre Forest.

Decision:

The recommendations as set out below be noted and a further report be brought back to the next cycle to consider the next steps:

- 1. The maximum stay period of 23 hours in any 24 hour period to remain applicable across the Council's Car Parks, but 24/7 parking be allowed for Full, Restricted and Residents' Parking Passes, with no uninterrupted stay in one space for longer than two months.**
- 2. To continue to provide Residents' Parking Passes in Bewdley, and limit them to one per household.**
- 3. The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services to draw up a set of restrictions governing the eligibility of Residents' Parking Passes, and the decision on this be taken at management level.**
- 4. The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services to look at where Residents' Parking Passes might be introduced across the District as part of the budgetary process for the 2011 to 2014 budget.**
- 5. The price of Residents' Parking Passes as set out in the 2010-2013 budget should remain unchanged.**
- 6. The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services to examine the possibility of both the overnight roll over of Pay and Display payment, and also weekend tickets, as part of the October 2010 software update to the Pay and Display Ticket Machines.**
- 7. The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services to estimate the cost of providing Residents' Parking Passes as part of the budgetary process for the 2011 to 2014 budget.**
- 8. A letter be sent to Bewdley High School asking whether they would consider setting up a Park and Ride Service using the school car park during peak holiday periods.**

(b) Temporary Accommodation Use Policy

The Chairman of the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendation regarding the Temporary Accommodation Use Policy. She commented that the scrutiny committee had considered the issues and questions around the policy during the meeting, including why the Council still used bed and breakfast facilities and how often and what controls had been put in place to prevent abuse. Questions had also been raised as to why hotels were also used in Birmingham and the frequency of monitoring the safeguarding policy.

Decision: The Temporary Accommodation Use Policy be approved.

CAB.14 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.15 Land in Kidderminster

A report was considered from the Director of Legal and Corporate Services that sought Members’ approval to the freehold disposal of land in Kidderminster in order to develop 2 affordable houses.

A Member wished to place on record his thanks to the Chief Executive for taking this matter forward especially as it had been ongoing for 3 years.

Decision: To transfer the freehold of the land edged red on the attached plan of the report to Cabinet for nil value to Wyre Forest Community Housing Group in order to facilitate the construction of affordable housing.

The meeting ended at 6.36 pm.

Addendum to Minutes

Further to a question raised by a Member at the Cabinet meeting on 15th June 2010, please find below a response in relation to the cost incurred by the Council through the reissue of information on refuse collection.

Costs were minimised by ensuring that all design and printing was done in-house, the total cost for the production of the correct cards was £775. In addition to this the Council used a mixture of overtime and agency workers to ensure that the cards were hand delivered to all of the properties affected, this cost £500.

Therefore the total cost of providing the correct information was £1,275.