

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET,  
KIDDERMINSTER

21ST SEPTEMBER 2010 (6.00 PM)

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**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, J A Shaw, D Sheppard and N J Thomas.

**CAB.34 Councillor M Salter, Vice-Chairman of the Council**

The Leader of the Council advised Members that Councillor Salter had been taken ill yesterday and extended best wishes from Members of the Council.

**CAB.35 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.36 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.37 Minutes**

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

**CAB.38 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.39 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.40 Public Participation**

Mr Neil Harman presented both an online and paper petition containing 687 signatures on behalf of residents from Stourport-on-Severn concerning objections to charging for Vale Road Car Park in Stourport-on-Severn. He stated that there had also been further independent objections which showed the strong feeling regarding the charging proposal. He noted that there were differing charging structures across the district and urged the Cabinet to defer the decision to charge for parking at Vale Road.

The Leader of the Council accepted the petition on the Council's behalf.

**CAB.41 Leader's Announcements**

Members were advised that at the Council meeting to be held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2010 an update would be given with regard to the Council's Icelandic investments.

Members were also informed that with regard to the Council's single site a planning application would be submitted shortly which would be subject to the usual consultation period. The planning application would be presented to the Planning Committee before the end of the year.

**CAB.42 Budget Monitoring – First Quarter 2010/2011**

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that outlined the monitoring of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.

The Cabinet Member for Resources advised Members that there was a projected overspend of £102,000. This was mainly due to the base rate remaining exceptionally low and had resulted in a shortfall of £100,000 external interest not being accrued as anticipated. He perceived that the financial landscape was likely to change through the current financial year.

The Leader reiterated that the Council was facing a challenging year and further efficiencies would need to be achieved. He commended all Divisions for the work they had undertaken on achieving efficiencies to date.

In response to a Member's query, the Cabinet Member informed Members that the Council had been advised by its then Treasury Management Advisors that it was anticipated that the base rate would rise. He commented that very few economists would have predicted that the base rate would remain at the same low rate for 18 months and that many authorities found themselves in the same position as this Council in that they only attracted low rates on their investments.

**Decision: The projected budget variations and comments outlined within the report to Cabinet and appendices 2 to 8 be noted.**

**CAB.43 Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2009/2010**

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that outlined the treasury activity for 2009/2010 and the actual Prudential Indicators.

The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that the Council was in a fortunate position as its external debts were exceptionally low at £0.35m. The Council's investments currently stood at £13.179m. Members were informed that the Council had now appointed Sector to be its treasury management advisors and the Council was looking forward to working with them. Sector had already suggested some interesting ideas with regard to the counterparty list and were keen to undertake some Member training.

**Decision:**

- 1. The actual 2009/2010 Prudential Indicators detailed within the report to Cabinet be noted.**
- 2. The Treasury Management Stewardship Report for 2009/2010 be noted.**

**CAB.44 Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 – Value for Money Efficiency Gains Achieved in 2009/2010**

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that informed Members of the actual total new value of ongoing cash releasing value for money gains for 2009/2010 and further efficiency gains required under the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR07).

The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that the report outlined a good news story as the Council had significantly exceeded its targets on efficiency savings. The Council had been required to save 3% in 2009/2010 and 4% for 2010/11. The efficiency gain achieved in 2009/10 meant that the Council had exceeded the cash releasing efficiency saving of 4% one year early. He urged caution however as greater challenges and efficiency savings would be required in the months to come.

The Leader of the Council endorsed the comments made by the Cabinet Member for Resources and commented that the next few months would be challenging for the Council.

**Decision:**

- 1. The actual net value of ongoing cash releasing value for money gains of £3,026m achieved in 2009/10 (equivalent to 8% cash releasing efficiency savings) against an internal target of £1.289m be noted.**
- 2. That the CSR07 cash releasing efficiency saving of 4% or £2.176m has been exceeded one year early be noted.**

- 3. The increased efficiency target for English Councils from 3% to 4% for 2010/11 be noted.**

**CAB.45 Sundry/Property Debt Position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010**

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that informed Members of the Sundry/Property debt position as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 together with details of performance against targets.

The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that there was a decrease of £352,828 compared with last year. Total debts outstanding at year end had decreased by £93,861 and the reason for the decrease was a reduction of debts outstanding between 0-3 months old by £163,395. However he commented that significantly only 0.6% of the Council's debt had been written off and this equated to £18,500 which was a good achievement given the current economic conditions.

In response to a question regarding benchmarking and how this Council compared with other Councils regarding outstanding debt, the Director of Resources stated that this Council had performed better in this area in comparison to other similar Councils.

**Decision :**

- 1. The Sundry/property debt level, age of debt and performance against targets, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 be noted.**
- 2. Payment methods for debtor accounts be noted.**

**CAB.46 Proposed Service and Financial Planning Timetable 2011/12**

A report was considered from the Director of Resources that outlined the proposed service and financial planning timetable in order to deliver the budget for 2011/12 and beyond.

The Cabinet Member for Resources introduced the report and stated that it outlined the budget timetable. He planned to take a report to Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> November which would explain the implications of the Spending Review.

The Leader of the Council commented that the budget would be challenging this year as there would be less money available. However, work was being done on the budget now in order to facilitate scrutiny of the budget.

**Decision: The proposed Budget Timetable attached as Appendix A of the report to Cabinet be agreed.**

**CAB.47 Building Control Marketing Strategy 2010-2013**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that sought Members' approval for the Building Control Marketing Strategy 2010-2013.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration informed Members that the revised Strategy would assist in promoting Building Control for the next 3 years. The Leader commented that the Building Control division offered a professional service and had an excellent track record in providing income for the Council.

**Decision: The Building Control Marketing Strategy 2010-2013 be adopted.**

**CAB.48 Kidderminster Town Centre Strategy – Consultation Feedback**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that asked the Cabinet to agree the next steps on the development of the Kidderminster Town Centre Strategy and to note consultation feedback as set out in Appendix 2 to the report to Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration commented that it was hoped that a new model would be agreed for taking forward the Town Centre Partnership. It was hoped that a leading business person would be involved in taking this forward. He expressed his thanks to Peter Picken for the work he had undertaken in chairing the Partnership.

The Leader of the Council congratulated the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration for the commitment that had been shown to the regeneration of the town centre. He commented that Kidderminster did not appear to have as many empty shops as some other towns in the County. He hoped that the continued investment in the town centre would help to protect this position.

A Member commented that a meeting was to be held on 5<sup>th</sup> October which would hopefully achieve the shaping of the new Town Centre Partnership. She wished to thank the Policy and Regeneration Manager for the work he had undertaken in trying to encourage high level management to become involved in the Partnership.

**Decision:**

- 1. The next steps set out at Paragraph 4.15 and 4.16 of the report to Cabinet be approved including match funding towards the Town Centre Enhancement Project set out at paragraph 4.15 and delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration to agree and implement proposal to enhance Kidderminster Town Centre.**
- 2. Delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services to make the necessary amendments to the Town Centre Strategy and necessary arrangements to review the Town Centre Partnership.**

**CAB.49 Worcestershire Local Economic Assessment**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that asked the Cabinet to agree a response to a consultation from Worcestershire County Council on the Worcestershire Local Economic Assessment.

**Decision: The response as set out at paragraph 4.2 of the report to Cabinet be submitted to Worcestershire County Council as the District Council's response to consultation on the Local Economic Assessment.**

**CAB.50 Wyre Forest District Council (Off Street Parking Places) (Consolidation) Order 2009 (Variation No. 2) Order 2010**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that asked the Cabinet to consider consultation responses to the Wyre Forest District Council (Off Street Parking Places) (Consolidation) Order 2009 (Variation No. 2) Order 2010 (The Order) which ended on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2010 and asked for authorisation for the making of The Order to come into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services gave Members some background information to the proposed Order. He commented that parking was an emotive and controversial subject.

Members were advised that the administration wished to have a consistent and fair policy across the district. Work had been undertaken by a Review Panel chaired by Councillor J Phillips that considered car parking issues across the district. It was noted that the Council had 26 car parks in its control of which 22 were chargeable and 4 were free.

It was noted that the Council had considered the parking proposals in July and commenced a consultation which had received 120 responses as well a petition which had been received at this meeting but was outside the consultation period. Members were informed that the administration wished to have a fair and consistent approach to car parking charges.

Whilst the Review Panel had recommended that Residents' parking passes in Bewdley be retained this recommendation was not considered viable as a consistent approach was needed across the district.

In relation to some negative comments made that the consultation period had been held during the summer holidays, the Cabinet Member commented that there was never a right time to consult and he had met with some of the consultees. He also commented about allegations regarding the bequeathing of the land in Vale Road by Thomas Vale. He was able to establish however, that Stourport Urban Council had purchased the site at market value and it had subsequently transferred ownership to the District Council.

The Cabinet Member commented that the administration had listened to the request from Stourport Town Councillors to reduce the cost of parking at the Sports Centre rather than charging £5.20 as in Raven Street. He had also spoken to Councillors from Blakedown and suggested that the Parish Council take on responsibility for the car park in Blakedown, a proposition that was turned down.

The Leader of the Council agreed that car parking was a controversial issue and whilst not all of the Review Panel's recommendations were accepted, the administration was concerned with fairness and equity.

Members from Wards in Stourport spoke out against the proposals for the Vale Road Car Parking charges.

**Decision: The making of The Order as set out at Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 with the amendment that a charge of £4.10 be made for a stay of over two hours at Vale Road and Bridge Street, Stourport-on-Severn instead of the £5.20 originally proposed.**

**CAB.51 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.52 Civil Enforcement**

A report was considered from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services that related to seeking cost reductions in the discharge of the Civil Enforcement function and in the management of the Council's Streetscene and Civil Enforcement teams. The option of securing savings through extending joint working with another Council had been examined but the recommended approach was to achieve a higher level of savings through internal changes.

**Decision: Option 5 as set out in paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7 of the report to Cabinet be agreed and delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Director of Resources and Cabinet Member for Housing & Environmental Services to make the necessary changes to implement this option in accordance with the Council's Policy.**

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm.