

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,
KIDDERMINSTER

23RD OCTOBER 2012 (6.00PM)

Before the meeting commenced, there was a minute's silence held in memory of the late Peter Carter who had been a District Councillor, County Councillor and former Mayor of Kidderminster.

Present:

Councillors: J-P Campion, N J Desmond, I Hardiman, M J Hart and A T Hingley.

Observers:

Councillor J A Shaw.

CAB.25 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.26 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.27 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18th September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.28 Call Ins

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

CAB.29 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.30 Leader's Announcements

There were no Leader's announcements.

CAB.31 Council Tax Benefit Reform

A report was considered from the Director of Resources on the Council Tax Benefit Reform.

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation outlined the content of the report and informed Members that the consultation process had been helpful when making the recommendations. These would be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for their comments and be reported to Cabinet at their November 2012 meeting.

Following the Government's decision to replace the Council Tax Benefit scheme with a localised Council Tax Discount Scheme, Members thought that the proposals were the best option for the Council.

Decision:

To Recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that:

- 1. The principles for the scheme as set out in paragraph 5.3 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**
- 2. The changes to the Council Tax exemptions as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**
- 3. The changes to the eligibility criteria for access to Council Tax support as set out in paragraph 5.12 of the report to be Cabinet be approved.**
- 4. Option 3 as detailed in the report to Cabinet be adopted and limit the support available to people of working age to 90% of their Council Tax liability.**
- 5. A Hardship Fund be created with a maximum contribution from Wyre Forest District Council of £25,000 per annum and the proposed criteria for administering the fund included in Appendix 5 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**

CAB.32 Wyre Forest Tenancy Strategy

A report was considered from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place on the need to adopt a Tenancy Strategy for Wyre Forest and to consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4th October 2012.

Members were referred to the six key issues in the report and informed that a full consultation had taken place.

Decision: The Wyre Forest District Council Tenancy Strategy be adopted

CAB.33 Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee , 4th October 2012

(a) Recommendations from the Housing Review Panel 28th August 2012

The Leader of the Council advised that the recommendations from the Housing Review Panel would be noted and be considered as part of the budget process for 2013/2014.

Noted as follows:

- 1. Provision be made in the budget for the 2013/14 financial year and beyond to continue to provide a financial top up above the current minimum government grant of £444k to support Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) provision in order to meet the needs of the Wyre Forest District residents.**
- 2. Cabinet continue to provide the current level of top up funding from 2013/14, thus enabling an overall fund of £800k to be maintained or if possible exceeded the support for the funding of DFG's.**
- 3. A 2 tier element into the budget allocation to ensure that a proportion of the DFG budget be set aside exclusively for Category 3 needs cases be introduced.**
- 4. Cabinet to explore alternative funding mechanisms to support the top up, including, but not limited to:**
 - Prudential Borrowing.**
 - A first priority for Right to Buy monies.**
 - Any unallocated funding from the Regional Housing Pot.**
 - Any alternative sources of funding available to the Council, e.g. New Homes Bonus.**
 - External Partnership funding from social care partners, e.g. County Council and the NHS.**
- 5. Cabinet agree the provision of an alternative adaptation grant/loan mechanism that can be achieved as quickly as possible for simple cases of level access showers and/or stairlifts for example and that such an alternative is used to incentivise self funding or alternative funding sources. Such Adaptation assistance to be developed with partner agencies to minimise processes and the number of steps necessary under the full DFG system and to be used as an alternative but not replacement for DFG's.**
- 6. Any necessary amendments to the Housing Assistance Policy be made in support of any of the above alternative funding options.**
- 7. A review of the process of dealing with DFG's be undertaken on a Systems Thinking basis.**

8. **Cabinet provide funding or supports funding from external sources for the post of an Occupational Therapist additional to the current District provision, subject to investigation and confirmation of likely costs and benefits.**

(b) Revised Statement of Community Involvement – Consultation Draft

The Leader of the Council informed Members that this decision had already been given using the Notice of Delegation of Decision to a Cabinet Member by Strong Leader model.

Noted: The Draft Statement of Community Involvement as set out at Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 4th October 2012 be approved for a six week consultation.

The meeting closed at 6.27 pm.