

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER
TUESDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2015 (6.00 PM)**

Present:

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), J-P Campion, S J Chambers, N J Desmond, S E Fearn and I Hardiman.

Observers:

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

CAB.35 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.36 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.37 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 16th September 2015 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.

CAB39. Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.40 Leader's Announcements

The Leader of the Council advised that this was the first Cabinet meeting since former District Councillor Jim Parish sadly passed away, and passed on colleagues' condolences to his family.

CAB.41 Review of Council Tax Reduction Scheme

A report was considered from the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager, which provided information to the Cabinet following the recent consultation to make changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2016/17.

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Change led Members through the report and advised that the recommendations comply with the original principles of the scheme that was set up in 2013. Wyre Forest District Council carried out a public consultation on whether to change the minimum payment percentage and the capital savings threshold, whether to make proposed technical changes and whether the Hardship Fund should be kept . It was emphasised that the increase would only affect working age individuals. The majority of those who responded to the consultation agreed with the changes.

The Leader of the Council advised that the consultation responses had been considered at length by the Cabinet and every response had been given due regard. He added that the submission to the consultation from the Children's Society had been read comprehensively and was noted.

Councillor Fran Oborski arrived at the meeting at 18.22 pm

Decision: RECOMMEND to Council that from 1 April 2016:

- 1 The exceptional hardship fund is retained to support claimants who are unable to pay their council tax liability due to financial hardship;**
- 2 The technical changes outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report to Cabinet are adopted in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme;**
- 3 The capital limit be reduced from £16,000 to £12,000;**
- 4 The minimum payment required by all working age claimants be increased to 20%, on the basis that the Council is not minded to review the level of contribution again for the period before 2019-20.**

CAB.42 Write off of Amounts Outstanding

A report was considered from the Chief Financial Officer to consider the writing off of debts that cannot be collected.

The Cabinet Member for Resources took members through the report and advised that whilst every effort had been made by the Authority to pursue the outstanding debts, there was no alternative but to write them off.

Following a Member question regarding the write off of amounts outstanding for National Non-Domestic Rates Business Rates over the last 4 years, the Chief Financial Officer agreed to circulate the information to Members.

The Leader of the Council echoed that the Authority has a rigorous regime to ensure that debts are paid, and whilst it is regrettable to write off any debts, some companies were simply not in a position to pay.

Decision:

The total of £149,224.81, as detailed in the Appendix to the report to Cabinet, be written off.

CAB.43 Future Arrangements for HR Support

A report was considered from the Chief Executive which sought approval for the Human Resources service to be provided in house from 1st April 2016, following expiry of the current service level agreement.

The Cabinet Member for Resources informed Members of the proposed changes to the Human Resources provision, when the contract with Worcestershire County Council ceases on 31st March 2016. He advised that all options have been carefully explored and the most viable option was to bring HR support in house.

Decision:

The Human Resources service be provided in-house from 1 April 2016, following expiry of the current service level agreement.

CAB.44 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.45 Sale of Land in Stourport on Severn

A report was considered from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to agree the part disposal of a site.

Decision:

Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity & Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Regeneration, authority to agree terms for part disposal of an area of land as referred to in the confidential report to Cabinet for a capital receipt that will be made available for the Evergreen Investment Fund.

The meeting closed at 18.51 pm.