

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER
20TH DECEMBER 2016 (6 PM)**

Present:

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), N J Desmond, S E Fearn, I Hardiman, J D Smith and R J Vale.

Observers:

Councillors: J-P Champion, H E Dyke, N Knowles, S Miah and F M Oborski MBE.

CAB.51 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.52 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.53 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22nd November 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.54 Call Ins

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

CAB.55 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.56 Review of District Car Parks 2016

A report was considered from the Director of Community Well Being and Environment which considered arrangements for District car parking following a comprehensive review and to agree the schedule of charges for the Council's pay and display car parks and season ticket charges for inclusion in the 2017/18 budget, to take effect from October 2017.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services led Members through the report and explained that the proposed changes would simplify the existing system of car parking charges across the District and would achieve an increase in net income for the Council to help close the gap in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. She added that the changes maintained a fair and equitable approach across the District. The proposed changes to car parking were estimated to produce a positive contribution of approximately £70,000 to £75,000 per year.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services confirmed that the Council was committed to maintaining free car parking in Wyre Forest and that free parking for 1 hour would be available in 7 car parks across the District, a generous proposal which was not offered by all Councils.

The Leader of the Council echoed the comments of the Cabinet Member for Operational Services and added that the proposals had been the subject of debate over a number of months, having been discussed at the Cabinet Financial Advisory Review Panel and in the public domain at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

He confirmed that a free day's car parking was introduced in 2013 and had not had the desired effect of encouraging people into the towns. He emphasised that the proposals were fair and consistent, particularly when compared to other districts, and commended the work of Council Officers and the Cabinet Member for Operational Services for their hard work.

A lengthy debate ensued. The Cabinet Member for Resources re-iterated that the car parking proposals have been deliberated on for many months and was confident that the proposals would incentivise users to use car parks and generate income for the Council to protect front line services.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration agreed that the proposals would simplify the existing car park system and was a better approach to raise revenue than increasing Council Tax costs, as not all residents of Wyre Forest could drive. The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Change clarified that the Council does not charge for car parking after 6.30 pm, unlike other districts, thus the proposals would benefit a wide range of people and were fair and generous.

Councillor Oborski MBE presented the Leader of the Council with a petition from the Parishioners of St Mary's and All Saints Church, Kidderminster, against the proposed change of free car parking on Sundays from 90 minutes to 60 minutes. Councillor Oborski MBE read out a letter from the Canon Reverend Rose Lawley of Kidderminster Parish Church Team Ministry, which advised that the car park next to St Mary's church occupies the land where the church hall once stood, and suggested that anything less than 90 minutes free parking would not be viable for members of the congregation to attend services. Councillor Oborski added that she would like to see evaluations of Officers work on the impact of the free initiative, to which the Leader of the Council added that he would provide comments in due course.

Councillor Champion commented that he supported the proposals as such strategic change played an important role in economic regeneration for the District, and added that whilst he has respect for those that attend St Mary's Church it would be unfair to provide free car parking for some faiths and not others.

In answer to a Member query, the Cabinet Member for Operational Services confirmed that the data evidence gathered whilst forming the proposals was not anecdotal. She clarified that data had been gathered on the number of tickets generated and had no concerns regarding the validity of evidence.

The Leader of the Council stated that whilst he sympathised with members of St Mary's and All Saints Church, the proposals were fair and equitable for all members of the public. He emphasised that there would still be 60 minutes free parking and that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had supported the proposals, without amendment at their meeting on 1st December 2016.

Decision:

In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 1st December 2016

- 1 To include the proposed schedule of car park and season ticket charges outlined in 4.8 and 4.9 of the report to Cabinet in the budget proposals for 2017/18, to take effect from October 2017.**
- 2 The re-designation of all car parks in the District to SHORT or LONG stay car parks be agreed.**
- 3 The Wyre Forest District Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2016 (no 2) be amended and consulted upon to accommodate the changes in recommendations 1 and 2 as necessary, together with any further minor drafting amendments which, in the opinion of the Director for Community Well Being and Environment are required and that the Cabinet Member for Operational Services be given delegated authority to consider any representations made as a result of the public consultation and to finalise the revisions to the Order.**

CAB.57 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-20

A report was considered from the Chief Financial Officer which provided the Cabinet with financial information in order to make proposals for the Budget Strategy for the period 2017-20.

The Cabinet Member for Resources led Members through the report and stated that the proposals were for a budget that was bold in outlook and would invest in the future of the Council and the District.

The Cabinet Member for Resources set out the context of the proposals and confirmed that the way in which Local Government was funded had radically altered. The figures for negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) remained as previously forecast from 2019-20, a reduction of over £1 million in Government funding from 2016-17 to 2019-20. He added that the funding stream has been further weakened by changes to the way the New Home Bonus is calculated. The impact of the introduction of a national baseline of 0.4% below which funding allocations would not be made meant that the first new 163 new homes built would not qualify for the New Homes Bonus funding. In financial terms, this was a reduction of almost £600,000 over three years. The Cabinet Member for Resources confirmed that the funding gap would rise steeply from 2018-19 and although he recognised that the future would be a challenge he confirmed that the Council had a strong track record of making the necessary savings, having already saved over £5 million in the last 5 years. He added that it was imperative that further savings would be made in a calm, measured and strategic way.

The Cabinet Member for Resources confirmed that the budget was both bold and radical and would grow income for the Council whilst supporting Economic Regeneration. He highlighted 2 significant policy areas that represented a radical approach to business growth and provided the Council with an opportunity to take a proactive role in property investment: namely the policy on Loans to Third Parties which would help realise housing projects and regeneration across the District. The second new policy area was for a maximum sum of £25 million to create a Capital Portfolio Fund which would enable the Council to invest in Economic Regeneration and Housing projects to help generate income to protect frontline services. Expenditure for both of these areas would be considered on an individual case and be approved by Cabinet and independent financial experts. He emphasised that the Cabinet gave a commitment that each business case would be considered by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and any capital changes reported to the Treasury Management Review Panel.

Councillor Campion left the meeting at 6.59 pm and returned at 7pm.

The Cabinet Member for Resources added other notable investments as part of the budget proposals included proposals for the first stage of investment at the Council's Green Street site to allow for essential maintenance of health and safety improvements and improve office accommodation, an investment in recreational areas including Brinton Park and an allocation of funding for the Master Plan at Stourport Riverside which would set out a vision for the future development of this site and the District as a whole.

He emphasised that the proposed budget was strategic in its outlook and invested in the future of the District by putting income generation at its core. He thanked the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer and the Corporate Leadership Team for their input and continued advice over what had been a difficult number of years financially.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Cabinet Member for Resources for his comprehensive outline and confirmed that the proposals included a Council Tax freeze and would provide money for the Localism Fund and the Community Leadership Fund, and highlighted the cross party support for the transfer of assets for paddling pools provision to Town Councils.

Councillor Campion left the meeting at 7.17 pm

The Leader of the Labour Group addressed the Cabinet and commented on various points, including the approval of the new Council Policy on loans to third parties, which he supported in principle.

Further to the comment from the Cabinet Member for Resources that business cases would be considered by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman of the committee suggested that it would be beneficial if legal representation could be present at those meetings, as large sums of money would be considered.

The Cabinet Member for Resources thanked Members of both the Cabinet and the Opposition Groups for their helpful and constructive comments

Decision:

1. **The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 4 – Part 1.of the report to Cabinet be noted.**

The following be endorsed and recommended to the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel for scrutiny:

- 2 **The Council's updated Medium Term Financial Strategy;**
- 2.1 **Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2017-20 (Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet) including;**
 - a) **Approval of the new Council Policy on Loans to Third Parties to support our corporate priority of regeneration and economic development as set out in Appendix 3/1 of the report to Cabinet;**
 - b) **Approval of the new Council Policy to create a Capital Portfolio Fund to support our corporate priority of regeneration and economic development and to create a net revenue income stream as set out in Appendix 3/2 of the report to Cabinet;**

and that the approval of both in-principle decisions on a) Policy on Loans to Third Parties and b) Policy to create a Capital Portfolio Fund includes:

- i) That an initial allocation of £10m to support progression of the policy on Loans to Third Parties and £25m to support progression of the policy of a Capital Portfolio Fund is made to the capital programme in 2017-18, this being a maximum sum in both cases. Expenditure will be subject to specific approval of the business case for each proposal by the Cabinet following consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and due diligence.**
- ii) That the financing of such expenditure be delegated to the Chief Financial Officer and that requisite amendments are made to the revenue budget to reflect potential financing costs (likely to be PWLB loan finance) and income streams to support the initial capital allocation in a) and b) above.**
- iii) That subject to this approval, delegation is given to the Chief Financial Officer to make the requisite updates to the Financial Regulations and Treasury Management Service Strategy (TMSS) in due course.**
- c) Approval of the Community Leadership Fund for 2017-18 of £33,000;**
- d) Proposals for capital investment into the Green Street Depot site of up to a maximum of £1.1m for Phase 1 of works to update the asset to an improved standard and to provide more potential for increased commercial viability for the depot service. Proposals for a second phase for further investment will be subject to approval of a full business case in due course;**
- e) Approval of £100,000 of capital funding towards a Heritage Lottery Bid of up to £3m for the development of Brinton Park;**
- f) Approval of a further Localism Fund allocation of £50,000 in 2017-18;**
- g) Approval of funding of £25,000 for a Master Plan for Stourport Riverside in 2017-18.**
- h) Approval of increased targets for savings under the Wyre Forest Forward Programme in 2017-18 onwards (paragraph 7.2 of the report to Cabinet).**

- 2.2 The level of net expenditure and resultant Council Tax for 2017-20 as per paragraph 7.3 of the report to Cabinet;
- 2.3 The fees and charges in line with this strategy and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2017-20, as shown in Part 3 of Appendix 4 of the report to Cabinet;
- 2.4 The Base Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendix 6, Appendices A and B of the report to Cabinet;
- 2.5 The variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewal Schedule in accordance with the Council's Budget Process.
- 2.6 The Revised Efficiency Plan as set out in Appendix 7 of the report to Cabinet.
- 3 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 4 – Part 2 of the report to Cabinet be approved.
- 4 That, if no asset transfers can be agreed by 7th February 2017 on the basis outlined in paragraphs 4.20 – 4.23 of the report to Cabinet, the paddling pools in Wyre Forest will cease to be operated from April 2017 and the revenue budget for them will be removed.

CAB.58 Town Centres Busking Policy

A report was considered from the Town Centre Manager to approve a new Code to regulate buskers across the district (principally in Kidderminster Town Centre)

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration led members through the report. He emphasised that Buskers were welcomed in Town Centres and a specifically defined framework was required to deal readily and fairly with busking in the District. He added that the key issue of amplified entertainment must be addressed to ensure that music was not too loud or too near to local business premises. He stressed that although good quality entertainment can enhance the town centres, busking must not deter customers from visiting business premises.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration thanked Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for prompting the inclusion of condition 6 of the Buskers Code, reference to buskers not being under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanked the Town Centres Manager for the concise Buskers Code which was much needed, and hoped that it will be adhered to by buskers.

Decision:

In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 1st December 2016

The Wyre Forest District Buskers Code (Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet) be approved.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.40 pm.