

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER  
14TH MARCH 2017 (6 PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: M J Hart (Chair), N J Desmond, I Hardiman, C Rogers, J D Smith and R J Vale.

**Observers:**

Councillors: H E Dyke and N Knowles.

**CAB.67 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.68 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.69 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7th February 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.70 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.71 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.72 Public Participation**

In accordance with the Council's Scheme for Public Speaking at meetings of Cabinet, to allow members of the public to present petitions, ask questions or make statements, the following member of the public addressed the meeting at this point:

Councillor Anna Coleman from Bewdley.

*The traders, residents and visitors believe that Wyre Forest District Council's proposed increase in parking charges unfairly penalises the town's traders and puts at risk the viability and prosperity of this town in particular as an important tourist attraction.*

*Will Cabinet reconsider their 20.12.2016 decision to increase parking charges in Bewdley which caused more than 1k people to sign a petition, which is being presented by me to the Cabinet?*

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services thanked Councillor Coleman for submitting the petition for consideration. She commented that parking charges had been the subject of consultation for many months and had been discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She confirmed that there were positives to the increased car parking charges as it would simplify the car parking system and was a better approach to raise revenue than increasing Council Tax. She added that many people who signed the petition may not be aware that there are benefits in the changes for Bewdley, including increased time to park in Load Street from 1 hour to 2 hours and a decrease in charges in Load Street from £1.60 to £1.30 per hour, and that there was an hour's free car parking in Gardeners Meadow.

The Leader of the Council endorsed the comments of the Cabinet Member for Operational Services. He added that public participation was welcomed and emphasised that members of the public who signed the petition should not feel that they have not been heard. He commented that Cabinet was not unfairly treating the traders and residents of Bewdley, as the charges applied to the District as a whole and were fair, equitable and consistent for the community of Wyre Forest.

**CAB.73      Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan and Consultation Exercise**

A report was considered from the Strategic Housing Services Manager which considered the final version of the Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan (WHPP) following the consultation period and subsequent amendments made to the plan.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing led Members through the report. He explained that the Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP) would replace the current Housing Strategy and brought together a number of strategic partners including Clinical Commissioning Groups, Community Rehabilitation Company, Adult Social Care, Children, Families and Communities directorate, Registered Providers and the six Local Housing Authorities. The objective of the Partnership would be to enable people to live as independently as possible, promote opportunity for the right type of homes and improve homes and transform places.

The Leader of the Council commented that it was pleasing to see a range of partners come together for the development of the Plan. He noted the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and anticipated that the concerns raised would be addressed at Members Forums in the next Municipal year.

**Decision:**

**In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny**

**Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017:**

**The Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan be approved and work to develop detailed action plans commenced.**

**CAB.74 Council Membership on Community Housing Group (CHG)**

A report was considered from the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place which considered the future of Wyre Forest District Community Members on the Board of Community Housing Group (CHG) and agreed the approach to be taken in the Council's AGM in May when nominations were usually agreed.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing led Members through the report. He advised that the Council's housing stock was transferred to the CHG in 2000 and Members of Wyre Forest District Council had been nominated to be on the CHG Board and committees ever since. He confirmed that CHG was undergoing a governance review and it was anticipated that most of the positions that are currently held by Members would cease to exist. He added that Committee members did not have any influence on decision making on behalf of the bodies they represented.

The Leader of the Council added that the CHG had grown and changed in a variety of ways and referred to point 4.3 of the report to Cabinet which explained that as of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017 the Secretary of State was formally empowered to issue regulations limiting the influence of Local Authorities over Registered Social Landlords.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented that in recent years it has become apparent that Members have had diminished influence over the organisations they were appointed to and therefore the Committee recommended that no further nominations were to be made at Annual Council in May 2017.

**Decision:**

**In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017:**

**Recommended to Council:**

- 1.1. That from May 2017 the Council no longer makes any nominations to the roles of Community Member on any of the Community Housing Group boards or committees;**
- 1.2. That the Council considers the outcome of the governance review commissioned by Community Housing Group when it is received and makes necessary changes to nominations to positions on the Community Housing Group as a result of any re-structure, as invited to;**
- 1.3. That delegated authority if given to the Solicitor to the Council to terminate the Memorandum of Understanding between the**

**Council and Community Housing Group relating to Community Member Nominations**

**CAB.75 Collective Switching Energy Scheme**

A report was considered from the Strategic Housing Services Manager which sought to agree a Collective Energy Switching Scheme on behalf of residents.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing led Members through the report and commented that the scheme was good news for the residents of Wyre Forest. He explained that many people are not on the best value energy tariff and were reluctant to change providers, thus collective energy switching provided the option to collectively change. To date, 650,000 households in the UK had taken part in the scheme with an average potential saving of £243 per household.

The Leader of the Council echoed the comments of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing and added that, according to the latest government figures, 11.1% of households were thought to be in fuel poverty and therefore it is right that this scheme should be encouraged.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that the scheme was agreed and acknowledged that the comments regarding the report were very positive. She added that if residents took part in a collective scheme they may be more inclined to make switches on their own in future years.

**Decision:**

**In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017:**

**Wyre Forest District Council to initiate a Collective Energy Switching Scheme on behalf of residents.**

**CAB.76 Additional Car Parking Spaces at Wyre Forest Leisure Centre**

A report was considered from the Leader of the Council which sought to agree the proposal to develop additional car parking spaces at Wyre Forest Leisure Centre with 50/50 funding between Wyre Forest District Council and Places for People Leisure (PfPL) and that the planning application will be submitted by PfPL

The Leader of the Council led Members through the report and emphasised that Cabinet was not determining the Planning application, rather that the application can be made and how it was to be funded. He explained that the Council's 50% contribution would be met from the capital contingency reserve. Therefore no additional allocation of resources is required.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection said that

the Leisure Centre is going from strength to strength and was something to be proud of. The Cabinet Member for Resources reported that the Leisure Centre had proved to be exceptionally popular and with an average of 35,000 users per month, rising to 47,000 in January which is 4,000 more than the combined sites of Wyre Forest Glades Leisure Centre and Stourport Sports Centre in the equivalent months in recent years. He added that an extra 31 spaces will make a huge difference and the Council has been proactive in acting quickly for local residents and users of the Leisure Centre.

**Decision:**

- 1.1 To agree submission of a planning application by Places for People Ltd (PFPL) for additional spaces at the Wyre Forest Leisure Centre car park in accordance with the plan in Appendix 1.**
- 1.2 To agree that costs of the works should be shared 50/50 with Places for People Leisure Ltd and that the contract with PFPL be varied to allow PFPL to procure the work on this basis.**

**CAB.77 Transfer of Far Forest Play Area, Oakleaf Drive to Rock Parish Council**

A report was considered from the Cultural Services Manager which sought to agree the transfer of ownership of Far Forest Play area to Rock Parish Council, with the remaining allocation of section 106 money to be transferred to the parish council to be spent on maintaining the play area.

The Leader of the Council led Members through the report. He thanked Rock Parish Council for their approach to the District Council and commented that this was a shining example of how Parish Councils play their part within the District

The Leader of the Council explained that the land on which the play area was built was transferred from Bryant Homes in 2010/11 and the Council received a sum of £35,000 to maintain the play area. £4,284 had been spent to date and the Council proposed to transfer the balance to Rock Parish Council for the purpose of maintaining the play area.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services stated that she was pleased that Rock Parish Council had indicated that they wanted to take on the play area, which highlighted the benefits of localism in action.

**Decision:**

- 1.1 To decide in principle to transfer the Far Forest play area to Rock Parish Council for nil consideration, and to transfer the balance of the associated section 106 contribution, subject to a binding legal requirement that it continue to be used as a play area and that the section 106 monies only be used towards its maintenance**
- 1.2 Delegated authority be given to the Director of Community Well Being and Environment and the Solicitor to the Council, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Operational**

**Services, to advertise the proposed transfer of land as shown on the attached plan in the report to Cabinet as required by section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972; to consider any objections made as a result of the advertisement; and to take the final decision on disposal in the event of objections.**

**CAB. 78 Budget Monitoring Third Quarter 2016/17**

A report was considered from the Chief Financial Officer which monitored the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, informed members of the Housing Benefit Overpayment debt position as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 and the Sundry/Property debt position as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

The Cabinet Member for Resources led Members through the report and highlighted that it contained good news for the Council in the form of a healthy under spend of £250,000. He thanked the Chief Financial Officer and her team for their work in constantly driving for efficiencies and savings.

**Decision:**

**The projected budget variations and comments outlined within the report to Cabinet and appendices 2 to 5 be noted.**

**CAB.79 Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 4**

A report was considered from the Planning Policy Manager which sought to approve Wyre Forest District Council's response to the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 4 Consultation.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration led Members through the report. He explained that the role of the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) was to set out local transport policies and a strategy for investment in transport infrastructure, technology and services to deliver against a wide range of objectives. He advised that Worcestershire County Council would aim to target investment in three broad areas: transport technology, travel choice and capacity enhancement.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration referred to the LTP4 document in appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet, which clarifies that the Wyre Forest Infrastructure Delivery Plan would have an important role in supporting the proposals contained in the emerging Wyre Forest Local Plan Review. He highlighted that Worcestershire County Council would bid for major transport funding for transport schemes including Kidderminster Transport Strategy and the Blakedown Railway Station Parkway enhancement, which was supported by Wyre Forest District Council.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented that the LTP4 consultation had been discussed at various forums and thanked the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration for including the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's response regarding the impact on the Green Belt Land surrounding Blakedown Rail Station Enhancement in the

recommendations.

**Decision:**

**In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017:**

- 1.1 The comments and representations as set out at Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet, be agreed as the District Council's formal response to the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 4 Consultation.**
- 1.2 The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place be authorised to submit the District Council's representations in accordance with the consultation deadline of 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.04pm.