

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER  
23RD MAY 2017 (6PM)**

---

**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, N Knowles, F M Oborski MBE and J A Shaw.

**CAB.1 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.2 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.3 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14th March 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.4 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.5 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.6 Community Housing Group: Transfer of Engagements to Wyre Forest Community Housing**

A report was considered from the Chief Executive which considered instructions for the Council shareholder on Community Housing Group (CHG).

The Leader of the Council led Members through the report. He reminded Members that at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017 Council appointed Councillor Chris Rogers as its shareholder on CHG. He added that Council supported the significant governance changes which saw new governance rules adopted for CHG. He advised that the role of the Council had diminished over the years and Committee Members did not have any influence on decision making on behalf of the bodies they represented.

**Decision:**

**To mandate the Council shareholder to vote in favour of the merger of Community Housing Group with Wyre Forest Community Housing by the transfer of engagements process.**

**CAB.7 Business Rates: Scheme of Revaluation Support**

A report was considered from the Chief Executive to adopt a scheme which provided revaluation support to businesses facing significant increases in rates following the revaluation.

The Cabinet Member for Resources led Members through the report. He advised that this was a positive report that would help local businesses affected by the business rate revaluation that took effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. He added that the Government had given local Councils the freedom to devise their own schemes to support businesses most affected by the revaluation with the key objective to focus support to local businesses with a rateable value between £15,000 and £200, 000. He explained that in order to maximise the number of business in the district that would qualify, national chains have been deliberately excluded from the scheme. Support would automatically be provided for trading businesses who qualified for the scheme and they would not have to submit an application. He stated that relief would be provided at the rate of 85% of the increase in the bill and that this support would be phased out over three years.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged that the administration were pro small businesses and referred to the 3418 hereditaments in Wyre Forest. Of these, 1134 rateable values have stayed the same, 1335 rateable values have reduced and 949 rateable values have increased. He commented that the scheme was well thought out in directing the resource where it is needed.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services commented that she was pleased that businesses do not have to make any application to benefit from the scheme and that it was readily accessible.

In answer to a Members question, the Cabinet Member for Resources explained that the consultation was carried out with Worcestershire County Council and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, both of which responded positively.

**Decision:**

**The scheme of revaluation support set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be adopted.**

**CAB.8 Report on Provisional Final Accounts Outturn 2016/17**

A report was considered from the Chief Financial Officer to receive the provisional outturn position in relation to the Final Accounts for 2016/17.

The Cabinet Member for Resources led Members through the report and advised that he was delighted to report a provisional outturn position of £1,112,540 savings, which was welcome news given the current financial landscape. He added that this was only possible due to prudent budget management and thanked Officers and The Corporate Leadership Team for their hard work. He explained that as well as generating savings, external income has been a key factor of the report, including increased income in Depot Services and increased income from Development Control.

The Cabinet Member for Resources acknowledged that part of the savings would be used to re-invest in the authority including £150,000 to top up the innovation fund and the replenishment of the Business Rates Equalisation / Regeneration Risk Reserve by £300,000. He added that the Council should be proud of its excellent record of generating efficiencies.

The Leader of the Council commented that it was welcome news to have a significant total saving on the net revenue budget and fully supported the allocations in terms of replenishing Business Rates Risk Reserve and contributing to our general reserves. He congratulated Service managers and their teams for their savings at year end.

**Decision:**

**The Cabinet Noted:**

- 1 The most welcome news that a total saving of £1,112,540 has been achieved for 2016/17 reducing to £662,540 after the transfers to risk reserves as set out in 2.2 and 2.3 of the report to Cabinet. This has been achieved by prudent budget management, particularly in relation to Pay and General Administration budgets together with a robust review and release of circa £310,000 earmarked reserves no longer required.**
- 2 That £150,000 from the 2016/17 savings has been used to increase the existing earmarked reserve for the Innovation Fund to continue to meet the costs of our challenging Wyre Forest Forward Programme as detailed in paragraph 4.6 of the report to Cabinet.**
- 3 That £300,000 from the 2016/17 savings has been used to replenish the Business Rates Equalisation/ Regeneration Risk Reserve to its previous level.**

**CAB.9 Industrial Unit Investment Business Case**

A report was considered from the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration which agreed the outline business case for the Council to proceed with investing in developing new small industrial units on a council owned site, and to proceed with the project subject to the satisfactory completion of a detailed business case.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration led Members through the report. He explained that the Council, as part of its Medium Term Financial Strategy, had agreed a proposal to use its prudential capability to create a new Capital Portfolio Fund of up to a maximum of £25million. He explained that the Council recognised that there was a strong demand for small industrial units of up to 6,000 square feet, which was not met by the private sector and that the most immediate opportunity available to the Council would be to develop a small parcel of vacant Council owned land off Silverwoods Way. This project would be funded using recycled capital receipts from the Council's Evergreen Investment Fund and prudential borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration explained that the business case would also include further analysis on local market conditions and an assessment of project benefits, risk and timescales for delivery.

The Leader of the Council commented that this report was fantastic news, and explained that this was a shining example of good use of the Evergreen Fund. He advised that in addition to the Evergreen Fund, the Council's Capital Portfolio Fund would be utilised to enable the construction of the new industrial units. He added that this was the first in what he hoped was a long line of projects and business cases that will benefit the District, its residents and small businesses.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented that this was an exciting project and one that all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> April unanimously voted to support.

**Decision:**

**In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017:**

- 1.1 The outline business case for the development of a new small industrial units scheme on Council owned land off Silverwoods Way in Kidderminster utilising borrowing capacity from the Council's Capital Portfolio Fund and funding from its Evergreen Investment Fund be agreed**
- 1.2 Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity & Place, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, Solicitor to the Council and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to:**
  - (i) Finalise and approve the detailed business case for the development of the new small industrial units scheme;**

**And subject to agreeing the detailed business case to:**

- (ii) **Appointment of contractor(s) to design, develop and build the units and to project manage the delivery of them.**

**CAB.10 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 paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.**

**CAB.11 Capital Portfolio Fund: Proposed Acquisition**

A report was considered the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which sought to agree the submission of an offer to acquire a property for the Capital Portfolio fund.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration led members in depth through the confidential report to Cabinet. He advised that the proposal would generate a new revenue stream which is line with the Council's strategic priorities and is therefore part of the Council's overall plan towards achieving financial sustainability.

**Decision:**

**Subject to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017 agreeing a positive recommendation to proceed:**

**The recommendations for the steps to acquire a property for the Capital Portfolio Fund as set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.2.5 of the exempt report to Cabinet be agreed.**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.56 pm.