

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER
12TH JUNE 2018 (6PM)**

Present:

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

Observers:

Councillors: H E Dyke and F M Oborski MBE.

CAB.1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.2 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor R J Vale declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in Agenda Item 8.1 – Wyre Forest District Local Plan Review: Revised Local Development Scheme (Project Plan 2018-20), and would leave the room during consideration of the item.

CAB.3 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 27th March 2018 and the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Sub-Committee held on 2nd May 2018 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 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

CAB.7 Final Accounts Outturn 2017/2018

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources to receive the provisional outturn position in relation to the Final Accounts for 2017/18.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report and advised that it was excellent news that the provisional outturn position was far better than what had been reported to Cabinet for the second and third quarters of the year. He added that this was due to prudent budget management and he was extremely grateful to the Corporate Leadership Team and a myriad of Officers for their hard work in achieving this fantastic result.

The Cabinet Member for Resources explained that in addition to generating savings, increasing income was a priority and it was proposed to re-invest £350k back into the Council's Innovation Fund to further support the Wyre Forest Forward Programme of transformation work. He said that the funding from the Business Rate Retention Scheme had increased by circa £1m for this year which was good news. He added that one off gains had contributed to the increase and therefore may not be recurring; it was however, excellent news.

The Leader of the Council commented that it was welcome news to have achieved the significant total saving on the net revenue budget. He acknowledged the importance of the funding stream from the Business Rate Retention Scheme and seconded the proposals as set out in the report. He added that by 2020/21 the overall funding gap would increase to around £1.6m. He said it was a priority of the Council to continue to grow income and become more commercial in the way it operates, to protect services for the district's residents. He thanked the Corporate Leadership Team and the wider Management team for their savings at year end.

Decision: As detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, the Cabinet noted:

- 1.1 The most welcome news that a total saving of £443,950 has been achieved for 2017/18 reducing to £86,950 after the transfers to risk reserves as set out in 1.2 below. This has been achieved by prudent budget management, particularly in relation to Pay and General Administration budgets and includes a release of earmarked reserves of £233k compared to the planned £240k as set out in 3.7 of the report.**
- 1.2 That £350,000 from the 2017/18 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 4.6 of the report.**
- 1.3 That in addition to the Service savings above, £900,000 from the 2017/18 Business Rates surplus has been used to replenish the Business Rates Equalisation/Regeneration Risk Reserve to a level proportionate to assessed risk. This was planned in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as set out in 4.2.3 of the report. A further reserve of £100,000 to support the work of the Commercial Activity Programme Board has also been created out of surplus Business Rates.**

Councillor R J Vale left the meeting at this point, (6.14pm).

CAB.8 Wyre Forest District Local Plan Review: Revised Local Development Scheme (Project Plan 2018 – 20)

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth which provided an update on the progress made in undertaking the Local Plan Review, sought agreement to revise the Local Development Scheme (Project Plan 2018 – 20) and to revise the process of pre-application in light of the amended timetable.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration outlined the report in detail. He explained that the finalisation of sites to be included in the Pre-Submission consultation could only be done when the technical evidence base studies were completed and consistent with other evidence base documents. He said that the key studies would be: Transport Modelling which was due to be completed in Summer 2018; Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) revision which was due to be completed over summer months when Government's standardised methodology figure were available; and Employment Land Review which was due to be completed in parallel with OAHN study. He emphasised the importance of keeping the LDS up-to-date to help provide certainty to local stakeholders, developers and communities to assist in district wide regeneration.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration said it was extremely disappointing that the Government had failed to adhere to the April 2018 timescale for confirming the standardised methodology for agreeing housing provision in the district. He said that the Council was reluctant to enter into a further round of public consultation on the Local Plan Pre Submission document without having unequivocal knowledge of the numbers of new houses that it had to plan for as this would simply create further uncertainty amongst its residents, businesses and statutory consultees.

The Leader of the Council expressed his frustration that the authority was having to delay its timetable for the next stages of the Local Plan Review. He said the revised timeline proposed adoption of the new Local Plan in Spring 2020. He seconded the proposal for the adoption of pre-application standing advice, he said without an adopted Local Plan the Council was in a vulnerable position from developers submitting hostile planning applications. He added that he had spoken to the local MP and written to the Secretary of State raising concerns over the delay in Government guidelines.

The Cabinet Member for Resources said he was equally frustrated that the Government had failed to keep to its deadline for confirming the exact methodology to be used for calculating housing need. He said delaying the timetable was the right thing to do as it was imperative that the Council had a robust Local Plan which conformed to the National Planning Policy Framework and other current guidance. He said that it would be wrong to continue with the process without the correct housing need figure.

The Chairman of the Local Plans Review Panel, Councillor F M Oborski MBE, echoed the concerns previously raised. She said the delay by the Government

was unacceptable. She expressed concern over the uncertainty for residents as a result of the amended timetable.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor H Dyke, advised Members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were happy to support the recommendations made in the report. She said that the Preferred Options consultation which took place last year had resulted in approximately 5000 written responses and had caused a lot of uncertainty for residents within certain wards across the district. She asked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration if it would be possible for a summary of the consultation responses to be published before the next round of public consultation took place.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration agreed that in the interests of public relations the results should be published and agreed to discuss the request with Officers.

Decision:

1.1 The proposed revised Local Development Scheme Project Plan 2018 – 2020 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be adopted.

1.2 The proposed pre-application standing advice for housing as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be adopted.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 6.42pm.