

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,
KIDDERMINSTER

25TH JULY 2018 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: S J Williams (Chairman), K Henderson (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, J Baker, J-P Campion S J Chambers, M Cheeseman, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, N Harris, J A Hart, M J Hart, V Higgs, N Knowles, D Little, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, J A Shaw, J D Smith, A Totty, R J Vale and H S Williams.

C. 23 Prayers

Prayers were said by Revd Canon Rose Lawley of St Mary and All Saints Church, Kidderminster. A moment of silence was observed in memory of Councillor Rod Wilson and former Councillor Mike Price who both have passed away recently.

C. 24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S J Walker and G Webster.

C. 25 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor J-P Campion declared an ODI in agenda item 9, motion 2, as he is the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia. He declared the interest for noting but will take part in the debate.

Councillor T L Onslow declared an ODI in agenda item 9, motion 2, as she is the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia. She declared the interest for noting but will take part in the debate.

The Chairman announced that there would be no item under the exempt section at this meeting.

C. 26 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd May 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C. 27 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

C. 28 Questions

Seven questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order A5 by members of the Council.

Question from Councillor A Totty to the Cabinet Member for Resources

There are now 8 months only left of the financial year and the start of the 2019-20 financial year. Can the cabinet member tell me how he plans to replace the £30,000 projected income which now will no longer be forthcoming, due to the decision not to proceed with the construction of the industrial units, part of the proposed development at Green Street Depot.

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Resources.

All members were advised back on 16th May to a change of the scheme of works on the Green Street project which excluded the industrial units in order that the project falls back in the financial envelope which council set. By way of background this was largely to do with the increase cost circa £400,000 to do with essential drainage and attenuation works that were found out through the process. Therefore by omitting the industrial units there is a knock on effect of circa £30,000 on income. But we will assume that in our business plan and will make up the shortfall by letting out more space in Wyre forest House which we calculate can generate a further £39,000 and coupled with further external income generation from the depot. The business plan therefore still assumes the income just in a different guise. We as an administration are happy we can meet the £30,000 if not more and that means the overall business plan will be revenue positive to the tune of £26,000. The facts and the figures still stack up and this much needed project still represents exceptional value to the tax payers of Wyre Forest.

Supplementary question from Councillor A Totty.

The Cabinet Member for Resources says that you will generate extra income through the Green Street depot. Will this be using existing staff?

Supplementary answer from Cabinet Member for Resources.

We do not propose to reduce any staff but we might actually increase staffing, for example the tree gang. We have the commercial board which ratifies the business plan and has its own capital and revenue budgets so what we might find is that over time it actually generates more staff.

Question from Councillor N Knowles to the Leader of the Council

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Wyre Forest District Council needs to plug the gap between income and expenditure which is £1.6 million.

Council leadership has said that most of the effort to close the gap will take place after the “all-out” elections in 2019. However, £112,000 efficiency savings will take place this year.

How will the £112,000 be saved and from where in the Budget?

Finally, how will the gap of £1.6million be closed, given that it is far too late and irresponsible, not to address the issue now.

What policies are there to save the £1.6 million? Council and the public surely has the right to be told.

Answer from the Leader of the Council

This Council and administration have been very clear on how we are plugging the gap hitherto by reforming, being more efficient, by being smart in the way we do things, by becoming more commercial, by fees and charges and by reducing where we can sensibly reduce, in order to provide a sustainable and balanced budget with reasonable reserves over the medium term. So this Council and administration have a proven track record of financial competence and being able to live within our means. We have an allocation of £112,000 for further savings this year. We have already made £30,000 of them because we put in as part of the budget proposals an allocation for community safety which is now funded through the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner as a result of a successful application and grant. So we are already 25% of the way to this saving and we are only 25% of the way through the financial year. As we go through the September budget first quarter monitoring and the medium term financial strategy we will be able to demonstrate that we are making good progress on that by localism, cost savings and further procurement and indeed we over achieved on our Wyre Forest forward savings in 2017/18.

You say the council and public have a right to be told. We have been perfectly honest and we know there is a financial budget gap over the medium term which needs to be plugged. We will do that by doing sound things like investing in commercial projects to bring in further additional income, making the tough decisions like coming to Wyre Forest House for example, which is saving the tax payer £500,000 per year and bringing in rental income from tenants and making the proper decisions like the Leisure Centre where previously this Council and the tax payers were paying £900,000 a year to fund those centres and now save over £500,000 a year by making this sensible and strategic decision. So we have a proven track record on the savings we have made. I'm not sure who you are referring to as I have never said that we will not take any decisions before May 2019 because we have already taken a decision on the Hub for example, which is to save £50,000 on our revenue income. So yes the public have a right to know how these savings

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and efficiencies are to be made and we will continue to make the case through our interaction with the public.

Supplementary Question from Councillor N Knowles

The nature of this council is changing as we look and as we speak. My

question was really about the £1.6 million. What we have got is fees and charges and going into reasonable reserves. There is no detail and I would hope we would have a printed document sooner rather than later setting out all of the savings and challenges on meeting the £1.6million gap. I would like some more detail to your answer.

Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council

We have to manage within the financial envelope we have and live within our means. There will be documentation on how we are going to make these savings and this is the annual budget setting process. We have a budget review group and we have a budget which is set in February in public as a result of full public consultation which is fully transparent. This administration has a sound financial competence and we are determined to do all that we can at becoming efficient and growing our income to plug this gap. Invariable there will be difficult decisions and priorities which will have to be considered. We shouldn't do anything rash, we have a balanced budget and we aren't going to run out of money this year, next year or the year after. We will do all that we can to deal with the budget situation and continue to deliver sustainable efficient and good value for money services for the taxpayers of this district.

Question from Councillor N Knowles to the Leader of the Council

What percentage of Wyre Forest House is now rented out? Is the long term objective to rent out all of Wyre Forest House and is it the intention to relocate all staff from Wyre Forest House into the yet to be built accommodation at Green Street?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

48% and no.

Supplementary Question from Councillor N Knowles

We seem to be in a situation where units are being let out as we speak. When will this stop and what is your intention as the administration, of the viability of Wyre Forest House?

Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council

This administration has taken sound steps to bring in over £200,000 of rental income which helps us provide services. There are approximately 10

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organisations who rent from us here in Wyre Forest House and we have one area which is currently being marketed so that will take the percentage higher just a little bit more. This building is an asset which has a capital value to the taxpayers in this district. The new accommodation at Green Street will be for staff at the hub and predominantly the Revenues and Benefits team, based at Wyre Forest House, to bring them together under the 'help my financial situation'.

Question from Councillor N Knowles to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

According to a recent report WFDC (on behalf of WCC) uses Glyphosate to control weeds on grass verges, lawns, parks, pavements etc. There is a court case now proceeding in California against the agro-chemical giant Monsanto Company, brought by DeWayne Johnson, a former school pest control manager, who is suffering from terminal cancer having worked for thirty years using Glyphosate being sprayed on weeds. In 2015 the World Health Organisation classified Glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans". Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that until the result of the court case is known, or until other evidence can prove Glyphosate is safe, that WFDC stops using Glyphosate as a treatment for weed control and the control of other plants?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

Essentially you are asking Wyre Forest District Council to take action on the basis of a court case in America which hasn't reached a conclusion yet. We do currently use Glyphosate which is commonly found in weed killer. The current Health and Safety Executive's advice is 'The UK has a rigorous approval process for pesticides. The main aim of the process is to protect the health of people, creatures and plants and safeguard the environment. All companies wishing to obtain approval for their pesticides are required to submit substantial data dossiers to support their applications. The extensive range of studies undertaken on pesticides is aimed at establishing acceptable safety for people, animals and the wider environment. This process has been applied to Glyphosate which has been approved as safe and effective for several years. In addition to the UK process all pesticides are subject to the regular EU wide initial approval and review programme for active substances. The review programme makes sure the data supporting the application meets modern safety standards. Glyphostae is currently approved for use as an herbicide or weed killer in the EU. The government feels the regulatory process is a robust system. The authorisation programme takes in to account all scientific knowledge available. Neither the EU's assessment nor the UK's assessment of the active substance have found the substance unacceptable to use. The Health and Safety Executive and the EU find it safe to use and we will continue to use it until we get advice to the contrary.

Supplementary question from Councillor N Knowles

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The World Health Organisation has said that this liquid is carcinogenic, it doesn't matter that it might be okayed by the EU or any other country?

Supplementary answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

The Health & Safety Executive is not a political organisation: it is an independent body. In this county every product we buy has the stamp of the Health & Safety Executive and we have to trust them. We can't

comment or take action on court cases in America that we don't have the full details of. Maybe the result of the court case will change the advice that the Health & Safety Executive gives us in the future.

Question from Councillor S Miah to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

Everyday from my business premises I witness Police vehicles having to attend incidents at the Lion Hotel. These continuous incidents are not only a concern to neighbouring premises but must also be a serious drain on Police resources.

What steps can this Council take to reduce the antisocial incidents arising at these premises?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

Having spoken to the Local Police Inspector, I have been assured that the Police do not attend the Lion Hotel every day. There have been some recent incidents but we can not comment on them but none have involved any placements from this Council.

We can not comment on how the Police decide to deploy their officers: that is a matter for them.

The Lion Hotel is a private business and whilst the council makes sure that anyone placed there are aware that, if asked to leave due to anti-social behaviour, they will not be offered anywhere else. However even though we are in regular contact with the owner and work with him on housing conditions in compliance with the contact, we have no powers over the hotel. We do as much as we can and will continue to monitor and work with the owner of the hotel.

Supplementary question from Councillor S Miah

Would the Council have more power to regulate it if the property or accommodation was to be reclassified as a House in multi occupation?

Supplementary answer from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure

and Community Protection

Yes we would have more powers if it was classified as a HMO but we can't do that unless more than 50% of the guests are long standing and we can't force them to become HMO.

Question from Councillor S Miah to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

How will the council ensure s106 money received from the development off Stourbridge Road will be used in Broadwaters.

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

S106 monies are under the jurisdiction of Planning Committee not Council. Planning committee is the arena for members to agree the shape of S106 and where the money is spent.

All apart from the education provision are directly related to Broadwaters and the education 106 is determined by the County Council.

Supplementary question from Councillor S Miah

In relation to section 106 and Broadwaters can you specify what projects the money will be used on?

Supplementary answer from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

You can find out the answers to this question from the Planning Committee.

Question from Councillor Shazu Miah to the Leader of the Council

How will the council ensure that it retains a presence in Kidderminster town centre after the relocation of the Hub?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

Of course the District Council will have a presence in the Town of Kidderminster. We have statutory functions which will continue as they do in the other towns in this district and the Hub is only 5 minutes down the road from its current location.

Supplementary question from Councillor S Miah

Are you expecting members of the public to approach the people who empty the bins with issues relating to the council?

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Once the Hub moves will the cabinet member attempt to negotiate with Diamond buses to reroute along some services via Lower Green Street?

Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council

Of course we wouldn't expect members of the public to approach people who are emptying the bins with their issues. People can approach this council, via the internet or by contacting the Hub.

We as a council will continue to do, whatever commercial operator it might be, to ensure they provide appropriate and adequate bus services for servicing Green Street. Members of the public welcome being able to park directly outside of the new building.

C. 29 Chairman's Communications

The Council received a list of functions attended by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman since the Council's last meeting.

C. 30 Leader's Announcements and Report

The Leader of the Council referred Members to his tabled report.

C. 31 Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders 42:00

4 motions were received in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1).

Motion from Independent and Liberal Democrat Group

Council has been proud to support U.K. Holocaust Memorial Day since the instigation of that commemoration.

Council notes with concern the rise in Anti Semitic attacks against members of the U.K. Jewish Community. Council believes that politicians and officials from all parties and institutions must lead by example, use responsible language and call out others when they do not.

Council therefore resolves to Adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working definition of Anti Semitism and its appended examples; which has already been adopted by the U.K. Government, the Scottish Government, the Greater London Authority, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and over a hundred local authorities:

- *Holocaust denial or minimisation; indicating sympathy for the Holocaust;*
- *Holocaust inversion - i.e. identifying Israel or Zionists as Nazis;*
- *Giving support to, or failing to oppose, terrorism directed at the*

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Jewish Community inside and outside Israel;

- *Theological antisemitism, such as accusing Jews of killing Jesus*

Councillor F M Oborski MBE presented the motion. She stated she was delighted that this motion passed through unanimously at Worcestershire County Council. She added that Wyre Forest District Council has been proud to commemorate Holocaust memorial day every year and was one of the first authorities in the West Midlands to support. On a visit to Singers Hill Synagogue in Birmingham she had attended a seminar on this subject. They highlighted the Jewish manifesto for local government and they requested councils to adopt this definition.

Councillor S Miah seconded the motion.

Councillor M Hart spoke on behalf of the Conservative group at Wyre Forest and that they are more than happy to support this motion. This definition has been adopted by the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly, the GLA and over 120 local authorities in this country and is only sensible that Wyre Forest District Council does the same. He added that whatever your religion, belief, faith views on race, this shows we are tolerant of the Jewish community and their religion.

Councillor Shaw spoke on behalf of the Labour group's full support for this motion.

Councillor J-P Campion spoke on the importance that the events of the holocaust aren't forgotten and hopes that this motion will be accepted unanimously.

Councillor Miah said it's wonderful that this council was united on this issue. He added that people of colour are visible when there is a race hate crime but the Jewish community don't have that and are the hidden community.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to adopt the policy.

Motion from Independent and Liberal Democrat Group

Council recognises the knowledge of communities which our workforce develops during their work. Council applauds the joint initiative of West Mercia Police and Telford Council in Training Refuse Collection Staff to observe evidence of Child Abuse and Exploitation, Domestic Violence and Drug Dealing and resolves to develop a similar initiative in Wyre Forest.

Councillor F M Oborski MBE presented the motion and spoke on how the refuse collection staff are out on regular routes and will individuals or incidents and it is important that they become the eyes and ears of the community. She added that she feels that this is something we should be publicising and could include other staff that might see various behaviours and know how to report it.

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Councillor H Dyke seconded the motion. Not just our refuse staff but they may see something unusual that others might not see. They are in an ideal situation to help safeguard children and the vulnerable in our society.

Councillor R Vale spoke and tabled an amendment to the motion, which is as follows:

Council recognises the knowledge of communities which our workforce develops during their work. Council applauds the joint initiative of West Mercia Police and Telford Council in Training Refuse Collection Staff to observe evidence of Child Abuse and Exploitation, Domestic Violence and Drug Dealing and notes the training that has already been provided to our frontline refuse and depot staff by Worcestershire County Council in this area and resolves to consider what further training could be provided as appropriate.

Councillor F M Oborski confirmed that the Independent and Liberal Democrat Group would accept the amendment.

Councillor M Hart spoke of his happiness to support this amended motion.

Councillor N Knowles said he remains to be convinced on this important subject. If local government was better funded there would be more people to deal with these issues. Training should be for the people paid to do these jobs. He added what happens when things go wrong and people have the finger pointed at them? Would operatives be paid for this training? He is reluctant to go down this road on such an important issue. We need more staff to solve the problems.

Councillor T Onslow said she is very happy to support this amendment and that in her role as Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner she unfortunately has a lot of experience in this area. The crimes are horrendous and have a dramatic effect on the child's life. Anything that can be done on safeguarding to help staff or residents come forward with information we must do.

Councillor N Gale spoke of her dismay at Councillor Knowles' comments and added that this is not an extra duty; this is everyone's duty and responsibility to look out for anything that is suspicious. No one is being asked to investigate the crime, it's about people coming forward and having the confidence that there are safe people to disclose information to.

Councillor A Totty agreed with Councillor Gale that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Councillor J-P Campion spoke about how this is about being a good citizen. These skills everyone should have and that is more awareness than training. For anyone worried about reporting something wrongly is that the law is on the side of the innocent. He added that it is better to report something which could change a situation than not report anything at all and if this motion only helps

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one person than it is a great use of our time.

Councillor J Smith spoke on the importance of being aware of things happening in the areas we live in and that any steps we can take on safeguarding is crucial.

Councillor S Miah said that, as a safeguarding school governor and having been on safeguard training himself, he is now more aware of the issues in our society. He added that we should be considering that the Councillors should also be having this training. He recalled the taxi drivers were initially concerned as to why they were having the training but that, once they had, they were really pleased.

Councillor S Chambers spoke of how children look up to people in hi-vis jackets. Training these people will give them more confidence in dealing with someone approaching them.

Councillor F M Oborski MBE added that once people have had training they will know who they can report issues to if something is wrong and called for a named vote.

A named vote on the Independent and Liberal Democrat Group's motion was recorded and the motion was approved unanimously as follows:

Councillors:

For (30) J Aston, J Baker, J-P Campion, S J Chambers, M Cheeseman, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, N Harris, J A Hart, M J Hart, K Henderson, V Higgs, N Knowles, D Little, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, J A Shaw, J D Smith, A Totty, R J Vale, H S Williams and S J Williams

Against (0)

Abstained (0)

Motion from Independent and Liberal Democrat Group

Council appreciates the work carried out by the Affordable Housing Review Panel. However Council regrets that the Panel was not given the opportunity to examine the work done by APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) on the proactive role some District and Unitary Authorities are undertaking, using Prudential Borrowing to directly provide housing both for market sale and both Affordable and Social Rental usually via arms length companies or joint ventures. Council therefore requests Overview and Scrutiny Committee to reconvene the Panel with a request that it further investigates ways in which Wyre Forest DC can actively intervene in the local housing market to ensure that the real housing needs of the District are addressed.

Councillor F M Oborski MBE presented the motion.

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Councillor T Onslow left the room at 19:18 and returned at 19:21.

Councillor F M Oborski said she was very pleased to serve on the panel but that it had come to her attention that other Local Authorities have set up local housing companies. By reconvening the panel it will give the opportunity to look at what other councils and APSE are doing to see what Wyre Forest District Council can do.

Councillor S Miah seconded the motion.

Councillor C Rogers said that he agreed the work of APSE did not form part of the work agreed by the Affordable Housing Review Panel nor was it raised at any point during the review but this was never requested. He added that alternative delivery models have been looked at and a report came to Cabinet in June 2016. He also said that reconvening the panel is a matter for Overview and Scrutiny not Council.

Councillor J Shaw said that, as a member of the Affordable Housing Review panel, the reason that the request to examine this work wasn't made was because the panel wasn't aware of the potential and it was unreasonable for our officers to have every variant of initiatives to hand. He added that some areas that weren't explored could be fruitful and that we need to explore every option.

Councillor S Chambers left the room at 19:27 and returned at 19:28.

Councillor M Hart said that the Conservative group can not support this motion. This is not a matter for Council to direct Overview and Scrutiny to reconvene the panel.

Councillor H Dyke addressed Councillor C Rogers' comments on the panel communicating with each other.

Councillor N Knowles was in favour of the motion.

Councillor S Miah agreed that the panel should reconvene to look at what has been missed and assess housing needs.

Councillor F M Oborski added that the idea of this motion was for the whole Council to have their say.

A vote was taken and the motion was defeated.

Motion from Labour Group

Council,

noting its Prudential Borrowing capacity and other potentially available

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capital sums;

its existing policy to increase residential occupation of Kidderminster town centre;

the assessment that 229 new affordable homes per year are required for the next five years to meet existing and newly arising need in Wyre Forest;

recommendations 4:1 and 4:3 of the Affordable Housing Review Panel's report, which refer to close partnership working with Community Housing and the council's role as landowner in the provision of affordable housing;

recommendations 4:4 and 4:5 of the same report, which refer to a more flexible and comprehensive Local Plan policy on thresholds for affordable housing;

the Scrutiny agenda item, 5th July 2018, "Lion Fields Future Phases Development", on which the oral advice from the Economic Development officer was that the redevelopment of the former Magistrates Court site is likely to consist primarily of housing;

and the previously-expressed will of Council that the construction of houses be part of the Bromsgrove Street redevelopment, a proportion of which should be "affordable":

states its firm preference for a mix of housing tenures to be a major element in the Lion Fields redevelopment, including a 30% proportion of affordable houses, as a minimum, and invites Community Housing to become a development partner forthwith.

Councillor J Shaw presented the motion and spoke on the importance of affordable housing and partial ownership tenures, such as part buy part rent. He added that the council as a land owner is in a prime position for these joint ventures.

Councillor J Baker left the room at 19:37 and returned at 19:39.

Councillor J Shaw added that mixed tenure is good and to support the policy where 30% affordable housing is included.

Councillor Vi Higgs seconded the motion.

Councillor I Hardiman spoke on the decision that was taken at the Cabinet meeting on 17 July 2018 where it was agreed to wait for receipt of a further report. He added that paragraph 4.21 of that report importantly states the council needs to balance the need for affordable housing against best value for the site. Council can not select a development partner in the way proposed. There will have to be a proper process and adherence to Council procurement procedures.

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Councillor Oborski spoke and wished to make an amendment to the motion. The amendment was to omit the words after “minimum,” in the final paragraph and insert “*and seeks suitable development partners.*”

Councillor F M Oborski added that without this amendment she wouldn't be able to support the substantive motion. As Chair of Local plans review panel she wants to see as high a percentage as possible of affordable housing and people living in the town centre.

Councillor H Dyke supported the amendment.

Councillors J-P Champion and N Martin left the room at 19:54.

Councillor M Hart said he could not support the motion and that, even after the amendment, it would still be tying the Council's hand on what the development is.

Councillors J-P Champion and N Martin returned to the room at 19:55

Councillor N Knowles said he was against the amended motion as it is losing the point that it was intended to make.

Councillor J-P Champion said that he couldn't support the motion as amended.

Councillor Oborski summed up that she could only support the amendment and wouldn't support the original motion.

Councillor J Shaw said that the amendment hasn't had the thought that was given to his substantive motion and that the Labour group will not support the amendment.

A vote on the amendment was taken and was clearly defeated.

Councillor N Desmond spoke on the substantive motion and said that all members realise that there is a shortage of affordable housing and all want to see it increased but he wouldn't be able to support the motion because of the legal and procurement reasons on why the motion cannot commit to a partner. He added that now is not the time to box the Council into a corner on this issue and it needs to be flexible going forward.

Councillor F M Oborski said that in September we will know the split on affordable and market housing that we are going to need. This motion is premature and will bind the Council now before it knows what the figures on affordable housing will be. Therefore she could not support this motion.

Councillor J Shaw added that, whilst the Council is looking for best value for a capital receipt, this did not represent best value for the community. The original motion is very clear in what its priority is.

A vote was taken on the substantive motion and was defeated.

C. 32 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (7)

There were no urgent motions.

C. 33 Review of the May 2018 Elections

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented a report from The Returning Officer reviewing the Local Elections in May 2018 and formally moved the recommendation.

The Leader of the Council formally seconded the recommendation.

Councillor N Knowles spoke on the need to encourage more people to vote by post as turn out is nearly double that of those who turnout at the polling station and voiced his opinion on the closure of Polling Stations previously located in Habberley estate.

Councillor H Dyke spoke on the positive that Wyre Forest District Council maintains a low number of proxy voters compared to other areas in the country. It is very important that people have their own vote.

Councillor F Oborski OBE spoke on the low turnouts at polling stations and that people are far more likely to return a postal vote. Around 400 postal votes were rejected in the District for various reasons including signatures not matching records held and feels a refresh and education process should be implemented.

Councillor F Oborski also wanted to highlight that some elderly residents in care homes struggle to get their postal votes posted after voting and that the Residential homes need educating.

The Leader of the Council spoke briefly on Postal Voting rejections and that it is important we follow the legislation and guidance from the Electoral Commission on the matter. He agreed that it is right to encourage people to vote by post if they can not attend a polling station in person. He added the return window for Postal votes is lengthy and that, whilst most people would have someone to assist in posting the postal vote for them, there is room to educate larger establishments to help facilitate assistance as long as it's not abused.

Decision: Council AGREED to note the report on the Local elections in May 2018.

C. 34 Community Governance Review – Wolverley & Cookley

The Leader of the Council presented a report from The Chief Executive on the Community Governance Review – Wolverley & Cookley and formally moved

the recommendation in the report.

He spoke briefly on the turnout of 27.9% and 65% return of postal votes and the reasons as to why this review was conducted. This report now formally closes the review but with the planning consent already approved at Lea Castle the public may ask us to look at this again in the future.

Councillor I Hardiman formally seconded the report.

Decision: The Council DECIDED that, following the consultation, the recommendations of the community governance review should be to make no change to community governance arrangements in the parish of Wolverley and Cookley.

C. 35 Policy and Budget Framework

Councillor I Hardiman spoke on the recommendation to Council from the Cabinet meeting held on 17th July 2018.

The project is in relation to Phase 2 of the improvement work for Kidderminster Town. The project is intended to inject life back into Worcester Street by opening it back up to traffic. The benefits will be adding footfall and passing trade in to this part of town. There have been some significant design challenges. More detailed plans have enabled Worcestershire County Council to estimate the total costs at £2million, not £1million. The Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP have been asked to contribute £500,000. The balance of the funding gap is proposed to be split equally between Wyre Forest District Council and Worcestershire County Council. It is recommended that Wyre Forest District Council adds 10% to the contingency to its £750,000 contribution for this project, and therefore to increase the Capital Programme by £325,000.

The Leader of the Council formally seconded the recommendation.

Councillor F Oborksi disagreed with the financial split with the County Council as they are the highways authority. She understands why the costs have gone up but that County should pick up a much larger proportion of the cost.

Councillor N Knowles gave his support to the project.

Councillor T Onslow talked on how the funding is to regenerate the area, not for necessary works for repairs. This is a persistent item on the agenda of residents over the last few years.

Councillor H Dyke spoke on being unsure on when the project will begin as there seem to be several delays and she would like a timetable of works.

Councillor J-P Champion spoke on how regeneration is a long term journey for this council and how the Council must deliver on this project.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Leader of the Council spoke in relation to Worcestershire County Council having promised “boots on the ground” before the end of the calendar year.

Council AGREED to amend the Capital Programme: Worcester Street, Kidderminster – Regeneration Proposals

- **The Capital Programme for Worcester Street regeneration project be increased by £325k to £825k to be funded by either prudential borrowing and/or earmarked reserves as determined by the Corporate Director: Resources.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.44p.m.