

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER
13TH NOVEMBER 2018 (6PM)**

Present:

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

Observers:

There were no members present as observers.

CAB.42 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

The Leader of the Council announced that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor H Dyke, was unwell and would not be attending the meeting.

CAB.43 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.44 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the 19th September 2018 and the minutes of the Special Cabinet meeting held on 30th October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.45 Call Ins

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

CAB.46 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.47 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

CAB.48 Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2019/20

A report was considered from the Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services

Manager which provided information on the recent consultation to make changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2019/20.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report. He explained that since 2013 the Council had operated a Council Tax Reduction Scheme for all working age people in the District. He added that the proposal was not about amending the 20% threshold; it focused on changing the scheme that would essentially protect those people in receipt of benefits in light of the changes to Universal Credit which would come into force during November. He said that the changes would simplify the system for claimants, as it would prevent claimants from potentially having to constantly inform the authority of any changes to their circumstances. He added that the system would also be easier for the Council to administer.

The Cabinet Member for Resources said that the changes were fair and would improve the scheme. He thanked the Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services Manager, Lucy Wright, and her team for the tremendous amount of work they had put into devising the scheme, and formally moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

The Leader seconded the recommendation for approval by Council. He echoed the thanks given to the Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services Manager and her team. He said that the principles of the scheme, as set out in the report, remain clear and was pleased that the hardship fund would be retained. He added that the proposal had been considered and was supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services supported the proposal as she felt it would help people to budget their finances better.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Recommend to Council that from 1st April 2019:

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme is amended as outlined in paragraph 3.11 of the report to Cabinet.

CAB.49 Write-off of Amounts Outstanding Report

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources which enabled the Cabinet to give consideration to writing off the sum of £98,224.56 in respect of debts that could not be collected.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report and formally moved the recommendation for approval. He said that it was regrettable that the authority had to write off any amounts. However on occasion there was no other choice when robust recovery work to pursue debts had been exhausted.

The Cabinet Member for Resources outlined the circumstances surrounding the situation on this occasion. He advised that the tenant company concerned had used sharp practices to avoid paying its business rates liability. He added that he had written to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out his disappointment with this case and asking for

changes in legislation to allow local Councils to bill landlords instead.

The Leader seconded the proposal and said that all recovery avenues had been fully explored.

Decision: The total of £98,224.56 as detailed in the Appendix to the Cabinet report, be written off.

CAB.50 Housing Assistance Policy

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth which sought agreement for the policy that would be used to determine how the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding from central government would be spent.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report. He advised that the Council uses its discretionary grants to support the Better Care Fund in order to support a number of ways to ensure that older people can remain in their homes and live independent lives. He added that the Housing Assistance Policy, as set out at appendix one of the report, detailed how the Council would deliver its services, which included the Disabled Facilities Programme.

He said that in 2018/19 the Council received £1.192m of capital funding via the Better Care Fund (BCF) to deliver its DFG programme and related services. He added that the policy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and formally moved the recommendation for approval.

The Leader said he welcomed the policy and funding from Central Government and seconded the proposal.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

The Housing Assistance Policy 2018 be approved.

CAB.51 Recommendations from Committees - Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 4th October 2018

a) Wyre Forest Health and Wellbeing Plan Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the recommendations. He said that the plan set out the forthcoming programme of actions for the next year on interventions with partners that the Council proposed to make in respect of improving health and wellbeing across the District.

He said that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the plan and made four additional recommendations for consideration by Cabinet. He said that the first recommendation which requested the next update to set out more information on achievements and direction could be easily accommodated. Whilst the remaining three regarding Dementia Friends refresher training, promotion of mental health issues to help young people and

encouraging healthy eating to avoid childhood obesity were perfectly appropriate. He said the Council did rely on other partners for direct delivery of those items so would be reliant on others in that regard.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being was happy to recommend the Wyre Forest Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2018-21 with the amendments for approval. The proposal was seconded by the Leader.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

The Wyre Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Health Action Plan 2018/21 as attached at Appendix 1 and 2 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as amended, be approved.

b) Climate Change Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the recommendations. He said that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered the action plan and had some specific recommendations for Cabinet to consider.

He said that the three recommendations could be easily accommodated and required publicity and signposting. He said he was happy to propose that the Climate Change Action plan 2018/19 including the additional recommendations be approved. The proposal was seconded by the Leader.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

The Climate Change Action Plan 2018/19 as attached at Appendix 2 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as amended, be approved.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.26pm.