

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,  
KIDDERMINSTER

26TH SEPTEMBER 2018 (6PM)

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**Present:**

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

**C.36 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Rev Hugh Burton, Team Rector, Kidderminster East Parish.

**C.37 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: N Gale, N Martin and S J Walker.

**C.38 Declarations of Interests by Members**

There were no declarations of interests.

**C.39 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.40 Public Participation**

There were no declarations of interests.

**C.41 Questions**

One question had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order A5 by a Member of the Council.

**Question from Councillor F M Oborski MBE to the Leader of the**

**Council**

Could the Leader tell me:

Is he aware of any discussions taking place which might lead to one or more Unitary Councils in Worcestershire?

Does he feel that a move to one or more Unitary Authorities in Worcestershire would be in the interest of the residents of Wyre Forest?

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

No, I am not aware of any discussions and no, I don't.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor F M Oborski MBE**

Would you please give us an undertaking that if you do hear of any such discussions, you will let this Council know?

**Supplementary Answer from the Leader of the Council**

I certainly will. I do not tend to engage in salacious gossip or scare mongering or believe everything I hear from Labour members at County Hall.

**C.42 Chairman's Communications**

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

The Chairman announced that he was holding a Civic Songs of Praise on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at St Cassian's Parish Church, Chaddesley Corbett, followed by afternoon tea at Rowberry's Nursery. All Members were invited to attend.

**C.43 Leader of the Council Announcements**

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

**C.44 Motions Submitted under Standing Orders**

Two motions have been received in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1).

**1. Motion from Councillor N Knowles, Leader of the Labour Group**

*"At the last meeting of Wyre Forest District Council held on 25th July, I asked the Cabinet Member for Operational Services to stop using Glyphosate as a weed killer until the court case in California had been settled and it had decided on the safety of the product. The case was won by Dewayne Johnson who was awarded \$289 million dollars, against Monsanto*

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*the Manufacturer, for his terminal cancer caused by Glyphosate.*

*It is now imperative that WFDC stops using Glyphosate and puts the health and safety of its workforce first and ceases to risk damage to our employees.*

*We therefore demand that the use of Glyphosate is immediately stopped.”*

Councillor N Knowles presented the motion. He said that Council was using a weed killer which was dangerous to the health of its work force. He added that the Health and Safety Executive had not yet caught up with the courts in America. He said it was almost too late for Dewayne Johnson to benefit from the weed killer ban but it was not too late for the Council's employees if we ban it now. He said that he believed that B and Q had stopped selling Glyphosate because of the perceived danger to the public, animals, birds and insects. Much of the water that gets washed off the grass and weeds gets flushed into drains and water courses and gets into our water systems. He said Glyphosate was filled with noxious chemicals which were poisonous. This situation was indicative of the whole agricultural industry. He said that weed killers should be banned from being sprayed onto fields; he added that he was not yet calling for the wholesale ban but was calling for the use to be banned for Wyre Forest District Council employees. He said that this was an opportunity for the Conservative Administration to adopt a progressive policy in respect of banning Glyphosate.

Councillor V Higgs seconded the motion. She said that the Council should not take any chances with this issue and condemn the use of Glyphosate.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services said that, following a question about Glyphosate at the last Council meeting, she spoke at length about having to follow the guidance from the Health and Safety Executive as they were privy to much more information than the authority was. She said that it was their function to dictate what was safe and unsafe in the Country. She said the Health and Safety Executive was an independent, politics free function and their advice had not changed following the ruling in America. As such, a majority of Councils were continuing to use Glyphosate. She added that the Council continues to take the health and safety of its work force seriously and ,when employees use this chemical, they receive training and are provided with full protective gear. The Cabinet Member for Operational Services added that the most effective alternative to using a chemical weed killer would be manual weeding. She said it would not be safe to ask the workforce to pull weeds on the side of roads. She said that the authority had a statutory duty to remove ragwort weeds and this could not be done effectively manually. She said that, if the use of Glyphosate ceased, there would be serious consequences with weeds growing out of control across the district; weeds would spread across pavements causing safety issues and the open space areas would quickly become overgrown and look scruffy, therefore she could not support the motion.

A lengthy debate ensued and, upon a show of hands, the motion was defeated.

**2. Motion from Independent & Lib Dem Group**

*“Council commends the decision of the Parks Section in coming to an agreement with the Friends of St George’s Park that Glyphosate (Round Up) weedkiller will not be used in that Park.*

*Council resolves to investigate the implications of potentially ceasing the use of this weedkiller in other Parks and Open Spaces under our control and to discuss its use with Friends of the Parks Groups where appropriate.”*

Councillor F M Oborski MBE presented the motion. She said that one of the reasons Friends of St George’s Park were anxious to get the use of Glyphosate stopped in that park was due to the vast amount of planting and weeding that the Friends do by hand. She added that they also involve a lot of school children in work in the park. She said the evidence on Glyphosate was mixed. A scientific study had recently been released about the effect Glyphosate had on bees. She said that the latest scientific evidence appears to link the use of the chemical with the death of honey bees; not by directly killing them, it is because Glyphosate kills off necessary gut bacteria which protects the honey bees from other viral infections. Therefore it reduces and weakens their immune system and that is the reason for the hive die off which is happening in many areas. She added that Friends of St Georges Park were desperate to make sure that the pollinating insects which support the hedges, flowers and vegetables, which are grown in the park for community use, were given the maximum opportunity to thrive. She concluded by saying that the motion was not asking for a complete ban. It was asking for other Friends of the Parks Groups to be given the same opportunity to undertake hand weeding as the Friends of St George’s Park do, which would be a consequence of not using Glyphosate in their parks and open spaces.

Councillor S Miah seconded the motion.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services said that the authority was extremely grateful for the amazing work the Friends of Park Groups carry out. She said that the use of Glyphosate weed killer was a tactic that is used to control weeds across the district to keep the area looking green and looking good. She said that it was used very carefully and at the discretion of the Council’s Officers. She said that the weeds which grow in pavements and around fences in parks were very difficult to weed manually. She added that Officers should have the discretion to use a chemical weed killer to tackle those problem areas, and supporting the motion would take the discretion away from Officers. To that end she would not support the motion.

A discussion ensued and, upon a show of hands, the motion was defeated.

**C.45 Urgent Motions submitted under Standing Orders**

There were no urgent motions.

**C.46 Annual Report of the Chief Executive**

A report was received from the Chief Executive which gave an overview of the issues facing the district and the Council; key actions being implemented against the priorities in the corporate plan for 2014-19; and the progress made in transforming the Council since his report last year.

Members considered each page of the report in turn and took the opportunity to question the Chief Executive on a number of points detailed in the report.

**Decision: The annual report of the Chief Executive be noted.**

**C.47 Policy and Budget Framework**

**a) Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 6th September 2018 - Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2017-18**

Councillor H Dyke presented the recommendations for approval. The Chairman of the Treasury Management Review Panel, Councillor F Oborski seconded the proposal. She thanked the Corporate Director: Resources and her team for managing the Council's investments in a professional manner. She said that the Treasury Management training was very informative and urged all Members to attend.

**Decision:**

- 1. The actual 2017-18 prudential and treasury indicators in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved.**
- 2. The annual treasury management report for 2017-18 be noted.**

**b) Recommendations from Licensing and Environmental Committee - 6th August 2018 - Animal Establishment Licensing Reforms**

Councillor J Baker presented the recommendations for approval and the proposal was seconded by Councillor P Harrison.

**Decision:**

- i. Determination of all licensing applications in respect of Animal Welfare Act 2006 is removed from para 3, Schedule 2, Part II (Matters not Delegated) of the Worcestershire Shared Services Agreement dated 1 April 2016.**
- ii. The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 are added to Schedule 1**

**Appendix, Part II of the Worcestershire Shared Services Agreement dated 1 April 2016.**

- iii. **The wording as set out in para 2 iii) of the report to the Licensing and Environmental Committee is added to Part II “Animal Health and Welfare” section of Appendix 1- Statement of Partner Service Requirements to Worcestershire Shared Services Agreement dated 1 April 2016.**
- iv. **The proposed fees and charges as detailed in the report at Appendix 2 be approved.**

**C.48 Request for Leave of Absence**

The Leader of the Council presented a report from the Solicitor to the Council which detailed a request for leave of absence from Councillor S Walker, Broadwaters Ward. He said that this was the right thing to do in order for him not to fall foul of the legislation due to ill health.

Councillor G Webster said that he and his fellow Ward Councillor, M Rayner, would be happy to take on any outstanding case work for Councillor Walker in order to ensure that the residents were not affected by his absence.

The Leader of the Council thanked Members for their support and said he would pass their best wishes onto Councillor Walker. The request was carried unanimously.

**Decision: Leave of Absence be granted to Councillor S Walker for the period from 9th June 2018 to 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018, on the grounds of ill health.**

The Chairman announced that agenda item number 14 – Political Balance, had been removed from the agenda.

**C.49 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Decision: Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of “exempt Information” as defined in paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

**C.50 Amendments to the Capital Programme**

The Leader of the Council presented the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018 as set out in the exempt report, and formally moved them for approval. He said that it was important for the Council to move forward with the approved capital project which would see much needed investment in the Green Street site and to improve the facilities

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for the staff who worked there.

Councillor T L Onslow left the meeting at 7.50pm and returned at 7.53pm.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services spoke about the importance of the project and seconded the proposal.

A robust debate ensued. There was agreement that the improvements to the welfare facilities for the employees were paramount, and it was acknowledged that with all major capital projects there may be unforeseen issues which come to light as the project evolves.

### **Decision:**

- 1.1 The Capital Programme be amended to accommodate the gross additional estimated costs associated with the overall project in light of tenders received;**
- 1.2 The amendment is that the gross capital cost of the project be increased as set out in para 4.4 of the exempt Cabinet report.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.14pm.