

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER
12TH FEBRUARY 2019 (6 PM)**

Present:

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

Observers:

Councillors: H E Dyke, N Knowles and F M Oborski MBE.

CAB.62 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J D Smith.

CAB.63 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor F M Oborski MBE declared in respect of Agenda Item No. 7.1 – Transfer of operational responsibility and surrender of lease for Kidderminster Town Hall, that she was a Member of Kidderminster Town Council. She would rely on the Membership being covered by the extant dispensation pertaining to Town Councillors dated 22nd September 2016.

CAB.64 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18th December 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.65 Call Ins

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

CAB.66 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.67 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

CAB.68 Transfer of operational responsibility and surrender of lease for Kidderminster Town Hall

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Community, Well Being and Environment on the transfer of the management of Kidderminster Town Hall (KTH) to Kidderminster Town Council (KTC) from 1st April 2019.

In the absence of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection, the Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He said that he was excited about the proposal as he believed it was a continuation of a good and strong working relationship between the District and Town Council. He added that this had come about following a request from KTC which asked for the District Council to consider transferring management of KTH to them. He said that this was localism at its best in Wyre Forest and once the 5 year grant had finished, there would be a welcome substantial financial saving for the District Council.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Corporate Director: Community, Well Being and Environment, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection, the Cultural Services Manager Kay Higman and Town Council representatives for their hard work on the proposal. He added that the proposal had received unanimous support from KTC at its meeting on 30th January 2019.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing seconded the proposal which was in accord with the Council's approach to localism. He said he was pleased to see KTC's abilities to take on more local services following its creation in 2015.

Councillors F M Oborski MBE and N Knowles spoke in favour of the recommendations and welcomed the proposal.

Cabinet Decided:

- 1.1 To surrender the Council's Lease of Kidderminster Town Hall (KTH) to Kidderminster Town Council (KTC), terminate the Dual Use Agreement and revise the service level agreements that it entered into with KTC such that KTH is both occupied and managed by KTC subject to the new service level agreements set out in the report to Cabinet from 1st April 2019.**
- 1.2 To provide a grant to KTC which reduces over a period of 5 years to support the cost of operating KTH.**
- 1.3 To revise the service level agreements from 1st April 2019.**
- 1.4 To enter into a short term lease of the land shown edged blue on the plan attached to the report for a period of three months from 1 April 2019 to 30 June 2019, with an option to extend with adequate notice, until the Customer Service Team is in a position to move into their new accommodation at Green Street on the terms set out in the report to Cabinet.**

CAB.69 Results of Budget Consultation, Alternative Budgets and Recommendations from the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources which set out

the results of the budget consultation exercise launched following the presentation of the Financial Strategy 2019/2022 to Cabinet on the 18th December 2018, alternative budget proposals and recommendations from the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel from their meeting on the 31st January 2019.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report. He was delighted to say that a total of 430 consultation responses had been received, which was far above what had been received in previous years; last year there were over 200 responses. He said that the rise in respondents was largely thanks to the Media Team who had repeatedly put the consultation out on social media, Twitter and Facebook which had obviously paid dividends.

The Cabinet Member for Resources said he was delighted with the positive responses to the 8 questions which were asked. He said that the feedback clearly endorsed the administration's proposals and its direction of travel. He added that, in response to question 1, 76% of the respondents strongly support / support the freeze on car parking charges during 2019-20 and, in relation to the question regarding the proposal to increase the District Council part of the Council Tax bill, 55% of the respondents strongly support / support the proposal. He said that this was a clear indication that people were prepared to spend a little bit more on their Council Tax in order to protect the services that the residents of Wyre Forest obviously depend on. He formally moved the recommendations for approval.

The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations. He said he was very pleased with the high number of consultation responses which had been received and thanked those who had taken the time and trouble to respond.

Decision: In line with the recommendations of the Cabinet Financial Advisory Panel:

The results of the budget consultation exercise and the alternative budget proposals as detailed within the Cabinet report and appendices, be noted.

CAB.70 Financial Strategy 2019-2022

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22 and made recommendations to Council on the proposed budget decision.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He outlined the updated position since the December 2018 meeting. He advised Members that there had been 2 significant changes to the original budget package, which was in response to alternative proposals put forward by the Independent and Lib Dem Group.

He said the first proposal was to introduce a highly attractive new season ticket for Bromsgrove Street car park. He added that the season ticket would be competitively priced at £300, and would benefit people who work within the town centre. This would be a trial from April 2019 for 12 months and if it proved

successful consideration would be given to introducing a similar scheme on other car parks across the district. He said the second change was to provide funding for a rough sleepers protocol, which would provide a night shelter in Wyre Forest for rough sleepers to access on the coldest winter nights: at present people would have to travel to Redditch or Worcester to receive this support.

The Cabinet Member for Resources said another change which would have a positive impact on the level of reserves at the end of the medium term financial strategy was the financial benefit to the authority of the transfer of operational responsibility of KTH to KTC. In conclusion, he said he believed this was a comprehensive budget package - the administration had worked with other political parties through the budget process and looked forward to achieving political consensus at full Council on 27th February 2019.

The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations. He said the strategy was exceptionally clear about the financial position of Wyre Forest District Council, how the authority allocates its resources and what reserves it will have at the end of the three year term. He added that the income generation targets and modest increase in council tax will enable the Council to provide frontline services for its residents.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being thanked the Corporate Director: Resources and other Officers for the absolute clarity in the report.

Decision:

The CABINET having re-considered the Financial Strategy 2019-22, the results of the Budget consultation exercise and recommendations of the Cabinet Financial Strategy Advisory Panel RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL that it:

1.1 THREE YEAR BUDGET, CAPITAL STRATEGY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2019-22

1.1.1 APPROVES the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-22;

1.1.2 APPROVES the revised Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council’s Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2019-22 as shown in the table in paragraph 3.14 including:

- a. Approval of the Community Leadership Fund for 2019-20 of £33k;**
- b. Approval of a further Localism Fund allocation of £50k in 2019-20.**
- c. Approval the allocation of £30k in 2019-20 to preserve service standards of highways verge maintenance;**
- d. Approval of additional staffing resource for Planning**

Enforcement of 1 FTE for a 2 year fixed term at a cost of £25.9k in 2019-20 and £27.1k in 2020-21 funded from a combination of the 20% increase in Planning Fees previously approved and service efficiency savings as a result of the new system implementation;

- e. Approval of additional staffing resource for Environmental Protection and Enforcement team of 1 FTE for a 2 year fixed term. Funded in part from additional fine income at a net cost of £17,540 in 2019-20, and £18,780 in 2020-21;
- f. Approval of additional income generation targets of £75k in 2019-20, £100k in 2020-21 and £150k in 2021-22;
- g. Approval of £13.5k in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 for a Rough Sleeper night shelter protocol to be funded from additional Flexible Homeless Support Grant from Central Government (see paragraph 3.13).

1.1.3 APPROVES the fees and charges in line with this Strategy and in line with the recommendations of the Licensing and Environmental Committee of 4th February 2019, and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2019-22, as shown in Appendix 3 - Part 3;

1.1.4 APPROVES the Council's updated Capital Strategy including:

- a. Approval of the Capital Strategy 2019-22 including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 2 of the December Cabinet report;
- b. Approval of variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendix 2 of the report (which updates Appendix 1, Appendices A and B of the Capital Strategy report to December 2018 Cabinet);
- c. Approval of the limits for gross debt of non treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for commercial income as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2 of the December report;
- d. Approval of the limits for loan investments as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the 18th December 2018 report.

1.1.5 APPROVES that any Final Accounts savings arising from 2018-22 over and above the target allowed for in the Council's Financial Strategy, together with surplus Earmarked Reserves, be allocated by the Corporate Director: Resources in consultation with the

Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources;

1.1.6 The General Fund Revenue Budget be APPROVED including all updates from the position in December 2018 as set out in the report.

1.2 COUNCIL TAX

1.2.1 SETS the Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property at £214.34 for 2019-20 (£209.34 2018-19) which represents an increase of 2.39% on Council Tax from 2018-19.

1.2.2 ENDORSES the provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2020-21 of £219.34 and £224.34 in 2021-22, being increases of 2.33% and 2.28% respectively.

1.2.3 APPROVES increasing the Council Tax charge for long-term empty dwellings to the maximum possible level with effect from 1st April 2019 and in future years, in accordance with section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by section 2 of the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 (see paragraph 5.3);

1.2.4 NOTES the Corporate Director: Resources (as Chief Financial Officer) opinion on the budget proposals, recommended by the Cabinet in this report, as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

1.3 The Cabinet APPROVED:

1.3.1 Delegated authority is given to the Corporate Director: Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Leader of the Council, to make any appropriate adjustments to the General Fund Revenue Budget recommended under paragraph 1.1.6 above, as a result of any further notifications from Central Government.

1.3.2 The updated schedule of Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 3 - Part 2 to reflect redesignations of Bromsgrove Street car park for a new season ticket offer.

CAB.71 Lion Fields Parcel 4 - Delivery Options

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place on the feasibility and masterplanning study prepared for Parcel 4 of Lion Fields, Kidderminster and sought approval to undertake soft market testing of the Bromsgrove Street Car Park site.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Planning presented the report in detail and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He said that, like many towns and cities across the country, Kidderminster was suffering from the effects of internet shopping on the High Street. He added

that the Council had already undertaken significant investment in the town working in partnership with Worcestershire County Council in improving the public realm with £2m of investment and opening up Worcester Street with £1.5m of investment. He said that further proactive reinvention for Kidderminster was required to turn it into a place to live, work and play, not just a shopping destination. In conclusion, he said that, for the Council's ambitions for the site to become a reality, further work would be required to ascertain potential developer and funding interest.

The Leader of the Council seconded the recommendations. He said that the Council was under no illusions that it would be one of many district and borough Councils that would be bidding for the Government's Future High Streets Fund, however he was optimistic that the authority had a clear plan and vision for the re-development of the site.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor H Dyke, presented the recommendations from the Committee. She said that the Committee looked forward to receiving the results of the soft market testing as the more information that was available to help the authority make decisions in a better, more informed way was welcomed.

Cabinet Decided: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7th February 2019:

- 1.1 To endorse the vision set out within Appendix 1 as an appropriate framework for delivering the redevelopment of Parcel 4 of Lion Fields; and**
- 1.2 To give delegated authority to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to:**
 - 1.2.1 progress the expression of interest in the Future High Streets Fund as well as pursuing other opportunities for gap funding to render the viability of the scheme more attractive for investors**
 - 1.2.2 to undertake the soft marketing of the site to determine investor appetite for developing the site, and to report back to Cabinet by September 2019**

CAB.72 Housing Allocations Policy

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which outlined the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy following amendments made to the legislation around Homelessness (the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) and other statutory instruments / guidance around allocations.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He said that it was a statutory requirement for Councils to hold an allocation scheme for determining priorities of people in housing need and for defining the procedures it will follow in allocating social housing accommodation.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being explained that in 2018 the government introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act which increased the duties the Council owes to those applicants who are threatened with homelessness. This together with new advice from the Government on those with terminal illnesses, those suffering from domestic abuse and members of the Armed Forces have all meant that the Council needs to amend its Allocation Policy to comply with the new legislation and advice. He added that it was proposed to undertake consultation with Members, stakeholders and those on the housing register.

The Leader of the Council supported the proposals and formally seconded the recommendations. The Cabinet Member for Operational Services welcomed the opportunity of the review as she believed it would improve the clarity and equity of the Policy.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor H Dyke, said the Committee fully supported the course of action detailed in the report.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7th February 2019:

- 1.1 The Council undertakes consultation on the Allocation Policy changes outlined in Appendix One of the report with Members, Stakeholders including Registered Partners and Households on the Housing Register for a period of six weeks.**
- 1.2 Delegated authority be given to Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing to amend the allocation policy in line with the proposed changes, following the consultation process.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.06pm.