

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,
KIDDERMINSTER

24TH JULY 2019 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: S Miah (Chairman), P W M Young (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, G W Ballinger, J F Byng, V Caulfield, S J Chambers, A Coleman, R H Coleman, B S Dawes, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, C E E Edginton-White, N Gale, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, L J Jones, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, S E N Rook, D R Sheppard, J W R Thomas, A Totty and L Whitehouse.

C.23 Prayers

Prayers were said by Rev. Mark Turner, St. Bartholomew's, Areley Kings.

C.24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: C J Barnett and K Henderson.

The Chairman announced that nominations for the annual No Barriers, Mike Oborski Awards opened on Friday 26th July 2019. He said that the award scheme recognises those that go the extra mile for people with disabilities.

The Chairman congratulated the England cricket team for their success in becoming world champions.

C.25 Declarations of Interests by Members

There were no declarations of interest.

C.26 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.27 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

C.28

The Leader of the Council moved the following motion:

“Mr Chairman, for the convenience of the Council, under standing order 8.4, I would like to move the suspension of the limit of thirty minutes limit on questions and answers. The standing order that would be suspended is standing order 1.8, sub-paragraph (i). I ask for members’ support in agreeing the suspension of the standing order on this occasion.”

The proposal was seconded by Councillor F M Oborski MBE.

Agreed: Standing Order 1.8(i) be suspended for the duration of the meeting.

C.29

Questions

Twelve questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order A5 by Members of the Council.

1. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Leader of the Council

Would the Leader of the Council advise this Council when he proposes to appoint member champions?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

Thank you for the question. I have appointed armed forces champions, Councillor Nicky Gale and Councillor Susie Griffiths, both of whom have close family members who are or have been serving members of the regular armed forces. This decision was taken on 30 May and published on 31 May, and shared with all members at that time.

What about other member champions? The Peer Review in February, which was before our Administration was elected to the Council, had the following recommendation. “Although the Council has reviewed the roles, the Peer Team found that the Member Champion role is still not clearly and widely understood and varies from seeking information from officers to leading the town centre work. If WFDC wishes to retain these roles the Council may wish to consider having a specific project or aspect to focus the work of a Champion, in order to maximise the expertise of councillors.” I have considered this recommendation and I have no plans at present to appoint other member champions.

Supplementary question

Clearly I was not referring to armed forces champions; I was specifically referring to Member Champions. Will the Leader further agree with me that prior to May we had excellent Member Champions in Councillor Fran Oborski

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and Councillor Helen Dyke who then were members of the opposition, and would he agree with me that it is most regrettable that he has no plans to appoint Member Champions from the opposition. This is a clear example where he is not prepared to work with Members of the opposition without any Members of the Progressive Alliance.

Supplementary answer

I note your comments, thank you.

2. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Leader of the Council

Given that the Leader of the Council said at the annual meeting of Full Council this year, that this is going to be a 'Can Do Council', Can he explain his rationale for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Review Panel being the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council as opposed to back benchers?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

It was interesting watching Boris Johnson's speech yesterday when he was selected and constantly referred to wanting his period as Prime Minister to be that of a can-do administration. He is clearly copying the Progressive Alliance of Wyre Forest District Council; we are two months ahead of him. These appointments were unanimously supported by all members at the annual general meeting on 22 May. If you had any concerns about these appointments you should have raised them on that occasion. Previous reports to the Council's annual general meeting about appointments of members to chair committees have not set out a rationale about why someone should be appointed. Members know that these are political matters where, if necessary, the majority party or group can ensure its will prevails, although I was very pleased on this occasion that all the appointments had the unanimous support of the Conservative group. Indeed the minutes of the meeting on 22 May record that Councillor Hart "thanked the Leader of the Council for the proposed Chairman and Vice-Chairman Committee positions for Conservative Group Members" so I am surprised that the Council's decisions are now being questioned in this way. We also gave the Chairmanship of the Local Plans Review Panel to the Conservative Group.

Supplementary question

I have not asserted that the decision of Council is being challenged in any way. I asked this question to the Leader of the Council in May which wasn't answered, and then I asked the Chief Executive and it wasn't answered again. Would he first agree with me that this is an example where the leadership are not prepared to work with non-executive members of this Council and secondly is the answer to this question his answer or was it written by the Chief Executive?

Supplementary answer

The answer was written by myself and you know the Council's procedure for answering questions. At the end of the day it is important that he allows the administration to administer. We were the choice of the public of Wyre Forest and we should be allowed to get on with the job. Thank you.

3. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

Would the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Planning congratulate the previous Conservative administration for their commitment and indeed delivery of the demolition of Crown House at no cost to the tax payer?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

Thank you for the question. I would like to congratulate officers including Mike Parker for the hard work that has achieved this outcome. Crown House was built under the Conservative Administration of Kidderminster Borough Council in 1971.

In May 2017 when I had the honour of being appointed as Chairman of Council in 2013, I had been told that I could look forward to demolishing Crown House during my year of office. While I am pleased to welcome that the demolition is happening and is being funded by the tenant, I have to add "at last".

I am also exceptionally pleased that Crown House and the wider Bull Ring gateway into the town are one of the three elements in the Council's Future High Streets Fund bid. Wyre Forest's bid is one of only 50 across England that has been successful. We have done very well to reach this stage and I would like to pay tribute to Ostap Paparega, the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration and his team. We will now access funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to prepare the full business case, which has to be submitted by January 2020. This is an intensely competitive process with potentially a large funding prize at the end of the process, and I am sure that we can rely on support from across the chamber for this important bid.

Supplementary question

I did not get a direct answer to the question and hopefully I might get it in the answer to my supplementary. Of course we would all absolutely agree and thank Mike Parker for his gritty determination and resolve as an officer. Would the Cabinet Member not agree with me that it was the previous administration which gave that commitment to deliver Crown House being demolished; would she now agree that she was entirely wrong in wanting to spend £500,000 worth of taxpayers' money by diverting it from the public realm

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scheme in Worcester Street to demolish Crown House, letting off the private property company from their moral and social obligations to this district?

Supplementary answer

It was the failure of the previous administration to deliver on the promise made to me in 2013 that led to us being frustrated that we felt it was necessary to be willing to commit public funds to the demolition of Crown House if it became necessary. We did that because of the overwhelming support that we received from members of the public who thought that demolishing Crown House was more important to them than opening up Worcester Street. I am extremely glad that money has not had to be spent on Crown House and that it is being demolished by the tenant.

4. Question from Councillor Ian Hardiman to the Leader of the Council

Given the comments made at Full Council on 22nd May by members of the Leader's cabinet will he give me and this Council an assurance that all future agendas, reports and minutes of Cabinet/CLT meetings are made available to all 33 members of the Council?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

It is surprising that Councillor Hardiman is a sudden convert to openness and transparency. He was deputy leader for several years. I don't recall a proposal from him to make available the private discussions and papers of the Cabinet of which he was a member, when he had the chance to do so.

I am sure Councillor Hardiman will be familiar with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the various exemptions set out in it, under which cabinets in all councils have the space to discuss issues in private before formal proposals are brought forward for decision. For example, section 40 provides an exemption for personal information. Section 41 provides an exemption for information provided in confidence. But most important is section 36 of the 2000 Act which provides an exemption for information whose disclosure "would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank provision of advice, or the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or would otherwise prejudice, or would be likely otherwise to prejudice, the effective conduct of public affairs".

I am sure it would suit the opposition to have access to the private deliberations of the Progressive Alliance's Cabinet but we do not need to make that change - as he will have seen in the papers for the Strategic Review Panel, this administration is already sharing information about its developing priorities and views with the Panel and all members in a far more open and transparent way than in the past.

Supplementary question

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Given that you said at the May Council that for some time your political party had expressed concern about the whole concept of having a powerful Cabinet which can leave certain members in the dark, I thought you were the new party for change and were going to be more open to transparency. Did you write the answer to my first question yourself or was it from the Chief Executive?

Supplementary answer

A slightly condescending comment from the Councillor but it wasn't really a question so I note his comments, thank you.

5. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Leader of the Council

Given the Leader of the Council's commitment at Full Council on 22nd May in wanting to work with and include all political parties, would he now explain to this Council and the public why the Conservatives who are by far the largest group on this Council were not invited to be members of the Progressive Alliance?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

Thank you Chairman, I know you had to go out earlier to get a few bottles of wine for the event you host at the end of the meeting for Councillors and members of the public. Perhaps you could have asked the people on the opposite side of the Chamber because 2019 is clearly going to be the year for sour grapes. I hear the comment you make about being the largest group, you did not say political. You are the largest group and have 14 members; the Progressive Alliance has 19 members. That is a difference of 5, and I don't quite see the point you are making. We are the group that decided we would go for openness and transparency and the meetings we have are open to the public to attend. We have the responsibility to the people of Wyre Forest to provide an administration that is open and transparent, they are the people who pay for this Council; it is the electorate of Wyre Forest for whom we are accountable. As far as inviting members of the Conservative Group to become members of the Progressive Alliance, that does not stack up really. We had a lot of debates over the few days following the election in May with colleagues from the Labour Party, the Green Party, Independents, Liberal Democrats and Health Concern and we decided we would try and form an administration. I did speak to a few members of the Conservative party during that time and they may not have said this to you because they wanted to see how things settled down with your Group and your leadership. Let's say invites were open to other people but they did not take it, so they had not been excluded. If anybody wanted to come forward in those few days it was very public that we were attempting to form an administration which we succeeded to do with the Progressive Alliance.

Supplementary question

Would the Leader agree with me that it is wholly inaccurate and misleading to

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say that this Conservative Group was invited to take part in a progressive alliance and when he says to the public in the Kidderminster Shuttle “your new Wyre Forest District Council would be an example of co-operation along party lines to the benefit of all residents” that simply isn’t true and what we have is not a progressive alliance, but the ABC Alliance, Anyone But Conservatives.

Supplementary answer

No, I wouldn’t agree. He has got his figures wrong on how many different groups make up the progressive alliance; he said 3 when in fact it is 5.

In response to a point of order made by Councillor Hart, the Solicitor to the Council confirmed that there were 3 political groups within the Progressive Alliance.

6. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

Would the Cabinet Member for Operational Services agree with me that the investment in the Green Street Depot in the form of the 2020 depot project is an excellent example of this Council bringing two locally listed buildings back into prominence and good use and that this was a wise and sound decision taken by the previous Conservative administration?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

I am sure that all members welcome investment at the Green Street site which was long overdue. Successive Councils had not prioritised improvements at that location, and the contrast with the investment here at Wyre Forest House was stark. It is right that the Council provides modernised, fit for purpose accommodation and facilities for all its staff.

It is also a good thing that historic buildings have been renovated for new uses. They are an interesting part of the heritage of the town and have been brought into public view.

However Councillor Hart will know that we don’t agree with the relocation of the hub from the centre of the town to its periphery, to a site that is not on a bus route. While we recognise that we can’t turn the clock back on the Council’s decision, we can’t therefore support that consequence of the investment.

Supplementary question

Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that whilst you can’t reverse the clock in terms of the capital decision, if the Progressive Alliance wanted to they could have reversed the decision to relocate the Hub staff and other staff to Green Street if they wanted to and what plans does the Cabinet Member have to do that?

Supplementary answer

Thank you for your comments and questions, it is too late to go back on the decision which has been made.

7. Question from Councillor Ian Hardiman to the Leader of the Council

Given the Leader of the Council's commitment to be a 'Can Do Council', and one that is going to be 'more transparent', whilst I am cognisant of the costs and viewing figures, 'Can' he explain to this Council how he thinks that is consistent with no longer web casting Cabinet meetings?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

This is another surprising question. Councillor Hardiman's group leader was present at a meeting of group leaders on 8 May which had all the information about costs of webcasting and data on the number of views.

The report explained the proposal to focus webcasting on meetings of full Council and the Planning Committee and was supported by the group leaders. Does the group leader of the Conservatives not keep his group informed of what is being discussed?

But what about Cabinet meetings? Again, if his group leader had kept him informed, Councillor Hardiman will know that the option is retained of webcasting any meeting whose content will be of wide public interest.

I am surprised he keeps pressing on this issue. While I haven't seen the paper, because as he knows papers of Cabinet/Corporate Leadership Team meetings are not available to all members of Council, I understand that the then Cabinet had in fact received the information and data about webcasting in a meeting on 27 November 2018. So it's rather late in the day for Councillor Hardiman to be protesting about the change when he's been in the know for eight months.

Supplementary question

I would just like to correct Councillor Ballinger, when he said Group Leaders was not a decision making body. Therefore my question is are you being inconsistent and hypo-critical, and are you embarrassed in fact because really you are committed to greater transparency?

Supplementary answer

This is the cost issue, which Councillor Hardiman himself knew about for replacing the somewhat outdated equipment. It is not about the point that I made that your Leader was aware of what was going on. If he hadn't communicated with your group then it really isn't our problem.

8. Question from Councillor Ian Hardiman to the Cabinet Member for

Operational Services

Would the Cabinet Member for Operational Services confirm to this Council that neither he nor this Progressive Alliance will make any reductions in service to parks and open spaces and public toilets during the lifetime of their administration?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

Thank you for the question. All members know that the Council faces a funding gap of over £2m. It is the job of this Council to address that as the most significant issue facing the organisation.

In that context, I am very surprised by Councillor Hardiman's question. He must know that it would be rash to give the sort of commitment that he seeks for any service, given the funding gap of £2m.

While all members would expect every sinew to be strained to protect services that local communities value, it would be naive to think that there will be no change to them if we are to close the financial gap. That is why this administration is prioritising discussions with town and parish councils about localism, under which more assets and services are transferred to local councils or the cost shared between them and the District Council. The Cabinet had a very useful discussion with representatives of the town councils yesterday and several members of this Council were present in their role as Cabinet members or as members of the town councils. We will organise a similar discussion with the parish councils later in the year.

Supplementary question

Can you give any examples that you yourself could see will be part of reduction measures?

Supplementary answer

We are looking at various options at the moment Councillor Hardiman, and some are in an advanced state of progress. It would be wrong of me to enlighten anybody further because there are several sensitive questions that need to be answered.

9. Question from Councillor Chris Rogers to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services

Would the Cabinet Member for Health, Well-being and Democratic Services confirm to this Council what investment and financial support they will be giving to public transport in this District over the lifetime of this administration?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services

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Thank you for the question. The Council plays a number of roles in facilitating or supporting public transport. In taking decisions on planning applications, the Council seeks appropriate section 106 contributions to transport infrastructure, including such things as road and junction improvements, cycle ways, provision of bus stops and, where appropriate, financial contributions to provision of bus services.

The Churchfields development is an excellent example of how this Council uses its powers to secure not only much-needed housing but very significant investment in the road infrastructure for Kidderminster, which will open up the site but also alleviate congestion in the Horsefair area by providing a new route towards Stourbridge for traffic leaving the town. This will also help to alleviate air pollution in the Horsefair area.

The district council has helped secure funding for the road improvement, successfully bidding for a significant grant from Homes England, and dedicating part of the St Mary's car park to allow the new access from the ring road to be constructed.

As Councillor Rogers will recall, the Council is making a modest direct contribution to the cost of building the new train station in Kidderminster, a much needed boost for the second busiest train station in Worcestershire. We have worked with other partners to help secure the funding package including grants from both local enterprise partnerships.

Supplementary question

Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that it is important that members of the Alliance meet their election promises; I have a leaflet put out by the Labour Group which states that it would make better public transport and improved local economy a priority?

Supplementary answer

Other than the trains, the improved public service would come with bus services and I do believe that Councillor Rogers is probably in the best position to help with that, given that it is the County Council which commissions public transport.

10. Question from Councillor Tracey Onslow to the Leader of The Council

Following the elections, the Leader of the Progressive Alliance was quoted in the local press as saying that the Progressive Alliance would be '...for the good of Wyre Forest residents'.

In view of the Deputy Leader of the Progressive Alliance's startling decision to write a letter of support for a convicted domestic abuser, could the Leader explain how her decision - and the resultant damage to the reputation of WFDC - was 'for the good of Wyre Forest residents'?

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Further in his quote he stated that the Alliance would '...put an end to social media spats'.

Given that this issue was played out widely across social media, would he also agree with me that that part of his vision for the Alliance has, only one month in, already failed?

A point of order was raised by Councillor F M Oborski MBE, immediately after the question had been asked.

Mr Chairman, under standing order 4.4, sub-paragraph (xv), I wish to raise a point of order and to make a personal explanation on this matter as I have been named in the question which Councillor Onslow has just put.

I am sorry if what I have done has offended or upset anyone.

I am opposed to domestic violence in all its forms – whatever its nature, and whatever the gender or sexuality of the perpetrator and of the victim.

I have known Dave Hollyoak for 10 years through a local political party and I was asked to provide a statement for his defence solicitor, which I did. This was not done in my role as Deputy Leader of the district council, and did not use any resources of the district council.

I regret that I had not reflected fully on the potential implications of providing such a statement. I would want to consider very carefully whether I would provide a statement in similar circumstances in future if they ever arose. My resolve to oppose all forms of domestic abuse and violence remains unshaken.

Answer from the Leader of the Council

Thank you for the question. This issue is also the subject of a wider motion later on the agenda so I will focus only on the specific points raised in this question.

The question is inaccurate. The individual was not “a convicted domestic abuser” at the time the statement was provided. The statement was certainly not provided by Councillor Oborski in her current role as deputy leader. This was a personal matter where one individual provided a statement in respect of another individual in a judicial process that had nothing to do with the council.

Any comments on this matter on social media were not provided by or on behalf of the Progressive Alliance.

I would like to ask colleagues around the room to put their hands up if any of you have never made a mistake in your lives then subsequently regretted it; there's not a lot of hands going up. Also perhaps hands up for any Member of the Council who has an award of the MBE for services to the Community; and

it's Fran Oborski.

Supplementary question

I would like to thank Councillor Oborski for her apology. It is six weeks late and she said "no comment" in the paper. Perhaps there would have been no need for the question had she come out with that before being prompted by my question. Given openness and transparency can he therefore provide a copy of the statement that Councillor Oborski provided so that we can be reassured that she did not refer to herself as a Councillor; she was not Deputy Leader at the time that she wrote it and she made no reference to her career as a Councillor.

Supplementary answer

I have seen it and there is no reference to any of those things that you have referred to.

11. Question from Councillor Nathan Desmond to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

Please would the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments confirm what the Progressive Alliance's strategy is for WFDC property acquisitions from the £25 million capital portfolio fund?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

Thank you. The Progressive Alliance is following the adopted strategies and policies of this council. They are set out in the Capital Strategy 2019-22 that was agreed by Council in February 2019 and also appended the Capital Portfolio Fund Strategy, which sets out how the Council intends to go about making property acquisitions. At tonight's meeting, Council is considering a recommendation from Cabinet to adopt the Asset Management Strategy as part of the comprehensive suite of strategies and policies this Council has developed.

As the member knows, the council is actively pursuing a number of investments in the area of Wyre Forest. Scrutiny and Cabinet will be considering another proposed investment in the area next week. We continue to use the geography in the adopted strategy so that the Council can continue to have access to the best range of opportunities and can spread its risk.

Supplementary question

I am very grateful to the Cabinet Member for her very full and frank answer to my question. In relation to the geography underpinning the strategy going

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forward I do feel reassured that the Cabinet Member has said that they will adopt the current strategy which is obviously the geography of the 2 LEPs. My question is in the context of that. Why the u-turn of the Cabinet Member? On 4th April Fran Oborski posted on Kidderminster Matters that she was against the 2 LEP geography and in particular was against investments by this authority outside of Wyre Forest District Council and actually used 2 examples; Solihull and Bromsgrove. So my question is why the u-turn?

Supplementary answer

No u-turn. In fact when the papers are considered the Member will see that we are prioritising investments within the Wyre Forest District.

12. Question from Councillor Alan Totty to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

Could the Cabinet Member tell me when, and under what circumstances, she first became aware that it would be necessary to re-open the Consultation on the Revised Local Plan?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

In February I was invited to a private meeting when I was briefed in confidence about issues relating to the local plan by the then leader and deputy leader. It was shared in confidence that a further period of consultation would have to happen and I was told that nothing would happen until after the May elections. Naturally, the Council could not take formal decisions until further information was provided, which include the revised and new reports provided by the county council.

Supplementary question

Given you were told that in confidence, did you at any time try to make it public before the local elections?

Supplementary answer

Yes. Members who were Councillors before the local elections may recall that at the February meeting of this Council I asked a question to Councillor Hardiman who was then the Cabinet Member, I asked him if, in view of issues that had arisen including the fact that many people felt they had not had an opportunity to take part in the consultation, he would consider re-opening the consultation. I expected him to respond in a more positive light but what he actually said was that he felt there was no need to because people had had adequate opportunities to make their comments.

C.30

Chairman's Communications

The Council received a list of functions attended by the Chairman or

Vice-Chairman since the Council's last meeting.

C.31 Leader of the Council Announcements

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

C.32 Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders

Three motions had been received in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1).

1. Notice of Motion by the Conservative Group

"This Council deplores domestic violence and abuse in any form.

This Council resolves to request that the Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Community Protection confirm that this Council does not condone domestic violence and abuse in any way.

This Council further resolves to request that the Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Community Protection bring a report back to Full Council in this municipal year setting out what steps she has taken and will take to ensure that all elected members and staff are aware that violence of any type, especially domestic violence and abuse will not be tolerated.

This Council regrets that any elected member especially in their capacity as a councillor would seek to condone domestic violence in any way.

This Council resolves that the Leader of the Council publicly comment and confirm to this Council that his current Deputy Leader enjoys his full support."

Councillor S Chambers presented the motion. She said that domestic violence and domestic abuse are horrific crimes blighting our society; ruining lives and destroying childhoods. This Council should be united in the commitment that it is never acceptable and should never seek to have its impact minimised or the actions of those perpetrating mitigated. The motion was seconded by Councillor N Gale.

The Leader of the Council moved an amendment to the motion and briefly outlined the proposed changes. The amendment was seconded by Councillor H Dyke.

The Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart, spoke against the amendment to the substantive motion. He said that he could support the first two paragraphs. He added that he could not support the request for the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection to provide a briefing note to all Members as opposed to a full report to Council, as he felt that it was watering down this very serious matter.

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A full and robust debate ensued. A vote on the substantive motion was taken and defeated.

Councillor S Chambers said that whilst it was disappointing that the original motion had been defeated, it was important that we support Councillor Oborski and welcome her apology. She urged Members to support the amended motion to give reassurance to the general public that domestic violence and abuse will not be tolerated.

Upon a show of hands for the motion as amended, the vote was carried unanimously.

Decision: The following motion by the Conservative Group, as amended by the Leader of the Council be agreed:

This Council deplores domestic violence and abuse in any form.

This Council welcomes the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill by Her Majesty's Government and looks forward to consultation on any guidance to be issued by the Secretary of State under Clause 79 of the Bill.

This Council resolves to request that the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection provides a briefing note to all Members in this municipal year setting out what steps have been taken and will be taken to ensure that all elected members and staff are aware that violence of any type, especially domestic violence and abuse, will not be tolerated.

This Council notes that the Deputy Leader enjoys the full support of the Leader of the Council.

2. Motion from Councillor F M Oborski MBE

"The Council values all sections of the community and welcomes the contribution of LGBT+ groups to the diversity of Wyre Forest. Council therefore resolves that, from 2020, the RainbowFlag will be flown during Pride Month."

Councillor F M Oborski MBE presented the motion. She said that she was thrilled by how much the Kidderminster & District Youth Trust were doing to support LGBT+ young people to come out and have the courage to celebrate who they are, celebrate their sexuality and to be proud of their achievements. She spoke about the frightening amount of LGBT+ bullying which goes on across the county. She asked all Members to support the motion and hoped that next year we would be proudly flying the rainbow flag from the Council's headquarters.

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Councillor S Griffiths said that many Councils across the country were flying the flag for the first time to mark the 50th anniversary, which included a number of Councils hosting a whole programme of arts and events to celebrate the LGBT+ heritage and community. She hoped that Wyre Forest District Council would follow that lead and was proud to second the motion.

The Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart moved a slight amendment to the motion, which made it clear that the flag would be flown over Wyre Forest House. He said that it was absolutely right that we should embrace equality and diversity. He added that it was sad that people are still bullied and vilified for being different. He said that as a Council it was essential that we had the right policies in place to be leaders within our communities to stamp out such hatred. He said that the Conservative Group supported the sentiments of the motion.

Councillor Oborski said that she was happy to accept the amendment to the motion.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection advised Members that she had been approached by Councillor Griffiths to look at whether we could hold an event or events next year to celebrate Pride Month. She said that they had discussed the proposal and even if it was a one off small event, supported by the Council, it would be a start that could be progressed from.

A vote on the motion as amended by the Conservative Group was taken and was agreed.

Decision: The following motion from Councillor F M Oborski MBE, as amended by the Conservative Group be agreed:

The Council values all sections of the community and welcomes the contribution of LGBT+ groups to the diversity of Wyre Forest. Council therefore resolves that, from 2020, the Rainbow Flag will be flown over Wyre Forest House during Pride Month.

3. Motion from Councillor V Caulfield

“Council recognises that as a nation we must reduce our use of single use plastics. Council therefore resolves to follow the example of Worcestershire County Council to reduce plastic waste by:

- 1. Undertaking an audit of single-use plastics across the council and all council commissioned services, replacing them with sustainable or re-usable alternatives where practicable;*
- 2. Investigating the possibility of requiring caterers at Council events to avoid disposable plastic items as a condition of their contract;*
- 3. Ceasing the provision of plastic water cups at Wyre Forest House and replacing them with washable reusable alternatives;*

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4. *Encouraging cafes within council-owned buildings and land to continue to support the Refill scheme and provide free water refills;*
5. *Informing members of the public in its online and written communications about reducing plastic waste;*
6. *Encouraging our towns and local communities to go plastic free.”*

Councillor V Caulfield presented the motion. She said that the amount of plastic waste generated annually in the UK is estimated to be £5m tonnes, which has a catastrophic effect on our environment and wildlife. She added that programmes such as the War on Plastic and the Blue Planet have really highlighted the effect of plastic pollution which has become a much debated topic with very high levels of public interest. She said that this issue does affect us locally and spoke about the plastic pollution in the rivers within Wyre Forest. She urged all Members to support the motion.

Councillor L Whitehouse was delighted to second the forward thinking motion. He said that he hoped that in the not too distant future the Council would develop a robust strategy to make Wyre Forest District Council a plastic free authority.

The Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart, proposed a slight amendment to bullet point 6 of the motion, which was accepted by Councillor Caulfield. Councillor Hart said that it was important that we are as sustainable as possible and reduce our waste. He added that it was important that we encourage the citizens of Wyre Forest to recycle more and to consider changing their lifestyles so that our planet will be fit for purpose.

A lengthy discussion ensued. A vote on the motion, as amended, took place and was carried unanimously.

Decision: The following motion from Councillor V Caulfield, as amended by the Conservative Group be agreed:

Council recognises that as a nation we must reduce our use of single use plastics. Council therefore resolves to follow the example of Worcestershire County Council to reduce plastic waste by:

1. **Undertaking an audit of single-use plastics across the council and all council commissioned services, replacing them with sustainable or re-usable alternatives where practicable;**
2. **Investigating the possibility of requiring caterers at Council events to avoid disposable plastic items as a condition of their contract;**
3. **Ceasing the provision of plastic water cups at Wyre Forest House and replacing them with washable reusable alternatives;**
4. **Encouraging cafes within council-owned buildings and land to continue to support the Refill scheme and provide free water refills;**
5. **Informing members of the public in its online and written**

communications about reducing plastic waste;

- 6. Encouraging our towns and local communities to go single-use plastic free.**

C.33 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders

One urgent motion had been received in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1 (vi)).

Local Enterprise Partnerships: Membership

Proposed by Councillor Graham Ballinger, seconded by Councillor Fran Oborski

“Council NOTES the urgent motion passed by Redditch Borough Council on 22 July 2019 declaring that, if overlaps have to be removed, the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) is its preferred LEP and giving notice of the Borough Council’s intention to leave the Worcestershire LEP.

Council RESOLVES

- a) To reaffirm its commitment to membership of the Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP;*
- b) To record its belief that membership of both LEPs has undoubtedly been beneficial for the district of Wyre Forest and has not created difficulties in respect of accountability for or delivery of significant projects in Wyre Forest that have been funded by one or both LEPs;*
- c) To call urgently on the newly formed Government to heed the wishes of Wyre Forest District Council and other district councils that are members of the GBS LEP, by retaining the ability for those councils to choose which LEP or LEPs to join.”*

The Leader of the Council presented the motion. He said that 48 hours ago Redditch Borough Council had taken the decision to leave the Worcestershire LEP. He added that they had wanted Wyre Forest to take the same approach. The Leader explained that the motion was to reaffirm the Council’s commitment to both LEPs.

Councillor F M Oborski MBE seconded the motion. She said that the motion actually reiterates what has been the policy of Council and has in fact been extremely successful in getting funding from both the Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP.

The Leader of the Conservative Group moved a very slight amendment to the motion which was accepted by the Leader of the Council. Councillor Hart said that he firmly believed that, given the geography, the authority should remain in both LEPs.

A vote on the motion, as amended, took place and was carried unanimously.

Decision: The following urgent motion from the Leader of the

Council, as amended by the Conservative Group be agreed:

Local Enterprise Partnerships: Membership

Council NOTES the urgent motion passed by Redditch Borough Council on 22 July 2019 declaring that, if overlaps have to be removed, the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) is its preferred LEP and giving notice of the Borough Council's intention to leave the Worcestershire LEP.

Council RESOLVED

- a) To reaffirm its commitment to membership of the Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP;**
- b) To record its belief that membership of both LEPs has undoubtedly been beneficial for the district of Wyre Forest and has not created difficulties in respect of accountability for or delivery of significant projects in Wyre Forest that have been funded by one or both LEPs;**
- c) To call urgently on the newly formed Government to heed the wishes of Wyre Forest District Council and other district councils that are members of the GBS LEP and/or the Worcestershire LEP, by retaining the ability for those councils to choose which LEP or LEPs to join.**

C.34 Electoral Issues including Review of the May 2019 Elections

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive which detailed a number of matters relating to elections as well as providing a report on the local elections held on 2 May 2019 and the European Parliamentary election held on 23 May 2019.

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

The Leader of the Council seconded the proposal.

A discussion ensued and in relation to the feedback from the debriefing meeting relating to the lack of tellers at the polling stations at the European Parliamentary elections and how much more pleasant it was when visiting, the Chief Executive advised that there was not any qualitative and quantitative data on the number of comments from electors, but the very fact that we had some feedback from Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors indicated that there were issues at the local government elections.

The Chief Executive thanked Members for their kind comments during the debate and in the feedback sessions. He said that the Elections Team had done an exceptionally good job under exceptionally difficult circumstances, in having to run two major elections so closely together. He said that it was something the Council could be proud of.

Upon a vote the recommendations were carried unanimously.

Decision:

- 1.1 The report on the local elections and European Parliamentary election in May 2019 be noted;**
- 1.2 DELEGATED authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being & Democratic Services, to conduct the statutory Polling Districts and Polling Places Review by 31 January 2020 as set out in paragraph 10.1 of the report, with a report to be brought to Council later in 2019 for decision on the outcome of the Review.**

C.35 Policy and Budget Framework

Matters which required a Decision by Council.

a) Recommendations from Cabinet – 16th July 2019

- **Asset Management Strategy**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments presented the recommendations for approval. The Leader of the Council seconded the proposal.

Councillor N Desmond said he wholeheartedly supported the strategy. He said it was the right thing to do especially as the authority was purchasing more assets. He added that it was essential that the authority manages its diverse portfolio of assets in the most appropriate way.

Decision: The Asset Management Strategy be adopted as part of the Capital Strategy 2019-22.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.40pm