

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER  
17TH DECEMBER 2019 (6 PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: G W Ballinger (Chairman), F M Oborski MBE (Vice-Chairman), H E Dyke, N Martin and J W R Thomas.

**Observers:**

Councillors: C J Barnett, A Coleman, R H Coleman, N J Desmond, C Edginton-White, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, M J Hart and M Rayner.

**CAB.43 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.44 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.45 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12th November 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.46 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.47 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.48 Public Participation**

In accordance with the Council's Scheme for Public Speaking at meetings of Cabinet, the following member of the public addressed the meeting at this point on behalf of Bewdley Traders:

Jon May of Mooch Gifts & Home, Bewdley

*Bewdley Traders are very concerned regarding the proposed changes to Car Parking Fees across the Wyre Forest District, in particular Bewdley that does not have the benefit of large Supermarket carparks where the public can enjoy 2 hours free parking like in Stourport and Kidderminster. The proposed*

*changes will severely damage the local trade on our high streets, trade that is already struggling. This will be a huge kick in the teeth to small businesses looking for support not barriers in these challenging times.*

*Over recent months we (40 Bewdley Traders) have been running a campaign highlighting Car parking in Bewdley and have gained over 3000 signatures from both visitors and local shoppers who support us in asking you for 2 hours free parking in Bewdley, a policy that has been adopted by Dudley Council and Cotswold District Councils and a host of others across England to support their local high streets, to prevent trade going to out of town shopping centres.*

*So please before you rubber stamp any proposals this evening think of your local high streets and consider the true impact of your actions as these new proposals do not support Small Business: they just make it easier for out of town shopping and the internet to prosper at a time when high streets all across the UK need their local councils to offer support.*

**CAB.49 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020-23**

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources which provided the Cabinet with financial information in order to make proposals for the Budget Strategy for the period 2020-2023.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He said that the Progressive Alliance has adopted a different approach this year. It had ensured that the Strategic Review Panel is briefed on the emerging proposals in advance. He said Members of all groups have had the chance to scrutinise the ideas and to ask questions. All Members are sent the Panel's papers.

The Leader said that the Progressive Alliance had also ensured that their proposals on car parking charges had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to tonight's meeting; this did not happen under the previous administration. He said that he was pleased that the scrutiny committee supported the proposals. He added that the Alliance had also sought the public's views in advance through a budget survey which produced over 600 responses; more than has been received in previous years. He added that the views of the public had been taken into account when shaping the strategy.

The Leader continued that the proposals in the strategy would now be the subject of further scrutiny by the Strategic Review Panel. He said he looked forward to discussing any alternative proposals but they had to be realistic and not make the Council's financial position worse than it already is.

The Leader said that none of the councillors sought office to cut services but the Council has come to the point where putting up charges and cutting some services is inevitable. The administration had inherited a £2m funding gap that was created by the 2010 and 2015 Governments which cajoled councils into keeping council tax down with short-term "freeze grants". He added that despite continuing financial pressures and economic uncertainty the report shows the Council has managed to reduce the estimated gap between its

proposed expenditure and income in 2022-23 from over £2m to £1.68m. He said that, together with other cost saving measures and income generation initiatives, the modest council tax increase now proposed will help towards closing the funding gap. If the Council had not kept council tax increases below inflation between 2011-12 and 2019-20, its funding gap could now be significantly lower.

In relation to the car parking charges, the Leader said that the Alliance now runs the Council and were entitled to reach different conclusions about how to balance the economic needs of the district and the financial needs of the Council to close the funding gap that it had inherited. He added that the Council does not have to allow people to use its land for free and, if people want the convenience of parking in or near our town centres on the Council's land, they should expect to pay for the privilege. He said that the Council has declared a climate emergency and was not going to maintain free car parking all year round that will encourage unnecessary car journeys.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments seconded the proposals.

The Corporate Director: Resources pointed out a typographical error in the notes on page 82 of the gold coloured Financial Strategy 2020-2023 booklets (electronic appendix 3 part 2); the text should read – charges apply Monday-Sunday between 08:00 and **21:00**.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services said that the authority was under no obligation to allow its land to be used for free. He said that the proposed changes will result in a more simplified charging structure than at present and will apply to all car parks across the district. He said that the proposals were town centre and business friendly and the reduction in the season ticket price would benefit those who park frequently in town centres.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their thorough and in depth analysis of the proposals. He also thanked the Directors and Officers across many departments for their hard work in putting the proposals together.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart, said that there was a thorough and robust discussion at the meeting, and the proposals were supported by the majority of the Committee.

**Decision: Cabinet NOTED:**

- 1.1 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 1.**
- 1.2 The comments from the Strategic Review Panel at its meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 on Car Parking fees and charges included in Appendix 3 – Part 2;**
- 1.3 The results of the Budget Consultation survey included in Appendix 6 and summarised in paragraph 7 of the report;**

- 1.4 A report will be brought to the Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 on the proposed Brinton Park Heritage National Lottery Heritage Fund project to approve the evaluation criteria for the procurement of professional and building services contracts and to put in place an appropriate delegation to award the contracts.

**Cabinet ENDORSE and RECOMMEND to the Strategic Review Panel for scrutiny:**

- 1.5 The Council's updated Medium Term Financial Strategy taking into account the results of the earlier Budget Consultation;
- 1.5.1 Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2020-23 (paragraph 8.3) including;
- a. Approval of the Community Leadership Fund for 2020-21 of £33k;
  - b. Approval of a revised programme for the maintenance of highways verges to align more closely with funding received from Worcestershire County Council and with the recent Plant Life report. This will save £50k pa from 2020-21 onwards;
  - c. Approval of a programme of phased savings from Localism partnership working with our Town and Parish Council colleagues as outlined in paragraph 5.13 of £135k in 2020-21, £245k in 2021-22, £350k in 2022-23, £525k in 2023-24 and £700k in 2024-25. The savings include assumptions of transfers of activities and staff posts which, if not realised will be ended or deleted as set out in paragraphs 8.2.4 and 8.2.5;
  - d. Approval of additional capital resource to facilitate ongoing delivery of the ICT Strategy of a total of £653k phased over the MTFS as set out in paragraph 8.2.6 proposed to be funded by prudential borrowing. The associated revenue costs are £4k in 2020-21, £63k in 2021-22 and £126k in 2022-23;
  - e. Approval of the removal of funding for Kidderminster Town Centre, Bewdley Development Trust and Stourport Forward saving a total of £30,520 in 2020-21 onwards;
  - f. Approval of a schedule of improvements to Stourport Riverside in line with the Master Plan to be funded as set out in paragraph 8.2.8. The gross capital investment proposed is £150,000 of which £103,580 can be funded from S106 contributions so leaving £46,420 to be funded from prudential borrowing. The ongoing net revenue implications are £24,510 in 2020-21, £23,010 in 2021-22 and £23,010 in 2022-23;
  - g. Approval of essential health and safety capital works to the

**Depot Block E for Operational Services of £70k in 2020-21 funded from prudential borrowing with revenue financing costs £1,510 in 2020-21, £6,510 in 2021-22 and £6,510 in 2022-23;**

- h. Approval of the HLF Brinton Park Project gross capital expenditure of £2.4m subject to HLF approval of the substantive funding and the final business case. This includes approval of a commitment to meet a maximum shortfall of £100k in capital partnership funding for the project, to be funded from prudential borrowing.**
- 1.5.2 The level of net expenditure and resultant Council Tax for 2020-23 as per paragraphs 8.1 and 8.4 including the revenue implications of the Capital Strategy report also on the agenda;**
- 1.5.3 The fees and charges in line with this strategy and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2020-23, as shown in Part 3 of Appendix 3 (paragraph 8.1 also refers) that reflect the recommendations from Licensing Committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019;**

**Cabinet APPROVED:**

- 1.6 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 2 (in line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th December 2019 in respect of car parking charges);**
- 1.7 That subsidy for the outsourced Pest control service administered by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) is withdrawn from April 2020;**
- 1.8 To delegate authority to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place to advertise the proposed amendments to the parking charges, shown at Appendix 3 Part 2 to the report, in the Wyre Forest (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2019 (“the Parking Places Order”); and in consultation with the Corporate Director: Community, Well Being and Environment, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments and Cabinet Member for Operational Services to consider any objections made as a result of the advertisement; and following such consideration to decide whether the proposed amendments to the Parking Places Order should be made;**
- 1.9 The allocation of capital receipts from the Evergreen Investment Fund of £25k to fund works to lay out temporary car parking at the former Crown House site in Kidderminster, in line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and as set out in the separate Capital Strategy Report also on the agenda in paragraph 9.2.2.**

**CAB.49 Capital Strategy**

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources and the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which provides Members with information to support the recommendations within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and to seek approval of a Capital Strategy for 2020-2030 including prudential indicators which set limits for non financial investments and to fulfil the key requirements of the MHCLG Investment Guidance.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He said that the Capital Strategy is a key document for the Council and forms part of the authority's integrated revenue, capital and balance sheet planning. It provides a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services and our Corporate Priorities. He added that the report also provides an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability, and includes an overview of the governance processes for approval and monitoring of capital expenditure.

The Leader explained that the Council's Capital Programme is the delivery plan for the Capital Strategy and is under-pinned by the borrowing strategy contained in the approved TMSS. He said this was set out in Appendix 1 of the report and covers a 10 year period extended from the previous 3 year forecast. He added that the report sets out the detail of the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Investment Guidance and confirms that we adhere to this.

The Leader continued that for the Capital Portfolio Fund and Development Loans Fund we include additional prudential indicators for transparency whilst noting that these are not commercial investments; properties acquired to date are operational, making important economic development and regeneration contributions to the district. He added the report includes reference to the successful bid that has been made to the Future High Streets Fund for Kidderminster town centre; the full business case is to be submitted by April 2020. This includes proposals for the Crown House site, former Magistrates' Court building and Bromsgrove Street car park.

He said that the report considers ongoing risk assessment in relation to capital expenditure in detail. It also considers proportionality that is particularly relevant to Capital Portfolio expenditure. He added that paragraph 3.76 refers to the new CIPFA Guidance on Prudential Property Investment. In terms of our current governance, processes and procedures, and was pleased to report that we already largely comply with the guidance.

In conclusion, the Leader explained that the Cabinet Proposals include several that involve capital expenditure and the prudential indicators and Capital Programme will be updated and presented again for approval to the February meetings of Cabinet and Council.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments seconded the recommendations. The Strategy will be presented

to the Strategic Review Panel in January 2020 for scrutiny.

**Decision:**

- 1.1 Cabinet ENDORSE and RECOMMEND to the Strategic Review Panel for scrutiny:**
- 1.2 The Council's updated Capital Strategy:**
  - a) Approve the Capital Strategy 2020-30 including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 2 of the report;**
  - b) Approve variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendix 1, Appendices A and B;**
  - c) Approve the limits for gross debt of non treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for Capital Portfolio and Development Loans Fund income as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2;**
  - d) Approve the limits for loan investments as set out in Section 5.1.**
- 1.3 Cabinet APPROVED:**
  - 1.3.1 That delegation is given to the Corporate Director: Economic, Prosperity and Place in consultation with the Corporate Director: Resources and Solicitor to the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources to update the Development Loans Fund and Capital Portfolio Strategy Policies in year if required.**

**CAB.50 Recommendations from Committees - Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

**a) Wyre Forest Health and Wellbeing Plan Update**

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services presented the recommendations which were supported by the Committee, and were formally agreed.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5th December 2019;**

**The Wyre Health Action Plan 2019- 20 as attached at Appendix 2 of the report is approved with the addition of action points for tackling male suicide and loneliness in 'at-risk' groups in Wyre Forest.**

**b) Climate Change Action Plan Update**

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services presented the recommendations which were supported by the

Committee, and were formally agreed.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5th December 2019;**

**The Climate Change Action Plan 2019/20 as attached at Appendix 2 of the report be approved.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.15pm