

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,  
KIDDERMINSTER

26TH FEBRUARY 2020 (6PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: S Miah (Chairman), P W M Young (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, 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 Edginton-White, N Gale, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, K Henderson, 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.61 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Rev Sue Levitt, Wesley Methodist, Stourport and Alveley & Callow Hill & Areley Kings Methodist Churches.

**C.62 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**C.63 Declarations of Interests by Members**

Councillor T Onslow declared an interest in agenda item 15 – Council Tax Setting 2020-2021, because she is the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia.

**C.64 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2019 and the Minutes of the special meeting held on 22nd October 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.65 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**C.66 Questions**

## **Agenda Item No. 4**

Ten questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order Section 7, 1.8 by Members of the Council.

### **1. Question from Councillor Mary Rayner to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services**

How many public health funerals have taken place in Wyre Forest in the last 5 years?

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

I can confirm that in the past five years there have been a total of 23. There were four in 2015-16, six in each of the following three financial years and one so far in the current financial year.

### **Supplementary question**

Where do these public funerals take place? Are relatives allowed to attend and do they have to pay anything?

### **Supplementary answer**

They take place in Redditch. We always advise family members and they are allowed to attend. We advise family members about the funeral payment grant available from Department for Work and Pensions.

### **2. Question from Councillor Nathan Desmond to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services**

At Annual Council last May, a motion was introduced by the Progressive Alliance which was unanimously supported by all political parties, that sought to increase and promote electric vehicle charging points across the Wyre Forest, especially on Council owned public car parks.

Could the relevant cabinet member please update Council on the progress to date of this very important initiative.

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

Councillor Desmond will recall that at last December's Overview and Scrutiny meeting Members were presented with the Climate Change Action Plan 2019-20. Within that document the action was recorded as "Increase provision of electric vehicle charge points in WFDC car parks and encourage the owners of privately owned car parks to do likewise." It was noted at that time that Worcestershire County Council had made a funding bid for new charge points where it would benefit residents without access to private car parks. I can confirm that Raven Street and Dog Lane car parks had been

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included with a likely timescale for implementation by this Summer.

### **Supplementary question**

Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that with the Government now making an announcement that all new diesel, petrol and hybrid vehicles will be phased out from 2035, the infrastructure to a green agenda is going to be absolutely huge throughout the country, and in order to do that local government has a key and fundamental role to play. Does she agree that she and the administration will continue to lobby the LGA and local Member of Parliament, Mark Garnier, for better funding initiatives to Local Authorities in order that they rollout more charging points across their areas?

### **Supplementary answer**

Yes, indeed she can. Officers should have had a meeting today with Cenex about this very subject, but due to the unfortunate flooding in Bewdley the meeting had to be cancelled.

### **3. Question from Councillor Tracey Onslow to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection**

Given WFDC's performance in respect of Community Wellbeing, could the Cabinet Member please confirm that the Progressive Alliance will be continuing with the 'free to attend' events programme across Wyre Forest, including such popular events as 'Bands in the Park' and 'Country & Western', which bring the community together?

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection**

I am sure the Member will be aware, the Medium Term Financial Strategy clearly states on page 37, paragraph 8.2.4 that funding for arts development, all discretionary events and summer activities will be sought from Town councils or other sponsors. Unfortunately, if this is not achieved the final year of funding by this Council will be 2020-21. In fact as Members will also be aware Officers and I have been actively working on this for some time now between Councils. Indeed the budget consultation questionnaire specifically sought the views of respondents to the question of whether parish and town councils ought to be funding such discretionary activities, 55% agreed and 67% agreed that parish and town councils should increase their council tax to protect services. This was the largest budget response that we have had to a budget questionnaire.

### **Supplementary question**

Having spoken to my Town Councillor colleagues, none of them have agreed to take on these events, will you therefore confirm that you will be cutting these events with effect from next year?

**Supplementary answer**

I cannot confirm that because ongoing talks are still taking place through Town Councils. You may have spoken to different members of Town Councillors than I have, there have been some positive responses and we will continue to work along those lines.

**4. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments**

Could the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments confirm that the current policy in respect of acquisitions from the capital portfolio fund in respect of the two LEP geography is being fully followed and therefore specifically how many properties have been looked at in the Redditch Borough Council area and how many have been looked at in the Bromsgrove District Council area since 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2019?

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

I was asked an identical question by Cllr Desmond at last July's Council meeting and I confirmed at that time that the new Administration was following the adopted strategies and policies of this council. Nothing has changed since then. You will remember that the new Administration publicly stated that our priority on capital investments will be to purchase properties within the Wyre Forest District.

Every week the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place receives from the Council's acquisition and asset management consultants, Jones Valerio, a cumulative schedule of all potential opportunities that have arisen during that week. It has to be said that the whole market slowed in 2019 compared to 2018 so there were fewer opportunities presented and as far as Bromsgrove and Redditch properties that were on that list, none of them met the Council's viability criteria.

**Supplementary question**

Would she confirm to me and indeed this Council that there is absolutely no agreement of any type; whether that be formal, informal, written, spoken or a gentleman's agreement between this Council and the Leaders of Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council and their Chief Executive, as discussed at a Northern Alliance meeting, that Wyre Forest would simply not pursue any acquisitions within Bromsgrove or Redditch areas. I understand the Leaders of those areas, particularly Bromsgrove were somewhat upset when we purchased a certain property in Bromsgrove, so would she categorically confirm the position in respect of that?

**Supplementary answer**

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No properties have been looked at in Bromsgrove and Redditch. The only properties we are concerned about considering purchasing are within the Wyre Forest District.

#### **5. Question from Councillor Ian Hardiman to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection**

Does the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection still value the work and contribution of the Parish Councils in this District?

#### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection**

I believe I have been asked this question before at our last meeting on 25th September and I think the only difference in the question is the word 'still' added. I refer Councillor Hardiman to page 14 of this meeting's agenda for the answer I gave then. I can confirm as I did then that I and the administration value the work of all Parish Councils. They play an important part of our work across the area and are very efficient and hard working partners.

#### **Supplementary question**

Since Councillor Mrs Dyke's Cabinet appointment last May, can she confirm which of the nine Parish Council meetings she has attended and does she agree with me that failure to attend is discourteous to them?

#### **Supplementary answer**

I attended the first Parish Forum intending to meet with Members from the Parishes. We were greeted at the Forum by the Chairman who made the comment of what is all the District Council doing here. I find that slightly discourteous to us as well. I am happy to visit any Parish Council. I don't want to just impose myself on them. If a Parish Council would like to get in touch we can have a conversation and I will gladly visit it. I do not consider myself discourteous and never have.

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

Given Cllr. John Thomas' response to myself at the Full Council meeting in September when he confirmed he had visited the depot and hub to see the refurbishment and that the wider cabinet had, could he advise this Council of the date and time he visited and that of his 4 cabinet colleagues?

#### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

If the matter is of such interest to you Councillor Hart, I am a little perplexed why you did not contact me in the intervening five months for you to raise the question with me further. I can confirm that my colleagues and I have visited the facilities at Green Street at various times and I do so frequently in my role

as Cabinet Member for Operational Services.

**Supplementary question**

Would he actually answer my question and tell this Council exactly when the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Members attended Green Street, because he told Council on 25<sup>th</sup> September that they had visited. So could he tell me when prior to that meeting they had visited or was this Council recklessly or deliberately misled?

**Supplementary answer**

Perhaps you would like to set out the evidence you have for this extraordinary claim. There is no comprehensive record of who enters the Green Street site and I am sure he would agree with me that no single person within that complex could possibly observe all the comings and goings in one day let alone over a sustained period.

**7. Question from Councillor John Byng to the Leader of the Council**

Far from having all the information that has been requested, Bewdley Town Council still awaits the following:-

Condition reports on Load Street toilets and the Riverside North Park paddling pool.

Transfer documents for the toilets.

Amended contract for the paddling pool.

Information as to why BTC has to contribute £50k to the museum.

Would the Leader of the Council please let us know when this information will be shared?

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

Councillor Byng has asked about a large number of issues and I need to give him a detailed answer as it seems that he may not have been given correct information by his colleagues in the Town Council.

Load Street Toilets - The 2017 condition survey was shared on 29 November 2019 and again on 10 December 2019. At the request of the Town Council, a new survey was completed in January 2020, received 4 February 2020 and sent to the Town Council on 13 February 2020.

Transfer documents are being drafted with a view to transfer April 2021 in line with the wishes of the Town Council.

Riverside North Paddling Pool – there have been discussions with the Town Council since 2017 about the paddling pool transfer. On 18 December 2018 the draft agreement and conditions survey were sent to Cllr Anna Coleman. The previous town clerk also had received all relevant documents including

the conditions survey.

From March 2019 legal colleagues held meetings with the town clerk and all relevant documents – lease, service level agreement, condition survey- were discussed and were in the possession of the Town Council.

At a meeting on 21 November 2019 the clerk informed the District Council that the Town Council no longer wished to take on the paddling pool and

instead the Friends group would receive £5,000 from the Town Council. At a subsequent meeting with the Friends group on 29 November 2019, they confirmed this arrangement. Therefore, no further amended documents have been prepared for the Town Council.

It is our understanding that neither organisation wish to take on the paddling pool at this point in time. If that is the case, it will not reopen this summer.

Bewdley Museum – In response to a query from the town clerk on 29 November 2019 about a contribution to the museum, officers emailed the Town Council on 6 December 2019 to confirm that potentially any contribution UP TO £50k would be sought. It is up to the Town Council whether or not it wishes to make a contribution to the museum when it becomes an independent trust. I would hope that the Town Council would look favourably on the value that this important facility brings to the town and its economy.

I hope that this answer demonstrates that the Town Council has already had all of the information mentioned in Councillor Byng's question.

### **Supplementary question**

There is a Localism meeting with Bewdley Town Council tomorrow evening, will the Leader be attending?

### **Supplementary answer**

I have every confidence in the portfolio holder, Councillor Mrs Dyke, who has a real grip on the situation within the three Towns. I did go to the first meeting over there with the Chief Executive. It would not be my intention to go tomorrow evening. Councillor Mrs Dyke has the confidence of the full Cabinet. I gave a very full answer to the question and I would encourage the Bewdley Town Council to take a positive decision about what role it wants to play in the localism agenda and not make negative comments, commencing with the meeting Councillor Mrs Dyke is holding with Town Councillors tomorrow evening.

### **8. Question from Councillor Ian Hardiman to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments**

Would the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic

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Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments confirm to this Council that the Wyre Forest Green Party representative enjoys her full support -Yes or No?

#### **Answer from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments**

This question seems to imply a misunderstanding of the democratic process. Councillors are elected to represent the residents of their ward; not to represent a political party. I can assure Council that Councillor Vicky Caulfield has my total confidence both in her role as a member of the Independent, Liberal Democrat and Green Group, and as a Councillor of Blakebrook and Habberley South.

#### **Supplementary question**

Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that it is completely disingenuous to campaign against the Green Belt development, get elected on that basis and now support extensive development in the Green Belt?

#### **Supplementary answer**

At last week's Special Council meeting the majority of this Council took the responsible decision to ensure that this District has a viable Local Plan. Many of us campaigned in the elections against Green Belt development and indeed every Member of this Council wishes Green Belt development to be absolutely minimal. As a responsible Member of this Council, Councillor Vicky Caulfield voted in favour of submitting the Local Plan so that this District was not held hostage by hostile planning applications from greedy developers.

#### **9. Question from Councillor Chris Rogers to the Leader of the Council**

Given the Chief Executive of the Council's recent email regarding comments made by a member or members of this Council regarding comments made regarding Simply Limitless would the Leader, having obtained the information from the Chief Executive, advise this Council of who that member or members is/are and will he apologise and advise this Council of what he said to them and what action he is taking against them to ensure this Council is not brought into disrepute and confirm that this organisation has the full support of the Progressive Alliance?

#### **Answer from the Leader of the Council**

Again there are five questions in there, we could have answered those quite simply if we had have been asked privately without exciting all the people watching at home and those in the Chamber tonight. You won't be surprised that I am saying there is no need for me to apologise about this matter, as the question implies. I am happy to confirm that the Council is supportive of this



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charitable organisation and the Council's Sustainability Team has worked closely with Simply Limitless on various projects over the last five years. Some of the services at Simply Limitless are commissioned by the county council.

The Chief Executive's message contained a very clear reminder that members should not criticise any organisation without evidence to support their views. This could involve a breach of the code of conduct including the provision that "You must treat others with respect". I am sure members understand and support that it is always inappropriate to make unsubstantiated comments and criticisms of organisations or individuals and that applies to us all.

#### **Supplementary question**

Is the Leader aware that his Deputy made disparaging remarks about Simply Limitless at the recent Treasury Management meeting and would he distance himself from those remarks and join me in supporting the good work Simply Limitless does.

#### **Supplementary answer**

I will certainly be happy to repeat what I have said. I hope that all Groups have taken heed of the advice and remind their Members from time to time about the Code of Conduct.

#### **10. Question from Councillor Anna Coleman to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection**

Could the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection confirm categorically that this Progressive Alliance will not withdraw any Council funding from Bewdley Museum?

#### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection**

Councillor Coleman appears to have forgotten the report to Council on 25 September. Paragraph 4.24 said "Work is under way to explore conversion of Bewdley Museum into a self-standing charitable trust", which if you remember Councillor Coleman was mentioned at the last Bewdley Museum meeting, item 7, to be discussed again at the next meeting on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, agenda item 6, "which would be overseen by a board of independent trustees and which would employ the staff. This change is considered essential in order to move the Museum to a sustainable position where its operating costs can fall because of the tools that would be available to it as a charity. The financial and support calls on the District Council would be reduced or removed, and the District Council's role would be limited to being a funding partner."

Councillor Byng sort of had the wrong end of the stick earlier, the figure that he mentioned, £50,000, is the target we have set for the reduction in this

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Council's net contribution to the museum. That is only a small proportion, less than 10%, of the expenditure that Wyre Forest District Council currently incurs on the museum and store, Guildhall and QEII Jubilee Gardens.

#### **C.67 Chairman's Communications**

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

#### **C.68 Leader of the Council Announcements**

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

#### **C.69 Motions Submitted under Standing Orders**

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

##### **1. Notice of Motion from Councillor C Edginton-White**

*Council*

- a) Extends its thanks to all public agencies, voluntary organisations and individuals for their response in assisting local residents and businesses affected by the flooding caused by Storm Dennis, noting in particular the work and commitment of the Environment Agency staff who worked through very adverse conditions throughout the night to respond to the emergency situation and the ongoing support they provided on site especially at Beale's Corner;*
- b) Notes that there was good forewarning from the Met Office about the impending storm event, with Storm Dennis being named on 11 February, although there were unprecedented local weather conditions which led to a very rapid rise in river levels at Bewdley on the night of Saturday 15 February;*
- c) Expresses concern that it was not possible for the Environment Agency to erect the Severnside South barrier and the temporary barrier at Beale's Corner in time to prevent a number of properties being flooded in Lax Lane and leaving Beale's Corner properties vulnerable and the bridge closed on Sunday 16 February;*
- d) Refers the issues arising from this and the ongoing current flooding events to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for it to take evidence from relevant bodies including the Environment Agency, with a view to making recommendations no later than the Council's meeting in July 2020 on lessons to be learned and what case can be made to the Government for permanent flood protection arrangements at Beale's Corner.*

Councillor C Edginton-White presented the motion, which was seconded by Councillor J Byng.

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The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart said that we should not prejudge or predetermine what any of the statutory agencies are going to say, and therefore it would not be appropriate for Council to have a lengthy debate on the issue at this time. He moved an amendment to the effect that the item be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He said that it would be for the Committee to decide who they would like to invite; such as the Environment Agency, statutory agencies, representatives from the community and voluntary sectors. He added that the scope of the scrutiny exercise could potentially be widened to examine the impact on residents, local businesses, car parks etc.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor I Hardiman. Councillor Edginton-White was happy to accept the amendment.

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

**Decision: The Motion from Councillor C Edginton-White, as amended by Councillor M Hart be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

#### **C.70 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (7)**

There were no urgent motions submitted under Standing Orders.

#### **C.71 Governance and Constitutional Issues**

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive which dealt with; Governance review recommendations; Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations and Adoption of amended code of conduct.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations as set out in the report en bloc.

The Leader advised Members that the group leaders and deputy group leaders had undertaken a thorough review of the governance arrangements, following last May's motion. Their recommendation was that Council should not move away from the Cabinet and Scrutiny model that Wyre Forest District Council has operated for almost twenty years. He said that the Progressive Alliance backed the motion last May when the motion indicated that we would examine moving to a committee system. All members have had the chance to be part of this review, and advice was sought from the Local Government Association. He said the conclusions reached by group leaders reflect the fact that there was no strong consensus in favour of change. He added that we should never be ashamed to review arrangements that have operated for such a long period. He added that the review had produced recommendations on which he believed there will be a consensus, and the Cabinet welcomes and supports the recommendation about how it might undertake policy development work in future.

The Leader further explained that the Council's approach in recent years has

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been to accept the IRP's recommendations in full and he believed that it was the right thing to do. He thanked the Panel for their report which recommended some modest changes, and the report before Council proposes that they should take effect from last May. In conclusion he added that Council should accept the work done on the revised code of conduct by the Ethics and Standards Committee and support its adoption.

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

A discussion ensued. Councillor Hart said that he and his group fully endorse and support the Executive Cabinet style of governance and looked forward to future invitations to work with the Cabinet on policy development work. He added that whilst he may not personally agree with the recommendations of the IRP, they would be supported along with the recommended changes to the Code of Conduct.

Councillor Desmond welcomed the decision to remain with the Cabinet style structure; he said it was the right structure for the authority as it gave strong leadership.

Upon a show of hands the recommendations as set out in the report were carried unanimously.

#### **Decision: Council**

- 1.1.1    AGREED that the Council should not make a formal change to its governance arrangements at this time, as recommended by the Group Leaders and Deputy Group Leaders in the report in Appendix 1;**
- 1.1.2    ENDORSED the recommendation that Cabinet should be mindful of formal and informal opportunities to involve other members in policy development work, prior to reports coming before the overview and scrutiny committee and Cabinet;**
- 1.1.3    ADOPTED the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel with effect from 7 May 2019, as set out in its report in Appendix 2;**
- 1.1.4    ADOPTED the revised Member Code of Conduct set out in Appendix 3, as recommended by the Ethics and Standards Committee.**

#### **C.72        Review of the December 2019 UK Parliamentary election and Review of Polling districts and polling places**

Council considered a report from the Returning Officer and Electoral

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Registration Officer which dealt with a report on 12 December general election, and the Polling districts and polling places review.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being & Democratic Services presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. She said that the report set out the key statistics and information about the General Election, the third major election that Wyre Forest's electoral team had to administer in 2019. She said she felt she could speak on behalf of all parties in complimenting the electoral team and the Acting Returning Officer for a well-run election process, which had to be undertaken at a challenging time of year and at the same time as the concluding phases of the annual canvass.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being & Democratic Services explained that the review of polling districts and polling places was due to have been reported to our meeting in December but that was postponed because of the general election. There was a good level of response to the public consultation last autumn. Generally, respondents seem content with the current arrangements and it is certainly the case that they have been operated successfully for a number of elections, including the three major elections held in 2019. However the consultation also revealed concerns about the location of polling places in a number of areas, with the most frequent comment being about the absence of a polling place on the Habberley Estate

In conclusion she said it would be inappropriate for council to ignore these comments and therefore the report proposes a further specific review of polling districts and polling places in Franche & Habberley North and Blakebrook & Habberley South, as set out in paragraphs 10.6 and 10.7. She added that the outcome of the further specific review would be reported to the Council meeting in July and would allow any changes to be implemented for the autumn of 2020.

Councillor Whitehouse said he was absolutely delighted to second the proposals; having spoken to residents during his election campaign, he said it was only right that there is a polling station on Habberley estate.

Councillor Hart formally moved an amendment to delete recommendation 2.3 of the report to agree to undertake a further review of polling districts and polling places in Franche & Habberley North and Blakebrook & Habberley South. He said we should take the lead from the response of the Acting Returning Officer who, as part of the consultation, stated he was content with the set of arrangements that we currently have.

Councillor Onslow seconded the amendment. She said four people out of in excess of 3100 had asked for the review; she felt that we shouldn't change things unless there is strong consensus in favour of it.

Councillor Oborski spoke against the amendment. She said there is a lack of a regular and proper bus service on the estate and, whilst it was acknowledged that postal votes are available, for some residents they do not have a post box within reasonable walking distance. She added that there

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may not have been a very big response to this survey; a detailed review is needed to ensure that everybody affected can have their say and it was a perfectly democratic thing for the authority to do.

A vote on Councillor Hart's amendment was taken and defeated.

In summary the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being & Democratic Services said just as the public consultation showed, there will be a variety of views around this chamber on specific issues and it will probably never be possible to please everyone all of the time. She said she believed the proposals in the report are the best way forward and sought Council's agreement to the recommendations set out in section 2.

Upon a show of hands, the vote on the substantive recommendations was carried unanimously.

#### **Decision: Council**

- 1.1 NOTED the report on the UK Parliamentary election in December 2019;**
- 1.2 APPROVED that the existing polling districts and polling places should remain unchanged at present;**
- 1.3 AGREED to undertake a further review of polling districts and polling places in Franche & Habberley North and Blakebrook & Habberley South, as set out in paragraph 10.7 of the report.**

#### **C.73 Policy and Budget Framework**

##### **Recommendations from the Licensing & Environmental Committee**

##### **(a) 7th October 2019 - Licensing Act 2003 Review of Statement of Licensing Policy Consultation Results**

The Chairman of the Licensing & Environmental Committee, Councillor P Dyke presented the recommendation for approval. Councillor M Rayner seconded the proposal.

**Decision: The revised Statement of Licensing Policy attached at Appendix 1 of the report be approved and published.**

##### **(b) 2nd December 2019 – Review of Fees and Charges for the Council's Licensing and Regulatory Services Function 2020/21**

The Chairman of the Licensing & Environmental Committee presented the recommendations for approval. Councillor M Rayner seconded the proposal.

**Decision:**

- 1.1 The proposals for fees and charges within the Council's Licensing, Food, Health, Safety and Pollution Control functions for 2020/21, as detailed in the report, be included in the Council's 2020/21 budget strategy.**
- 1.2 Direct Officers to advertise the hackney carriage and private hire vehicle and operator fees as detailed in this report and recommend that, subject to consideration of any objections received, Council approves the increases as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report**

**Recommendations from Cabinet**

**(c) 12th November 2019 – Conversion of Property in Stourport on Severn**

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

**Decision: The funding within the Capital Programme currently set aside for Comberton Place (as per the report of 11/07/17) is removed from the Capital Programme and that £60k is reallocated to the Raven Street refurbishment and the remainder returned to the Evergreen Investment Fund as unallocated.**

**Recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**(d) 7th November 2019 - Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2019-20**

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart presented the recommendation for approval. Councillor N Desmond seconded the proposal.

**Decision: The Treasury Management Mid-year Review and updated Prudential Indicators & Ratios be approved.**

**(e) 6th February 2020 - Treasury Management Strategy 2020-21**

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee formally moved the recommendations for approval. He said that the item had been fully considered by both the Treasury Management Review Panel and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. He said he was very grateful to the Professional Officers for all their hard work in this area. Councillor N Desmond seconded the proposal.

**Decision:**

- 1.1 The restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2020-21 to 2029-30 included in Appendix 3. These will be revised for the February 2020 Council meeting, as per paragraph 7.2 of the report, following any changes to the Capital Programme brought about as part of the budget process.**
- 1.2 The updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5) be approved.**
- 1.3 The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1 be approved.**
- 1.4 The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3 be approved.**
- 1.5 Council noted that the separate, but intrinsically linked, Capital Strategy 2020-30 to be approved separately by Council, sets out the policy statement covering non-treasury investments including the related suite of prudential indicators.**

**C.74 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020-2023**

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources which sought approval of the Council's budget for 2020-2023 having considered the proposed decision and budget reports recommended to Council by Cabinet on 11th February 2020 including:

- Base Budget Projections 2020-23 including Cabinet Proposals
- Fees and Charges
- Capital Strategy 2020-2030
- Report of the Chief Financial Officer in respect of Sections 25-28 Local Government Act 2003

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Corporate Director: Resources and her team for all the hard work they had put into producing the document.

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



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Councillor Desmond moved a suite of amendments, as set out on pages 99 and 100 of the report, on behalf of the Conservative Group. He said that the amendments were built on the principles of efficiency and value for money and had a clear focus on a mixture of internal savings with a continued transformation of services. The proposals were seconded by Councillor M Hart.

A lengthy debate ensued. Several Members spoke about the importance of the Council being more commercial in its approach to income generation. The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection assured Members that, under the new Administration, the Member and Officer Income Generation Group continued to meet and discuss ideas and proposals put forward.

### **Named votes on the Conservative Group proposals were recorded as follows and the amendment was defeated:**

For (14)

Councillors: J F Byng, S J Chambers, A Coleman, R H Coleman, B S Dawes, N J Desmond, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, K Henderson, L J Jones, T L Onslow and C Rogers.

Against (19)

Councillors: J Aston, G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, V Caulfield, H E Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, S Griffiths, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, M Rayner, S E N Rook, D R Sheppard, J W R Thomas, A Totty, L Whitehouse and P W M Young

The Leader of the Council said that when you freeze council tax you never catch up. The authority has a large financial deficit and closing it will depend on the Localism agenda. He said the District Council cannot go on funding services year on year that are not its duty. The District Council will continue to work with Town and Parish Councils, and other local organisations wishing to take on services for the people of Wyre Forest. He urged all Members to support the budget.

### **A named vote on the substantive budget proposals was recorded as follows and was agreed:**

For (19)

Councillors: J Aston, G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, V Caulfield, H E Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, S Griffiths, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, M Rayner, S E N Rook, D R Sheppard, J W R Thomas, A Totty, L Whitehouse and P W M Young

Against (14)

Councillors: J F Byng, S J Chambers, A Coleman, R H Coleman, B S Dawes, N J Desmond, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, K Henderson, L J Jones, T L Onslow and C Rogers.

**Decision:**

- 1.1 Council APPROVED the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020-2023;**
- 1.1.2 APPROVED the revised Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council’s Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2020-2023 as shown in the table in paragraph 3.9 including:**
- a. Approval of the Community Leadership Fund for 2020-2021 of £33k;**
  - b. 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 the December Cabinet report of £135k in 2020-2021, £245k in 2021-2022, £350k in 2022-2023, £525k in 2023-2024 and £700k in 2024-2025. 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 of the December Cabinet report. To also approve the top-up of the single Localism Fund by a further £30k in 2020-21 to continue the good work done so far with Parish and Town Councils and other organisations.**
  - c. 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 of the December report, proposed to be funded by prudential borrowing. The associated revenue costs are £4k in 2020-2021, £63k in 2021-2022 and £126k in 2022-2023;**
  - d. Approval of the removal of funding for Kidderminster Town Centre, Bewdley Development Trust and Stourport Forward saving a total of £30,520 in 2020-2021 onwards;**
  - e. 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 of the December Cabinet report. 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**

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ongoing net revenue implications are £24,510 in 2020-2021, £23,010 in 2021-2022 and £23,010 in 2022-2023;

f. Approval to undertake health and safety capital works to the whole of the Depot Block E so it is fully operationally functional to meet business need. This includes extra provision of work/meeting space to provide future proofing/additional flexibility with no parts of the building mothballed. Funding of £85,000 in 2020-2021 from prudential borrowing with revenue financing costs £1,830 in 2020-2021, £7,910 in 2021-2022 and £7,910 in 2022-2023; no additional income from external use is assumed although opportunities may arise to achieve this in the future.

g. 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.

h. Approval of an additional capital allocation of £1.5m for Capital Portfolio Fund property acquisitions funded by prudential borrowing. This is to provide headroom to cover a potential shortfall for further purchases within the district, that are currently in the early stages of consideration for which early viability indications are favourable. This proposal is assumed to be revenue neutral at this early stage, progression will be dependent on the ongoing due diligence and reports to Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet Sub Committees in accordance with normal protocols when the financial business cases will be confirmed.

1.1.3 **APPROVED** the fees and charges in line with this Strategy and in line with the recommendations of the Licensing and Environmental Committee of 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019, and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2020-2023, as shown in Appendix 3;

1.1.4 **APPROVED** the Council's updated Capital Strategy including the following Indicators and limits that have been further revised for the February 2020 Council Meeting following any changes to the Capital Programme brought about as a result of the budget process:

a) Approval of the Capital Strategy 2020-2030 including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 2 of the December Cabinet report now updated for Cabinet

Proposals as set out in Appendix 2/2 of the 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 2019 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 now updated for Cabinet Proposals as set out in Appendix 2/2 of the report;

d) Approval of the limits for loan investments as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the 17th December 2019 report.

1.1.5 **APPROVED** that any Final Accounts savings arising from 2019-2023 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 Cabinet Member for Strategy and Finance;

1.1.6 The General Fund Revenue Budget be **APPROVED** including all updates from the position in December 2019 as set out in the report.

1.2 **COUNCIL TAX**

1.2.1 Council **SET** the Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property at £219.34 for 2020-2021 (£214.34 2019-2020) which represents an increase of 2.33% on Council Tax from 2019-2020.

1.2.2 **ENDORSED** the provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2021-2022 of £224.34 and £229.34 in 2022-2023, being increases of 2.28% and 2.23% respectively.

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

#### **C.75 Council Tax Setting 2020-2021**

Council considered the formal resolution for setting the Council Tax for

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2020-2021. This includes the 2.33% increase in the District Council's element of Council Tax, as recommended by Cabinet on 11th February 2020, and the precepts and council tax increases in the elements of Council Tax set by the following bodies: Worcestershire County Council (+3.99%); The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia (+3.94%), and, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority (+1.96%).

The Leader of the Council formally moved the recommendations for approval. The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments seconded the proposals. She acknowledged the Town and Parish Councils that had made substantial increases to their precepts in order to take on services under the Localism agenda.

A named vote on the Council Tax resolution was recorded as follows and was agreed:

For (31)

Councillors: J Aston, G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, J F Byng, V Caulfield, S J Chambers, A Coleman, B S Dawes, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, N Gale, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, K Henderson, L J Jones, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, M Rayner, C Rogers, S E N Rook, D R Sheppard, J W R Thomas, A Totty, L Whitehouse and P W M Young

Abstained (1)

Councillor: R H Coleman.

**Decision: The formal Council Tax Resolution 2020-21 at Appendix 1 of the report, taking into account information contained in Appendices 2 to 5 be approved.**

The Chairman announced that this was the last Council meeting for the Corporate Director: Community Well-being & Environment, Linda Draycott. He thanked Linda for supporting Members in their roles and for her service and contribution to the authority and he wished her well for the future.

Councillor Oborski said that Linda had done a fantastic job for the Council. She had always remained cheerful even when things have looked grim and Members were really grateful to Linda for her hard work. She said that Linda would be missed but was sure that she would have a really exciting future.

Councillor H Dyke said that it was her second time on Cabinet and both times she had been lucky enough to have Linda as her Head of Service. She said Linda had been amazing; she always smiles and remains happy when dealing with Councillors, she can make you feel like your suggestions are brilliant, then she can tactfully tell you if its not! She said that Linda was one of the nicest people she had met and will miss her dearly. She thanked Linda for everything she had done.

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Councillor Onslow said that she and Linda had arrived at the Council at the same time and they had a bit of a 'bonkers' history together. She said that she would miss Linda and thanked her for everything she had done for the District. She said Linda was the Officer that had instigated the Leisure Centre project and had helped her succeed in delivering an outstanding facility.

Councillor Hart said that he was on the interview panel when Linda was unanimously appointed to the post of Head of Community and Partnership Services (CAPS). He said that Linda had given sterling service firstly as Head of CAPS and latterly as a Director. On behalf of the Conservative Group he wished her all the very best for the future and thanked her immensely for all she had done for the Council and its residents.

Councillor Desmond said that he too was on the interview panel that appointed Linda. He said that she was head and shoulders above anybody else and we haven't looked back since. He said Linda has been a first class Officer and Director. She has a positive can-do attitude and has been a breath of fresh air in Local Government. She has given tremendous service to the authority and has overseen the creation of a thriving Leisure Centre facility, the Green Street Depot project and the transformation agenda. Whatever she has been linked to she has taken it on board and wholeheartedly delivered. He thanked her for her incredible contribution and said she can certainly leave the authority with her head held extremely high.

Councillor Ballinger spoke on behalf of the ICHC Group. He said that he can remember Linda coming to the authority from Birmingham City Council, and it was like a breath of fresh air. He said that her enthusiasm had been infectious; particularly with the staff group that she has led at the Depot. The frontline staff had a great deal to deal with and it is always with good spirit. Everybody will miss Linda and she will not be short of a reference.

Linda extended thanks to Members. She said that she felt humbled by their heartfelt and kind words. She said that she will miss everybody in the Chamber and in the staff teams. She wished everybody well for the future because it will be a huge challenge, and was sure that the staff would respond and provide the service Council and its residents need.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.08pm.