

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
HELD REMOTELY
7TH JULY 2020 (6 PM)**

Present:

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

Observers:

Councillors: J F Byng, V Caulfield, R H Coleman, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, M J Hart and C Rogers.

CAB.11 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.12 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.13 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20th May 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.14 Call Ins

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

CAB.15 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.16 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

Councillor C Rogers joined the meeting at this point, (6.04pm).

CAB.17 COVID-19 Recovery Framework

A report was considered from the Chief Executive to adopt the framework for recovery from COVID-19 in respect of the Council and its services.

The Leader of the Council invited the Chief Executive to present the report.

The Chief Executive explained that the report dealt with recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and raised a number of significant issues. He outlined the key points from the report and said that a lot of the recovery of individual services had now happened, however there were still a few facilities which the Council had not fully opened, such as the splash pad in Brinton Park which remained shut in accordance with Government legislation. He added that the report touched on economic recovery which was an ongoing piece of work with organisations across Worcestershire which involved all of the Council's, the Local Enterprise Partnership, Chamber of Commerce and others.

The Chief Executive further explained that the most significant issues in the report related to the Council as an organisation, and they focused on the recommendations in terms of arrangements for future working by staff. He said a very significant proportion of office based staff had been moved onto home working, and it raised the issue of the extent to which the Council embed that as the new operating model; it was not about retaining things precisely as they are. He added that the report explained about maximising home working at the optimum level, however clearly there were some functions and activities that will always have to be done in a building and cannot be done at home, for example some aspects of running an election; you would not be able to have postal vote opening done at someone's house, that clearly would have to be done at a suitable alternative location. He said the recommendation to Council was to commence a process of consultation with staff and trade unions about embedding some of this change to working models.

The Leader of the Council formally moved the recommendations for approval. The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments said that it was important that we recognised that as we emerge from COVID-19, not only will there be a new normal, there is also a massive opportunity in terms of the Council's green agenda by looking at minimising travel wherever possible, which in turn minimises the amount of emissions we produce. She added that it was important that a proper consultation with staff and unions took place to find out how home working could be maximised at an optimum level without disadvantaging any individual members of staff. She also welcomed the consultation with members of the Council as some were more comfortable with using remote technology than others. To that end, she said she was happy to second the proposals and commend the report to Council.

Decision: Cabinet Decided to:

- 1.1 ADOPT the framework in Appendix 1 of the report;**
- 1.2 RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that it authorises the Head of Paid Service to initiate formal consultation with staff and unions with a view to maximising home working at the optimal level, in order to minimise the building space that the Council occupies (paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4), with a further report to Council no later than December 2020 to seek Council's approval of any changes to terms and conditions;**
- 1.3 CONTINUE to use remote meeting technology wherever possible**

for all informal meetings involving Cabinet members including Cabinet advisory panels and, if legislation is changed permanently to allow its formal meetings to be held remotely, to continue to use remote meeting technology for such meetings;

- 1.4 RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that a survey of Councillors should be undertaken about the impact of remote working on them, with a report and any recommendations being submitted to Council in September.**

Councillor I Hardiman joined the meeting at this point, (6.13pm).

CAB.18 Financial Stress Testing re Coronavirus Pandemic Impact

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources which provided a second briefing for members on the impact of the current Coronavirus Pandemic on the Council's financial performance for 2020-21 and beyond.

The Leader introduced the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He said the ongoing pandemic continues to place unprecedented stress on the Council's budget in the short term. The authority was seeing the reduction in or even complete failure of some of its income streams for at least part of the current financial year. Together with cost pressures in certain services and cash flow implications, this will mean the authority will have to take action to safeguard the Council's budget in the medium term.

He added that the Local Government Association, Societies of District and County Council Treasurers and District Councils' Network continued to lobby hard on the sector's behalf for additional funding. The announcement of further funding made on the 2nd July was very welcome, however what is clear is that this Council, together with the majority of Councils stills faced significant financial challenges. He said the total impact still remained uncertain as society and the economy were only in the early stages of recovery and it is likely to take many months for the "post-COVID" position on expenditure and income to emerge.

The Leader outlined the key points from the report. He explained that the Government had announced a raft of financial assistance initiatives to help the community, businesses and local authorities through the pandemic. He said the Council had been extremely efficient and speedy in distributing this help to businesses and council tax payers and thanked all the staff involved for doing this work so effectively.

The Leader invited the Corporate Director: Resources to present the report.

The Corporate Director: Resources explained that after the report was published the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced a Support Package for Local Authorities – COVID-19 and Beyond. She said all members had received a high level briefing with links to all the papers from the Chief Executive on the evening of the 2nd July, and she thanked the Chief Executive for all of his work undertaken with the District

Council's Network to lobby the Government which has contributed to the achievement of this new more comprehensive funding support.

The Corporate Director: Resources outlined the main points of what the new support included. She advised members that a further £500 million of funding to cover local authority spending pressures had been announced. She added that most of this money would almost certainly go to County Councils, however was hopeful that District Councils would receive something. She further explained that also included was a co-payment mechanism for irrecoverable Sales, Fees and Charges income, with the Government covering 75% of losses beyond 5% of planned income. She said this was very welcome, however more detail was awaited and it may not cover all areas of income.

The Corporate Director: Resources further explained that the announcement was now allowing the authority to defer the impact of council tax and business rate losses by phasing them over 3 years. She said the authority was seeing significant reductions in council tax and business rate payments despite the relief and hardship fund payments. She said the situation was very worrying and the authority was expecting an increase in people claiming council tax reduction support when the Government's furlough scheme comes to an end. She said the new arrangement does not compensate the authority for this lost income, however it does allow for it to be spread over 3 years.

In conclusion she said that whilst overall the funding shortfall would reduce from previous forecasts given, more detail was needed to allow accurate estimates to be made of what will inevitably still be a funding shortfall, which would result in a significant additional use of reserves and the need to accelerate savings plans. She assured members that she would continue to work with her team and officers across the Council on the forecasts, to refine and improve them as more information emerges.

On behalf of the Cabinet, the Leader thanked the Corporate Director: Resources, and her hard working team for the incredible job they were doing.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments seconded the proposals and said that members were being incredibly well served by officers and welcomed the briefings which were provided following statements from Central Government.

Decision: Cabinet Decided:

- 1.1 That the projected budgetary impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic outlined in the report and related actions both taken so far and planned for the future be noted.**

Cabinet Approved:

- 1.2 That Delegated Authority to the end of September 2020 is granted to the Corporate Director: Resources, in consultation with the Corporate Leadership Team and the Cabinet Member for Strategy and Finance to use General Reserves to replace reduced income and increased expenditure that is not covered by government**

funding.

- 1.3 That Delegated Authority is granted to the Corporate Director Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategy and Finance to make in-year transfers from General Reserves to the General Risk and Innovation Fund Earmarked Reserves.**

Councillor V Caulfield left the meeting at this point, (6.26pm)

CAB.19 Review of Public Space Protection Orders and Results of the Consultation Process

A report was considered from the Chief Executive which outlined the results from the consultation process regarding the dog control Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and the restriction of alcohol consumption in Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn PSPOs, and outlined the implementation process if the PSPOs are agreed.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

It was noted that the map shown in Appendix 4 for restricting consumption of alcohol in Bewdley was confirmed as incorrect, and that the PSPO would cover the same area as the existing order. It would therefore cover the whole of the Riverside Meadows park, including Northwood Lane area on the Wribbenhall side of the river.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection explained that following a review of the district wide dog control PSPO and PSPOs restricting alcohol consumption in Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn, a formal consultation process for each PSPO commenced on 19th May and ran until 15th June 2020. She added that a range of stakeholders were consulted and a questionnaire was made available on the Council's website, along with a press release and numerous media messages to make residents aware that the consultation was taking place.

She added that whilst the majority of dog owners were very responsible people, the results of the consultation showed that some residents had concerns about dog fouling and other related issues; the PSPOs was an important tool to be able to deal with these concerns.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection thanked everyone that took part in the consultation, and also members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for thoroughly debating the subject. She confirmed that the position of professional dog walkers would be looked at under the 6 month review of the PSPOs.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart, said that the Committee had given the item full deliberation and consideration and supported the Cabinet proposals.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and

Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2nd July 2020, Cabinet decided that:

- 1.1 A Public Space Protection Order regarding dog controls, within the specified area, outlined in Appendix 4 of the report, is implemented.**
- 1.2 A Public Space Protection Order to restrict the consumption of alcohol within the specified area of Bewdley, based on the same area as the existing order, is implemented.**
- 1.3 A Public Space Protection Order to restrict the consumption of alcohol within the specified area of Stourport-on-Severn, outlined in Appendix 4, is implemented.**
- 1.4 The Public Space Protection Orders are reviewed 6 months after their implementation.**
- 1.5 Council Officers and Partners to give due consideration and implement appropriate actions regarding issues that have been raised through the consultation but are not suitable for inclusion in a PSPO.**

CAB.20 Community Led Housing Policy

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which shared the progress on Community Led Housing (CLH) and sought approval for the updated CLH policy.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Wellbeing and Democratic Services presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

She explained that the CLH policy and pledge was approved by Cabinet in February 2018. Since that time a vast amount of work had been done within the district and nationally which meant that it was necessary to update the CLH.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Wellbeing and Democratic Services outlined the work that had been completed or was underway, and explained the key changes to the CLH policy. She confirmed that to date no houses had been built, however the CLH Co-ordinator was regularly working with the Wyre Forest Community Land Trust to identify a number of possible development opportunities across the Wyre Forest.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments seconded the proposals. She said that she was looking forward to some exciting schemes coming forward for the local community.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee acknowledged how difficult it was to get the Community Led projects off the ground. He thanked the Cabinet Member for allowing the Committee to consider the report in

advance of Cabinet and said the Committee fully supported the recommendations.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2nd July 2020;

Cabinet decided that:

- 1.1 The Community Led Housing Policy is approved.**
- 1.2 Delegated authority be given to Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Wellbeing and Democratic Services to agree future changes to the Community Led Housing Policy.**

CAB.21 Property Flood Grants – Amendment to Capital Programme

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which outlined the process for the Government funded Property Flood Grants to be distributed to affected residents and businesses.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Wellbeing and Democratic Services presented the report and formally moved the recommendation for approval.

She said that unfortunately Wyre Forest District suffered from the effects of flooding in February 2020, particularly in Bewdley. The Property Flood Grant funding from DEFRA was greatly received and an amendment to the capital programme was required to distribute the grants.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Wellbeing and Democratic Services thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the extensive meetings they were having regarding the flooding. She added that it was important that local residents and businesses knew that the authority was taking this issue very seriously.

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

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee said that the funding from DEFRA was very much welcomed, and the Committee fully supported the Cabinet proposal to Council.

On behalf of the Cabinet, the Leader thanked the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their current scrutiny exercise into the February 2020 flooding. He said they were doing a phenomenal amount of work and was impressed by the expert witnesses they had called to date.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2nd July 2020;

Cabinet RECOMMENDED to Council that:

- 1.1 **there is an amendment to the Capital Programme to include expenditure of £650,000 to provide Property Flood Grants fully matched by DEFRA funding, noting that the exact level of expenditure will be dependent of the number of eligible applicants received.**

Councillors P Dyke and I Hardiman left the meeting this point (6.55pm).

CAB.22 Bromsgrove Street Car Park Developer Agreement

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place to agree a proposed Agreement with the Council's former Glades Leisure Centre site development partner, Cordwell, in respect of the public car park at Bromsgrove Street and its usage in relation to the proposed cinema led leisure scheme planned for the former leisure centre site.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. She explained that the Coronavirus pandemic had hampered the finalisation of the development work, however it was ongoing and it had become clear that the cinema developer would need a car park to be maintained on the Bromsgrove Street car park site.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments outlined the principles of the draft agreement. She said the proposal was a good deal for both the Council and for the people of Wyre Forest. She added that as the county came out of lockdown, she was hopeful that the cinema developers would be able to come forward with their planning application for the development of the site.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee said the proposal was fully supported by the Committee. He said it was entirely legitimate for the cinema operator to want visitors to be able to park as close to the venue as possible and it was right and proper that the Council enter into a formal agreement with Peveril Securities Ltd.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 2nd July 2020;

Cabinet AGREED:

- 1.1 **To delegate to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place in consultation with the Council's Solicitor and the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning & Capital Investments authority to finalise and sign the proposed Agreement.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.02pm.