

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
HELD REMOTELY
23RD MARCH 2021 (6PM)

Present:

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

Observers:

Councillors: J F Byng, A Coleman, R H Coleman, N J Desmond, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, M J Hart, F M Oborski MBE, C Rogers, L Whitehouse and P W M Young.

CAB.61 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.62 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.63 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9th February 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.64 Call Ins

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

CAB.65 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.66 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

C Edginton-White joined the meeting at 6.04pm.

CAB.67 Budget Monitoring Third Quarter 2020-21

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Resources on the Council's financial performance for Quarters 1 to 3 ending 31st December 2020 and presented the current projected outturn position for the 2020-21 financial year for both revenue and capital expenditure.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. She said the report builds on the May, July and September 2020 Cabinet Reports on Budgetary Control including Financial Stress Testing regarding the Coronavirus Pandemic, and reports against the revised estimate approved by Council on 1st March.

She said it was good news that the revenue £175k underspend against the revised budget would make a modest contribution towards closing the funding gap. The Capital forecast spend, excluding the Capital Portfolio Fund and Development Loans fund, was £6.91m against a programme of £7.3m. She further explained that the outturn projections would undoubtedly change at final accounts, as is always the case. However this year in particular was very difficult to predict due to the on-going impact of COVID.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio outlined the key points from the report. She explained that due to the third unexpected lockdown there was potential for an overspend on the cashflow support (supplier relief) being provided to the leisure centre operators by the Council. She added that estimates were being finalised and it was too early to report with any certainty but it could be in the region of £100k. However this can be offset in part by the external funding support secured from Sport England's National Leisure Recovery that has now been confirmed as £213k. She added that the support the Council has been paying to the contractor is in line with other local authorities.

She added that the progress against Wyre Forest Forward savings targets presented at paragraph 6.5, now includes the Cabinet proposal agreed at March Council and an analysis of the savings achieved to date is presented at Appendix 4 of the report, and the Localism Partnership savings target is presented in the table at paragraph 6.6.

In conclusion, she said that the current forecast for the outturn position for 2020-21 was a welcome saving of £175k compared to the revised budget. She said the final position would undoubtedly be different as there are many variables including decisions made on provisions and reserves at year end.

Councillor L Whitehouse left the meeting at 6.26pm.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Localism seconded the proposals.

Decision: The Cabinet DECIDED that the projected budget variations and comments outlined within the report and appendices 2 to 6 be noted.

CAB.68 Review of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)

A report was considered from the Community Services Manager to invite members to consider whether the Council should make any changes to Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) following the review after a 6-month period of implementation and results of the consultation process.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Localism presented the report. She explained that at its meeting on 7th July 2020, Cabinet agreed with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on this issue with included a request that there would be a 6-month review of the 3 implemented PSPOs. With the recommended review in mind a consultation regarding all 3 PSPOs was launched on 6th of January and ran for four weeks ending on the 3rd February 2021. She added that the consultation gave residents the opportunity to have their say on rules to tackle dog fouling and the new measure which limited the people to walking a maximum of 3 dogs at any one time.

She further explained that the 2 separate surveys ran along at the same time inviting people to comment on the street drinking restrictions in Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn town centres. A total of 287 responses were received with relating to the alcohol restrictions for Stourport-on Severn and Bewdley; and the responses showed a clear majority in support of the restrictions continuing, in fact as part of their responses residents used the opportunity to report alcohol-fuelled incidents they had personally experienced.

Before formally moving the recommendations for approval, the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Localism took the opportunity to speak on several comments that had been made throughout the process.

She advised that it had been said that the Council had been undemocratic on this issue. She said she refuted this in the strongest terms. The recommendations that came to Cabinet in July had considered the results of an open consultation process. At that time, a 6-month review from the date of implementation of the 3 PSPOs was promised and had taken place. As part of the 6-month review a further public consultation had taken place and formed part of the report that went to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March and here this evening. She added that the Council had also encouraged and enabled public speaking on the matter, and lastly the recommendation before Cabinet this evening reflects the wish and recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Therefore, she was at a loss to see how that had been an undemocratic process.

She added that there has also been much mention of a petition of around 2500 signatures on this matter. What has been omitted was that this was a global Facebook petition containing signatures from all over the world including America, South Africa and India and by no means just signatures from Wyre Forest where the PSPOs were implemented.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services seconded the proposals. She said she had received many supportive emails from dog walkers regarding this issue, as unfortunately they could see it being played out on social media; and thanked them for their support.

She added that whilst the Kennel Club were in favour of 6 dogs, the RSPCA, the Dogs Trust and Industry Federation does not. She said this clearly shows the Council are democratic; a neighbouring authority had just ruled on 4 dogs,

therefore she hoped that the district did not see an influx of walkers with multiple dogs from other areas.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart, said the Committee had also been very democratic when the report was discussed at the meeting; all 11 members of the Committee spoke on the item in respect of dogs. He said the majority agreed that it was sensible to increase the limit in line with the recommendations from the Kennel Club's national position. He said in his opinion it was a sensible executive decision that the Cabinet were taking in response to this important change and was supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member. He said it was her resolute nature that had got us over the line, and it was much appreciated. He said the online abuse she had experienced was inexcusable.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 4th March 2021, the Cabinet;

- 1.1 NOTED that there is support for the alcohol orders in Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn as set out in the consultation responses in Appendices 2 and 3 and that no changes are required;**
- 1.2 AMENDED the Dog Control PSPO to substitute 6 for 3 in the limit of dogs that one person may have under his or her control, in line with the consultation response and comments of the Kennel Club and other relevant dog walking organisations as evidenced in Appendices 1 and 4.**

CAB.69 Green Homes Grant – Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 2

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place to recommend amending the Capital Programme to enable the distribution of the Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 2.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. She explained that the second tranche of funding would allow the authority to invite people to apply for funding to make their properties more energy efficient. She added that the funding was also available for social housing properties.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services seconded the proposals.

Decision: Subject to Council agreeing the Cabinet's recommendation in paragraph 2.1(e) of the Capital Strategy (22 December 2020), the Cabinet agreed that:

There is an amendment to the Capital Programme to include expenditure of £525,000 to provide Green Homes Grants Phase 2 fully matched by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) funding.

Agenda Item No. 3

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 6.55pm.

The full meeting is available for viewing on the Council's website
<https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/53298>