

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET
HELD REMOTELY
6 JULY 2021 (6PM)**

Present:

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

Observers:

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

CAB.12 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.13 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.14 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.15 Call Ins

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

CAB.16 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.17 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

CAB.18 Localism – Asset Transfers

A report was considered from the Chief Executive to agree various asset transfers as part of the localism agenda.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. She explained that in November 2020 the

Cabinet had agreed key steps towards establishing Bewdley Museum as an independent trust. She was pleased to report that good progress was being made which included identifying trustees to serve the trust and progress the project plan. She added that the aim was for the trust to be fully operational by January 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety seconded the proposals.

Decision:

- 1.1 The Cabinet agreed that, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of the matters delegated under paragraph 1.3, the transfer of the following land and buildings for a consideration of £1 for each site in accordance with the Council’s power under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of land at less than best value:**

| Description of land and buildings | Freehold to be transferred to |
|---|---|
| The Guildhall (WR106170), 12 Load Street; Bewdley Museum (WR106170), 12 Load Street: and Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Gardens (WR108752), High Street, all in Bewdley | Bewdley Town Council Subject to a lease to the proposed Bewdley Museum Trust (see paragraph 1.2) |

- 1.2 The Cabinet agreed that the transfer to Bewdley Town Council will be subject to the completion of a lease with the proposed Bewdley Museum Trust in respect of the land and buildings in Bewdley mentioned in paragraph 1.1. The terms of the lease shall be a full repairing lease for a period of not less than 99 years, to run from the date of the transfer of the freehold to Bewdley Town Council, with an annual rental (payable to Bewdley Town Council) of not more than £1 a year and otherwise on such terms as the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Solicitor to Council may decide;**

- 1.3 The Cabinet give delegated authority to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, in consultation with the Leader, to advertise the intention to dispose of such areas of the land referred to in paragraph 1.1 as constitutes public open space and to consider any objections made as a result of the advertisement and to take the final decision on disposal in the event of objections having been received.**

CAB.19 Flood Mitigation Scheme – Externally Funded

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth to recommend amending the Capital Programme to include the external funding to be received from the national flood schemes funding for 3 flood mitigation schemes in Areley Kings in the Wyre Forest District, Plack Brook in the Redditch Borough and property level resilience measures in Bromsgrove and

Redditch.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services presented the report and formally moved the recommendation for approval. She explained that the North Worcestershire Water Management (NWWM) service had applied for the funding on behalf of the local authorities in North Worcestershire. The schemes include partnership working with Severn Trent Water, Worcestershire County Council Highways and the Environment Agency (EA).

She further explained that approximately 29 properties in the Wyre Forest district will have flood risk reduced, 7 of which will have a significant reduction. She added that the 3 local authorities had a successful long-standing shared service and experience of managing projects of this nature. Members were advised that the EA will be giving out the funding and will monitor the delivery of the schemes.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety seconded the proposal.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart, presented the recommendations from the Committee which fully supported the Cabinet proposal.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 1 July 2021:

Cabinet APPROVED that there is an amendment to the Capital Programme of £115k for flood mitigation schemes funded from an external grant.

CAB.20 Recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 1st July 2021

- **Climate Change Action Plan**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations which sought approval for the Wyre Forest Climate Change Action Plan 2021-22.

Decision: Cabinet APPROVED the Wyre Forest Climate Change Action Plan 2021-22, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

CAB.21 Write-off of Amounts Outstanding Report

A report was received from the Corporate Director: Resources to enable the Cabinet to consider writing off the sum of £91,057.94 in respect of debts that cannot be collected.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and formally moved the recommendation for approval.

She explained that as billing authority the Council was responsible for the collection of Business Rates (National Non-Domestic Rates or NNDR) c£30m pa and for the recovery of any related debt in the event of non-payment. She added that the Council had several property tenants whose trading had been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, most notably those in the hospitality and beverage industry some of whom are in arrears. She further explained that the Council's property managing agents, BNP Paribas, were liaising with all of the businesses in an attempt to agree terms to ensure that as much of the arrears as possible is settled as quickly as possible. She said the business referred to in the exempt appendix to the report was the first tenant to have settled their arrears, the others are currently in negotiation.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio added that every effort had been made to pursue the debts proposed for write-off following the policies and procedures of the Council. She assured members that even after write-off debts continued to be monitored and would be pursued if circumstances change.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety seconded the proposal.

Decision: The Cabinet DECIDED that the total of £81,057.94 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be written off, for National Non-Domestic Rates and £10,000 for Property debts as detailed in Exempt Appendix 2.

CAB.22 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision: "Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "exempt information" as defined in paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CAB.23 Write-off of Amounts Outstanding Report - EXEMPT Appendix 2 – Proposed Property Debt Write-off

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the confidential appendix and gave a summary of the reason for the proposed write-off.

Having received additional information, the Cabinet re-affirmed their decision made in the open session.

CAB.24 Unity Park (Former Frenco Site) – Erection of Industrial Units – Amendment to Capital Programme

A report was considered from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place on the current position regarding the finalisation of the construction of the industrial units at the Unity Park site, off Silverwoods Way and to agree to recommend to Council that the Capital Programme is amended to enable the completion of the works.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services presented the confidential report and outlined the key issues. He said that the completion of the project would enable revenue income streams to be realised as there was a market demand for the industrial units.

In addition to the recommendation to amend the Capital Programme, the Cabinet Member for Operational Services moved a proposal to commission a review of the project by the Internal Audit Manager.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety seconded the proposals.

Decision: The Cabinet RECOMMEND to Council:

- 1.1 That the Capital Programme provision for Industrial Units on the Unity Park Site is increased by the amount shown in the confidential report, funded from the Capital Portfolio Fund and from the Evergreen Investment Fund to provide a revised overall Capital budget. This will enable the completion of the six industrial units on the Unity Park site.**
- 1.2 Cabinet DECIDED to commission a review of the project by the internal audit manager, the scope and timing of the review to be agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Audit Committee and the Leader of the Council; and RECOMMENDS to Council to note that this review will be undertaken.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.38pm

The full open meeting is available for viewing on the Council's website <https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees-and-meetings/council-meetings/>