

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,  
KIDDERMINSTER

23 FEBRUARY 2022 (6PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: J Aston (Chairman), P Dyke (Vice-Chairman), 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, C Edginton-White, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart, K Henderson, L J Jones, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, S E N Rook, D Ross, D R Sheppard, J W R Thomas, A Totty, L Whitehouse and P W M Young.

**C.69 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Rev. Sue Levitt, Stourport Wesley Methodist Church.

Councillor A Totty joined the meeting at 6.01pm.

**C.70 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**C.71 Declarations of Interests by Members**

As recorded later in the minutes, Councillor T Onslow declared in respect of agenda item nine, Council Tax Setting 2022-2023, that she was the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia.

**C.72 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

Councillor T Onslow joined the meeting at 6.03pm.

Councillor C Edginton-White joined the meeting at 6.04pm.

**C.73 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**C.74 Chairman's Communications**

The Council received a list of functions attended by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman since the Council's last meeting. The Chairman announced that his Charity Dinner event in December had gone very well and thanked Councillor A Coleman for her help in making it a successful

evening.

**C.75 Leader of the Council Announcements**

The Leader of the Council referred members to her tabled report.

**C.76 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2025**

A report was considered from the Head of Resources which sought approval of the Council's budget for 2022-2025 having considered the proposed decision and budget reports recommended to council by cabinet on 8 February 2022.

The report also sought approval of the Capital Strategy for 2022-2032 including prudential indicators which set limits for non-financial investments and to fulfil the key requirements of the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Investment Guidance.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. She said that the report presented the budget proposals to balance the books and included recommendations for both the Revenue budget and the Capital Strategy. She said achieving financial sustainability continued to be the Council's most significant challenge, which was exacerbated by the sharp rise in inflation, currently running at 5.4% and the pressure that it puts on pay and energy budgets. She added that inflation was expected to go up to over 7% after April.

The Cabinet Member advised that the final settlement had been debated in parliament. There were no significant changes from the provisional settlement which provided additional one-off funding for 2022-23 of £685k, and no additional flexibility to allow districts to approve slightly higher council tax increases without a referendum.

She added that the proposals set out in the budget could be balanced in light of the additional strains on council finances and had been shaped by public opinion. She said the views of 789 residents who completed the council's annual budget consultation had been taken into account. She explained that, rather than focussing on cutting services, the report continued with the significant programme of work to consider options for how the council might deliver services differently in future to save costs and protect front line services. She added that this could include joining forces to deliver services in partnership with other local authorities and organisations or reshaping how the authority delivered services itself.

The Cabinet Member outlined the two cabinet proposals for reductions in discretionary services. She said that having carefully considered the alternative budget proposals the Cabinet were sympathetic to providing funding for community groups to mark the unique Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen. She advised that £5,000 had been allocated from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund for Jubilee events organised by community groups for activities that meet the purposes of the grant.

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She added that the cabinet also concur with the proposal to progress the development of the solar farm business case and this would be funded from the existing Evergreen fund.

In conclusion, she said that closing the funding gap to balance our expenditure with our income continued to be a significant challenge. At present the authority had reduced the gap from over £2m to a projected £1.68m in 2024-25.

She said the Final Settlement confirmed the assumed council tax rise of £5 can proceed. She assured councillors that the authority would continue to work hard to build on the impressive track record of the council to achieve savings required whilst protecting services as far as possible.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

On behalf of the Conservative Group Councillor N Desmond moved a suite of amendments as set out in appendix 5 of the report. He said that the proposals set out an alternative of a growing and ambitious budget that would improve services for the council's residents and communities. He thanked the previous and current S151 Officer for their dedication and advice in helping to shape the budget package.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor M Hart.

A discussion on the amendment ensued.

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

For (16)

Councillors: J Byng, S Chambers, B Dawes, N Desmond, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M Hart, K Henderson, L Jones, S Miah, F Oborski MBE, T Onslow, C Rogers, D Ross and A Totty.

Against (17)

Councillors: J Aston, G Ballinger, C Barnett, V Caulfield, A Coleman, R Coleman, H Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, A L'Huillier, N Martin, M Rayner, S Rook, D Sheppard, J Thomas, L Whitehouse and P Young.

Abstained (0)

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group Councillor Oborski MBE moved a suite of amendments as set out in appendix 5 of the report. She outlined the main parts of the proposals. She said the proposals were not just providing the basic services: they were looking at things to make people's lives more interesting. She said that the proposals had been fully costed and thanked the previous and current S151 Officer for their support.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor S Miah.

A discussion on the amendment ensued.

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

For (16)

Councillors: J Byng, S Chambers, B Dawes, N Desmond, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M Hart, K Henderson, L Jones, S Miah, F Oborski MBE, T Onslow, C Rogers, D Ross and A Totty.

Against (17)

Councillors: J Aston, G Ballinger, C Barnett, V Caulfield, A Coleman, R Coleman, H Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, A L'Huillier, N Martin, M Rayner, S Rook, D Sheppard, J Thomas, L Whitehouse and P Young.

Abstained (0)

Councillor N Martin left the meeting at this point, (7.34pm) and returned at 7.37pm.

Councillor A Totty left the meeting at 7.37pm and return at 7.39pm.

A robust debate on the substantive proposals took place. A number of councillors spoke against the proposals as they felt they were not ambitious or lacked vision.

Councillor P Young left the meeting at 7.51pm and returned at 7.55pm.

The Leader addressed several of the issues raised during the debate. She said that the administration was concerned about the deficit and were mindful of the need for it to be reduced. She added that the budget proposals had been worked within the boundaries of the finance that was available and urged council to support the proposals.

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

For (17)

Councillors: J Aston, G Ballinger, C Barnett, V Caulfield, A Coleman, R Coleman, H Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, A L'Huillier, N Martin, M Rayner, S Rook, D Sheppard, J Thomas, L Whitehouse and P Young.

Against (16)

Councillors: J Byng, S Chambers, B Dawes, N Desmond, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M Hart, K Henderson, L Jones, S Miah, F Oborski MBE, T Onslow, C Rogers, D Ross and A Totty.

Abstained (0)

**Decision: Council;**

- 1.1 THREE YEAR BUDGET, CAPITAL STRATEGY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2022-2025**
- 1.1.1 APPROVED the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022-2025.**
- 1.1.2 APPROVED the Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council’s Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2022-2025 as shown in the tables in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 and as set out below:**
- a) Approval to close the small business grants scheme currently administered by North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration after March 2022. This would save £35k each year from 2022-23 onwards which will be utilised to fund additional resource in the NWEDR team to assist with delivery of the externally funded projects for the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) and the Levelling up Fund (LUF).**
  - b) Approval to end discretionary support of sport and leisure facilities from April 2023 namely, phasing out involvement in Bewdley Leisure Centre and Stourport Sports Club. This would save £38k each year from 2023-24 onwards.**
- 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 6th December 2021, and the impact on the Council’s Revenue Budget for 2022-2025, as shown in Appendix 3.**
- 1.1.4 APPROVED the Council’s updated Capital Strategy:**
- a) Approval of the Capital Strategy 2022-2032 set out in Appendix 2 of the February 2022 Cabinet report including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 2 of the December 2021 Cabinet report.**
  - b) Approval of the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendices 1A and 1B, of the Capital Strategy report to December 2021 Cabinet.**
  - c) Approval of the limits for gross debt for 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.**
- 1.1.5 APPROVED that any Final Accounts savings arising from 2021-2022, together with surplus Earmarked Reserves, be allocated by the Head of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio.**

- 1.1.6 **APPROVED** the General Fund Revenue Budget including all updates from the position in December 2021 as set out in the report.
- 1.2 **COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES**
- 1.2.1 **The Council Tax increase is confirmed as £5 p.a. and that Council;**
- a. **SET** the Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property at £229.34 for 2022-2023 (£224.34 2021-2022) which represents an increase of 2.23% on Council Tax from 2021-2022.
- b. **ENDORSED** the provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2023-2024 of £234.34 and £239.34 in 2024-2025, being increases of 2.18% and 2.13% respectively.
- 1.2.3 **NOTED** the Head of 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.77 Council Tax Setting 2022-2023**

Councillor T Onslow made her declaration at this point (8.13pm).

Council considered the formal resolution for setting the Council Tax for 2022-2023. This included the 2.23% increase in the District Council's element of Council Tax, as recommended by Cabinet on 8 February 2022, and the precepts and council tax increases in the elements of council tax set by the following bodies: Worcestershire County Council; The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia; and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Leader formally moved the recommendations for approval. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio seconded the proposals.

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

For (33)

Councillors: J Aston, G Ballinger, C Barnett, J Byng, V Caulfield, S Chambers, A Coleman, R Coleman, B Dawes, N Desmond, H Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M Hart, K Henderson, L Jones, A L'Huillier, N Martin, S Miah, F Oborski MBE, T Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, S Rook, D Ross, D Sheppard, J Thomas, A Totty, L Whitehouse and P Young.

**Decision: Council approved the formal Council Tax Resolution 2022-23 at Appendix 1, taking into account information contained in Appendices 2 to 5.**

At 8.22pm the meeting was adjourned for a short comfort break and resumed at 8.34pm.

**C.78 Policy and Budget Framework**

**Recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 03-02-2022**

- **Treasury Management Strategy 2022-23**

The chairman of the committee, Councillor M Hart presented the recommendations and formally moved them for approval. The chairman of the Treasury Management Review Panel, Councillor S Miah seconded the proposals.

**Decision: Council;**

- 1.1 Approved the restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2022-23 to 2031-32 included in Appendix 3. These will be revised for the February 2022 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 Approved the updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5).**
- 1.3 Approved the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1.**
- 1.4 Approved the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3.**
- 1.5 Noted that the separate, but intrinsically linked, Capital Strategy 2022-32 to be approved separately by Council, sets out the policy statement covering non-treasury investments including the related suite of prudential indicators.**
- 1.6 Noted the implications of the revised Codes as detailed in section 3.1. the new Codes apply with immediate effect, in particular that an authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. Implementation of the new reporting requirements is deferred until the 2023 24 financial year.**

Councillor L Jones returned to the meeting at this point.

**C.79 Ethics regime in local government**

Council considered the response and further information provided by the Government following the Council's resolution of 8 December 2021 and the actions taken by Mark Garnier MP.

The chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee, Councillor A L'Huillier, said that the response was clearly seeking to reassure the authority that they were taking the matter seriously and that council could expect a proper response imminently. She said she felt it would be fair and just to allow them a little longer to respond to the recommendations, possibly until the end of April. She said that would allow adequate time to review the situation at the May meeting of council with a view to her seeking support to move a further motion if no action had been taken by that time.

**Decision: Council noted the responses and await the final Government response to the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The item to be added to the agenda for the May meeting.**

**C.80 Questions**

Eleven questions had been submitted by members of the council in accordance with standing orders.

**1. Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Leader of the Council**

Climate Emergency U.K. has assessed the Council Climate Action Plans of Councils in the top two tiers of Local Government according to 28 questions across 9 Sections based on the expert approved Checklist for Council Action Plans.

Is the Leader content with the performance of Wyre Forest D.C. on the resultant scorecard?

**Answer from the Leader**

This is very much a tick box exercise by Climate Emergency UK, and what I am not content with is that it has not correctly recorded the achievements of progress that have been made by Wyre Forest District Council.

**Supplementary question**

I understand that the average for UK councils is 47% and even with the adjustments that were made at the Green Panel, I think we now score 37%. Even with those improvements we compare badly with Malvern Hills District Council on 47%, Worcestershire County Council on 40%, Worcester City Council on 47% and Wychavon on 49%. We are better than Bromsgrove on 10% and Redditch with a stunning 0%. But in view of our supposed green credentials, could the Leader tell me what steps the administration is going to take to make sure that we are able to score at least the national average?



**Answer**

It was discussed at the Cabinet Advisory Panel last week which I observed. I am content that most of the information required to improve our scores is already on our website and that was debated at the Green Panel, it is just not in the right place, and in the correct format. Yes, the council needs to update that, and that was an action in the Green Panel meeting. I think it was decided at that meeting that the panel, working with officers, will begin looking at collating those existing results so they appear in the correct place on the website and looking at ways of achieving higher scores. I think one of the things debated at that meeting was working with parish councils for their involvement.

**2. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Leader of the Council**

Could the Leader of the Council please confirm that she values the process used in respect of the appraisal of the Chief Executive?

**Answer from the Leader**

I can.

**Supplementary question**

Would she agree with me that it was exceptionally coincidental that at 2.05pm on 14 February this year, I received a request for my availability for the Chief Executive's Appraisal Panel, scheduled for 7 April this year particularly given that was after the 12noon deadline when my question would have been public?

Secondly, would she comment if she values it so much, that when it was agreed on 13 April last year, there would be a half yearly review in October, and we are now nearly at the end of February, why the half yearly review has not taken place hitherto and when is it proposed to take place or is the half yearly review taking place in April?

**Answer**

I confirm that appraisals are important, and I am sure members will remember that in October we were still working through a very difficult time on the council, especially with being given all sorts of concerning comments about the omicron variant. Internally I admit the focus was not on the appraisal at the time it was on the medium-term financial strategy, the new management structure and all the other things that were hitting the council at that time. I feel there were more important issues to deal with than the mid-term review. The Chief Executive and I were already talking about it, but you did prompt us, so thank you.

**3. Question from Councillor Nathan Desmond to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio**

Could the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio comment on how she feels the budget process and Strategic Review Panel has worked this year?

**Answer from the Leader**

I will be taking that question as I am the Chair of that panel. I feel, and I

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think that our cabinet members do as well, that the budget process has worked well this year.

### **Supplementary question**

Would the Leader agree with me that this particular year the process has been more like a damp squib and achieved very little? Not only did the third meeting last a mere 7 minutes, but there was also no update from the cabinet or cabinet member on the budget. It is clear to me that despite the rich history, over the last 15 years or so, of consensus on the budget, certainly by the former Leaders Councillor Campion and Councillor Hart, where they were always looking to take on board alternative proposals, isn't it clear that this administration has no desire whatsoever to work with any particular party or take on any particular policy initiative however helpful it may be?

### **Answer**

I disagree with you. This particular year I organised extra meetings to meet with Group Leaders or representatives of the opposition groups, attended by myself and the Deputy Leader. Whether you believe me or not, I can honestly say that cabinet and myself considered all the alternative budgets in detail and we did not make any decision rashly. We did consider them, we just felt that we were unable to take them on board at this time.

### **4. Question from Councillor Tracey Onslow to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

When will work commence at Brinton Park in respect of our Heritage Lottery Fund Project further to the grant of £2.4m of funding in 2020?

### **Answer from the Leader**

I think this question was originally directed at me when it went to the council meeting when we didn't consider all the questions, and I have been involved in it, so I will take this question.

The work will commence soon after the procurement for the capital work has been completed and the contract awarded. It is on the cards and will be happening as soon as possible.

### **Supplementary question**

I am sure she has heard the rumours that HLF are pulling out. Would she therefore confirm that the leasing, risk assessment and ownership issues, which HLF had concerns about, have they now been resolved? Can she also confirm when HLF last confirmed their support for the project?

### **Answer**

At my last briefing there was no mention of HLF pulling out. We are nearing completion of some legal issues that we are dealing with, with particular groups within the park. I am happy to keep you informed, as with other ward councillors as we already work on other projects with Brinton Park, so as soon as I have more of an update I will be in touch.

### **5. Question from Councillor Ian Hardiman to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

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When can we expect all WFDC units on the Frengo site to be let by?

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

Progress with the units is going very well and the interest in the units is extremely high. Five units are already under offer, and there is a waiting list of many people interested in the remaining four units. I am sure you will agree that these units will go extremely quickly once they are completed.

### **Supplementary question**

I am not sure that you quite rightly answered the question. I am saying on the Frengo Site when will they be let by? Not if they are going to be let. Could you please clarify that? Are they going to be ready next week, next month, that was the question?

### **Answer**

The units should all be completed by the end of March and hopefully by then some of the units will have already been let and companies will be in those units and working from them.

### **6. Question from Councillor Chris Rogers to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Could the Cabinet Member please tell me the latest position of how much of Wyre Forest House is now rented out to external tenants.

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

Wyre Forest House has a square footage of 18,740, this is office space only and does not include meeting rooms and other non-lettable areas. 14,000 square feet or 75% is currently leased out, including the space under offer to Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership for the Betaden North project.

### **Supplementary question**

As the Chief Executive's and the Leader's offices no longer appear to be used, could they be rented out as well?

### **Answer**

We will look at all possibilities within the building. If the Chief Executive does not want his office, then we will let it out, but I am sure he has plenty of use for his office and it is well used.

### **7. Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Worcestershire County Council is to be congratulated on passing a motion recognising that we face a Biodiversity Emergency. That Motion stated:

“Council welcomes the focus of the new Environment Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) which updates and strengthens the existing Biodiversity Duty on Public Bodies ( including local authorities) contained in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 ( NERC Act)”

Will the Cabinet Member agree with me that, although the primary

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responsibility will lie with the County Council, it would be appropriate to request the Green Panel, in compliance with and subject to, the requirements of the Act, to work with partners including WCC towards producing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy which would build on the emerging Local Plan and set out the priorities for protection and enhancement of biodiversity within the district, to include key habitats and geographical locations of focus?

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

I have spoken to Councillor Vicky Caulfield, who is the current Chair of the Green Panel and unfortunately, she feels at the moment our top ten priorities need to remain within the top ten. However, I spoke to Paul Allen our Countryside and Technical Services Manager, and he is very keen to work with the county council with regards to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. He feels it is a very powerful document. However, we as a district need a strong steer within this document because we have some areas of interest. We are as a district taking this seriously.

### **Supplementary question**

Could we ask for a report back from the officer of the progress being made and what he suggests we do?

### **Answer**

I can certainly ask him.

### **8. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio**

Could the Cabinet Member comment on how she feels she has taken on board the views of all members as part of this year's budget?

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio**

We did take on board all the comments made by the opposition and there are some that have been incorporated within our budget. It was democratically done; all leaders of the opposition groups were invited to meet with the Leader and Deputy Leader to discuss the proposals for their budgets.

### **Supplementary question**

Clearly something has gone wrong in this process because opposition groups were not invited to negotiate, opposition groups were invited to meet the Leader and Deputy Leader to answer questions on our proposals. Does she agree with me that it is most regrettable that not one miniscule slither of an opposition parties alternative budget proposals have been taken on board by this administration, or certainly not the Conservatives', which is a retrograde step from previous years?

### **Answer**

No, we do not agree with you. All the things you have mentioned were taken on board by the Leader and Deputy Leader. They listened to you and took notice of what was being said.

**9. Question from Councillor Ian Hardiman to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Since the work from home guidance has been relaxed and we move to our hybrid model of working could the Cabinet Member advise on how many staff have been physically working from Wyre Forest House each day since 1st February?

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

We do not usually monitor how many staff are in Wyre Forest House at any one time. However, coincidentally and not prompted by your question, we have started collecting data from the 1 February, in order to assess what space we as a council might require in the future now that the hybrid model, which this council approved, is being worked to. The data is only a snapshot in time, it is not taken every day and it is taken at different times of the day. Please bear in mind that when the snapshot is taken, it is of how many Wyre Forest District Council staff are at a desk. It does not count anybody who may be in the meeting rooms or may have left a desk or may have walked out of the building temporarily when the data was collected. For the 10 days that the data has been collected between 1 February and 17 February inclusive, the number of staff counted ranged from 13 to 27, the average being 21.

**Supplementary question**

Please confirm how many staff, if all are present at Wyre Forest House, are there in total normally? How many employees were taken on to work in this building?

**Answer**

To give an accurate answer off the top of my head, I cannot do that. I will write to you with that answer.

**10. Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services**

Can the Cabinet Member tell me how many homeless families have we housed at the Travel Lodge at Hartlebury?

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

I am told that you have been given this information, I will indulge you again. It is six households that have been accommodated at the Travel Lodge at Hartlebury.

**Supplementary question**

Could you tell me how many of those households have had children?

**Answer**

Three.

**11. Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services**

Given that rooms in the Travel Lodge at Hartlebury have no cooking facilities and there are no shops nearby how can this possibly be a suitable

accommodation with people with no cars?

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

The accommodation is suitable in the sense that it provides a roof over vulnerable and distressed homeless people. Should the case of transportation and food arise then they are provided for.

**Supplementary question**

On Monday night, the HELP night kitchen was called to take a food parcel to a homeless person, not a Wyre Forest one, at that Travel Lodge, because all they had in their room was a kettle and they had absolutely no food at all. The person who took the food parcel was advised it was not the first time that people had been there with no food. Please can the Cabinet Member ensure that in future, if people with no transport are placed at Hartlebury, some sort of arrangement to give them at least some basic food can be undertaken?

**Answer**

That is not a situation I am aware of. I am thankful that HELP was able to help them. We as a council, just like other councils across the board, are struggling with temporary accommodation. I am not saying that the Travel Lodge is the most suitable, what I am saying is we provide what we have on offer to us. Sometimes unfortunate situations will happen, we always endeavour for them not to happen and I am thankful that help was there at the time.

**C.81**

**Motions Submitted under Standing Orders**

Three motions had been received in accordance with standing orders.

**1. Notice of motion from Councillor H Dyke**

The Leader presented the motion which was seconded by Councillor G Ballinger.

A discussion ensued and councillors welcomed the motion. Councillor M Hart proposed that when the letter of thanks and congratulations to Her Majesty be sent, it would be nice to request a royal visit to showcase some of the excellent work within the district.

The Leader confirmed that she was happy to accept the amendment. Upon a show of hands, the motion was unanimously agreed.

**Decision: The following motion from Councillor H Dyke, as amended by Councillor M Hart be agreed:**

**On the occasion of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee on 6 February 2022 – a unique achievement in the history of the UK Monarchy - Council resolves that the Chairman should send a Humble Address to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Second to convey the congratulations of the Council and the residents of Wyre Forest and**

to express their grateful thanks to Her Majesty for Her dedicated service to the United Kingdom.

The Council work with the Lord-Lieutenant to request a royal visit to showcase some of the excellent work within the district.

## 2. Notice of motion from Councillor G Ballinger

Councillor G Ballinger presented the motion which was seconded by the Leader.

A discussion ensued and several councillors shared their experiences of the fourth round FA cup match day.

Councillor P Harrison left the meeting at 9.13pm and returned at 9.17pm.

Upon a show of hands, the motion was unanimously agreed.

**Decision: The following motion from Councillor G Ballinger be agreed:**

**Council resolves to congratulate Kidderminster Harriers Football Club on their run in the FA Cup and welcomes that this has fostered pride in the Club and the town and has brought positive publicity for the town and Wyre Forest. Council further resolves that the Chairman should send a letter to the Club to convey the Council's congratulations and to extend best wishes to the team for the remainder of the 2021/22 season.**

## 3. Notice of Motion by the WFDC Conservative Group

*This Council **acknowledges** the fact that there has been a reduction in senior leadership capacity as a result of the deletion of three corporate director posts in the last 2 years plus a number of other officer posts.*

*This Council further **acknowledges** that there are positives that can come out of the Covid-19 pandemic in respect of virtual and remote ways of working.*

*This Council does not wish to undermine and indeed acknowledges and supports a hybrid model of working.*

*This Council further **acknowledges** that it needs to be an attractive, good and responsible employer and that work life balance has a part to play in the recruitment and retention of staff.*

*However, this Council **regrets** the decision made by the Head of Paid Service and supported by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and his announcement to group leaders on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 that he will be permitting officers of this Council to attend and participate remotely at formal meetings of the Council.*

*This Council **welcomes** the role that Officers play in advising and*

## **Agenda Item No. 10**

*supporting members of this Council in discharging their functions as democratically elected representatives.*

*This Council is deeply concerned about the message this sends to our workforce, residents and taxpayers and the effect it will have on the cohesion of the council and decision making.*

*This Council **calls** upon the Leader of the Council to respect and positively respond to the views of members of the Council that deplore and object to this decision and find that as a result of this decision we believe that there will be a discourtesy to all members at meetings and therefore **commit** to personally ensuring that this decision is reversed with immediate effect.*

Councillor M Hart presented the motion on behalf of the Conservative Group. The motion was seconded by Councillor N Desmond.

Councillor Hart outlined the reasons for the motion and a robust debate ensued.

Councillor T Onslow left the meeting at 9.50pm and returned at 9.51pm.

At 9.55pm Council agreed unanimously to suspend the council procedure rules (standing orders) 1.1 (iii) to allow the meeting to continue until 10.15pm.

In view of the number of councillors that had spoken on the issue, the Deputy Leader moved that the question be put. The proposal was seconded by the Leader.

It was the opinion of the Chairman that sufficient debate on the motion had taken place.

Upon a show of hands, a vote on the proposal that the question immediately be put was taken and agreed.

A vote on the motion submitted by the Conservative Group was taken. Upon a show of hands, the motion was defeated.

**Decision: The motion was defeated.**

### **C.82 Emergency Motions submitted under Standing Orders**

There were no urgent motions.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 10.03pm

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