

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,
KIDDERMINSTER

11TH MAY 2022 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: J Aston (Chairman), P Dyke (Vice-Chairman), G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, J F Byng, V Caulfield, 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, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, S E N Rook, D R Sheppard, J W R Thomas, A Totty, L Whitehouse and P W M Young.

C.01 Prayers

Prayers were said by Revd Shaun Armstrong, Curate, Kidderminster Ismere Team in the Diocese of Worcester.

C.02 Election of Chairman

Councillor P Dyke was nominated as Chairman. This was moved by Councillor G Ballinger and seconded by Councillor C Edginton-White.

Decision: Councillor P Dyke be elected as Chairman of the Council for the Municipal Year 2022-2023.

C.03 Chairman – Investiture and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

After being invested with his Chain of Office, Councillor P Dyke made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chairman.

C.04 Chairman’s Response

The Chairman thanked members for supporting his appointment as Chairman. He said that he would represent the Council to the best of his ability and would take every opportunity to promote the district in a positive way. He announced that his chosen charities for the municipal year are Wyre Forest Talking Newspaper and the Kidderminster and District Youth Trust.

C.05 Retiring Chairman

The Leaders of the political groups; Independent Group, Councillor H Dyke; Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart; Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor F Oborski MBE; Health Concern Group, Councillor Ballinger;

Agenda Item No. 4

and the Labour Group, Councillor L Whitehouse, thanked the retiring Chairman for his contribution to the role during his term of office.

C.06 Election of Vice-Chairman

Councillor G Ballinger nominated Councillor C Edginton-White as Vice-Chairman. This was seconded by Councillor H Dyke.

Decision: Councillor C Edginton-White be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the Municipal Year 2022-2023.

C.07 Vice-Chairman – Investiture and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

After being invested with her Badge of Office, Councillor C Edginton-White made her Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

C.08 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: S Chambers and D Ross.

C.09 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

C.10 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2022, and the minutes of the special meeting of the Council held on 26 April 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.11 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

C.12 Questions

No questions were received by the deadline.

C.13 Chairman's Communications

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

C.14 Political and Constitutional Structures 2022-2023

Council considered a report from the Solicitor to the Council on the proposed political and constitutional structures for the municipal year 2022-2023.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the full suite of recommendations as set out in the report for approval. Councillor G Ballinger seconded the proposals.

Councillor M Hart thanked the Solicitor to the Council most sincerely for dealing with the proposed amendments to the Constitution in respect of the rules of debate at Council meetings.

Upon a vote, the recommendations were agreed.

Decision: Council;

- 1.1 Agreed the revisions to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 1.2 Approved the proposed Political Management Structure of committees for 2022/2023 as set out in Appendix 2.**
- 1.3 Agreed the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees as contained in Appendix 3.**
- 1.4 Adopted the Municipal Calendar as set out in Appendix 4.**
- 1.5 Agreed the revised table of political balance in Appendix 5.**
- 1.6 Agreed the updated appointments to outside bodies as set out in Appendix 6.**
- 1.7 Authorised the Solicitor to the Council to settle any outstanding details relating to the political structures and to make changes as necessary to the Council's Constitution to give effect to the Council's decisions and any other revisions necessary to reflect needs or circumstances.**

C.15 Constitution: code of conduct

Recommendations from the Ethics & Standards Committee – 4 May 2022

- Amended Member Code of Conduct**

The Chairman of the Ethics & Standards Committee appointed for the meeting held on 4 May, Councillor G Ballinger, presented the recommendations for approval.

Councillor Ballinger stated that he had just been informed that Stourport Town Council had an issue with the recommendation 1.3 *All Town and Parish Councils within the District adopt the final amended code.*

The Solicitor to the Council advised that it would be considerably more straightforward for the Ethics & Standards Committee to hear breaches of the Code of Conduct if all councils were operating under the same code.

Agenda Item No. 4

However, if for whatever reason a Town or Parish Council chose not to adopt the code, it was a matter for them: it was purely a recommendation from the District Council.

In response to questions from members regarding the adoption of the code by other councils across Worcestershire, the Solicitor to the Council advised that at a meeting of all of the Monitoring Officers in Worcestershire, it was agreed that they would take the amended code to their respective councils for adoption. She said it was a matter for Councillors to decide what code they adopted for Wyre Forest.

Councillor P Young seconded the proposal.

Councillor M Hart said that he had spoken to the Chairman of Worcestershire County Council's Ethics & Standards Committee and they had deferred the item for further discussion. He added that he was only aware of one other District Council in Worcestershire that had adopted the amended code.

Councillor Hart moved an amendment that the item be referred to the Ethics and Standards Committee to reconsider the matter. The Leader said that she would discuss the matter with other Leaders to investigate what is happening in councils across Worcestershire and was happy to second the proposal.

Upon a vote, the proposal was agreed.

Decision: The item be referred to the Ethics & Standards Committee to reconsider the matter. The Leader to discuss the matter with other Leaders to investigate what is happening in councils across Worcestershire.

C.16 Members' Annual Activity Reports and Attendance 2021-2022

Council received the schedule of Members' Annual Reports giving details of their activities in their role as District Councillors for the 2021-2022 municipal year and a record of Members' attendance for the 2021-2022 municipal year.

Decision: The reports and attendance be noted.

C.17 Annual Reports for the Municipal Year 2021-2022

- (a) Cabinet
- (b) Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- (c) Ethics & Standards Committee

Council received the annual reports from the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman of the Ethics & Standards Committee appointed for the meeting held on 4 May 2022.

Decision: The Annual Reports for Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Ethics & Standards Committee be noted.

C.18 Leader of the Council Announcements

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

C.19 Ethics Regime in Local Government

Recommendations from the Ethics & Standards Committee – 4 May 2022

Councillor G Ballinger presented the recommendations and formally moved them for approval. The proposal was seconded by Councillor P Young.

Upon a vote, the recommendations were agreed.

Decision: Council agreed that:

The Ethics Committee SUPPORTED and WELCOMED;

- i the Government’s expectation that Council resources are not wasted on councillor vs councillor, “tit for tat” complaints between political parties;**
- ii the Government’s expectation that, if an elected member is a member of a political group, they would also expect to be subject to party discipline, including being removed from that group or their party;**
- iii the Government’s recommendation that every political party establish their own code of conduct for party members, including elected representatives;**
- iv the Government’s confirmation that Councillors can be barred from Cabinet, Committees, or representative roles, and may be publicly criticised;**
- v that the Government will engage with sector representative bodies of councillors and officers of all tiers of local government to seek views on options to strengthen sanctions to address breaches of the code which fall below the bar of criminal activity and related sanctions but involve serious incidents of bullying and harassment or disruptive behaviour.**

C.20 Emergency Motions submitted under Standing Orders

There were no urgent motions.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 6.57pm

Agenda Item No. 4

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/>