

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER  
7TH NOVEMBER 2022 (6PM)**

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**Present:**

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

**Observers:**

Councillors: N J Desmond and F M Oborski MBE.

Observed remotely: Councillors: B Brookes, J F Byng, R H Coleman, C Edginton-White and M J Hart.

**CAB.24 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor: M Rayner.

**CAB.25 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.26 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22nd September 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.27 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.28 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.29 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**CAB.30 Council tax reduction scheme review 2023/24**

A report was considered from the Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager that provided the results of the consultation exercise that the Council is required to undertake if there are any proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme; and invited the Cabinet to provide recommendations to the Council.

### **Agenda Item No. 3**

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety in lieu of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio.

It was noted that the proposal had been well received at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee last week. The scheme annual review had showed that 54% of respondents were happy with increased support for working age households. The move to 0% contributions had been considered but was felt that to be counter-productive in two ways: firstly, it could distance the end user (as they would lose any financial relationship with local government services including those provided by the council) and secondly, it could encourage a habit that they did not have to contribute to such services, making any future request for contributions more difficult. The 10% option had been agreed as the most sensible approach to endorse.

There was unanimous acknowledgement of the need to help those struggling to pay their bills and full support of the minimum 10% contribution as being fair and equitable.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 3 November 2022, the Cabinet RECOMMEND to Council that:**

**The minimum contribution for working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme claimants is reduced from 20% to 10% with effect from 1st April 2023.**

#### **CAB.31 Performance and budget monitoring Q2 update**

A report was considered from the Head of Resources and s151 Officer on the Council's financial and other performance at the end of Quarter 2 ending 30 September 2022. The report also presents the current projected outturn position for the 2022-23 financial year.

The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety in lieu of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety noted that estimated revenue seemed relatively good considering the pressures from inflation and pay compared to estimated income from fees, rents, and charges. WFDC performance was in line with target, though increased utility bills at the Leisure Centre could have a negative impact. There was good progress regarding Wyre Forest Forward, with localism being a success and a renewed focus on transformation. Some attempts have been made at shared services and collaborations and these are in motion thanks to the hard work from the Head of Community and Environment Services.

The Chair called on Councillor M Hart as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He said the Committee had considered the report and had no further questions.

It was agreed that local government everywhere is currently suffering, and it would help greatly if central government were to help with finance and give direct communications: clarity about the budget was needed.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety noted that the recent salary uplift had been needed to offset difficult recruitment and retention issues. The next budget at the end of February will need to discuss this issue further and consider

the next wave of austerity.

Councillors discussed savings that had yet to be achieved and the need for the new Council, next May to be equipped to make very quick decisions. It was agreed that any new Councillors should have mandatory training, especially around finance and budgeting.

**Decision: Cabinet noted the report.**

**CAB.32 Medium term financial strategy – strategic options analysis**

A report was considered from the Head of Resources and S151 Officer, and Chief Executive that provided an up-to-date analysis of the Council's financial position including projections about future years. The report also considered options on some matters that will be addressed in the medium-term financial strategy, a draft of which will be presented to the Cabinet meeting in December.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Safety asked that Cabinet agree to the consultation as outlined in the report.

A Councillor asked for clarity regarding pay inflation and shared services, especially in relation to operational services - also commercial income and localism.

It was acknowledged that the Head of Community and Environment Services was still working with the hope of a North Worcestershire collaboration in respect of waste services – thanks were given for his hard work on this. Other aspects of shared services are ongoing with lots of opportunities having been explored. Localism is still going well and is on track.

The Head of Community and Environment Services gave an update on work currently being done; they had looked at income raising and internal restructuring to free funds, the Depot offering potential to reposition business within a partnership. An example of good collaboration would be a shared waste scheme with North Worcestershire. Alongside this the aim is to be more commercially minded. This is an 18–24-month project and the business case was due by the end of the year.

All were concerned about the November 17<sup>th</sup> Autumn Statement, agreeing that it would be good to know what this will mean for the Public Sector. The hope is that we would have meaningful information before the Cabinet meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> December.

**Decision: The Cabinet NOTED the analysis set out in the report and AGREED that consultation should be undertaken on the principal options for the MTFs set out in paragraphs 3.8 to 3.12 of the report.**

The meeting closed at 19.10 pm.