

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

20 DECEMBER 2023 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), I Hardiman (Vice-Chairman), B Brookes, D Morehead, T L Onslow and D Ross.

Observers:

Councillors: L Carroll and F M Oborski MBE.

CAB.44 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.45 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.46 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 November 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CAB.47 Call Ins

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

CAB.48 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

CAB.49 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

CAB.50 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-27

A report was considered from the Head of Resources and S151 Officer that provided the Cabinet with financial information in order to make proposals for the Budget Strategy for the period 2024-27.

Prior to the meeting, members received supplementary papers that set out amendments to the table at 6.7 and appendix 1 of the report that reflected the funding allocations notified in the provisional statement received on 18 December 2023.

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

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that looking ahead, the main challenges faced by the Council was inflation, an increase in demand led services such as homelessness and further slippage in the Capital Programme which would involve additional cost pressures.

The Cabinet Member added that within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) the budget for 2024-2025 contained eight Cabinet spending proposals as set out at paragraph 6.4 of the report. He outlined each proposal in turn.

The Cabinet Member further advised that the draft budget would be published on the Council's website on 21 December, with council tax and business ratepayers invited to comment. He added that any changes made as a consideration of the responses received would be made to the final budget that will be presented to Council in February 2024.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

Decision: The Cabinet NOTED:

- 1.1 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 1 of the report.**
- 1.2 The recommendations in the separate Capital Strategy 2024-2034 report that are intrinsically linked to the MTFS report.**

The Cabinet ENDORSED and RECOMMEND to the Strategic Review Panel for scrutiny:

- 1.3 The Council's updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy;**
 - 1.3.1 There are eight Cabinet spending proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2024-27 (paragraph 6.4) as follows;**
 - a) provision of community leadership funding of £1,000 for each councillor across the period of the MTFS, at a cost of £33k in each year.**
 - b) Delivering actions set out in the new corporate plan by increasing capacity in the Civil Enforcement team at a cost of £39k in the second year. This will provide funding for one additional environmental enforcement post in 2025-26.**
 - c) Delivering actions set out in the new corporate plan by increasing litter picking activity at a cost of £52k/£56k in 2024-25 and 2025-26.**
 - d) capital investment of £50k for accessible play equipment, which**

will have a revenue cost for the borrowing of £7.5k/year.

- e) a spend to save proposal to provide permanent capacity within the property team, at a cost of £116k/£120k/£123k to progress commercial rental income growth in line with the priority within the 2023-27 Corporate plan; cost of temporary agency resource is currently met from risk reserves; cost to be fully recouped from income growth from commercial rents.
- f) changes to the senior management structure to provide capacity for delivery of the priorities in the corporate plan, at a cost of up to £11k/£15k/£15k.
- g) introduction of free one hour parking at one car park in each of the three towns, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm. This builds on the arrangements put in place in Bewdley in November as a consequence of the long-term traffic works. This is anticipated to cost £51k/£54k/£57k.
- h) to introduce web casting of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a cost of £1k in each year to allow maximum access for the public and in order to be fully open and transparent.

1.3.2 The level of net expenditure and resultant Council Tax for 2024-27 as per paragraphs 6.1 and 6.5 including the revenue implications of the Capital Strategy report also on the agenda;

1.3.3 The fees and charges in line with this strategy and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2024-27, as shown in Part 3 of Appendix 3 (paragraph 5.4 also refers) which incorporate decisions taken by Council on 13th December 2023 in respect of licensing fees and charges;

1.4 The Cabinet APPROVED:

1.4.1 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 2.

1.4.2 That the budget contained in the papers is the subject of consultation with residents and business ratepayers for the 4 week period commencing 21st December 2023.

CAB.51 Capital Strategy 2024-34 and Capital Programme Update

A report was received from the Head of Resources and S151 Officer that sought Council approval of a Capital Strategy for 2024-34 and to consider the Capital Programme 2023-24. The report also set out the details to support the recommendations within the separate MTFS.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and gave a verbal update on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) for 2024-25. The Cabinet Member thanked the Head of Resources and S151 Officer for providing the briefing note and an excellent,

detailed report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He explained that the Capital Strategy formed part of the framework for financial planning and was integral to both the MTFs and the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS). He added that it set out how capital investment plays its part in delivering the ambitious long term strategic objectives of the Council, how associated risks are managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

Decision:

1.1 The CABINET ENDORSED and RECOMMEND to the Strategic Review Panel for scrutiny:

The Council's updated Capital Strategy:

- a) Approve the Capital Strategy 2024-34 including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 2;**
- b) Approve variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendix 1, Appendices A and B;**
- c) Approve the limits for gross debt of non-treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for Capital Portfolio Fund as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2.**

1.2 The Cabinet APPROVED:

That delegation is given to the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration in consultation with the Head of Resources and Solicitor to the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Capital Portfolio Fund, to update the Capital Portfolio Strategy Policies in year if required.

CAB.52 Wyre Forest Health Action Plan Update

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on action to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in Wyre Forest. The report included the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan for 2024-25 for endorsement.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report. He gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He explained that the Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board oversees local health commissioning and leads on the strategic planning and co-ordination of local health services. He added that the Health and Wellbeing Board was required to develop a strategy for improving the health and wellbeing of people who live and work in Worcestershire. He said the 'Being Well in Worcestershire' Strategy covered the period 2022-2032.

The Cabinet Member further explained that the 'Being Well Strategic Group' subgroup had delegated responsibility to develop detailed action plans to deliver the strategy. He added that within the Council, delivery of the work was primarily carried out by the Health and Sustainability team in Strategic Growth.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor F Oborski MBE presented the recommendations from its meeting on 7 December 2023. The Cabinet Member said that it was appropriate that an update on the effectiveness of the Action Plan was provided after 12 months.

Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 December 2023, the Cabinet:

1.1 APPROVED the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2024-25.

CAB.53 Cost of Living Action Plan Update

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on action to tackle the cost-of-living crisis. The report included the Wyre Forest Cost of Living action plan for 2024-25 for endorsement.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report. He gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

He explained that on 21 September 2022, Council decided to hold an Emergency Summit to explore how more local help could be provided for those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. He added that the summit was held on 13 October 2022 and the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2022-23 was developed and endorsed by Cabinet on 20 December 2022.

He further explained that since then, a further two Cost of Living summits had been held at Wyre Forest House and attended by a wide range of organisations from across the district, such as local authorities, Community Housing, Police, Food Banks, Citizens Advice, Age UK, church and community groups, Barnardo's, health and social care organisations. He said the events provided the opportunity to share information on specific topics such as Warm Spaces, Household Support Fund and Sustainable Warmth. He added that the events were also an opportunity for all organisations attending to update on the issues affecting them and the services they provide. He said that the events also helped with identifying ways of working together to tackle cost of living issues.

The Cabinet Member said that a Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) group with officers from Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits and Strategic Growth also meet regularly to discuss council specific action on delivering this work.

The Leader seconded the proposals. He said that the authority, through the household support fund and other mechanisms such as the council tax reduction scheme, very much supported those households who were finding it difficult. He said that with inflation coming down there was light at the end of the tunnel, and he looked forward to the day when there was no longer a need to hold these summits.

Councillor Oborski MBE presented the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 December 2023, she said the Committee endorsed the recommendations. In relation to the household support fund, she congratulated the Council officers for the very prompt and efficient way they had dealt with the application process.

Decision: Having had regard to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 December 2023, the Cabinet:

1.1 NOTED the update on delivery of the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2022-23.

1.2 APPROVED the Cost-of-Living Action Plan 2024-25.

CAB.54 Climate Change Action Plan Update and Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024 – 27

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on action to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions. The report included the new Wyre Forest Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan for 2024-27 and year one action plan for endorsement.

Councillor T Onslow left the meeting at 6.58pm and returned at 7.01pm.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

Councillor D Ross left the meeting at 7.02pm.

The Cabinet Member explained that the new WFDC Climate Change Action Plan and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024-27 had been developed to pull together activities the Council and some of its partners were undertaking to tackle climate change, increase resilience and reduce carbon emissions. He added that it considered both existing actions and new projects to be delivered in 2024 onwards.

In conclusion the Cabinet Member said that the Council had declared a climate emergency and was keen to support residents and businesses to reduce

carbon emissions. He added that it was important that the authority considered how it could reduce its own carbon emissions through its operations.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

Councillor D Ross re-joined the meeting at 7.04pm.

Councillor Oborski MBE presented the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 December 2023.

Decision: Having had regard to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 December 2023, the Cabinet:

- 1.1 CONSIDERED the update of the Climate Change Action Plan 2022-23.**
- 1.2 APPROVED the new Wyre Forest Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan and accompanying action plan for delivery of this.**
- 1.3 DELEGATED to the Head of Strategic Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda to make minor amendments and updates to the Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plan 2024 - 2027.**

CAB.55 Termination of shared service arrangement: North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration

A report was considered from the Chief Executive to agree the mutual termination, with effect from 30 June 2024, of the agreement that established North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWedR).

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that NWedR was a shared service serving Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest councils. It had successfully operated for over a decade and in recent years had attracted a very welcome total of £70m in Government grants for the three districts to support major regeneration programmes.

He added that all three councils placed high priority on economic regeneration. He said implementing the programmes and projects associated with the Government grants had inevitably involved considerable additional work and had affected NWedR's capacity in the last couple of years.

The Cabinet Member further explained that discussions had been ongoing between the leadership of the three councils about future options for over a year. He said the three Leaders had accepted advice from officers that mutually agreed termination should be achievable and should happen on 30

June 2024.

The Leader seconded the recommendations. He said that the three councils had a very proud record of working together and it had served the authority well. He added that the three Leaders felt that the best model was to have their own in-house team to create greater capacity in order to be able to deliver on the important projects.

Decision: The Cabinet:

- a) **AGREED that the Collaboration Agreement relating to the Provision of Economic Development and Regeneration Services should be terminated mutually under clause 15.1 with effect from 30 June 2024;**
- b) **DELEGATED to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda, Head of Resources and Solicitor to the Council authority to approve the exit agreement and to take any other steps that arise from the termination process.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.18pm.

The meeting is available for viewing on the Council's website <https://wyreforestdc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>