

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

9 APRIL 2024 (6PM)

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**Present:**

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

**Observers:**

Councillors: L Carroll, F M Oborski MBE and A Sutton.

Observed remotely: Councillors: J F Byng and H E Dyke.

**CAB.69 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.70 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.71 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 13 February 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.72 Call Ins**

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

**CAB.73 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.74 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**CAB.75 Budget and Performance Monitoring Third Quarter 2023-24**

A report was considered from the Head of Resources and Section 151 Officer that briefed members on the Council's financial and other performance at the end of Quarter 3 ending 31 December 2023. The report also presented the current projected outturn position for the 2023-24 financial year.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report

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and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Resources and Section 151 Officer for providing the comprehensive report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report.

He advised that, after application of risk and contingency reserves, the year-end outturn position on services was forecast to be £152k better than the position forecast in the 2024-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). He added that the assessment of the outturn position was based on a wide range of assumptions, predicted patterns of cost, service demand and behaviours and the forecasts continued to be refined.

With regards to reserves, he advised that the quarter 3 adjusted reserves position, as of 31 March 2024, was set out at table 3 on page 17 of the report. He said that the authority had a structural deficit in each of the 3 years of the MTFS, and the council was exploring options to increase commercial income and to maximise efficiency savings. He added that the Commercial Programme Board meet regularly to explore potential opportunities for commercial income and to progress current business cases.

With reference to external income, the Cabinet Member explained that this was an important part of the revenue of the council. He advised that the original budget was £7.76m with a revised budget of £7.485m and an estimated outturn of £7.502m. He explained that the revised budget took into account the impact of staff shortages on the tree gang and thus the impact that had on undertaking external contract work. He added that the income from car parking had been reduced and reflected the issues facing high street traders and the increase in on-line shopping post pandemic.

With reference to the Capital Portfolio Fund performance, he explained that table 7 on page 24 of the report showed that the targets in the original budget would not be achieved. He added that the variance had been addressed in the revised budget. He explained that final rents at review were below those originally assumed and the council's share of service charges arising from voids, common areas and essential health and safety work had impacted on revenue. The change in capital values had been discussed at both the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and at the Audit Committee. The variance to the original purchase reflected the commercial property market, the occupancy and the terms and lengths of the tenancies. He assured Cabinet that work was currently being undertaken to address all these issues.

In conclusion the Cabinet Member gave a highlighted summary of the council's performance against the Economic Growth & Regeneration and A Clean, Safe & Green place to live priorities. The Cabinet Member invited any questions or comments on the report from Cabinet and other members, none were received.

The Leader of the Council seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor F Oborski MBE, presented the recommendations from its meeting on 7 March

2024.

**Decision: The Cabinet NOTED:**

- 1.1 The projected budget variations, virements and comments within the report and appendices 1 to 5.**
- 1.2 The performance against measures and actions as set out in the report and appendix 6.**
- 1.3 The recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 March.**

**CAB.76 Risk Management – Corporate Risk Management Policy and Strategy**

A report was considered from the Head of Resources that presented the updated Risk Management Policy and Strategy including Risk Impact and Scoring criteria.

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 the Audit Committee were responsible for considering the effectiveness of risk management arrangements. The previous Risk Management strategy had been considered by the Committee in March 2023.

He said that the risk management provided early warning on key and emerging matters to enable transparent, timely decision-making and intervention at appropriate levels. It improved decision-making allowing intelligent 'informed' risk-taking, helped to prioritise, protect assets, people, and the Council's reputation, supported consistent good governance and internal control, and allowed better informed financial decision making leading to greater financial and budget control. He added that the council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy were reviewed annually by the Audit Committee to ensure it remained current and fit for purpose.

The Cabinet Member advised that the council's risk management arrangements have been reviewed by Grant Thornton as part of the Value for Money work that informed the conclusion in their Auditor's Annual Report. The council's Risk Maturity has also been assessed by the council's Audit partners, BDO, as part of the approved Audit Plan for 2023-24.

He explained that the risk management strategy and policy had been revised to reflect the findings and recommendations from the two reviews of council's arrangements. The revised strategy was presented at Appendix 1 for approval.

The Cabinet Member outlined the main changes to the document. He explained that the updated strategy considered the latest guidance for risk appetite and to set out more specific tolerance levels within each type of risk.

He added that the strategy set out the principle of establishing a Risk Appetite Statement for adoption by council for the life of each council. The Risk Appetite Statement would establish specific tolerances for each of the risk types identified in the Orange Book, Management of Risk - Principles and Concepts (HM Government, 2020). In conclusion, he said that the Corporate Leadership team would work with Cabinet members and Committee Chairs to establish the risk appetite that would then be brought to council for formal approval.

The Leader of the Council seconded the proposals.

**Decision: The Cabinet:**

**1.1 CONSIDERED and NOTED the proposed steps to improve strategic risk management and support the ongoing continuous improvement for the Council's risk management arrangements.**

**1.2 APPROVED adoption of the updated Risk Management Strategy.**

**CAB.77 Update to the Housing Assistance Policy**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth to update the council's Housing Assistance Policy on the use of the Better Care Fund and other resources for the provision of disabled facilities grants (DFG) and other forms of financial assistance for property repair, adaptation and improvement and amendments in response to changes in typical costs and economic circumstances of applicants.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth for the comprehensive and necessary report.

The Cabinet Member gave a detailed summary of the background and key issues set out in the report.

He explained that DFGs were a mandatory service to fund adaptation of properties across all tenures based upon a means-test for adults and without a means test for children. He said that typical works ranged from provision of a stairlift or level access shower up to a complete extension for ground floor living. Whilst most elements of the mandatory grants were legally set, a local policy was needed to set out the council's approach to several discretionary elements and to set out how discretionary funds are applied.

The Cabinet Member added that the funding for housing assistance was provided by Government through the Better Care Fund mechanism and from recycled funds from previous assistance where a repayment condition had been activated. He said agency costs and council officer costs were met from within existing budgets including the capitalisation of the assistance provided.

In conclusion he said that an up-to-date Housing Assistance Policy would help the council respond to legal requirements and meet locally identified need in relation to adaptation, repair and improvement of properties with consequential improvement in health and wellbeing of residents. He added that key changes

had been identified for the new policy including increasing the maximum level of assistance, safeguarding the longer-term use of adapted properties in partnership with landlords and clarifying elements of the policy such as eligible works.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 7 March.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 March 2024;**

**The Cabinet DECIDED that:**

- 1.1 The proposed Wyre Forest District Council Housing Assistance Policy be adopted AND**
- 1.2 The split of funding between projects be delegated to the Head of Strategic Growth, in consultation with the s151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing.**

**CAB.78 Wyre Forest District Council Design, Amenity and Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that presented the Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Design, Amenity and Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth for providing the report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report.

He explained that the Design, Amenity and Shopfronts SPD was required to support the implementation of policies in the WFDC Local Plan 2016-2036, specifically policies SP.20 and DM.24 both titled 'Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness'.

He said the SPD had been prepared by the Planning Policy Team in partnership with Development Management colleagues in Wyre Forest District Council. He added that Officers also undertook a public consultation on the scoping document for the SPD in October 2022. The document set out the proposed contents of the SPD and the process for consultation and adoption, and there were no comments received.

In conclusion he said the draft Design, Amenity and Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document had been prepared to provide further detail to policies contained within the Adopted Local Plan, and it was anticipated that the document would assist applicants when submitting a housing application.

He added that the authority was required by part five of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 to consult on an SPD for a period of 4 weeks prior to finalising and adopting the document.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 7 March. She said this was a really important document and the recommendations were unanimously supported by the Committee.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 March 2024;**

**The Cabinet:**

**1.1 APPROVED the draft Design, Amenity and Shopfronts SPD AND**

**1.2 AGREED to a 4 week consultation on the SPD to take place from the 10 April 2024 until 8 May 2024.**

Councillor H Dyke left the meeting at 6.43pm.

**CAB.79 Wyre Forest District Council Housing Supplementary Planning Document**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that presented the WFDC Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) following the recent consultation exercise.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth for providing the report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report.

He explained that the SPD was required to support the implementation of the housing policies in the WFDC Local Plan 2016-2036. He said the process for writing and adopting an SPD is set out in the WFDC Statement of Community Involvement (February 2013), which was published following the issue of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Cabinet Member further explained that amendments had been made to the SPD as a result of the consultation and were tracked on the final draft of the SPD as set out in appendix A of the report.

In conclusion he said the Housing SPD had been prepared to provide further detail to policies contained within the Local Plan. Once adopted the document would be a material consideration in the determination of planning

applications.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 7 March.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 March 2024;**

**The Cabinet:**

**1.1 APPROVED the final Housing SPD for adoption AND**

**1.2 NOTED the public consultation responses detailed in the WFDC Housing SPD Consultation statement.**

**CAB.80 Stourport No.1 and No.2 Draft Character Appraisals and Management Recommendations**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that presented the draft Conservation Character Appraisals and Management Recommendations for Stourport No.1 and Stourport No.2 Conservation Areas and sought to agree that they be consulted upon.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth for providing the detailed report.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report.

He explained that in accordance with the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 it was necessary to take stock of the significance of the two conservation areas that cover the Georgian parts of Stourport-on-Severn and also set out the actions to preserve and enhance their special architectural and historic interest.

He added that a four-week consultation to be held between 10 April and 8 May 2024, was proposed and all responses received would be reported to Cabinet in due course alongside the final version of both character appraisals. He said it was anticipated that the documents would be adopted in July 2024.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 7 March.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 7 March 2024;**

**The Cabinet:**

**1.1 APPROVED the two draft documents AND**

**1.2 AGREED to a 4-week public consultation between 10 April and 8 May 2024.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7pm.

The meeting is available for viewing on the Council's website.

<https://wyreforestdc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>