

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN

29TH SEPTEMBER 2010 (6.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: M Ahmed, J Baker, G Ballinger, R Bishop, A Buckley, J-P Campion, S Clee, N Desmond, H Dyke, P Dyke, N Gale, B Glass, J Greener, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M Hart, P Hayward, M Hazlewood, A Hingley, J Holden, T Ingham, D McCann, D Millis, C Nicholls, F Oborski, T Onslow, J Parish, J Phillips, M Price, K Prosser, M Salter, J Shaw, D Sheppard, K Stokes, J Thomas, N Thomas, S Williams and G Yarranton.

Members welcomed back Councillor Salter following his illness.

C.39 Prayers

Prayers were said by Reverend Philip Hearn of Greatfield Road Evangelical Church, Kidderminster.

C.40 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors J Aston, D Godwin, M Kelly and H Martin.

C.41 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interests were made.

C.42 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 28th July 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.43 Public Participation

No Members of the public had requested to speak under the Council's public participation scheme.

C.44 Questions

The Council received a report setting out a range of questions from Councillors F Oborski, D Sheppard, J Shaw, N Thomas and J Thomas, directed at the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members.

Question 1 – From Councillor Fran Oborski to Councillor Marcus Hart, Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services.

Can the Cabinet Member tell me what is the latest situation regarding Car Parking on Sundays on the St Mary's Church car park?

Reply from Councillor Hart

I am happy to update you on the latest situation on Sundays at St Marys. I have had discussions with Revered Owain Bell and received correspondence with responses from the Diocese of Worcester, and the car park currently remains chargeable from 8.00am – 6.30pm.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Oborski

Does that mean we are ticketing people who are there on Sundays who have not paid until this meeting? The information I had was that we had instructed the Civil Enforcement Officers to ticket?

Reply from Councillor Hart

The position we want to maintain is a consistent approach across the District. The Car Park Order states we can charge on Sundays and we need to be fair and consistent to both church goers and residents across the district, and must employ a tolerant view for people using the car park on Sundays. What we will do on Sundays from the budget proposals is to have a consistent approach for car parking in a number of our car parks across the district and this will benefit church goers and residents in this District. Watch this space for the budget proposals as we take car parking to the second stage in the budget process

Question 2 – From Councillor Fran Oborski to Councillor Nathan Desmond, Cabinet Member for Resources.

Residents taking part in the garden waste collection scheme purchase their brown bin and pay a collection charge. Can the Cabinet Member explain to me why one of my constituents wanting a second brown bin, was informed by the Hub that not only would he have to purchase the second bin which he expected, but then he would also be expected to pay a second collection charge! How can this be right when both bins are emptied at the same time?

Answer from the Councillor Desmond

I am very grateful for this question. I am happy to look at a fair and equitable reduction for a second bin and will look at that and pick it up during the budget process ready for next March when the green waste collection starts again.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Oborski

I am grateful for that. Everyone could understand paying for a bin but not paying double for a collection when the lorry only comes once. I look forward to seeing the budget proposals.

Question 3 – From Councillor Dixon Sheppard to Councillor Tracey Onslow, Cabinet Member for Community and Partnership Services.

Stourport Horticultural Society: Could we please have the Cabinet Member's assurance that Stourport Horticultural Society will not be in future subjected to the draconian rules and regulations that were imposed on this society on the setting up of this year's show on the August Bank Holiday on the Riverside Meadows?

Answer from the Councillor Onslow

Can I just check that you have you read the conditions for the hire of the venue? I would ask for the word draconian to taken out of your question. In reply to the question, yes, anyone who hires the venue next year will have the standards applicable. The charges will be reviewed next year.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sheppard

When I attended the Stourport Horticultural Society exhibition on the riverside as Mayor, I was approached by a very upset Chairman and Secretary. I asked them to write to the Town Council but unfortunately the letter from the Town Council was forwarded to the District Council before I saw it. Can you please allow for the fact that delegate's may be transferring exhibits from their cars and being able to take cars to the marquee greatly upset people this year?

Answer from Councillor Onslow

Prior to the conditions of the hire being signed, a meeting was held with the Horticultural Society and it was discussed what was happening and they were asked not to drive their cars across the field during the event. There are children and parents in attendance at the event and we will work with the site to iron out any problems.

Question 4 – From Councillor Dixon Sheppard to Councillor Stephen Clee, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration.

British Sugar Site:- At the last Local Development Framework Core Strategy Review Panel where amendments to Policy DS02 were considered and the panel agreed that Option A should be adopted. This now includes a significant area for housing, when previously it was designated for purely industrial/commercial use. Can we be assured that there is no danger to potential housing from the proximity of the existing chemical works?

Answer from the Councillor Clee

No. We cannot give assurance to the houses but if we look at the dwellings along the site, houses are already there and those dwelling cannot be concerned about it.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sheppard

What concerns me is this site was designated for commercial use. We now seem to have houses potentially included in the site. It is extremely important for the future of the area and I consider it to be a retrograde step if houses are built on the site and the additional problems it may cause. Can we please have assurances that with the houses included, it will not dilute the potential industrial use of the site, as I fear it will?

Question from Councillor Clee

It is a large industrial site and includes the regeneration of Kidderminster and Wyre Forest over many years to come. This Council supports the regeneration of the site and if it means that houses and industrial units are built, then that is a plus and it is up to people if they want to live next to an industrial estate. People in Waterside Grange, Kidderminster live next to an industrial estate and it does not seem to worry them.

Question 5 – From Councillor Dixon Sheppard to Councillor Marcus Hart, Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services.

Coach Parking Stourport Riverside Car Parks:- Referring to Draft Local Transport Plan 3 – Key Themes – one of which is to promote parking and layover facilities in urban areas for coaches, can the Deputy Leader please reassure me that the Council will install at least two dedicated parking bays for coaches without further delay on the Riverside Car Parks below this Civic Centre to encourage more tourism and trade to Stourport? Many coach operators and passengers are put off by the current coach parking facilities on the other side of the river.

Answer from Councillor Hart

With respect to coach parking this was asked previously when Councillor Onslow had the Cabinet responsibility before. I am not being furnished with any evidence that these are necessary so I am not in a position to give assurance that this authority will be installing coach bays at the riverside.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Sheppard

Since previous questions, there is an additional factor of Local Plan Transport 3 which states it is the aim to have dedicated spaces in urban areas.

Question from Councillor Hart

Very interesting you use word local Plan Transport 3. You omitted the word draft and I advise that it is going out to consultation in due course and Councillor Clee is the Cabinet Member. It is in draft at this stage and I understand Councillor Sheppard you were going to furnish us with information from coach companies stating that they wanted parking bays.

Councillor T Ingham arrived at the meeting at this point, 6.19pm.

There has been no contact from coach drivers. There is adequate car parking on the car park by the sport and leisure centre across the bridge and many coach companies can park there. There is no evidence that coach companies want coach bays on the riverside. If you can give us evidence then we can review this.

Question 6 – From Councillor Jamie Shaw to Councillor John Campion The Leader of the Council.

Since 1st January 2000, which services, previously provided exclusively by Wyre Forest District Council, have become "shared", out-sourced, arms-length or partnership arrangements?

Answer from the Leader of the Council:

I am very happy to list partnerships as follows. Regulatory services, HR, Building maintenance, Care and Repair Agency, Worcestershire Hub, CCTV, Concessionary travel – contracting with business companies, Community safety, Emergency planning – technical support, Administration of parking fines, Leisure Centres, Procurement – technical advice and support and the Cemetery and Crematorium.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Shaw

I chose 1st January 2000 because it might have included Community Housing and I wanted to make a point. Would you agree that the role of this forum of 42

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councillors, that Wyre Forest District Council is reduced as a result of many or perhaps all those arrangements? Secondly, would you agree with me that it is appropriate now that we actually start up a scrutiny exercise on Shared Services, looking at perhaps what powers we have and what role is going to be best for this Council to play in the future when it would appear its role is continually diminishing?

Reply from the Leader of the Council

I don't agree it is diminishing by the joint working arrangements and would draw your attention to the last debate on Regulatory Shared Services. Members are involved in the level of service we want to deliver. We have a duty as Members to make sure we achieve maximum value for money for the service we provide and if it makes more economic sense to work with other people then that is good. I thought it had good cross party agreement. With relation to the role of this forum, I defend the decision; we are all accountable to our electorate and held to account. There are many important decisions made and big decisions are brought back here, so no I don't agree that the Council has been reduced. What is going to reduce this forum is legislation by the Labour Government and the Local Government Act as to whether we have a strong leader or an elected mayor. That would mean a massive reduction in power for this chamber. With regard to Regulatory Shared Services it might be time to update that work and Councillor Ballinger may wish to look at it in his work programme and do that for you.

Question 7 – From Councillor Jamie Shaw to Councillor John Campion The Leader of the Council.

Accepting that there has been contact about Section 136 grants and approaches about particular buildings, will the District Council be discussing with Parish Councils the possible transfer of services in the current budgeting process?

Answer from the Leader of the Council:

I was always reminded by Mike Oborski to give an answer and the answer is yes.

Question 8 – From Councillor Jamie Shaw to Councillor Nathan Desmond Cabinet Member for Resources

With the change from boxes to wheelie bins, are there any plans to expand the Recycling service to any of the areas currently unprovided for?

Answer from the Councillor Desmond:

Obviously Members will know of the excellent recycling service of 90% across the district and that there are localised pockets across the district who don't have recycling boxes and we are looking into that issue. With regard to the flats at Hoobrook, we are looking at some sort of community shared facility. In the Radburn area of Areley Kings we don't have recycling bins and again we are looking at that as there is a logistical issue in that area. We need to work with The Community Housing Group on the issue and are willing to work with local members in those areas. So In answer to your question we are looking at pockets.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Shaw

The questions have come from local residents from the Radburn area who want to do recycling but current facilities are too far away, but I am willing to work with the Cabinet Member and The Community Housing Group.

Supplementary Answer from Councillor Desmond

I welcome the comments.

Question 9 – From Councillor Nigel Thomas to Councillor Marcus Hart, Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services.

What calculations were used to arrive at the first and then the second parking charges for the Vale Road Car Park?

Answer from the Councillor Hart

An initial report in July stated a cost of £5.20 for over 2 hours parking on Vale Road. Colleagues may or may not be familiar with the car parking tariff and £5.20 mirrored the cost of Raven Street in Stourport and therefore it was considered that was a good starting point. However, as a result of the representations from Councillors Salter and Holden and a letter from Councillor Salter and some Stourport Town Councillors meeting with Directors, it was thought that £5.20 was too high so additional work was carried out and it was ascertained that the sports centre charge was £4.10 and it made it more sense to align the Vale Road charge to the sports centre charge. I thought Stourport Town Council were very happy with that?

Supplementary Question from Councillor N Thomas

There needs to be a fair and consistent approach across all areas, why are car parks prices the same?

Supplementary Question from Councillor Hart

Not entirely that is accurate. It is simply not the case and I have to stay that this is shutting the stable door. You made no such amendment when this came to full Council last time, and you made no formal written representations either. So it is somewhat propositioning as you are now trying to change something that you could have changed.

Question 10 – From Councillor John Thomas to Councillor John Campion The Leader of the Council.

Could the Leader please explain to me the Council's policy on public consultations?

Answer from the Leader of the Council:

The policy is set out in the consultation strategy for 2008-2011 that was adopted by the Council on 27th February 2008.

Supplementary Question from Councillor J Thomas

Does the Leader agree that Vale Road and changes to parking permits, local residents who have been affected have not been sufficiently consulted and a petition handed to Cabinet and ignored.

Supplementary Answer from the Leader of the Council

I'm not sure of the question. It is important that consultations are meaningful and statutory consultations are required under the law. Members who attended

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when this was discussed initially, saw a full list and the response. I fully accept that some people will have to pay more than they used to, it has to be a fair and consistent policy across the district, and another stage when we move to the budget cycle, no one can come up with why some should pay and others shouldn't. We are there to consult; it is about having your say and not about having your way.

C.45 Chairman's Communications

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

Decision: The report be noted.

C.46 Leader's Announcements and Report

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:

Members were updated on the latest news regarding the Council's Icelandic deposit.

- Heritable: The Council had invested £1m, there had been four dividends paid to date with a total of £412,000 being returned to the Council. A further 5th dividend was expected in October 2010.
- KSF: The Council had invested £5m. The Council had received 4 dividends which represented a total of £2.5m recovered.
- Landsbanki. The Council had invested £3m, there was a prediction that the Council would have preferred status in relation to deposits. Members were reminded that Council was working with other local authorities to defend the preferential status.

The Leader reported that monies had been awarded from the National Lottery Fund to a project on the eastern side of Kidderminster which related to community grants, and that the Carpet Museum had received just under £2m lottery grant monies. The Leader was pleased to see that these monies would protect the District's heritage.

Members were advised that Councillor Martin had jointed the Labour group.

Decision: The Leader's announcements be noted.

C.47 Annual Report of the Chief Executive

The Council considered the Annual Report of the Chief Executive.

Members were advised of the progress of the single site and the headline results of the staff survey although they were advised the full results would be published in a future edition of Wyred Weekly. The Chief Executive thanked Members and Officers for their support and advised that the transformation process was enabling the Council to meet the challenges of the future.

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In response to questions raised by Members, Council was advised:

1. The Council had achieved savings of £3m in 2009-10 and that one-off investments had been made in order to facilitate change. There would be further developments in ICT in order to make additional savings and support the change process. Moreover, there may also be a need to spend money on consultancy fees if required.
2. Consideration would be given to working with private and public partners, in particular options were being considered regarding revenues and benefits. The Leisure Centre contract, due to expire in 2013, would be reviewed.
3. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would revisit the ranking regarding the Council's resilience. However, he felt that the Council was working with the County and Wyre Forest Matters Partnership to assist in the drive to improve standards.
4. A report on Total Place Programme at Foley Park, Kidderminster would be available early next year with the intention to implement the proposals in 2011.
5. The Chief Executive reminded Members of the funding process for single site, in particular that the funding came from the capital budget. Further that the permission had been given to capitalise redundancy payments.

The Chief Executives' Panel enabled county-wide issues to be considered jointly and Wyre Forest played a key part in this. Moreover, it was important that robust business cases were proposed that supported any decisions made. Council were advised of the role and powers of the Leader's Board and advised that Group Leaders received information from the Transformation Board.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Chief Executive for his first report to Council.

Decision: The Chief Executive's report be noted.

C.48 Response to the Local Government Finance Formula Consultation

A report was considered that asked for approval of the Council's response to Government to the consultation exercise to the proposed changes in the method for distributing Government grant, specifically in relation to the funding of concessionary travel.

The Cabinet Member for Resources advised Members that the Council found themselves in a difficult time when the revenue support grant was expected to be reduced and the budget process would be challenging. He reminded Members that from 1st April 2011 concessionary travel would be transferred to Worcestershire County Council and in order for the Government to generate monies, they had identified the four options as detailed in the report.

The Director of Resources confirmed that the Council received funding from 2 areas, specific and revenue grants and that would be totally withdrawn

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An addendum to the decision was agreed by Members in that the Member of Parliament for Wyre Forest be contacted to assist the Council in putting its case forward.

The Director of Resources confirmed that the consultation had ended in July 2010 but all responses had to be in by 6th October 2010. The proposals the Council were making were similar to those which other authorities were making. Further debate ensued and the Leader of the Council confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Government stating that it did not mind losing the Concessionary Travel service albeit that the Council would have been better off if it was retained and that it had to be on a fair and equitable basis.

Decision:

The Department for Communities and Local Government be advised that:

- 1.1 Wyre Forest District Council does not support any of the four grant options being considered.**
- 1.2 On the basis of transparency and fairness the reallocation of grant should be linked directly to the current cost of operating the scheme.**
- 1.3 The Member of Parliament for Wyre Forest be contacted to assist the Council in putting its case forward.**

C.49 Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (1)

No notices of motion were received in accordance with Standing Order D1(1).

C.50 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (7)

No notices of motion were received in accordance with Standing Order D1(1).

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.14pm.