

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

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

26TH NOVEMBER 2008 (6:00PM)

Present:

Councillor Mumshad Ahmed	Councillor John Holden
Councillor Rachel Akathiotis	Councillor Michael Kelly
Councillor John Aston,	Councillor Susan Meekings
Councillor Jeffrey Baker	Councillor Howard Martin
Councillor Graham Ballinger	Councillor David Millis
Councillor Arthur Buckley	Councillor Christopher Nicholls
Councillor John-Paul Champion	Councillor Fran Oborski
Councillor Stephen Clee	Councillor Tracey Onslow
Councillor Nathan Desmond	Councillor Michael Partridge
Councillor Helen Dyke	Councillor Julian Phillips
Councillor Peter Dyke	Councillor Mike Price
Councillor Jill Fairbrother-Millis	Councillor Ken Prosser
Councillor Brian Glass	Councillor Mike Salter
Councillor Douglas Godwin	Councillor Michael Shellie
Councillor Jenny Greener	Councillor Dixon Sheppard
Councillor Paul Harrison	Councillor Ken Stokes
Councillor Marcus Hart	Councillor John Thomas
Councillor Pauline Hayward	Councillor Nigel Thomas
Councillor Siriol Hayward	Councillor Stephen Williams
Councillor Malcolm Hazelwood	Councillor Gordon Yarranton
Councillor Anne Hingley	

C.49 Prayers

Prayers were lead by the Reverend Mary Austin of Trinity Methodist Church Kidderminster and Broadwaters.

C.50 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Eeles.

C.51 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Prosser declared a personal interest in item 9 (Church Street Conservation Area) as he occupied premises in Church Street.

Councillor Hazelwood declared a personal interest in item 9 (Review of Residential Caravan Site Licence Model Conditions) as he lived at a Caravan Site in Wolverley,

Councillors Oborski, H Dyke, Kelly, Shellie, Aston and Williams in item 17 (Wyre Forest Community Housing Services Contract

Renewal) all declared personal interests as Board Members of Wyre Forest Community Housing.

Councillors Kelly and Ballinger declared a personal interest on item 9 (Free Swimming) as Council representatives on the DC Leisure Local Partnership Board.

C.52

Minutes

That subject to amendment the minutes of the Council meeting held on 16th July 2008 be signed as a correct record subject to the following amendments

Response from Councillor M J Hart

Councillor Hart thanked Councillor Oborski for her questions however he stated that these were hypothetical questions that he was unable to answer

Supplementary Question from Councillor Fran Oborski to Councillor Mrs T L Onslow

Can we be assured that any formal request will be dealt with quickly?

Response from Councillor M J Hart

All members have either been phoned or written to in July. I would expect the information to come from Stuart Booton on a ward by ward basis as soon as possible.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Mrs Helen Dyke

Will Members be kept informed?

Response from Councillor Campion

I am happy to do so.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 8th September 2008 be signed as a correct record.

C.53

Public Participation

It was noted that no members of public had requested to speak.

C.54

Questions

Tabled questions received from Members were considered as follows:

Question from Councillor Thomas to Councillor Onslow

Can you please tell us what year and from whom and at what price was the land purchased for the new district cemetery in Stourport-on-Severn?

Response from Councillor Onslow

The Land was purchased in two parts in 2007, the first from the Whalley family for £43,717 and the second from Barclays Trust for £43,550.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Thomas

Do you consider that it is prudent, within the current economic climate for the development to be continued?

Response from Councillor Onslow

The Cemetery will be full by the end of August and new provision for burial is required without delay.

Question from Cllr Howard Martin to Leader of the Council.

In view of the dropping rate of inflation and (at the time of writing) the predicted reduction in the VAT rate to 15%, would the Leader please advise what effect he estimates this will have on the Council's projected Revenue Expenditure?

Response from the Leader of the Council

I, like the rest of the nation rejoiced at the pre budget announcement regarding VAT. However because we claim back more than we spend on VAT it won't have an effect for us in recouping more cash. The hidden problem comes in areas such as fuel as the increased fuel duty could have an additional impact on the Council of up to £10,000, also additions to National Insurance will cost £70,000.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Martin

I hope that the Leader will agree that if the rate of inflation drops sufficiently to reduce the running costs of the Council, these savings can be used to provide free swimming for the under 16's who are an important part of the community.

Response from the Leader of the Council

Unfortunately inflation does not have a relationship to organisations such as ours. CPI was running at 4% and the average Council inflation is 6% and we will be interested to see what deflation will bring, however this is a significant indicator of a recession and therefore less people will be paying into the public purse. In the medium term Council Tax increases will be around 2.5% and the Council is already taking prudent steps to reduce costs without impacting on services. Wyre Forest Leisure is the envy of many other Councils in the County and I am proud of the services provided and I don't believe that the under 16's get a raw deal.

Question from Councillor Oborski for Councillor Onslow

As a member of PATROL (the organisation which monitors the Civil Enforcement of Parking and Traffic Orders outside London)

Wyre Forest Council is required to produce an Annual Report to that organisation. I understand that this Council has been in charge of Parking Enforcement for long enough to have needed to produce such a report. Could the Cabinet Member please tell me where members can access it?

Could she further tell me how many Appeals have been heard against "fixed penalty tickets" issued by our civil enforcement Officers and whether or not any have been successful?

Response from Councillor Onslow

Part of the Traffic Management Act 2004 came into force March 2008 with the first report March 2009, and in the guidelines we get a further 6 months from that date. Wychavon administer this on behalf of the Council. To date 15 appeals have gone to adjudication, 10 have been declined or the appeal not accepted and 5 appeals have been allowed?

Supplementary Question from Councillor Oborski

I was misinformed, could you please advise us of the types of offences that have been successfully appealed and if there is any pattern in those?

Response from Councillor Onslow

I can report that of the 5, 3 were of a technical nature and 2 related to signage.

Question from Councillor Oborski for Councillor Desmond

In view of recent critical press coverage, are you confident that the level of monitoring of our CCTV provided by Bromsgrove District Council is adequate to actually make the investment we have made in CCTV worthwhile?

Response from Councillor Desmond

I have the greatest confidence in Bromsgrove monitoring the CCTV cameras. I believe that the negative reports that you allude to are totally unfounded, without substance and without the evidence to substantiate them. I believe that that it is fair to say that in the main we get an excellent service from Bromsgrove. There are localised problems in Stourport but these are being addressed with the local Beat Manager and the Head of Community and Partnership Services, and Officers are having quarterly meetings on operation and performance. We get an excellent service from Bromsgrove and a competitive rate per camera.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Oborski

The only way that the public will go along with CCTV in public places is if they are given assurances that they can lead to arrests and successful prosecutions. Can we have detailed figures on

how many incidents in towns since CCTV have been recorded and how many miscreants and been caught on camera and have been prosecuted?

Response from Councillor Desmond

I don't have the exact figures to hand but I can circulate these to Members. However the key point is that quarterly updates are circulated at CDRP Board meetings.

Question from Councillor Oborski for the Leader of the Council

Councillors have recently been offered low energy light bulbs for issuing to local residents. Can you confirm that, as previously, they are only for issue in areas which an individual Councillor represents and should NOT be used as part of Political Campaigning?

Response from Councillor Campion

This matter is referred to Councillor Hingley

Response from Councillor Hingley

I can confirm that the content of the question is correct.

Councillor Oborski confirmed that there was no supplementary question.

Question from Councillor Fairbrother-Millis for Councillor Cleo

Is the Cabinet Member responsible for Planning, Regeneration and Enterprise able to confirm that all operations at the landfill site Minster Road, Stourport, will cease on the date of the 8th December 2008 and that the restoration will be completed by the 8th June 2009 in accordance with the condition of planning?

Response from Councillor Cleo

Councillor Cleo responded yes to both questions.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Fairbrother-Millis

Can you also confirm that that public footpath on the site which is difficult for walkers to negotiate as a result of tipping will be restored to a good condition as soon as possible?

Response from Councillor Cleo

I will look at this issue tomorrow.

Question from Councillor Harrison for Councillor Desmond

In view of the repeated vandalism to properties on Comberton Hill recently including commercial properties, will Councillor Desmond give active consideration to the Council providing closed circuit television monitoring on this street?

Response from Councillor Desmond

The Cabinet is not looking at CCTV on Comberton Hill. The AFP figures show there have been a total of 169 offences from October to April of this year compared to 167 offences for the same period the previous year. The vast majority of these offences are for nuisance and shop theft. Taking the figures as a whole we are pleased to say that the area is classed as a low crime area compared with other areas across the District and the local CDRP (Crime and Disorder Partnership) do not classify the area as a crime hotspot. I recognise that the broken windows are a problem, with 9 broken over the last 5 months. However there have been arrests. I have also spoken to PC Taylor of Greenhill; she has confirmed that she does not feel that the situation has deteriorated and that the incidents are sporadic and not indicative of a trend.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Harrison

It has been noted in the PACT (Partners and Communities Together) meetings that there have been incidents of criminality along the radial routes into Kidderminster including Comberton Hill. This has included the kicking in of shop premise windows, which is expensive. Perpetrators should be paying for replacement windows rather than getting away with this. Part of Greenhill is the Town Centre and I would ask Councillor Desmond to take this on board.

Response from Councillor Desmond

I have been liaising with the Head of Community and Partnership Services and the Partnerships and Projects Manager to try and get to the crux of the matter; however this is not a hotspot area. The Police have used cameras on Comberton Hill at night however the solution does not rest solely with the use of CCTV. I have every confidence that the Police will deal with the problem.

C.55

Chairman's Communications

The Council received a list of functions attended by the Chairman or Vice Chairman, copies of which had been circulated.

The Chairman thanked the Vice Chairman and the Past Chairman for attending meetings on his behalf on the 21st November 2008 as he had 3 simultaneous appointments diarised.

Further that Kidderminster Scouts were undertaking their annual Christmas post delivery at the civic centre and the Hub in Kidderminster and that there were stamps on sale in the Hub at 15 pence each, further that the service covered Kidderminster, Wolverley, Cookley and Blakedown but not Bewdley and Stourport as each had their own scheme.

DECISION: The report be noted.

C.56

Leader of the Council Announcements and Reports

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements explaining that the report was fuller than normal as there had been some significant national developments.

Council were advised that some Members had attended an open evening of Stourport Sports Club following its redevelopment and the new development of the indoor netball facility would open in the spring of next year.

All Members had been updated by Councillor Onslow on the Cemetery project and when the new site would be utilised.

The changing rooms in Habberly were now virtually complete and would be available for use in the next few weeks, and these were a significant improvement of the existing facilities.

The Council was subject to an economic and regeneration inspection by the Audit Commission over the next few weeks and he was grateful for Members' contribution to the process and to the Head of Chief Executive's Office and the Head of Planning Health and Environment for their contribution.

There was a new number to contact West Mercia Police for local issues.

The Settlement for 2009/10 was 1.29% and for 2010/11 was 1.1%.

The Council has currently has 9 million at risk in Icelandic Banks and Members had been provided with the latest information. Councillor Champion continued that he greatly regretted this situation and the angst that it had caused Members, residents and employees. Councillor Champion continued that he wanted to reassure Members that a series of decisions had been taken to ensure continued service delivery and that there was no financial crisis, however there were new challenges.

Councillor Champion continued that the Council was well placed to deal with the challenges ahead but that difficult decisions would have to be taken about employees and the buildings that the Council occupied.

C.57

Recommendations from Cabinet

Council received a report (copies of which had been circulated) on the recommendations from Cabinet to Council

The Council considered a recommendation from 24th July 2008 regarding the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006. Section 40 Duty to Conserve Biodiversity West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge.

DECISION

- 1. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) which placed a new duty to conserve biodiversity on all Public Authorities including Local Authorities be noted.**
- 2. That Wyre Forest District Council's commitment to the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge and the implementation of the duties contained within appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**

The Council considered a recommendation from 21st August 2008 regarding Review of Travel Token Conditions.

Councillor Shellie noted that it was regrettable that this had been delayed as the public could have benefited from this earlier.

DECISION: The rules of the current Transport Token Scheme be amended to remove the car use condition.

Council noted that the recommendation from 21st August 2008 regarding the Safeguarding Children Policy had been withdrawn.

The Council considered a recommendation from 25th September 2008 regarding Wyre Forest Empty Property Refresh

DECISION: That the Wyre Forest Property Strategy 2008 – 2011 as set out in the report to Cabinet be adopted.

Council noted that a recommendation from 25th September 2008 regarding the Free Swimming Initiative, Wyre Forest District Council was withdrawn.

The Council considered a recommendation from 23rd October 2008 regarding the report on Treasury Management.

Councillor Champion introduced this item advising Council that decisions had been taken to protect the Council's investments whilst ensuring that there was an adequate return on investments and that a decision had been taken to reduce the exposure to risk in this area until normality was restored in the financial markets.

In response to a question regarding scrutiny of the budget process, Councillor Champion responded that as Cabinet Leader he had established for expediency a review panel to review existing practices and to inform change. Further, that whilst it membership was Group Leaders it was for each political group to nominate a member for the panel and that in this instance this had been the Leaders of each group. Councillor Champion concluded that the

review panel would report on its findings at the end of January 2009.

Councillors Kelly, Martin and Oborski endorsed and supported the comments made by Councillor Campion.

DECISION:

- 1. That the remainder of 2008/09 investments are only placed with UK Banks and Building Societies which are rated in the Upper Limit Category, i.e. those with F1 +/-AA rating, along with the UK Government and other Local Authorities, with the exception being small balances of less than £500,000 which have been invested with the Council's own bankers the Co-Operative Bank PLC.**
- 2. That the Head of Financial Services be granted delegated authority to make investments with those organisations within the Middle Limit Category under exceptional circumstances.**

The Council considered a recommendation from 23rd October 2008 regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation Policy Refresh.

DECISION: The Wyre Forest District Council Houses in Multiple Occupation Policy 2008 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be adopted.

The Council considered a recommendation from 23rd October 2008 regarding the Review of Residential Caravan site Licence Model Conditions.

DECISION: The Wyre Forest District Council Residential Caravan Site Licence Model Conditions as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be adopted.

The Council considered a recommendation from 23rd October 2008 regarding the Single Equality Scheme.

DECISION: The Single Equality Scheme be adopted and implemented.

The Council considered a recommendation from 23rd October 2008 regarding the Wyre Forest District Rural Economic Strategy.

DECISION: That the Rural Economic Strategy be approved and adopted.

The Council considered a recommendation from 20th November 2008 regarding the Revised Partnership Framework

DECISION: The revised Strategic and Operational Level Partnership Framework as set out in Appendix A of the report to Cabinet be adopted.

The Council considered a recommendation from 20th November 2008 regarding the Adoption of a revised Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

DECISION:

- 1. The revised safety policy statement at Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet and the full Health and safety Policy, available on the Council's website be adopted.**
- 2. The Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council be authorised to sign the adoption statement and that the Head of Property and Operational Services be authorised to make any amendments that are required by changes to legislation as and when they occur.**

The Council considered a recommendation from 20th November 2008 regarding the Free Swimming Initiative, Wyre Forest District Council.

Councillor Hart introduced the report explaining to Members the background to the funding allocations from Central Government for the free swimming initiatives for under 16's and over 60's. Councillor Hart further explained that when the initiative was first considered by Cabinet it was anticipated that the Council would be able to access each funding stream for the individual initiatives and that DC Leisure would underwrite any additional costs to the schemes. However when the Government finally released the figures it became apparent that it was not financially viable for DC Leisure to underwrite the scheme and therefore the free swimming initiative for under 16's was withdrawn however the funding for free swimming for the over 60's would continue.

Councillor Ballinger expressed his disappointment that the Council was unable to support the free swimming initiative for under 16's adding that many Councillors had put forward their community leadership allowances into the free swimming initiative. However he acknowledged that partners could not be asked to support the costs of this initiative whilst commenting that that he felt that young people in Wyre Forest had been badly let down.

Councillor Onslow stated that as a parent of young children she felt she was inundated with leisure offers for the under 16's.

Councillor Martin stated that he also felt that the under 16's were being let down and that the health and well being of under 16's was of paramount importance and this was an opportunity to do something positive. He asked that the administration looked at this again.

Councillor Oborski stated that for young people who could afford to access leisure services the provision was excellent, however overall the provision for young people was abysmal. There was statistical evidence that the free swimming initiative benefited children in more deprived wards, and that the scheme was reaching children whose parents could not afford to send them swimming. Councillor Oborski concluded that this was a major concern.

Councillor Campion explained to Council that offers of this nature had to be sustainable and affordable.

Councillor Hart concluded that Wyre Forest offered excellent facilities for young people in the District and he was disappointed that the Council was unable to take up the offer.

DECISION:

- 1. The Head of Community and Partnership Services in consultation with the Head of Financial Services, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Cabinet Member for Leisure Services be requested to progress the Government Free Swimming initiative for the over 60's only (Pot 1). This external funding of £34,916 per annum will be shown in the Revenue Budget for 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.**
- 2. The Head of Community and Partnership Services in consultation with the Head of Financial Services, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Cabinet Member for Leisure Services be given delegated authority to agree with the Council's partners DC Leisure the details of the scheme.**

The Council considered a recommendation from 20th November 2008 regarding the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Revision Draft Submitted Proposals.

DECISION:

- 1. The response to the West Midlands RSS2 Draft Preferred Options proposals as set out in the Appendix to the report to Cabinet be approved.**

- 2. The comments on the Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners report as set out in paragraphs 4.25 and 4.26 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**

The Council considered a recommendation from 20th November 2008 regarding Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework.

DECISION:

- 1. The following Local Development Framework Development Plan Documents be approved for the purposes of consultation in accordance with Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as amended.**
 - Core Strategy: Preferred Options, (attached at Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet).**
 - Site Allocations and Policies: Issues and Options, (attached at Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet).**
 - Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan: Issues and Options, (attached at Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet)**
- 2. The Head of Planning, Health and Environment be given delegated power to determine the final format and presentation of the papers.**
- 3. The arrangements for the public consultation on the Development Plan Documents be undertaken in accordance with the Consultation Plan attached at Appendix 4 of the report to Cabinet**

The Council considered a recommendation from 20th November 2008 regarding Recovering Disabled Facility Grants through Property Charges.

DECISION:

- 1. The Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2008 be amended as of 1st December 2008 to incorporate the recovery of Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) monies upon the sale of properties as set out in the Disabled Facilities Grant (conditions relating to approval of payment of grant) General Consent 2008.**
- 2. A charge be applied, for 10 years from the date of completion of works, for the cost of works above £5,000, to the maximum of £10,000 on owner-occupied properties subject to the receipt of a DFG.**

- 3. The Head of Planning, Health & Environment be given delegated authority to waive charges which fall within the cases set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report to Cabinet, subject to the provision of satisfactory written evidence to support any such claim and that a mechanism for appeal be introduced for any decision with which the claimant is not satisfied.**

The Council considered a recommendation from 20th November 2008 regarding the Budget Outlook, Cost Saving Measures.

Councillor Campion outlined the rationale for the decisions, explaining that following a report to Cabinet of budget variations to the Council's detriment, management decisions were needed to bring the budget back to balance. These included reviewing divisional management structures, office accommodation, reducing costs, single site and assessing current needs, also reducing the overtime budget and reducing the budget for Member's training.

Councillor Hart added that it was important that measures were put in place to bring the finances back on course so that the Council could consider a balanced budget.

Councillor Martin asked for an amendment to recommendation 'h' so that it read 'To continue to identify and bring to Council for decision cost saving initiatives.' Councillor Martin continued that it was important that staff levels were right to ensure that the Council was run efficiently and effectively. He concluded that cost saving initiatives should have the Council's agreement.

Councillor Oborski stated that she was pleased that there were cost saving measures but was concerned that this could mean changing Council policy and that this was a matter for the Full Council and should policies require amendment they should be returned to Council for debate. Councillor Oborski expressed her concerns regarding waste collection and recycling in Wyre Forest and the cost implications to the Council. Councillor Oborski also asked for clarification on the progress of single site.

Councillor Campion advised Members that the reason that the recommendations had followed this route was for expediency and that they were framed within the current budget and policy framework. However operational freedom was needed within the framework to take prudent efficiency measures. The Council needed to look and review the properties that it owned or leased including Vicar Street. Chief Officers were being asked to explore possibilities of shared working in terms of space and to review any buildings that were rented and to consider if it was prudent to do so in the current economic climate. Councillor Campion continued that he asked Members to vote against the amendment, and reiterated the value he placed upon the decision making made in the Council

chamber. He concluded that Officers had been asked to come up with options to replace expensive waste and recycling collections and that these would be considered by a scrutiny committee.

Councillor Stokes referred to the reserves as detailed in 'f' of the recommendations and asked if the money obtained from housing would be considered as part of this process.

Councillor Champion stated that this was absolutely not the case. The purpose of single site was to reduce the costs of the Council, and this has to be considered in light of the current economic climate.

Councillor Kelly spoke in support of the motion adding that he felt all of the Council should be involved in these decisions.

Councillor N Thomas addressed Council stating that single site was also a capital project.

Councillor Martin stated that there were many areas for example redundancies that would fall under the budget and policy framework and it would be unfortunate if changes were identified and implemented as cost savings that would change the framework. Therefore the Leader should accept the amendment, as the current recommendations allowed the Leader to make these decisions unopposed.

Councillor Champion responded that he was not proposing to make amendments to the budget and policy framework, only that approval was requested to tweak existing budgets. He reminded Members that it was Council who set the Budget and Policy Framework and that this was a formalisation of the current processes that needed to be undertaken. Councillor Champion advised Members that Single Site was not an exception and if single site required further discussion this item would return to Council to be discussed.

Upon a vote the amendment was lost.

Upon a vote the substantive motion was agreed as follows.

DECISION:

To authorise the Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) in consultation with the Leader of the Council to take the following cost saving measures: -

- a) Review Divisional Management Structures and Business Processes.**
- b) Review the current office accommodation with a view to reducing costs.**

- c) **Reduce overtime costs by £100,000 in 2008/2009.**
- d) **Reduce the Member Training Budget by £6,000 in 2008/09.**
- e) **Continue a freeze on the Capital Programme with the exception of ICT, Waste and Recycling and Cemetery projects.**
- f) **Utilise existing earmarked reserves, as appropriate.**
- g) **Endorse action already taken by the Cabinet, the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team.**
- h) **Continue to identify and implement cost saving initiatives.**
- i) **Further exceptions be made to the Capital Programme where the schemes are required by statute, contractually committed or otherwise critical to the delivery of services.**
- j) **Provide monthly reports of cumulative savings to Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team.**

C.58

Motions submitted under Standing Order D1 (1)

A Motion was received from Independent Community and Health Concern (copies of which had been circulated), that 'This Council urges the reinstatement of coach parking provision on the Stourport East Side Car Parks.

Councillor Dixon Sheppard introduced the motion and rationale for its proposal suggesting that provision be made for coaches to park on the Riverside Car Parks to allow elderly or infirm visitors more convenient access to the town. He added that he felt that the current parking provision was discouraging coach firms considering Stourport as a destination.

Councillor Onslow responded that coaches were clearly allowed to park on the Severn Meadows and Riverside Car Parks and that there was signage to confirm this. Moreover that she had confirmed with the Head of Operational Services that no complaints had been received on this issue. Councillor Onslow concluded that the motion could not be supported.

After further discussion Councillor Sheppard withdrew the motion.

C.59

Urgent Motions submitted under standing order D1 (7)

No urgent motions were received.

C.60 Ethics and Standards Committee

Council received a report (copies of which had been circulated) on the appointment of a Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee following the resignation of Mr C J Brighton as Chairman. Council thanked Mr Brighton for his work and wished him a speedy recovery.

DECISION:

- 1. That the Reverend J A Cox be appointed as Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee.**
- 2. That Mrs C A Noons be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee.**

C.61 Urgent Decisions made outside the Budget and Policy Framework

The Council received a report (copies of which had been circulated) on the urgent decisions made by the Leader of the Council as required by Rule 6 of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules contained with Part 4 of the Constitution. The decisions related to Flood Hardship Grants and Proposed Closure of Post Offices.

Council were advised of the reasons for the urgency and the need for the decisions to be taken within a strict timescale that unfortunately did not allow for the items to be considered by Council.

DECISION:

- 1. That the urgent decisions taken by the Leader of the Council on 8th and 17th September be noted.**
- 2. That where any local service is under threat of downgrading or closure, perceived or actual, the Cabinet is authorised to:**
 - 1) Decide the nature and scope of the response including public meetings, scrutiny reviews, written submissions, campaigns, delegations and lobbying, as appropriate.**
 - 2) Report to Council on the progress of any campaign to save services that are under threat of downgrading or closure.**

C.62 Constitutional Updates

The Council received a report (copies of which had been circulated) on proposals to amend the constitution. Councillor

Campion thanked Councillor Martin for bring to the Council's attention deficiencies in the constitution regarding the cancellation of meetings. Further discussion ensued and it was agreed that the recommendation 1 be amended to include 'when the agenda closes at 12 noon on the day of publication'

DECISION:

- 1. In addition to the Annual Council, the Council will hold at least four other ordinary meetings in the Municipal Year, unless there is insufficient business when the agenda closes at 12 noon on the day of publication, and the Chairman, or in his absence the Vice Chairman, decides that the meeting should be cancelled. The meetings shall be as nearly as possible at regular intervals, the dates of which will be agreed at the Annual Meeting.**
- 2. The only business that will be dealt with at an Extraordinary Meeting are items for which the meeting has been specifically convened but limited to urgent or emergency items.**
- 3. A Code of Practice for speaking at Scrutiny Committees as detailed in Appendix A be adopted.**
- 4. The Terms of Reference for the Budget Review Panel as detailed in Appendix B be adopted.**

C.63 Exclusion of the press and public

Decision: Under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 on the Act.

C.64 Summary of the Minutes

The following proceedings were considered after the press and public had been excluded from the meeting. A summary of the minutes relating to those items has been made as 'exempt information' would be disclosed if the minutes were published in full.

C.65 Recommendations from Cabinet

Council received a report (copies of which had been circulated) on the recommendations from Cabinet to Council

The Council considered a recommendation from 23rd October 2008 regarding Wyre Forest Community Housing Services contract renewal.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.05