

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,  
KIDDERMINSTER**

**27TH FEBRUARY 2013 (6.00PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: J Aston, G W Ballinger, R Bishop, C Brewer, J-P Champion, S J M Clee, E Davies, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, N Gale, B T Glass, D R Godwin, J Greener, I Hardiman, P B Harrison, J A Hart, M J Hart, P V Hayward, V Higgs, A T Hingley, T Ingham, M B Kelly, N Knowles, H J Martin, D C H McCann, B McFarland, F M Oborski, T L Onslow, J Phillips, M Price, M Rayner, C Rogers, M A Salter, A M Sewell, J A Shaw, D R Sheppard, N J Thomas, S J Williams, and G C Yarranton.

**C.61**

**Prayers**

Prayers were said by Monsignor Canon J Moran from St Mary's Church, Harvington.

**C.62**

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C D Nicholls, and J W Parish.

**C.63**

**Declarations of Interests by Members**

There were no declarations of interest.

**C.64**

**Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.65**

**Public Participation**

No members of the public addressed the meeting.

**C.66**

**Questions**

The Council received a report setting out a range of questions from Councillors Knowles, and Rayner. Two further urgent questions were tabled with the agreement of the Chairman from Councillors Phillips and M Hart.

**Question 1. From Councillor N Knowles to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services Councillor M Hart.**

Given that many municipal contracts for waste collection and deposit are advertised internationally – for instance the municipality of Cinquecitta, Italy, invited tenders for door to door collection of domestic waste tenders by 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013 (Daily Telegraph) – contract value £5,970,352 Euros plus VAT – what safeguards can be taken to ensure that Wyre Forest District Council keeps its contract ‘in-house’ and we continue to employ our own local workforce to collect domestic waste in Wyre Forest?

**Response from Councillor M Hart**

With reference to the question about ensuring that Wyre Forest District Council continue to employ our in house own workforce, my response is that if we were to consider outsourcing, like any other authority in England and Wales, we would have to be mindful of the regulations of 2006 and any proposals would have to be advertised in the normal way. I place on record my thanks for the sterling work that the refuse and recycling crews, some 92% of whom live in the District undertake in this District. Whilst of course we can, in the future, look to see how we provide the service, we have no plans to externalise our waste contract.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor N Knowles**

In relation to this whole business of maintaining the in house service and being bound to notice the example of what Cinquecitta, Italy did and the choice in tendering, I am heartened by the comments that the administration has no plans to put the contract out to tender; this is a good commitment and I do hope you could respond to pressures from government to put more services out to private contract.

**Response from Councillor M Hart**

I’m not that close to government and of course there are no plans in the foreseeable future. We have all kinds of services, waste or whatever, and the most important thing is to serve the local electorate and bring better services for the tax payers. There are no firm plans in the immediate short term future but that is not to say that future administrations won’t look at it and, in terms of government, I haven’t met any colleagues to externalise this service.

**Question 2. From Councillor N Knowles to the Cabinet Member for Place Shaping, Councillor A Hingley**

Would the Council support naming the street between the Town Hall in Kidderminster and Husum Bridge, Richard Baxter Walk and that we ask the landowners for permission to name it such.

**Response from Councillor A Hingley**

Thank you for your question, and I like your idea. It is recognised that Richard Baxter is an important person for Kidderminster, however, when

charging street names, the Council has to be mindful of the rules and regulations that cover such activity and the Council would also need the permission of Hendersons to carry out consultation. Moreover the Royal Mail would not be keen on changing established street names. It may be more appropriate to name a new street after Richard Baxter.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor N Knowles**

I am disappointed with the response, as Richard Baxter is really associated with Kidderminster and a new street would not be in the heart of the town or public activity. We should not be put off by the Royal Mail or the cost. Kidderminster needs identification and the identification will bring extra interest and commerce.

**Response from Councillor A Hingley**

If changes went through, it would be Richard Baxter Walk, Weavers' Wharf and the cost of the changes, including postcodes, would be payable by the users of units 1 – 10. The Council needs to use common sense in this matter and if Richard Baxter was here today he wouldn't mind a new road being named after him.

**Question 3. From Councillor M Rayner to the Leader of the Council, Councillor J-P Campion**

How are outside contractors monitored in the delivery of their building project like Wyre Forest House by the District Council?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

Wyre Forest House has been externally project managed by RLB and also monitored by an identified officer within the district council, i.e. the Chief Executive.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor M Rayner**

I am concerned and would like reassurance that the Chief Executive had input in to the monitoring the project and what the Leader considers his role in this remit?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

Whilst there have been changes to the role of Leader within this authority there are clear distinctions between the head of paid service and an elected councillor. I am not the chief executive and don't want to be so; I have every confidence in the stance of the project and I am confident of the ability to deliver major projects well. There was appropriate oversight and regular briefings were given, it was a major project that was complex and I was pleased that we took appropriate advice on the project that you refer to.

**Question 4. Question from Councillor M Rayner to the Leader of the Council, Councillor J-P Campion**

What was the carbon footprint for the Ege carpets to be put into Wyre Forest House?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

The Council does not hold the information being required.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor M Rayner**

Has a comparison with Ege carpets been made on moving the carpets from Denmark; what does this say about the incumbent decision makers?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

Nothing would please me more than to spend money on services in the District, however the law doesn't allow it and I do not hold that information.

**Question 5. Question from Councillor M Rayner to the Leader of the Council, Councillor J-P Campion**

What materials make up the carpet that has been put into Wyre Forest House?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

I don't hold the information that the Councillor requires.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor M Rayner**

I believe that the product is polypropylene which is not sustainable or renewable. Why not wool which is sustainable and renewable?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

I am surprised that you asked when you already know the answer already and wool does come from sheep.

**Question 6. Question from Councillor M Rayner to the Leader of the Council, Councillor J-P Campion**

Can you please tell us what is happening to the heating system in Wyre Forest House?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

The heating system isn't working as designed or specified, we have a contract in place and every effort is being made to resolve this issue. There are temporary heaters in the building. The builders have tried some changes, there are to be further studies and we are working with the contractors to get it fixed so that it is the right environment for staff to work

in. It was not effective at the beginning but at the moment we need to protect the Council's legal position.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor M Rayner**

Thank you for your comprehensive answer. I am aware that electricity is being used and who is paying for it. I am also concerned about the system being applied to the leisure centre.

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

This matter is being tested through the contract and we will make sure that we hold the contractors to account and the Chief Executive is acting for us. There is no planning application for the Leisure Centre yet. Ground source heating was the right thing to do; with hindsight there have been problems but ultimately it was the right thing for this site. It is working but not at the levels it was expected to. If any Member wishes to speak to me in private please speak to me or the Chief Executive.

**Urgent Questions**

**Question 1. Question from Councillor J Phillips to the Leader of the Council J-P Campion**

With the Independent Police & Crime Commissioner, Bill Longmore, announcing his intention to support closing a number of police stations and bases within West Mercia, including Bewdley, there will be some in our community that will be concerned by the uncertainty this news brings.

Could I ask the Leader of the Council, as a matter of urgency to assist West Mercia Police in identifying an alternative police base (preferably in a co-location/partnership basis) within Bewdley to ensure local policing can continue to be delivered at the heart of the Town?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

I am concerned to hear this and will be supporting consultation so that there is community consensus. The Police need to be face to face and I would ask that the Chief Executive makes contact with the Chief Constable's team and other public sector partners to make sure that the levels of police can be maintained in the District.

**Supplementary question from Councillor Phillips**

I am pleased to hear the Leader shares this view. There are many commercial interests in the town centre and Wribbenhall; would the Leader consider suggesting to the Police a location outside of a public sector organisation to be considered. Outside bodies and groups would welcome the modest income this would bring and the added profile.

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

I will take this on board.

**Question 2. Question from Councillor M Hart to the Leader of the Council J-P Campion**

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that the news outlined in today's Joint Services Review announcement that all three existing acute sites with Worcestershire are to remain open is excellent news for local residents and, furthermore, specifically for Wyre Forest would he welcome the fact that services are to remain at the Kidderminster site and endorse the fact that wherever possible residents of Wyre Forest wish that their services to remain local?

**Response from Councillor J-P Campion**

I welcome the announcement today, it is good news for our community in Wyre Forest and the future of the Kidderminster Hospital site. There has been a lot of cross party co-ordination and indeed the devil will be in the detail,, it is good news for Kidderminster and a positive day for people power.

**C.67 Chairman's Communications**

Council received a tabled list of appointments carried out by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council. In addition the Chairman announced that Alderman Mrs Mills had celebrated her 101st birthday and that a card and congratulations had been sent. Best wishes and a speedy recovery were also sent to Councillor J Parish. The Chairman concluded by advising Members that there were a few places available at his charity dinner.

**C.68 Leader of the Council Announcements**

Copies of the Leader's announcements were circulated to all Members. Members were further advised that the application for the Hoobrook relief road which would connect the Worcester Road with the Stourport Road was being progressed and, if the application was successful, would start in the next 24 months. Further, that the State of Area debate would take place on 7<sup>th</sup> March which would be webcast and consultation was being undertaken on the new leisure centre.

In response to a Member's question regarding the money being returned from the Icelandic Banks, Members were advised that as preferential creditors we had seen impressive returns and were expecting to receive nearly all of the money invested. Moreover, that the Council wished to get most value back and that might take time rather than to rush things.

**C.69 Motions submitted under standing orders**

Council received the following motion, from Councillor J Shaw, Leader of the Labour Group.

*"Council resolves to support in principle the appointment of a Wyre Forest District councillor as Armed Forces Champion, the primary function of the office to be improving access to services and support for serving and ex-service men and women.*

*In order to appreciate fully the scope of this role, Council delegates to Scrutiny the task of setting up a working party in a timescale which would enable an appointment to be made for the new municipal year."*

Council briefly debated the motion and agreed that it was very welcome. Subject to the second paragraph of the motion being deleted, Council voted unanimously to support the motion.

**C.69 Urgent motions submitted under standing orders**

No urgent motions were received.

**C.70 Community Governance Review**

Council received a report from the Director of Community Assets and Localism of the community Governance Review of Kidderminster

Members debated at length the merits of the review, supporting their arguments with recollections of the history of Kidderminster and the merits in allowing the electorate to respond to the consultation.

**Decision**

- 1. The Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review be agreed as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 2. The Director of Community Assets and Localism be given delegated authority to make any minor modifications to the Terms of Reference as necessary during the course of the review.**

**C71 Elections and Election Fees**

Council received a report from the Returning Officer on the elections held in May and November of 2012 and the proposed fee structure for future elections, referendums and polls.

Members were reminded that Town Councils already paid fees should they hold a by-election and the revisions to the level of the fees that would be charged were modest.

**Decision:**

- 1. That the Returning Officers report on the elections held in May and November 2012 be noted.**
- 2. The revised scheme of fees and charges for the local elections and referendums as set in Appendix 3 of the report to Council take effect from 1 March 2013.**

**C.72 Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2013 – 14**

Council received the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for 2013 -14 with the purpose of deciding the scheme of allowances that should be paid to Members for the financial year 2013/14.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, stating that he felt it was flawed and based purely on averaging out the level of allowances paid across all of the County Districts and Boroughs. Moreover that the Panel had no understanding of the role of Councillors in Wyre Forest and there were inconsistencies in their approach. Members were reminded that the allowances had been frozen from 2008 and that the current rate of allowances was justifiable.

The Labour Group tabled an amendment to the substantive report as detailed below;

The Leader of the Labour Party introduced the motion and explained the rationale for amendments. The motion was vigorously debated with Members speaking both for and against the amendment; however, upon a vote, the amendment was lost.

Members then moved to debate the substantive item. This was thoroughly debated with Members speaking both against the substantive item and in favour.

**Decision:**

- 1. The Council had regard to the conclusions and recommendations of the IRP when agreeing the scheme of allowances as set out in Appendix A of the report to Council for the financial year 2013 -14, with the addition that an allowance for the Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee be agreed.**
- 2. The Director of Community Assets and Localism be authorised to amend the constitution as appropriate to give effect to the Council's decisions.**

**C.73 Policy And Budget Framework – Matters which require a decision by Council**

**Treasury Management Strategy 2013/14**

Council received the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

**Decision:**

- 1. The restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2013/14 to 2015/16 included in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet be approved and the change in the External Debt Indicator explained in paragraph 16.4 of the report to Cabinet be noted.**



2. **The updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 and the detailed criteria are included in Section 10 and Appendix 5 of the report to Cabinet) be approved.**
3. **The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**
4. **The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet be approved.**

### **Wyre Forest District Revised Statement of Community Involvement Adoption**

Council received the recommendations of the Council meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013

**Decision: The Revised Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix 2 to the report to Cabinet be adopted and that the responses to the representations made, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report to Cabinet be endorsed.**

### **C.74 Budget Proposals 2013/2016**

The Leader of the Council presented the administration's proposals for the budget. He thanked the members of the Corporate Management Team and officers for the work put into the budget proposals for this year. He explained that the Council had some difficult decisions to make. It was perceived that the proposals would benefit the community by offering business rate relief and an apprenticeship scheme.

The Leader advised Members that he had been pleased how well the budget scrutiny process had gone and comments had been taken on board from the alternative budgets received from other political groups.

A robust debate ensued on the budget proposals, during which Members of each of the political groups made their comments on the proposals.

The Labour Group presented an amendment to the budget which asked for the Council to create a new post of an Empty Homes Officer as it was felt that this could help to bring the housing waiting list down. However upon a vote the amendment was lost.

A Member asked why the seconded Empty Homes Officer had not been continued as it had proved successful in bringing some homes in the district back into use. Members were informed that the appointment had been for a fixed term only using windfall monies from Central Government.

The Labour Group presented a second amendment to the budget asking to

increase the amount of resources for the disabled facilities grants. This was discussed at length, however upon a vote the amendment was lost.

At the conclusion of the debate, the decision was carried.

1. **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13 ONWARDS** (pages 91-101 of the report to Council)
  - 1.1 The updated Base Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewal Schedule as presented to the Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and further amended to incorporate the Cabinet Proposals identified in Appendix 2 along with the updated Prudential Indicators presented in the separate report on this agenda be approved.
2. **FEES AND CHARGES** (pages 47-86 as updated of the report to Council)
  - 2.1 The fees and charges, noting the recommendations from the Licensing and Environmental Committee, as attached in Appendix 1 be approved.
3. **THREE YEAR BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2013/16** (pages 1-45 as updated of the report to Council)
  - 3.1 The contents of the Reports of the Director of Resources on the Three Year Budget and Policy Framework 2013-2016 (pages 1-45 incorporating the Base Budget Variations (pages 27-28) supplemented by the updated report approved by Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013, be *ENDORSED* and in doing so *APPROVE* the Revised Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2012/13.
  - 3.2 That any Final Account savings arising from 2012/16 over and above the target allowed for in the Council's Finance Strategy, together with surplus Earmarked Reserves, be allocated to the Working Balance be approved.
  - 3.3 The following General Fund Revenue Budget be *APPROVED* including *CABINET PROPOSALS (Appendix 2)* and *FEES AND CHARGES* as proposed by Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013 and related amendments (*Appendix 1 of the report to Council*):

**Agenda Item No. 12**

	<b>Revised 2012/13 £</b>	<b>2013/14 £</b>	<b>2014/15 £</b>	<b>2015/16 £</b>
Net Expenditure on Services (per Appendix 3 (New Appendix 3 updating the position as at 22 <sup>nd</sup> January and now taking into account Social Fund Grant ) <u>Add/(Less)</u> Cabinet Proposals - (Appendix 2)	13,076,950	12,691,410	12,410,560	12,055,100
Net Expenditure	13,076,950	12,809,220	12,222,780	11,791,530
Contribution from Reserves	(344,150)	(524,300)	(636,070)	(665,860)
Net Budget Requirement	12,732,800	12,284,920	11,586,710	11,125,670
<u>Less</u> Business Rates, Revenue Support Grant and Collection Fund Surplus	5,615,730	6,179,120	5,390,570	4,933,200
Council Tax Transitional Grant	-	28,630	-	
Community Right to Bid/Challenge	-	16,400	16,400	-
Homelessness Funding	109,270	108,650	108,650	-
Council Tax Income	<u>£7,007,800</u>	<u>£5,952,120</u>	<u>£6,071,090</u>	<u>£6,192,470</u>
Wyre Forest District Council Tax Level assuming no change in 2013/14 then a 2% increase 2014/15 onwards.	<u>£197.62</u>	<u>£197.62</u>	<u>£201.57</u>	<u>£205.60</u>

**Final Government Grant Analysis**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Value of Government Support £</b>	<b>Decrease</b>	
		<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>2012/13</b>	<b>5,391,294</b>		
<b>2013/14</b>	<b>4,884,507</b>	<b>506,787</b>	<b>9.40</b>
<b>2014/15</b>	<b>4,095,955</b>	<b>788,552</b>	<b>16.14</b>
<b>2015/16</b>	<b>3,882,440</b>	<b>213,515</b>	<b>5.21</b>

**Note to Government Grant Analysis table: These figures relate to business rates and revenue support grant; they exclude Grants for Homelessness and Council Tax Support, and also Transitional and Freeze Grants (source LG Futures as updated for the final Grant Settlement). The new funding regime for Business Rates greatly increases the significance of the collection of Business Rates, with more emphasis on the actual sums collected rather than collection rates. This change of emphasis may require the Director of Resources to consider deployment of additional staffing resource to ensure maintenance of the Business Rates baseline,**

including even closer liaison with the Valuation Office. It is hoped this can be achieved within existing resources.

**3.4 Reserves available as part of the Three Year Financial Strategy:**

<b>Reserves Statement</b>	<b>2012/13 £'000</b>	<b>2013/14 £'000</b>	<b>2014/15 £'000</b>	<b>2015/16 £'000</b>
Reserves as at 1 April	2,511	2,167	1,643	1,007
Contribution to/(from) Reserves	(344)	(524)	(636)	(666)
Reserves as at 31 March	2,167	1,643	1,007	341

**3.5 That the decisions on use of the Social Fund Grant, including any revision of the provisional distribution reflected in the base budget, should lie outside the normal Financial Regulation requirements for Supplementary Estimates and Virements be agreed.**

**3.6 Notes the following updates to the Risk Matrix as published on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2012:**

- **Since the Financial Strategy was presented to Cabinet in December 2012, the position regarding the Contractor’s Claim for the construction of the New Headquarters has developed further. The financial impact of finalising the account is unknown at this stage and could vary from zero to a potentially significant sum. This will continue to be managed by the Chief Executive and Director of Community Assets and Localism in close liaison with our specialist project managers.**
- **The continued depressed economy and resultant poor property market continues to represent significant risk to the financial strategy in terms of assumed funding from asset disposals and asset transfers. It is hoped that the position will improve, but assumptions made within the budget will continue to be carefully monitored against results achieved and any significant variances included in future reports to Members.**

**4 COUNCIL TAX**

**4.1 SETS a Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property of £197.62 for 2013/14 (£197.62 2011/12) which represents no increase on Council Tax from 2012/13.**

**4.2 ADOPTS A PLANNING ASSUMPTION OF a provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2014/15 of £201.57 and £205.60 in 2015/16 an increase of 2 % per annum over 2013/14.**

**4.3 NOTES that the new Council Tax Discount Scheme approved by Council in November 2012 (subject to minor revision due to a removal of the Class L, repossessed properties, Council Tax exemption) will be effective from 1<sup>st</sup>**

April 2013, and that there is a risk from the scheme that there will be a greater financial burden on the Council.

- 4.4 **NOTES** the decision taken to join the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool to protect the Council from any business rate reductions and help maximise the benefit by retaining more of the business rates delivered from economic growth within Worcestershire.

**C.75 Council Tax 2013/2014**

Council received a report, the purpose of which was to enable Council to calculate and set the Council Tax for 2013/14.

**Decision: The formal Council Tax Resolution 2013/14 as set out at Appendix 1 of the report to Council, taking into account the information contained in Appendices 2 to 5 of the report to Council be approved.**

There being no further business the meeting finished at 21.52.