

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

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

15TH MAY 2013 (6.00PM)

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, C D Nicholls, F M Oborski, T L Onslow, J W Parish, 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.01 Prayers

Prayers were said by Reverend Mary Austin from Trinity Methodist Church, Kidderminster.

C.02 Election of Chairman

Councillor F M Oborski was nominated as Chairman. This was moved by Councillor T Ingham and seconded by Councillor M J Hart.

Decision: Councillor F M Oborski be elected Chairman of the Council for the municipal year 2013/14.

C.03 Chairman – Investiture and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

After being invested with her Chain of Office, Councillor F M Oborski made her Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chairman, and expressed her thanks for her election.

C.04 Chairman's Response

The Chairman informed Members that she would be a Chairman for the whole of the district and Councillor M Price would be her consort and he was presented with a badge.

C.05 Retiring Chairman

The retiring Chairman was thanked for all the hard work he had done for the Council over the past two years. He had been fair and had served the chamber well. He has done the jobs to the highest expectations. Members all agreed that he had conducted himself in a superb manner.

C.06 Retiring Chairman – Presentation of Badges

The retiring chairman was presented with a Past Chairman's badge. Councillor Clee thanked Members for the support he had been given and he had enjoyed the past two years and had met some wonderful people. He had presented a cheque to Kemp Hospice, which had been his chosen charity, for £4,850. He thanked the Committee Section, the Corporate Management Team and in particular Karen Walsh (Members Secretary) for all the hard work they had all done to assist him.

C.07 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Councillor J-P Campion nominated Councillor D McCann as Vice-Chairman and this was seconded by M J Hart.

Councillor G W Ballinger nominated Councillor B Glass as Vice-Chairman and this was seconded by Councillor E Davies. However, upon a vote Councillor D McCann was elected as Vice-Chairman.

Decision: Councillor D McCann be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the municipal year 2013/14.

C.08 Vice-Chairman – Investiture and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

After being invested with his Badge of Office, Councillor D McCann made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Vice-Chairman.

C.09 Vice-Chairman's Response

Councillor D McCann thanked Members for the confidence that had been placed in him to fulfil this role and that he would support the Chairman to the best of his ability over the next 12 months.

C.10 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

C.11 Declarations of Interests by Members

There were no declarations of interests.

C.12 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2013 and 13th March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.13 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

C.14 Questions

The Council had received one question from Councillor M Rayner, directed at the Leader of the Council.

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

What are the actual costs or savings for Wyre Forest House compared to the costs or savings to the last predicted budget costs or savings?

Response from Councillor J-P Campion

Thank you, a full report on the detail which will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the Summer of 2013.

Supplementary Question from Councillor M Rayner

Thank you, but I would like to know why the accounts have not been made sooner and what effect the ground source heating had had and the cost of the supplementary heating which has not been published.

Response from Councillor J-P Campion

As I alluded when the question was raised, this matter is still in the process of sensitive contract negotiations and the Council are looking to close the account. It is not in the Council's interest for this to be made public as it would compromise our position and it is not best for the people we serve the information will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The ongoing efficiency problems of the ground source heat pump are known and the Council is working with the contractors to resolve them. We have a Build and Design Contract specification and will be going through that process to sort it out.

C.15 Chairman's Communications

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

The Chairman asked Members to join her for a buffet after the meeting and asked all Members to take a jam-jar for a copper collection for her chosen charities – Kidderminster Hospital League of Friends Scanner Appeal and the foodbank from Baxter Church, Kidderminster. It was hoped the jam-jar appeal would raise at least £10 per jar. She advised Members she had events planned such as a quiz at the Civic Hall in October 2013, a concert at Kidderminster Town Hall in March/April 2014, a dinner at La Brasserie and a Summer BBQ at Bodenham Arboretum.

C.16 Leader's Announcements and Report

A copy of the Leader's announcements had been circulated to all Members.

C.17 Members' Annual Activity Reports and Attendance 2012/2013

Council received the schedule of Members' Annual Reports which gave details of activities in their role as District Councillors for the 2012/2013 municipal year and received a record of attendance.

There was a new box on the form report showing absence and which explained why attendance was low.

In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed which meetings were included in the attendance figures.

Decision: The reports be noted.

C.18 Annual Reports for the Municipal Year 2012/2013

Council received the Annual reports from the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Ethics and Standards Committee.

Decision: The reports be noted.

C.19 Political and Constitutional Structures 2013/2014

Council received a report from the Director of Community Assets and Localism on the proposed political and constitutional structures for 2013/2014.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and advised Members that Councillor N Gale be appointed as the Armed Forces Champion and Councillor R Bishop be the Council nomination for Disability Action Wyre Forest.

In light of the financial challenges the Council were to face and the need for a new Corporate Plan, a new Committee was proposed Strategic Review Committee.

Councillor G W Ballinger nominated Councillor E Davies to be the Council representative on the Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and upon a vote the proposal was lost.

Councillor J Shaw nominated Councillor N Knowles to be the Chairman of the Strategic Review Committee as it was felt that this should be chaired by a Member of the opposition group. However, upon a vote this was lost.

Councillor J Shaw nominated Councillor N Knowles to be the Council representative for the Armed Forces Champion. A debate ensued and it was agreed that the Council would appoint two Members, i.e. Councillor N Gale and Councillor N Knowles.

Members were informed that only three appointments were due for renewal on the Community Housing Group.

Members were advised that the dates for the Strategic Review Committee were provisional and would be confirmed in due course.

Decision:

- 1. The proposed Political Management Structure for 2013/2014 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Council be approved.**
- 2. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees as contained in Appendix 2 of the report to Council be agreed.**
- 3. The Municipal Calendar as set out in Appendix 3 of the report to Council be agreed.**
- 4. The appointments to outside bodies as set out in Appendix 4 of the report to Council be agreed.**
- 5. The revisions to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 5 of the report to Council be agreed.**
- 6. The revised chart of political balance to reflect the new committee structure as set out in Appendix 6 of the report to Council be approved.**
- 7. Councillor N Gale and Councillor N Knowles be appointed to serve as the Armed Forces Champion for Wyre Forest District Council.**
- 8. The Director of Community Assets & Localism be authorised to settle any outstanding details relating to the political structures and to make changes as necessary to the Council's Constitution to give effect to the Council's decisions and any other revisions necessary to reflect needs or circumstances.**

C.20 Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders

A notice of motion was received in accordance in Standing Orders regarding the Living Wage.

Councillor J Shaw advised Members that under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council could promote wellbeing across the population of the local area and believed that it was only fair that lower paid workers should receive better remuneration.

Members unanimously agreed that the living wage should be implemented

Decision:

Council resolves to promote the Living Wage principle in its contracts with potential contractors and while acknowledging the limitations set down by European procurement regulations, Council

believes that, for work carried out on its behalf by contractors, employees working on qualifying service contracts should be paid at Living Wage rates.

C.21 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders

No urgent motions were received under standing orders.

C.22 Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission in respect of Council Size

Council received a report from the Chief Executive which asked Council to consider the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission about the size of the Council.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and informed Members that the report would need to be slightly amended following the new Council structure which had been adopted at this meeting and following feedback from the meetings held with the Boundary Commission.

There had been significant changes for the Council over the years, and it was felt that now was the right time to reduce the number of Councillors. There had been reductions in the number of staff and it was only right to reduce the number of Councillors. There could be the creation of a Town Council for Kidderminster. Members were also advised that there were many stages to go through, i.e. the cycle of elections and how wards would be made up and this would be all need to be done by elections in 2015.

A debate ensued and the following was discussed.

Councillor M J Hart seconded the proposals and agreed with the comments made by The Leader of the Council stating that it was now the right time for the number of Members to reduce in line with staff cuts.

Councillor G W Ballinger stated that the electorate were concerned with the proposed reduction in the number of Councillors and felt that this would confuse them. He commented that if the report made by Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) had been accepted then the reductions in Councillor numbers would not have to be made. He added that he would not be supporting the recommendation.

Councillor N Knowles stated that he had been appalled at the turnout in the recent County Council elections in the St. Barnabas division despite the work everyone had done. He added that he did not think it sensible to reduce the number of Councillors at this time.

Councillor J Shaw thought that, with the possibility of a Town Council in Kidderminster, Councillors did not need to be reduced. He also added that the Housing Review Panel had met 11 times during the past twelve months which showed the need for the current amount of Councillors.

Councillor H J Martin did not have a problem in reviewing the way in which the Council worked but thought changing boundaries would confuse the

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electoral especially in cases of cross boundary wards. He commented that the reported documented the work of the Council but not the role of the Councillor. Councillors were dealing with lots of issues at present and if the number were reduced, then work would start to pile up.

Councillor C D Nicholls felt that the recommendations of the IRP should have been accepted and stated he would not be voting for the recommendation.

Councillor E Davies felt that every review conducted needed to be good for the structure it was for and stated that the Councillor job description did not include anything relating to decision making which was their main purpose.

Councillor B McFarland stated that he had attended the Boundary Commission presentation and found it to be interesting and informative but felt that the report did not cover the evidence base it needed. He also felt that when the original proposal was accepted, it was not a unanimous decision as some members had voted against the recommendation. The definition and role of the Councillor was not explained in detail.

Councillor H E Dyke commented that if staff numbers were reducing then it was only right for Members to be reduced and the current number of Councillors could not be sustained and this was the right starting point for the Council.

Councillor M Kelly stated since he had been appointed to Council back in 1970, each year had got more difficult, in particular the last couple of years and felt that the recommendation would be harmful for the Council. He would not be supporting the recommendation.

Councillor T L Onslow stated that she agreed with the comments made by Councillor H E Dyke and if staff numbers were being reduced then so did the number of Councillors.

Councillor A Sewell commented that Councillors carried out a lot of work and if the numbers reduced then the workload would increase and this would put people off becoming a future Councillor.

The Leader of the Council concluded the debate and upon a vote, the decision was carried.

Councillor J Parish left the meeting at this point, 8.00pm

C.23 Half Yearly report of the Chief Executive.

Council received a half yearly report from the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive briefly outlined the content of the report, and stated that he was pleased with the decision Council had made to the new Strategic Review Committee especially in light of the financial situation the Council found itself in.

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In response to questions the Chief Executive advised Members of the following:

- a. Wyre Forest House had been shortlisted for the West Midlands Business Insider Awards but unfortunately the Council did not win. The award went to Birmingham City Council.
- b. Rider Levett Bucknall were assisting the Council to resolve the ground source heating issues.
- c. Members attendance figures covered Committees they were allocated to and included the Members Forum.
- d. The local pay deal would be funded from the medium term financial strategy if it was agreed. Discussions were ongoing with the unions.
- e. No local businesses had contacted the Chief Executive to express concerns that business had been lost with the Council moving to the new headquarters.
- f. The staff survey had been completed and there was another one planned for August 2013. It was hoped that there would be an improvement by the time of the Chief Executive's report in November 2013. The questions that staff had been asked had been circulated to Group Leaders. The key issues from the 2012 survey were workloads due to staffing levels being cut and expectations still being there, future pay deals and stress.

Decision: The report be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.11pm.