

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

27TH NOVEMBER 2013 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: F M Oborski (Chairman), D C H McCann (Vice-Chairman), 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, 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, B McFarland, C D Nicholls, 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.56 Prayers

Prayers were said by Pastor Rob Palmer of Franche Community Church, Kidderminster.

C.57 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B T Glass.

C.58 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor F M Oborski declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item no. 15 – Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority as she is a member of the Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority.

Councillor A T Hingley declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item no. 15 – Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority as she is a member of the Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority.

C.59 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.60 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

C.61 Questions

Council had received twelve questions.

Question from Councillor G W Ballinger to the Leader of the Council

Which 25 local businesses are specifically benefitting from the Council initiative “to help new businesses to set up in empty premises”?

Response from The Leader of the Council

I am very pleased to report, twenty six businesses have been assisted to date. A list of the 26 businesses that had benefited from the grant was read out. Members had received a copy of the list.

Supplementary question from G W Ballinger

Good news to hear so many small businesses involved. Is he concerned that the recent cancellation of the small businesses seminar by this authority because of lack of interest is anything to do with the way this Council, in conjunction with Hendersons, dealt with Lower Mill Street where shopkeepers were given a notice of a potential Compulsory Purchase Order and is that any reason why people have no faith in this Council to help small businesses?

Supplementary answer from The Leader of the Council

Only Councillor Ballinger could turn a positive story into a negative one, I don't agree with that. There are a number of things nationally for the take up of this initiative and we've been supporting this for some time. With regard to Mill Street, it is important to remember people who own properties were fully aware of the initiative well before the announcement and have been communicated with on a number of occasions before the announcement was made.

Question from Councillor G W Ballinger to the Leader of the Council

Has the Council Cabinet recently considered the operation of the current Committee structure?

Response from The Leader of the Council

No. The committee structure is decided each year by Council normally in May but understand next year it will be in June.

Supplementary question from G W Ballinger

There have been a number of committees recently that have either been cancelled at short notice such as the Planning Committee, last month it was 15 minutes, that has happened on a number of occasions, Licensing Committee has been postponed/cancelled due to lack of business. Should we be paying Members of this Council enhancements to chair committees and I would add that the Strategic Review Committee has no scheduled meetings for the remainder of this year? We created a post for a person to chair that committee at high cost to this Council and that committee is not scheduled to meet again. I think it's time we looked internally at our

expenditure and did something about it.

Supplementary answer from The Leader of the Council

Feed those views into annual Council when it sets up the committee structure for the next municipal year.

Question from Councillor N J Thomas to the Leader of the Council

By cutting the number of Councillors from 42 to 33 will this reintroduce democracy into our Council or will it disappear out of sight?

Response from The Leader of the Council

I don't agree with the premise of the question in that democracy is not demonstrating democracy in action and indeed moving to 33 Councillors will mean representing 400 more individuals. We are asking staff to work harder and do more for the same so therefore there is nothing wrong in asking elected Members to do the same. It also saves in excess of £40k. Councillor Ballinger said there is a number of committees not full of business, so why do we need same number of Councillors now as 40 years ago and of course there is an example of Councillors who don't attend meetings, I name an Independent Community & Health Concern Member who has only attended 6 meetings so far since May, that is £400 per meeting. A Labour colleague has only attended 8 out of a possible 14 and I make that £300. No requirement is exactly the same as it was 40 years ago.

Supplementary question from Councillor N J Thomas

How can democracy be increased by fewer representatives of the people when money we are saving by doing this could have come by cutting down Councillors allowances, this would have been far cheaper than boundary changes to instigate.

Supplementary answer from The Leader of the Council

Always good to see the question as a supplementary before you've heard the answer, interesting that Councillor Ballinger is mouthing to me that he didn't say he didn't write it, the cost involved has to be taken into account but it's a one off cost about £40k for this authority and would save year-on-year. It is important to remember that we are incurring no additional cost, the boundary commission exists anyway, we are utilising their expertise here.

Question from Councillor N J Thomas to the Leader of the Council.

Would it not be appropriate in these times of austerity to consider suitable partners for the leisure centre development?

Response from The Leader of the Council

The temptation is to be flippant with the question because all of the work that has been going on over a number of years on a partner delivering this for the Council, that's what the whole project is about. We currently have a leisure service delivered by a private partner and they operate our leisure centres for us. The proposal currently is to get a partner to design build operate and maintain a leisure centre for us and building the current model and taking it one step further so that they not only run it but maintain it for us with the aim to get rid of the subsidiary we currently provide to our leisure partner, we are nearly at £9m per year and will go up and need to bring that down, remove the subsidy and cost of project, exactly where you are Nigel, been there for a couple of years, we want to see a private partner coming in to help us deliver a leisure strategy.

Supplementary question from N J Thomas

Would it not be better by taking a partner who is willing to put money into the expertise with such a project, we would then experience problems we have with this building and could end up with a unit not fit for purpose?

Councillor J Parish left the meeting at this point, (6.18pm).

Supplementary answer from The Leader of the Council

The point is because they are going to be involved in designing and building it, it is up to them to say this works best for us and indeed we might help fund x facility by raising x revenue, that's the whole point of getting them in and on board. This Council is trying to do and agree with you it is the right thing to do that, we see leisure still provided in partnership with the District Council because the alternative of not doing what we're doing is the district not having leisure provision and I really don't that this is right thing for this district.

Question from Councillor E Davies to the Leader of the Council

Will the Leader please inform Council on the use of external consultancies in the financial year 2012/13 and in the current financial year? Please include the number of such contracts, on which subjects and the cost to the Council of these external contracts.

Response from The Leader of the Council

There are lots as you would imagine and I can supply you with the full list. The headlines are, Council spent £110 in 2012/13 and £60k in the current financial year, a whole range of specialism's, from property advice through to advice with leisure and advise in terms of delivering savings, a whole raft

of specialism's we don't have for consultancy services.

Supplementary question from Councillor E Davies

In part you have answered my question. What budgetary allocation has been made for consultancy services and are all consultancy contracts subject to the normal tendering process and who makes the final answer?

Supplementary answer from The Leader of the Council

I do not have the exact information but can supply that to you. Overall they are contained within the budgets, cannot act without the budget limit set in Council and secondly yes they are subject to the usual procurement routes, more often than not some of the special advice we get is in very small bundles so there wouldn't be a whole European tender but may be part of a framework, but we can get you budget figures you requested.

Question from Councillor C Nicholls to the Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being, Councillor I Hardiman

With reference to the identification of Silverwoods as the site for the new leisure centre, to what extent were the council's Planning Officers consulted?

Response from Councillor I Hardiman

The Council's Planning Officers are represented on the Leisure Centre project group and have been fully involved throughout.

Supplementary question from Councillor C Nicholls

Do you consider the new location is a matter of policy and if so do you think policy should be made by Councillors?

Supplementary answer from Councillor I Hardiman

It is policy of course, we're enacting the policy laid down by full council, the site that has now been chosen as the approved site and subject to searches, not one on the initial list and had it been it would have been top of our priority list.

Question from Councillor M Kelly to the Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being, Councillor I Hardiman

Where on the site, and on land zoned for which purpose, is it proposed that the new leisure centre be located?

Response from Councillor I Hardiman

The land is zoned for mixed use (reference Policy SAL.SK2) which is a document I have here and which is available from Council officers.

Councillor J Parish returned to the meeting at this point, (6.21pm).

The proposed location is to the left side of the Silverwoods site, adjacent to the railway line and all Members have been provided with a map to explain.

Supplementary question from Councillor M Kelly

Pleased to see map here which tells us very little, first time everyone seen it having said that, notwithstanding the answer given and the fact that the only time this site has been before Council, it was at an unscheduled meeting called on 14th October 2013 entitled “confidential briefing”, a meeting called without supporting paperwork and a meeting not all Councillors could attend, why did Councillor Hardiman put out a press statement when others Members of the Council, some who knew very little about the amended scheme and why is Councillor Hardiman not tied by the confidentiality like every other member of the authority.

Supplementary answer from Councillor I Hardiman

A press statement was put out but only after Members were made aware of what was going on.

Question from Councillor H Martin to the Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being, Councillor I Hardiman

Was the case for funding a road linking the A451 with the A449 through this site based on the justification that the land was zoned for industrial use?

Response from Councillor I Hardiman

No it was not.

Supplementary question from Councillor H Martin

I haven't written down a question, I don't think that Members have ever seen the business case and the submission that was put forward for pinch point funding. I'm going to ask on the basis that there was an application put in for funding and there must have been road and traffic modelling, could I ask that Members are circulated with a full set of documents that were part of the submission that was put in for funding, and also show the road modelling and I understand that information would have been confidential before the funding was given but it should now be in the public domain, don't think all Members have seen it so could it be re-circulated please.

Supplementary answer from Councillor I Hardiman

Yes the application is on the Worcestershire County Council website. Under the previous (now defunct) Local Plan, the site was zoned for employment (i.e. industrial use), however since then we've had the adoption of the Core Strategy in December 2010 which allowed for a mixed use development (including residential) and the emergence (and subsequent adoption in July 2013) of the Sites and Allocations Local Plan which clearly identifies the whole site as being suitable for mixed use

development.

It was reiterated to Members they could find the papers on the Worcestershire County Council website and a link would be sent to Members. This matter would be presented to the Planning Committee in January 2014.

Question from Councillor A Sewell to the Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being, Councillor I Hardiman

Is the extent of Sport England's "additionality" to the original plans fixed; i.e., there must be the extra two courts and the climbing wall, or their equivalent; or are the added facilities dependent on the size of the grant?

Response from Councillor I Hardiman

No, the "additionality" to the original plans is not fixed by Sport England, and the additional facilities are based on need in discussion with Sport England.

Supplementary question from Councillor A Sewell

Who makes the final decision about additional features, is it this Council or Sport England?

Supplementary answer from Councillor I Hardiman

As already said, it will be a joint consultation on approving the appropriate mix.

Question from Councillor B McFarland to Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being, Councillor I Hardiman

Is the proportion of the grant to be spent on "additionality" fixed, or subject to negotiation?

Response from Councillor I Hardiman

The level of Sport England Grant is not fixed but discussions have indicated that the balance outlined in the Cabinet report is right, as it is based on the Facility Planning Model and public consultation undertaken. The majority of the grant funding will mean the Council will not have to borrow as much money and therefore will reduce the overall revenue cost.

Supplementary question from Councillor B McFarland

Given the administration are minimising involvement in a great many issues which is not good for transparency and democratic practice, would the Cabinet Member agree that this is unsatisfactory, given that if proportionality is not fixed, at what point will it be and full Member involvement in conclusion?

Supplementary answer from Councillor I Hardiman

Absolutely so, done that to date. We keep no secrets, have Members confidentially when Victoria Carpets asked us to hold onto announcements for business reasons. We keep people informed, I cannot understand why you're not informed, there are no secrets.

Supplementary question from Councillor B McFarland

I talked about Member involvement not confidentiality.

Supplementary answer from Councillor I Hardiman

Noted but didn't mention confidentiality.

Question from Councillor N Knowles to Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being, Councillor I Hardiman

Were there alternatives to the "additionality option" of two extra courts and a climbing wall presented to the Cabinet for discussion at any point before, or at its meeting on, 22nd Oct?

Response from Councillor I Hardiman

No, based on previous consultation. The decision to provide 2 extra courts and climbing wall was based on discussions with Sport England grant team and on the Facility Planning Model and public consultation that took place as part of the scrutiny process and defined the facility mix for the centre. This work was included in the report considered by Cabinet in October this year. If the application is successful, then Sport England will continue to work with the Council on the technical specification for the new centre.

Supplementary question from N Knowles

Seems to be real problem about disclosure about full information, why was it not considered to discuss this and wider site facility and case to be put at full Council, not had chance to discuss economic case of this whole venture

Supplementary answer from Councillor I Hardiman

The answer is I can't answer all questions, as already said keep you advised of progress.

Question from Councillor V Higgs to Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being, Councillor I Hardiman

Did Sport England require explicitly the closure of Stourport Sports Centre as a condition of any size of grant received from it?

Response from I Hardiman

No they did not.

Supplementary question from Councillor V Higgs

Bearing in mind that the sports centre proposed to be closed is in Stourport-on-Severn, why has there been no involvement of any Stourport-on-Severn Councillors in this decision?

Supplementary answer from Councillor I Hardiman

This report went through scrutiny and it was a Council decision to close Stourport-on-Severn sports centre.

C.62 Chairman's Communications

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

The Chairman thanked those Members who had made donations to the foodbank and advised that it would not be taken for a couple of days so if anyone wished to add anything, they would be able to. She referred to her updated list of engagements and reminded Members that her Christmas Carol Concert would be held at St. Mary's Church, Kidderminster on Friday 20th December 2013 which would be followed by seasonable refreshments in the chantry and hoped Members would attend.

C.63 Leader's Announcements and Report

An update on the Icelandic investments had been circulated to Members prior to the commencement of the meeting. In response to a query regarding the 10% of the remaining monies still to be returned to the Council, the Leader of the Council reassured Members that the Council would continue to try and get all the money back.

Members were informed that today has seen the official opening of the SPACE incubator facility in Arthur Drive, Kidderminster and the first tenant who would start a graphic design business in one of the units.

Councillor N Knowles left the meeting at this point, (6.37pm).

C.64 Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders

Two motions were received.

1. A notice of motion was received from Councillor C Brewer, a Member of the Independent Community & Health Concern Group in accordance with Standing Orders.

Councillor C Brewer moved and Councillor E Davies seconded the motion. A debate ensued and the main points raised were:

- a) If the motion was to be taken on board, then the matter should be referred to the Local Government Association, the DCLG and HM Treasury.
- b) It was believed that the United Kingdom would not benefit from the tax, with the financial trade ultimately being passed to Hong Kong and Singapore.
- c) By supporting the motion, it could support the public and give them hope.
- d) It was believed that approximately 40 authorities in the country had supported this motion and it was time that the banks were bought into line.

Upon a vote the motion was carried with 20 for and 19 against the motion.

Decision: The motion as set out below be agreed:

Council resolves to support the introduction of a Financial Transaction Tax to raise £20bn a year from the financial sector. This tax would recognise the banks' responsibility for the financial crisis, which has required significant public expenditure reductions, and should be adopted in preference to further cuts in funding for local government and reductions in services for local people. The matter also be referred to the Member of Parliament, the Local Government Association, the DCLG and HM Treasury.

2. A notice of motion was received from Councillor J Shaw, Leader of the Labour Group in accordance with Standing Orders.

The Leader of the Council circulated an alternative motion and Councillor Shaw took on board the amendment but commented that it was only slightly watered down but pointed out that he would be annoyed if he saw this printed as a Conservative idea.

Members discussed the alternative motion and stressed that it was important that the St. Basils Foyer should remain open to help the vulnerable in the area.

Members unanimously agreed that the amended motion be supported.

Decision: The motion as set out below be agreed:

Notes with concern the government statistics which show that Worcestershire has a rate of homelessness higher than the national average;

recognises that there has been a significant shortage of accommodation and support for vulnerable young people throughout North Worcestershire, including Wyre Forest;

values the contribution made by, amongst others, West Mercia Homes and St Basils, working in partnership with Local Authorities, to address this problem, such as the provision at Park Street, Kidderminster;

wishes to understand about the implications of Worcestershire County Council's proposal to reduce drastically, and narrow the focus of, its Supporting People budget;

notes the conclusion drawn by St Basils and West Mercia Homes that, without ongoing support from the Supporting People budget, the nearly-completed £1.6m Bromsgrove Street Kidderminster Foyer project, planned to provide nineteen units of supported accommodation, will not be able to be used for this purpose, because of insufficient revenue funding;

notes, further, the conclusion that, in total, sixty-three bedspaces across North Worcestershire will be affected;

notes that there is a real danger that the capital grant provided by the Homes and Communities Agency for the Bromsgrove Street project may be withdrawn, because the building cannot be used for its intended purpose, therefore, potentially leaving the other partners, including Wyre Forest District Council, liable for the funding gap,

notes, further, that failure to deliver this project might damage the chances of success of bids for future HCA grants,

believes that neither the Bromsgrove Street Foyer project, nor the wider provision for vulnerable young people in North Worcestershire can be allowed to founder,

urges, therefore, that joint representation with Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils be made to Worcestershire County Council, the relevant Members of Parliament and the Department for Communities and Local Government, seeking a radical revision of Worcestershire's

Supporting People budget, so that homelessness prevention services, especially related to young people can be provided in Wyre Forest.

Councillors H J Martin and A Sewell left the meeting at this point, (7.31pm).

C.65 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (7)

There were no urgent motions.

C.66 Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission about warding arrangements for the Council

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive which set out the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission about future warding arrangements for the Council.

The Chairman explained that the report would be dealt with by the three areas, i.e. Stourport-on-Severn, Bewdley and Kidderminster.

Councillor M J Hart explained to Members the background to the review.

Councillor H J Martin and Councillor A Sewell came back to the meeting at this point, (7.33pm).

Members were reminded that the deadline for submission of proposals for ward boundaries was 16th December 2013 and any interested person could submit their own proposals to the Boundary Commission. Members were taken through the report area by area and a debate ensued. They were also informed that a working group had been set up, which had involved cross-party membership.

The Leader of the Labour Group stressed that he came to the meeting to vote enbloc for all areas so his group would only be able to support Stourport-on-Severn.

Councillor T Ingham left the meeting at this point, (7.37pm) and came back at 7.41pm.

In response to a Member question, it was reported that a lot of analysis had been carried out to get to the proposals and that some splits were not perfect solutions but overall it worked with the parish/county boundaries.

A Member had concerns that the Wolverley, Cookley, Blakedown & Chaddesley districts should not be 3 members. Wolverley and Cookley had a connection but did not have this with Blakedown & Chaddesley, there was nothing to link them up. It would also mean a lot more travelling attending meetings.

Several Members thought that the electorate would be confused and disillusioned.

The Chief Executive and his staff were thanked for the work that had been carried out.

A vote was taken and 25 voted for the decision with 16 against. Therefore, the decision was carried.

Decision: The submission about warding arrangements of the Council as detailed in Appendix A of the report to Council be approved.

C.67 Corporate Governance

Council considered a report from the Solicitor to the Council which asked Council to agree the revised political balance.

Decision: The revised political balance of the Council as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Council be agreed.

Councillor J-P Campion left the meeting at this point, (8.46pm).

C.68 Half Yearly Report from the Chief Executive

In response to questions, the Chief Executive replied as follows:

With regard to the monies the Council had committed towards the Lawrences Fire, the Council were not expecting to get it back as agencies had agreed to commit money, otherwise the fire would have continued to burn. However, the Council had issued an invoice and although the company had gone into administration, there could be a possibility of getting the money back.

Councillor J-P Campion came back to the meeting at this point, (8.49pm).

Councillor M J Hart left the meeting at this point, (8.50pm).

Empty buildings in Worcester Street, Kidderminster had received grants and were being back bought back into use. The amount of rent charged for the building was down to the landlords and not the Council.

Councillor M J Hart came back to the meeting at this point, (8.52pm).

With regard to the ground source heating in Wyre Forest House, some improvements had been made to the existing system and work was now ongoing with the contractor to try and resolve the issues. However, the savings of £500,000 would still be met.

An amount of £55,000 had been spent on aborted work for the investigation into the site for the new leisure centre. However, it was perceived that this was money well spent, as if the Council had proceeded with the site, it would have cost a lot more.

With regard to the two by-elections held in June and August 2013, monies

had been recovered from Worcestershire County Council and the amounts were approximately £18,000 for St. Marys and approximately £22,000 for Stourport-on-Severn.

In respect of the recent staff survey, there had been a slight improvement and these were shown in the report with the previous years figures in brackets.

Councillors P Dyke & G C Yarranton left the meeting at this point, (9.01pm).

A new layout for Council meetings in the Council Chamber would be investigated.

Decision: The report be noted.

Council broke at 9.07pm for a short break.

Councillor H J Martin left the meeting at this point, (9.07pm).

The meeting reconvened at 9.21pm and the Leader of the Council suspended Standing Orders until 11.00pm.

C.69 Policy and Budget Framework – Matters which require a decision by Council

a. Recommendations from Cabinet, 22nd October 2013

• Development of New Corporate Plan 2014-2019

Everyone involved in the work required to produce a new Corporate Plan were thanked.

Decision: The draft Corporate Plan 2014/19, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report to Cabinet, be adopted.

• Revised Local Development Scheme 2013-2016

Decision:

- 1. The Proposed Draft Revised Local Development Scheme (2013-16) be endorsed and published as a basis for the future production of the District's Local Plans.**
- 2. Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place to undertake any necessary formatting amendments to the Draft Revised Local Development Scheme prior to its publication.**

b. Recommendations from Cabinet, 19th November 2013

• Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-2017

The Leader of the Council presented the administration's proposals for the budget. He thanked members of the Corporate Management Team and Officers for the work put into the budget proposals for this year. The process had started earlier this year with the setting up the Strategic Review Committee which had met 26 times during the year, held 21 focus groups and conducted a consultation of which 629 responses had been received. The Leader of the Council advised that he was pleased how well the budget scrutiny process had gone.

A robust debate ensued on the budget proposals.

The Leader of the Independent Community & Health Concern Group (IHC) presented their alternative budget.

The Chief Executive left the meeting at this point, (21.39pm).

Members were informed that the amendment included the removal of the joining of Civica's South Worcestershire Partnership as there was not enough information for a decision to be made, the removal of the blue badge proposals, a further restructure of the senior management team and to implement the Independent Remuneration Panel recommendations to reduce Members Allowances. There was also a proposal to refurbish the existing leisure facilities and not progress with a new leisure centre for the district. It was also suggested that the budget be deferred to allow full consideration of the proposals.

A full discussion followed, however, upon a vote the amendment this was lost 15 to 25.

Councillor T Ingham left the meeting at 22.29pm and returned at 22.31pm.

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

Decision:

- 1. The Council's updated Medium Term Finance Strategy be endorsed.**
- 2. Cabinet Proposals be endorsed– taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2014-17 (Appendix 3 of the report to Cabinet)**
- 3. The level of net expenditure and resultant Council Tax for 2014-17 as per paragraph 8.2 of the report to Cabinet be endorsed.**
- 4. The fees and charges in line with this strategy and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2014-17, as shown in Part 3 of Appendix 4 of the report to Cabinet, and supplemented by the Cabinet Proposal on increasing external income included in Appendix 3 of the report to**

Cabinet, where relevant be endorsed.

- **Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid Year Review Report 2013/14**

Decision:

1. **The Treasury Management Mid-year Review be approved.**
2. **The updated Prudential Indicators be approved.**

The Chief Executive came back in to the meeting at this point, (22.43pm).

C.70 Recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 7th November 2013

- **Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority – Draft Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020.**

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee informed Members that a very detailed briefing had been held.

An amendment by the Conservative Party was tabled with an amendment detailing that closer working should be given to back office structures with Shropshire and Warwickshire as it was believed this could protect Bewdley retained fire station.

Upon a vote the amendment was unanimously agreed.

Decision:

1. **Closer collaborative working should be given to back office structures with Shropshire & Warwickshire where senior management posts could merge.**
2. **In light of the potential savings of the above, Wyre Forest District Council objects to any proposal to close Bewdley Fire Station or reduce Kidderminster to a single engine when much smaller towns (such as Bromsgrove, Malvern and Droitwich) are proposed to retain two engines. It is recognised that the other towns have their first engine crewed on a different basis, which is not whole-time shift;**
3. **The number of members of the Fire and Rescue Authority should be reduced, together with a reduction in related training costs;**
4. **The Council considers that any future reductions in fire cover for Wyre Forest in future would be unacceptable.**

The meeting ended at 10.55 pm.