



Agenda Item 8

Leader's Report to Council – 30th July 2014

There have been a number of things worthy of reporting within the District since the last Full Council meeting.

First of all, regarding the Malvern Hills planning application, an update for members that we announced on 25th June 2014 that after examining the options carefully, we do not intend to challenge the decision in respect of the planning application. It is likely that Malvern Hills District Council will include the site in their revisions to the South Worcestershire Development Plan as it now benefits from outline planning permission.

Of course, we have invested in an up to date Local Plan to support economic housing and growth to protect our communities from unplanned developments. I can confirm and assure members that we will continue to press our neighbouring authorities to do the same, and where appropriate to make sure that they fund local infrastructure in Wyre Forest for any developments adjacent to our District boundaries like the Malvern Hills application. Indeed, we will do all that we can to seek appropriate use of the developers contributions for the 62 dwellings that have received outline permission at Astley Cross.

In respect of the Hoobrook Link Road, I am delighted to report that on 7th July the Government announced over £4 million funding for Phase Two of the Hoobrook Link Road in Kidderminster. The funding is part of the local growth fund allocations for the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership of which we are a member of both. The Hoobrook Link Road is on the Agenda because of the visionary work done by Wyre Forest District Council through the ReWyre programme. The £4 million will help to ensure that the final phase of the Link Road will be built quickly. Members will be aware that planning permission is already in place and we expect to see construction start in early 2015 now that the full funding is in place.

This has only been possible through our joint working with Worcestershire County Council, the two Local Enterprise Partnerships and other partners.

As part of the announcement on 7th July we have also been allocated a provisional £2 million for the replacement of Kidderminster mainline train station and the creation of better transport links for buses. This is a positive step towards the project being taken forward and other partners including our Member of Parliament, Mark Garnier have been involved in this as well.

In respect of the recent Local Government strike on 10th July 2014 the main Local Government unions were involved although Unison locally did not call out its members. In Wyre Forest, a total of 9 staff were not present for work but I can confirm that no services were affected.

Members will be aware that we have been in discussions with staff and unions regarding coming out of the national pay deal. In return, we were offering a four year pay deal totalling 3% over four years with a 1.25% increase in pay for 2014. The vast majority of our staff accepted this with only 49 out of 400 declining to do so. For those 49 the pay deal will be implemented from 1st October 2014.

I am very keen to keep up good staff liaison and relations and in the last few weeks, well over 100 staff have come to see both myself and the Chief Executive in our Corporate Briefings at Wyre Forest House and Green Street. We have had a wide range of debate as usual with many questions about the work that we are doing throughout the Council and indeed on regeneration and supporting economic growth in the District. I am also putting in place "Meet the Leader" sessions where staff can meet me on a one to one basis or in small groups.

As part of the decision taken by Council in February, we are commissioning an external management review of the Corporate Leadership Team and the Appointments and Appeals Committee meet tomorrow evening to agree the terms of reference.

Last week, we were able to announce that the Council has claimed back a large part of the expense of dealing with February's floods under the "Bellwin Scheme". We recovered £62,000 for our staff's work on such things as flood prevention and then cleaning up the mess and debris once the floods have subsided. Wyre Forest District Council staff helped the Environment Agency putting up the barriers in Bewdley and also supported Worcester City Council in their clean up effort. Many thanks to all staff involved in particular Trevor Jones who co-ordinated our funding application.

Finally, congratulations to Joe Scully and the Parks Team as we have won Green Flag status for Brinton Park in Kidderminster and the QEII Gardens in Bewdley.

Cllr Marcus J Hart
Leader of the Council