



WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

10 DECEMBER 2014

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The most significant announcement since Council last met has been the award of the contract to design, build, maintain and operate our new leisure centre at the Silverwoods site. The contract has been awarded to our current management partners, Places for People.

The contract not only meets the financial viability tests that the Council set but will also offer an enhanced range of facilities and deliver a higher revenue saving than we had predicted. This is due also to the excellent work that Kay and the team did on securing award of a £2m grant from Sport England, the highest amount possible under its grant programme. I am sure all members will want to join me in thanking Kay Higman and the project team.

In the last two weeks, I have been delighted to announce that the Council has secured two major tenants at Wyre Forest House in the guise of dhjh llp, a local accountancy firm presently based in Bewdley, and Worcestershire Regulatory Services, the shared service formed by all 7 councils in 2010, which will be relocating from Worcester. This means that the space we have at Wyre Forest House to rent to partners will be fully let. It is an outstanding example of the commercial approach we are taking, using our assets to deliver more income for the Council from both rents and the full ICT support service that Dave Johnson and his team will be providing for Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

The tenancies are the result of excellent work led by Alison Braithwaite supported by other staff in her team. Again I know that members will want to join me in thanking them for the very beneficial outcomes that have been achieved for the Council. We will keep members informed of the moves within the building which will be necessary as a result.

Many areas across England are seeking devolution of greater powers and funding following the further devolution being put in place for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Greater Manchester has been blazing the trail with its combined authority. The leaders of Worcestershire Councils have asked for an options paper to be produced for their meeting in January on the pros and cons of establishing an economic prosperity board for the county. We are also looking at whether and on what basis to join the combined authority that the Black Country authorities and Birmingham intend to create. We need to select the option or options that offer the best potential outcome for Wyre Forest, and I will keep members updated on any proposals.

The Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 3 December did not contain any specific proposals about funding for Wyre Forest. The Government has committed to making good the impact of changes to business rates, including various reliefs for small



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businesses and a further year of increases capped at 2%. We await details of the provisional local government settlement due on 17 December to see whether our predictions of further grant reductions are accurate. I would urge all members to study carefully the budget strategy report which the Cabinet will discuss at its meeting on 16 December. I look forward to seeking to work with all groups as we move to setting our budget in February.

Finally, our very own "Wyre Choir" will be singing Christmas carols around the splendidly dressed Christmas tree in the foyer at Wyre Forest House, starting at 1pm on Thursday 11 December. I would encourage members to come along and join staff in this event.

It remains for me to wish all members and staff a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas, and Prosperous New Year.

M. J. Hart

Councillor Marcus Hart