

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

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

**25TH FEBRUARY 2015 (6PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: S J Williams (Chairman), C Rogers (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, G W Ballinger, R Bishop, C Brewer, J-P Champion, S J M Clee, A R Clent, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, B T Glass, D R Godwin, J Greener, P B Harrison, J A Hart, M J Hart, P V Hayward, V Higgs, A T Hingley, J Holden, L Hyde, M B Kelly, N Knowles, R J Lloyd, B McFarland, C D Nicholls, F M Oborski, T L Onslow, J W Parish, J Phillips, M Price, M Rayner, J A Shaw, D R Sheppard, M J Stooke, P Wooldridge, M J Wrench and G C Yarranton.

**C.66 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Reverend Rose Lawley – Kidderminster Parish Church Team Ministry.

**C.67 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Davies and A M Sewell.

**C.68 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations were made.

**C.69 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.70 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

Councillor P Wooldridge left the meeting at this point, (6.03pm).

**C.71 Questions**

Council received one question which had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order A5 by a Member of the Council.

**Question from Councillor D R Sheppard to the Leader of the Council**

Are the Cabinet aware that a major leisure organisation in Worcestershire is still interested in acquiring Stourport Sports Centre, Harold Davies Drive for the continued benefit of the residents of Stourport and the surrounding area?

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

No.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor D R Sheppard**

The organisation interested taking over Stourport Sports Centre is Wychavon Leisure. Is the council going to have meaningful negotiations with Wychavon Leisure or is this the latest longstanding vendetta by the Conservative administration for the good people of Stourport-on-Severn?

**Supplementary Answer from the Leader of the Council**

It is outrageous to say that this administration has a vendetta and ask you reflect on that and withdraw, nothing short of disgrace. Frankly, you refer to discussions with Wychavon Leisure pre Christmas, why does it take two months to bring it to Council? The decision to move was taken several years ago and as members know, there is a clause in the new contract that no future leisure provision is provided and that the land will be disposed of as a capital receipt.

**C.72 Chairman's Communications**

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

The Chairman thanked Members for the contributions to his charity including those who attended his Winter Warmer event.

**C.73 Leader's Announcements and Report**

The Leader of the Council referred Members to his report and reported that the contract for the new leisure centre had now been signed, it was perceived that this could save the Council and taxpayers annual savings of approximately £400k. He also stated that the council meeting would be the last one with 42 members. As from May 2015 the number of councillors would be reduced to 33 and he paid tribute to the members that would not be standing in the May 2015 elections. He thanked councillors, residents, the Corporate Leadership Team and staff who had worked hard over the past 12 months.

**C.74 Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (1)**

Two motions had been received in accordance with Standing Order D1(1).

1. The Leader of the Labour Group presented the motion and stated that a strategic vision was needed. It was not just about localism.

A debate was held on the motion.

**Decision:**

- . **The following motion from Councillor J Shaw, Leader of the Labour Group be agreed:**

**Council, noting**

**that Scotland's independence debate has decisively changed the debate about devolving power to English communities;**

**that Scotland has benefitted from greater control over tax, spending and public services as a consequence of devolution and has received further powers recently;**

**that, in stark contrast, similar powers and financial incentives are not currently on offer to communities in England;**

**that England is a nation of 54 million people, with major cities and counties in themselves as populous as the devolved nations of the union, with public sectors on a comparable scale;**

**considers**

**that, if the UK Government has recognised that it must empower Scotland more fully, it cannot escape the political logic of doing the same for English communities, as the perceived unfairness of leaving England as the last outpost of the old UK way of doing things would be permanently destabilising;**

**that an urgent conversation on the future of devolution is needed. The UK Government must establish a new deal with English local government and the communities that these councils represent. It is time for the UK Government to commit to offering England the political and fiscal devolution currently on the table in Scotland;**

**that all areas in England, including cities and shires, should have greater financial powers and control over the delivery of public services so as to ensure local choice, discretion and competition; and that currently existing structures such as combined authorities, mayors, health and wellbeing boards, joint committees, local enterprise partnerships and public service**

**boards, amongst others, should be utilised in effecting devolution;**

**that consideration needs to be given to the issue of fair funding across the UK : the sharing-out of tax and spending between the four countries needs to be put on to a new, sustainable and fair basis; and**

**resolves**

**to support the immediate establishing of a constitutional convention to debate and agree a fair devolution settlement across the UK. A convention of this type would not imply delaying devolution; it is simply a way of ensuring that all areas of the UK benefit a comparable level of devolution as Scotland; to make the council's position clear to the Secretary of State.**

2. The Leader of the Labour Group presented the motion and explained that some people in the Wyre Forest area could not afford the rents landlords were asking for so it was important to provide properties at affordable social rent levels. An amendment was presented on behalf of the Conservative and Liberal & Independent Groups.

A debate ensued on the amended motion which was agreed:

**Decision:**

**The following motion from Councillor J Shaw, Leader of the Labour Group as amended by the Conservative and Liberal & Independent Groups be agreed:**

**Council notes;**

**That one major area to be revised in the District Local Plan will be focused on Kidderminster town centre and that the use of land for housing may form a significant element in this revision as part of a wider mixed use to support the economic viability of the Town Centre, in addition to the £2m investment in public realm works by Worcestershire County Council and Wyre Forest District Council;**

**That, particularly, new use designations are likely to be necessary for the land from the Kidderminster Eastern Gateway through to Worcester Street;**

**That the "ReWyre – ReNewed" report was agreed by Cabinet in December 2014, including the actions contained within it.**

**That Wyre Forest District Council is a major landowner in this area of the town centre;**

**That Wyre Forest District Council is the Authority responsible for**

overall housing provision in the district, including the range of house types, social mix, and tenures;

That Wyre Forest is a low-waged area in which 55% of households do not earn enough to buy a house priced at £120,000;

That under the current Government, 223 Affordable houses were delivered between 2012 to 2014 as part of 378 new homes being built in the district, in comparison to 2008 to 2010 when only 144 affordable homes were delivered as part of 286 new homes being built;

Welcomes the administration's budget proposals to fund the development work that support the redevelopment of "Worcester Street and the wider Kidderminster Eastern Gateway";

And resolves, in principle,

that, at an early stage in the redevelopment of the Eastern Gateway, the council continues to aim to deliver its adopted standards of affordable housing provision including consideration of using a joint venture with a housing association or housing co-operative, to provide properties to rent at affordable, "social rent" levels.

Councillor M Wrench left the meeting at this point, (19.10pm).

**C.75 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (7)**

No notices of motion had been received in accordance with Standing Order D1(1).

**C.76 Policy and Budget Framework**

Matters which require a Decision by Council.

**a. Recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

- **Treasury Management Service Strategy 2015/16**

**Decision:**

1. **The restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2015/16 to 2017/18 included in Appendix 3 of the report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015 be approved.**

2. **The updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 of the report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5 of the report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015) 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 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015 be approved.**
4. **The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3 of the report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2015 be approved.**

**b. Recommendations from Licensing & Environmental Committee, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

- **Increase in Fees and Charges for Licensing the Council's Regulatory Service Function for 2015/2016**

**Decision: The proposals for fees and charges within the Council's Licensing, Food, Health, Safety and Pollution Control functions for 2015/2016, as detailed in the report to the Licensing & Environmental Committee at its meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015, be included in the 2015/2016 budget strategy.**

Councillor M Wrench returned to the meeting at this point, (19.13pm).

**C.77 Financial Strategy 2015-18**

Council received the budget for 2015-18 having considered the proposed decision and budget reports recommended to Council by Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015:

- Fees and Charges
- Three Year Budget, Capital Programme and Policy Framework 2015-18
- Council Tax 2015-16
- Report of the Chief Financial Officer in respect of Sections 25 – 28 Local Government Act 2003

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation took Members through the report. He explained that the Council had a good track record of balancing the books to protect front line services. Since 2010 over £4 million savings had been achieved. The proposals included seeking

commitment from Parish Councils to run community assets and to help generate income, new fees and charges. Economic Regeneration was also key in the budget and the strategy had proved successful such as Amtek investing in the old Lawrences site and the partnership working on the Silverwoods development. It was also proposed to continue with the post of the Town Centres Manager for a further 3 years where excellent work had been done and the post could support businesses.

The Cabinet Member stated that he was disappointed that no agreement could be reached over the four yearly elections cycle despite overwhelming support by the public through the budget consultation. It was perceived that this could have saved the Council approximately £150k over a 3 year period. He thanked the Corporate Leadership Team for their continued help and support and commended the budget to Council.

A robust debate ensued on the budget proposals.

The Labour Group presented an amendment which asked to increase the role of the Empty Homes Officer from 2 days to 4 days. It was suggested that in the new financial year, a review could take place on the empty properties in the district. A debate ensued on the Labour proposals.

Councillor B T Glass left the meeting at this point, (19.42pm).

Councillor J Holden left the meeting at this point, (19:50pm).

A named vote on the Labour amendment was recorded as follows and the amendment was defeated:

For (11):

Councillors A R Clent, V Higgs, L Hyde, M B Kelly, N Knowles, R J Lloyd, B McFarland, C D Nicholls, J A Shaw, M J Stooke and M J Wrench.

Against (24):

Councillors J Aston, R Bishop, C Brewer, J-P Campion, S J M Clee, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, D R Godwin, J Greener, P B Harrison, J A Hart, M J Hart, P V Hayward A T Hingley, F M Oborski, T L Onslow, J Phillips, M Price, M Rayner, C Rogers, D R Sheppard, S J Williams and G C Yarranton.

Abstained (2):

Councillor G W Ballinger and J W Parish.

Councillor L Hyde left the meeting at 20.19pm and returned at 20.21pm.

Councillor A Clent left the meeting at 20.19pm and returned at 20.22pm.

Councillors G C Yarranton and D R Sheppard left the meeting at 20.20pm and returned at 20.22pm.

A named vote on the substantive budget proposal was recorded as follows and was agreed:

For (24):

Councillors J Aston, R Bishop, J-P Champion, S J M Clee, A Clent, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, D R Godwin, J Greener, P B Harrison, J A Hart, M J Hart, P V Hayward A T Hingley, F M Oborski, T L Onslow, J Phillips, M Price, C Rogers, M Stooke, S J Williams, M Wrench and G C Yarranton.

Against (6):

Councillors M B Kelly, N Knowles, R Lloyd, B McFarland, C D Nicholls, J A Shaw,

Abstained (7):

Councillors G W Ballinger, C Brewer, V Higgs, L Hyde, J Parish, M Rayner and D R Sheppard.

**Decision:**

- 1. THREE YEAR BUDGET, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2015-18**
  - 1.1 The updated Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015-18 be approved.**
  - 1.2 The updated Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council’s Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2015-18 as shown in Appendix 3 of the report to Council be approved.**
  - 1.3 The fees and charges in line with this Strategy and the impact on the Council’s Revenue Budget for 2015-18, as shown in Appendix 4 of the report to Council be approved.**
  - 1.4 The updated Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewal Schedule as set out in Appendix 2, Parts 1 and 2 of the report to Council be approved.**
  - 1.5 The first £244,000 of Right to Buy (RTB) receipts in 2015-16 and subsequent years be allocated to Disabled Facilities Grants (to a maximum Capital budget of £800,000 pa) be approved and any extra RTB Capital Receipts be allocated to general capital reserves.**
  - 1.6 Any Final Accounts savings arising from 2014-18 over and above the target allowed for in the Council’s Financial Strategy be approved, together with surplus Earmarked Reserves, be allocated by the Chief Financial Officer in**



consultation with the Leader.

- 1.7 **The General Fund Revenue Budget be approved including all updates from the position in December 2014 as set out in this report.**

## **2. COUNCIL TAX**

- 2.1 **The Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property at £205.36 for 2015-16 (£201.45 2014-15) which represents a 1.94% increase on Council Tax from 2014-15 be set.**
- 2.2 **The provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2016-17 of £209.34 and £213.40 in 2017-18, an increase of 1.94 % per annum over 2015-16 be endorsed.**
- 2.3 **The Chief Financial Officer's opinion on the budget proposals, recommended by the Cabinet, as detailed in Appendix 5 of the report to Council be noted.**

### **C.78 Council Tax 2015-16**

Council received the formal resolution for setting the Council Tax for 2015-16. The amount of Council Tax depended on the budget proposal recommendations from Cabinet to Council on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015 which included the precepts by Worcestershire County Council, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority.

A named vote on the Council Tax resolution was recorded as follows and was agreed:

For (24):

Councillors J Aston, R Bishop, J-P Champion, S J M Clee, A Clent, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, D R Godwin, J Greener, P B Harrison, J A Hart, M J Hart, P V Hayward A T Hingley, F M Oborski, T L Onslow, J Phillips, M Price, C Rogers, M Stooke, S J Williams, M Wrench and G C Yarranton.

Against (0)

Abstained (13):

Councillors G W Ballinger, C Brewer, V Higgs, L Hyde, M B Kelly, N Knowles, R Lloyd, B McFarland, C D Nicholls J Parish, M Rayner, J A Shaw and D R Sheppard.

**Decision: The formal Council Tax Resolution 2015-16 at Appendix 1 of the report to Council, taking into account information contained in**

**Appendices 2 to 5 be approved.**

There was a comfort break at 8.50pm and Members returned at 8.59pm.

**C.79 The Future Governance of Kidderminster**

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive which asked Council to approve the household information leaflet and information for the Council's website for the Community Governance Review of Kidderminster.

Officers were thanked for the exceptional work that had been carried out. In addition, it should also be acknowledged the work done by Councillor Hingley and Charles Talbot.

**Decision:**

- 1. The household leaflet and information for the council's website for the Community Governance Review for Kidderminster as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Council be approved.**
- 2. Delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council to add further information to the council's website in response to additional questions of public interest on the community governance review.**

**C.80 Half Yearly Report from the Chief Executive**

Council considered a half yearly report from the Chief Executive.

In response to a Member question, information would be provided with regard to complaints about improper use of social media by Members.

**Decision: The report to be noted.**

The meeting ended at 21.08 p.m.