

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

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

**30TH SEPTEMBER 2015 (6PM)**

---

**Present:**

Councillors: S Arnold, J Aston, J Baker G W Ballinger, R Bishop, S J Chambers, J-P Campion, S J M Clee, J R Desmond, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, S E Fearn, J Greener, I Hardiman, S Harrington, J A Hart, M J Hart, K Henderson, L Henderson, A T Hingley, N Knowles, D Little, F M Oborski MBE, J Phillips, M Rayner, C Rogers, T A Muir, T L Onslow, J A Shaw, J D Smith, S J Williams and G C Yarranton.

**C.36 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Pastor Philip Hearn from Kidderminster Evangelical Church.

**C.37 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**C.38 Declarations of Interests by Members**

There were no declarations of interests.

**C.39 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meetings held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.40 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**C.41 Questions**

Five questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order A5 by Members of the Council.

**Question from Councillor N Knowles to the Leader of the Council**

Given the crisis situation pertaining to refugees who are currently making their way to Europe and who are being given sanctuary by many states including Britain what plans and attitude do we have in Wyre Forest to those refugees who wish to settle in Britain and Wyre Forest in particular, if

they are made aware of our hospitality and guarantee of a safe and welcoming environment.

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

I assume when you talk about refugees, whilst not specific given the huge number of refugees coming into Europe are Syrian, I will respond in respect of Syrian refugees. You will of course have received my letter of 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015 which set out clearly what the Council's plans are and you will have seen the further email I sent under the no surprises protocol on 21<sup>st</sup> September stating that Wyre Forest were playing its part with the County Council and other districts in Worcestershire. You will also see the comments in my Leaders announcements. There are two motions on the agenda this evening which I'm sure, following debate in the normal way, will show very clearly what this council and administrations plans and how best to deal with the situation.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor N Knowles**

I would like to point out that the phrasing is such that it mentions pertaining to refugees and doesn't just mention Syrian refugees, I wondered if you wanted to respond about refugees other than Syrian making their way to Europe.

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

The answer will come out in the debate this evening.

**Question from Councillor J Shaw to the Cabinet Member for Transformation & Change**

When a caller to the Hub or Green Street is informed that no-one is available immediately to deal with the enquiry, could the response be amended, to give an indication of how long the wait is likely to be?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Transformation & Change**

The answer is yes it could. However the issue has been considered before and a decision was made to give no indication for the waiting time for the following reasons:

Any time that has been calculated by the phone system will only be an estimation of the time that caller might have to wait for. Whilst we understand the frustration for the caller, what we tell them may not be accurate. If the waiting time is longer than estimated, then the frustration felt by callers is greater than not knowing how long they may have to wait. The message played gives alternative methods for contacting the council, i.e. encouraging people to make payments on line and they are directed to do so on the message. We want to save money for the council taxpayers and free up more time for our Hub and depot staff and they can then deal with face-to-face enquiries. So for those reasons we made the decision in the first place and I'm still happy with that decision.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor J Shaw**

Thank you, but would appreciate if those points could be put down on paper. I think the individual who asked me to ask the question may be watching but, just in case, I would like to report back.

**Question from Councillor J Shaw to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

How many operational staff are available daily to carry out the council's parking enforcement and car park monitoring duties?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

In total we have 5.5 full time employees in service but with annual leave and an on duty rota system, there are usually 4 full time employees in the district on any given day.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor J Shaw**

Are you satisfied with the level of service they are able to give? Not being critical of staff, I'm aware that a new part of my ward covers High Street in Stourport-on-Severn where I have for a long time heard dissatisfaction with the amount of parking that takes place on the side of the road where there are double yellow lines. Do we have enough members of staff to carry out a satisfactory level of service?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

You'll be pleased to hear that the service has recently undergone a review and there are proposals to increase the number of parking officers but this is subject to consultation.

**Question from Councillor J Shaw to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration**

How many staff are available daily to carry out the council's Planning Enforcement duties; (Sept 2nd '15, 141 cases)?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration**

We have 6 individuals to deal with planning enforcement issues within this authority. Do I think it's reasonable? Absolutely. Whilst of course we would like lots of capacity to deal with the ebbs and flows, I think we have a Planning service that is able to respond to minor/major applications in a competent way and we have been regularly offering good practice on enforcement matters, and resources are appropriate.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor J Shaw**

How many staff are dedicated to this task? I think this is 2. Do we have more than 1, because the figure he gave I believe is for the development control section which is not generally dedicated to planning enforcement issues?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration**

The world has moved on and officers are multi skilled and as you are aware planning development control has come a long way. It's sensible for a case officer to deal with enforcement rather than a dedicated officer, so for me my answer of 6 individuals who are able to deal with multi skilled issues is sufficient and I don't think we have any planning enforcement issues. If we did we would look at resources or the policy and address it. I don't recognise a problem and see the resources as appropriate.

**Question from Councillor J Shaw to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

What is the view of the Portfolio Holder on the effectiveness of the council's "continental" public toilet provision in Stourport town centre?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

I take it you refer to the use of the Wheatsheaf Pub in the High Street. I understand there have been no complaints about this service and presume the provision is satisfactory.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor J Shaw**

Does the portfolio holder think the provision for disabled residents in terms of possibly using the public toilet in Stourport town centre is satisfactory?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Yes, all I can say is with regard to the main toilets in Stourport, we are planning a complete refurbishment of the Riverside toilets so hopefully the disabled toilet facility will be up to standard there and if you wish to have a conversation with me outside of this meeting on disabled toilets elsewhere, I am happy to do so.

**C.42 Chairman's Communications**

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

**C.43 Leader's Announcements and Report**

The Leader of the Council tabled his report and informed Members it had been a very busy Summer. A lot of work was going on in the district, e.g.

Bewdley Medical Centre, Kidderminster town centre etc. There was disruption to shoppers/traders in Kidderminster town centre but he was confident it was a short term pain for a very long term gain with a major scheme. The Hoobrook link road was underway and he had visited the new leisure centre which was scheduled to be completed on time and under budget.

**C.44 Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (1)**

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

The Leader of the Council, on behalf of the Conservative Group, presented their motion and informed Members that it was right for the Council to do its bit in providing aid to those most in need. There were difficult issues to be navigated through but working with other district colleagues, a joint bid would be submitted to ensure the appropriate funding is received.

Councillor Knowles, on behalf of the Labour Group presented an amendment and asked Council to accept as a minimum the Prime Minister's announcement of taking in 20,000 Syrian refugees.

A robust debate ensued and a member stated that until the amount of funding was known, no decision should be made.

Upon a vote, the amendment was lost.

Members then held a full debate on the substantive motion.

Councillor P Dyke left the meeting at 7.11pm and returned at 7.12pm.

In summary, the Leader of the Council stated that the situation required the United Nations and central government support as the Council could not solve the problem itself.

**Decision:**

**Council notes the Humanitarian Disaster unfolding in Syria as a result of the Civil War and this Council deplores the killing of innocent civilians.**

**Council supports the stance taken by this Council to encourage communities to provide aid and support to displaced refugees across Europe and especially those in camps close to the Syrian border, as the Council is very sympathetic to the plight of the refugees.**

**Council supports the Prime Minister David Cameron's announcement to take in 20,000 Syrian Refugees over the next 5 years and the £1 billion of aid already committed, as a clear demonstration that the United Kingdom is playing its part.**

**Council endorses the approach being taken by the Local Government Association (LGA) in its discussions with the Home Office and other**

**Government departments in order to secure full funding for local authorities in supporting refugees.**

**Council notes that there are many complexities to re-housing Syrian refugees within the Wyre Forest area including the cultural and socio-economic issues which need to be fully taken into consideration.**

**Council resolves to support the current steps being undertaken.**

**C.45 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (7)**

There were no urgent motions.

**C.46 Community Governance Review of Kidderminster**

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive following consultation.

The Leader of the Council led Members through the report and thanked officers for the tremendous amount of work that had been carried out.

Councillors J-P Campion and T L Onslow left the meeting at this point, (7.50pm).

Members discussed the review and welcomed the creation of Kidderminster Town Council and were pleased with all the negotiations that had been done.

Councillors J-P Campion and T L Onslow came back to the meeting at this point, (7.52pm).

Members commented that it was great for Kidderminster and the first elections would be held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

**Decision: The reorganisation order in Appendix A of the report to Council be agreed, with delegation to the Solicitor to the Council to make any necessary or reasonable adjustments prior to sealing.**

**C.47 Policy and Budget Framework – Matters which require a decision by Council**

**a. Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

- **Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2014/15**

**Decision:**

- **The Actual 2014/15 prudential and treasury indicators as set out in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved.**

- **The annual treasury management report for 2014/15 be noted.**

**b. Recommendations from Cabinet, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

In response to questions by Members, the Cabinet Member for Health Well-Being and Housing replied that the Council representations would be decided on in the usual way. She also replied that the service was seamless and there was good reason to have a council debate on it, but from the public point of view, there would be no changes.

- **Revised Partnership Arrangements for Worcestershire Regulatory Services**

**Decision:**

- 1. The current Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership is dissolved by mutual agreement on 31 March 2016;**
- 2. A new Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership comprising the six district councils is created on 1 April 2016, in accordance with the terms recommended by Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee; and that the Council's Licensing functions be delivered through this Shared Service.**
- 3. The new Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership enters into a service level agreement with Worcestershire County Council for the provision of trading standards services in accordance with terms to be agreed by the Acting Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services; and,**
- 4. All existing contracts and service level agreements between the existing Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership and other local authorities are novated to the new Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership.**

**C.48 Corporate Governance**

This agenda item was withdrawn in light of there being no change to political balance following the Blakebrook & Habberley South by-election.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm.