

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

27TH JULY 2016 (6PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: R Bishop (Chairman), J D Smith (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, J-P Champion, S J Chambers, S J M Clee, J R Desmond, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, S E Fearn, N Gale, I Hardiman, J A Hart, M J Hart, K Henderson, V Higgs, A T Hingley, N Knowles, D Little, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, J A Shaw, R J Vale, S J Williams, R Wilson and G C Yarranton.

**C.21 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Dudley Anderson, Senior Leader of Cornerstone Family Church, Stourport on Severn.

**C.22 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Aston and S J Walker.

**C.23 Declarations of Interests by Members**

Councillor F M Oborski declared an Other Disclosable Interest (ODI) in agenda item number 9 – motion 2, as she is a member of the Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority.

Councillor N Gale declared an ODI in agenda item number 9 – motion 2 and would leave the chamber as she did not wish to take part in the debate.

Councillor A T Hingley declared an ODI in agenda item number 9 – motion 2, as she is a member of the Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority.

Councillor T L Onslow declared an ODI in agenda item number 9 – motion 2 as she had recently been appointed as Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and was referred to in the consultation.

Councillor J-P Champion declared an ODI in agenda item number 9 – motion 2 as he is the Police & Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and was referred to in the consultation.

Councillor G C Yarranton declared an ODI in agenda item number 9 – motion 2, as he is a member of the Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority.

**C.24 Minutes**

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**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.25 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**C.26 Questions**

Four 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**

Which Polling Station(s) will be used for the By-election to Kidderminster Town Council (Habberley South and Blakebrook) on 1<sup>st</sup> September, and would the Leader consider having one such polling station at the Church Hall on Habberley Estate, as well as either the Church in Greatfield Road or at the Gainsborough Hotel?

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

The two polling stations that will be used for the by-election on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 will be the Gainsborough House Hotel and Evangelical Church on Greatfield Road which are the same two polling stations agreed as part of the polling places review back in 2014 and the same two polling stations when Councillor Knowles asked me the same question at Group Leaders on 12<sup>th</sup> May. There are no plans to change the polling places for the by-election, I don't have the power, that would be a decision of Council as a result of a polling place review.

**Supplementary question from Councillor N Knowles**

I accept what the Leader says about the necessity for a legal move if it were to revert back to St Johns Hall but I do think we need to revisit that and I think it was a political decision to close it in the first place and the whole issue of the election would be better if that polling station was open.

**Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council**

For the sake of clarification, but with respect, we simply don't agree with you.

**Question from Councillor F Oborski to the Leader of the Council**

Some two years ago Council agreed, as part of its activity to engage young people, to establish the role of "Youth Mayor".

Can the Leader tell me what progress has been made?

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

This was discussed on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014 and having spoken with officers and

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Councillor Hingley, the Children's Trust that you chaired at the time were going to take this forward and I was advised it was left in your capable hands and therefore in your supplementary, it would be helpful if you could inform Council what has happened in the two years period but yes we did give that commitment and if it hasn't happened there is no difficulty and I can give my assurance that we will progress this forward.

#### **Supplementary question from Councillor F Oborski**

I would appreciate some guidance from the Leader or Council as to whether you would wish this to be proceeded with by referring it to Kidderminster Town Council and having a youth mayor for Kidderminster or whether you wish it to be proceeded with a youth mayor for the whole of the district. I was with Craig Bateman the other evening and he pressed me onto what was happening. There is a Children's Trust meeting in September and if I can have some guidance please as to whether it's Wyre Forest or Kidderminster Town Council.

#### **Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council**

The motion agreed by this Council was to develop a district youth council and young peoples mayor but if Kidderminster, Stourport-on-Severn or Bewdley wanted their own youth mayors, that's entirely a matter for their sovereign bodies.

#### **Question from Councillor J Shaw to the Leader of the Council**

Is this council currently engaged in any form of devolution negotiations?

#### **Answer from the Leader of the Council**

No.

#### **Supplementary question by Councillor J Shaw**

In view of the confusion that exists throughout the country about the issue of devolution, the messy arrangements that have and haven't been made in various parts of the country, may I ask on behalf of this Council that you contact the Local Government Association (LGA) to see what they are doing about their declared policy on devolution which was to have a constitutional conference about the matter and may I remind the Leader that this Council passed a motion on the matter which actually was a model motion sent to us by the LGA some time in the last two years, so will he contact the LGA about this matter.

#### **Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council**

I'm happy to do that. Every year the Leader goes to the LGA conference and I did that with the Chief Executive a couple of weeks ago together with most of the other leaders across this county and in fact in one of the sessions I was at,

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there was a very robust and in depth discussion with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the LGA regarding the position of devolution across the country. He will recall three to four weeks ago, the Labour Party and Conservative party were in the midst of leadership elections and I'm pleased that on this side of the chamber we have at least resolved ours which of course has left us in a period of things being in abeyance and it will remain to be seen what drive there will be nationally on devolution with the changes to the various Secretaries' of State. We will be restarting discussions with Worcestershire colleagues after the Summer to see exactly where we are in Worcestershire and I will happily raise the matter with LGA colleagues to see what the latest position is.

#### **Question from Councillor J Shaw to the Leader of the Council**

Have arrangements been made to enable Ray Brookes, Chief Executive of The Community Housing Group, and one of his senior officers, to brief councillors about the difficulties of providing truly affordable housing in future in this district?

#### **Answer from the Leader of the Council**

Very short answer is no but neither Ray Brookes nor any of his senior officers have made contact with me requesting that they do so.

#### **Supplementary question by Councillor J Shaw**

May I ask that the Leader either contacts the secretarial staff of the Council or indeed the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee because I believe there is an initiative taking place there and I am anxious that it is fully inclusive for all members of the council as possible so maybe afterwards that could be done.

#### **Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council**

Far be it from me to interfere with the excellent work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee chaired by Councillor Helen Dyke. She has heard all of that and if she and her panel are undertaking some form of overview & scrutiny in respect of this matter, then if they feel they need expert evidence from witnesses from Ray Brookes or CHG, no doubt matters will be put in hand to get the evidence to be put forward to the relevant panel.

#### **C.27 Chairman's Communications**

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

#### **C.28 Leader's Announcements and Report**

The Leader referred Members to his tabled report.

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

Two motions had been received in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1).

**1. Motion from the Conservative Group**

This Council **supports** the following statement:-

“We are proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in our country. We condemn racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally. We will not allow hate to become acceptable.

Wyre Forest District Council will work with other local bodies including the police and Community Safety Partnership to fight and prevent racism and xenophobia.

All residents living in the Wyre Forest are valued members of our community.”

We condemn any such attacks and fully support the Police and law enforcement agencies tackling this racist, xenophobic and criminal behaviour.”

The Leader of the Council presented the motion and stated he hoped it would have unanimous support.

A discussion was held and all members were in support of the motion and agreed that everyone should be treated fairly and racism and xenophobia should not be tolerated in the community.

Upon a vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

Councillor N Gale left the meeting at this point, (18.39pm).

**2. Motion from Councillor N Knowles, Labour Group Leader**

This Council is very concerned that the Review of the Fire Service will authorise a new system of Fire Cover in Wyre Forest which will result in response time to incidents being 2 ½ minutes more than is now the case. We accept that changes will be made and that a new HUB will be built for emergency services. We also accept that Bewdley Fire Station will be closed because the building will be demolished as part of the deal which has provided the town with a very large Health and GP Centre.

We call on the Fire Authority to;

- 1) Keep Kidderminster and Stourport Fire Station open at least until the HUB is opened,
- 2) Provide 2 full time appliances and staff at Kidderminster in

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- anticipation of the HUB,
- 3) Provide retained staff and appliances at Bewdley and Stourport until the HUB is open,
  - 4) When the HUB is open, provide 2 whole time teams and engines, and 2 retained appliances, transferring the 2 appliances now operating at Bewdley and Stourport.

The Fire Authority is obliged to maintain and improve safety standards for the public and staff, not reorganise our service with a built in factor that increases risk by causing a worsening of response time by 2 ½ minutes and putting lives at greater risk.

Councillor Knowles presented his motion and stated that the public expenditure cuts and the cuts to services needed to be challenged. This together with the 2 ½ minutes longer response time to get to incidents needed to be addressed.

An amendment to the motion from the Conservative Group was tabled and stated that the motion could not be supported. There would not be any reduction in fire cover across the district and the retained appliances in Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn would all move to a new hub. The Leader felt the Labour party motion was misleading and factually incorrect.

A robust debate was held on the amended motion.

Some Members pointed out that the existing stations would not close until the new hub was open. Over the last 10 years, there had been a 31% reduction in all incidents across the two counties, with a 42% reduction in the number of fires across the Wyre Forest. The move to a hub in Kidderminster would be a safer and effective option for the people of Wyre Forest.

Some Members felt that lives would be put at risk by the delayed time in getting to incidents.

Councillor Hingley stated that she was a Member of the fire authority and they had been well informed on the proposals and how services were to be delivered in a more modern way.

Upon a vote, the amendment was agreed. The following members voted against the amendment and asked that their names should be recorded: Councillors Knowles, Higgs, Shaw and Martin. Councillor Rayner abstained from voting.

**Decision: The following amended motion received from the Conservative Group be agreed:**

**This Council is mindful of changes to the system of future cover in Wyre Forest, including the impact on response times. It notes that the Fire and Rescue Authority is consulting on potential locations for**

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**the new emergency services hub, following its decision in principle to approve the hub subject to finding a satisfactory location.**

**The Council supports the Fire and Rescue Authority in ensuring that there is adequate and appropriate cover in for Wyre Forest. The Council welcomes the multi-million investment in Wyre Forest. It supports the Fire and Rescue Authority's intention not to close any of the existing stations until the hub is open and notes that there is no intention to reduce any on-call fire fighting crewing levels as a result of the move.**

**C.30 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Order No. D1 (7)**

There were no urgent motions.

**C.31 Political and Constitutional Structures 2016/2017**

Consider considered the revised political balance following a change in membership of political groups and to make consequential changes to the chairmanship and vice-chairmanship of committees.

Councillor J-P Campion left the meeting at 19.27pm and came back at 19.29pm.

Councillor N Gale came back to the meeting at this point, (19.28pm).

**Decision:**

- 1. The revised chart of political balance as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to Council be approved.**
- 2. Agree the changes to appointments of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report to Council be agreed with immediate effect.**

**C.32 Community Governance Review – Stourport-on-Severn**

Council received the draft Terms of Reference and timetable relating to the community governance review of Stourport-on-Severn, which is to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

**Decision: The terms of reference and timetable for the review in Appendix 1 of the report to Council be approved.**

**C.33 Review of the May 2016 Elections and the Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union**

Council received a report on the Police and Crime Commissioner Election for the West Mercia Area, elections to Wyre Forest District Council and Kidderminster Town Council held on 5 May 2016 and the Wyre Forest District

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results for the Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union on 23 June 2016.

The Cabinet Member for Resources took Members through the report. It was worth noting that the turnout for Wyre Forest for the EU Referendum was 74% which was higher than the national average across the country and also every ward in the Wyre Forest District had voted to leave the EU. He also informed Council that there was a recommendation for the Chief Executive to receive delegated authority to review any minor changes to polling districts. He pointed out that this was not a fundamental review but looking at small incremental changes.

Councillor Oborski stated that there were anomalies of ward boundaries in Offmore & Comberton, namely Byron Close and Queen Elizabeth Road and asked for these to be addressed. She also stated that the Community Housing Group were thinking that they may demolish the Offmore Community Centre, which was used as a polling station and asked that Offmore Evangelical Church and the scout hut in Byron Close be looked into as alternative venues.

Councillor Knowles asked that the review took into account that St Johns Hall on Canterbury Road be reopened as a polling station.

Some members agreed that the country needed a system of compulsory voting.

#### **Decision:**

- 1. The report on the Police and Crime Commissioner, Wyre Forest District Council and Kidderminster Town Council elections held on 5 May 2016 and the Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union on 23 June 2016 be noted.**
- 2. Delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources, to publish consultation proposals for any minor adjustments to polling district boundaries as outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report to Council and to commence a Polling Places review by December 2016 if any of the buildings used for Polling Places cease to be available for future use as a result of redevelopment plans.**

#### **C.34 Electoral cycle of Parish and Town Councils in Wyre Forest**

Council received proposed changes to the electoral cycle of ordinary elections for parish and town councils in the Wyre Forest District in light of the results received from the recent consultation exercise.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report to Council.

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Members were informed that if the town and parish councils did not align to the district council, they could face a huge financial cost.

A Member stated that with regard to Kidderminster Town Council, electors had been confused in the May 2016 elections having received two ballot papers, albeit on different colour paper, asking for them to vote for up to 3 candidates. They found it difficult to know what the ballot papers referred to. Therefore, Kidderminster Town Council were going with the electors wishes and wished to stay with their current cycle of elections.

#### **Decision:**

- 1. Under section 53 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Council recommended to resolve to make an order to:**
  - a) the electoral cycle of ordinary elections for parish and town councils in the Wyre Forest District be changed, except Kidderminster Town Council, so they are aligned with the date of Wyre Forest District Council's elections from May 2019;**
  - b) the term of office of parish councillors elected in 2014 be extended so that it comes to an end in 2019 (i.e. the present councillors in six town and parish councils would have an additional year in office);**
  - c) the term of office of parish councillors in Rock elected in 2016 be reduced so that it comes to an end in 2019.**
- 2. No change be made to the electoral cycle for Kidderminster Town Council.**

#### **C.35 Policy and Budget Framework**

##### **Recommendations from Cabinet 12<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

- Bewdley Medical Centre – Demolition and Redevelopment**

In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that an original figure of £250k had been planned for but then it was amended to £126K.

**Decision: The Capital programme be amended to accommodate the gross additional costs of £167,250 associated with the overall project, for which funding is already available or will be secured as set out in section 5 of the report to Cabinet.**

The meeting ended at 7.59 p.m.