

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,  
KIDDERMINSTER

28TH SEPTEMBER 2016 (6PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: R Bishop (Chairman), J D Smith (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, J Baker, J-P Champion, S J Chambers, N J Desmond, 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 Walker, S J Williams, R Wilson and G C Yarranton.

**C.36 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Reverend Phil Hoare, Wesley Methodist Church, Stourport-on-Severn.

**C.37 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: S J M Clee, J R Desmond, H E Dyke and P Dyke.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**C.39 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 27th July 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.40 Public Participation**

In accordance with the Council's scheme for public participation at meetings of Full Council, the following member of the public addressed the meeting at this point:

Councillor Sheridan Tranter, Chairman, Hartlebury Parish Council.

*I am grateful for this opportunity to speak at this meeting. I am Chair of Hartlebury Parish Council and have a number of concerns regarding the various issues recorded in Agenda Item No. 12.*

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*There has been no dialogue whatsoever with Hartlebury Parish Council and neither has there been any discussions with Wychavon District Council. This lack of transparency is extremely regrettable and difficult to understand.*

*The next meeting of Hartlebury Parish Council is on Tuesday 4th October where this will be on the agenda for full discussion and this information will be promulgated to the communities involved. I am most concerned that Mark Garnier MP has stated that the only difference would be 'boundary change' whilst the information in the agenda appears to differ with that by stating that Wyre Forest would add Hartlebury to Wyre Forest District Council.*

*The Parish Council will need to know what advantage this proposal would possibly be to the parish of Hartlebury and what advantage is perceived there would be to Wyre Forest District Council. There are numerous implications which may be to the detriment of this community. I therefore would ask that more time and consideration is taken by this committee before making any decisions tonight therefore I would ask for it to be deferred.*

### C.41

#### Questions

Seven 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 that the average wage of people living in Wyre Forest is around £19,000 each year, it is not, perhaps, likely that tenants living in the Housing Association sector might incur the Government's proposed £1,000 "Pay to Stay" rent rise from next April for household incomes of more than £31,000 (or £40,000 in London) aimed at getting tenants to pay market rate rents, but Councils like Wyre Forest would have to write to tenants to discover their household incomes for a decision on their obligation to pay the extra £1,000 on their rents, an extra cost for Council and perhaps no help in building more social housing. Will the administration comment on this Government policy?

#### Answer from the Cabinet Member for Transformation

Two questions in here and the first one I can answer very simply with a no. Councils like us will not have to write to tenants because we are not the social housing provider: it would fall on the registered provider of social housing. It is likely that very few tenants in Wyre Forest would have to pay the extra £1000, however the policy is not a compulsory scheme that those registered providers have to abide by.

As far as commenting on the government's policy which I think is your second question, the whole point of the policy is that people who can pay more for their social housing should do so and in fact rather than encouraging the building of more social housing this policy seems to be

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aimed at encouraging those who earn more than £31,000 to consider other options. I personally earn less than £31,000 from my employment and I consider myself quite affluent, I think it's reasonable for people who earn more than I do to be encouraged by this policy to look to other places to live; private accommodation and also to look to buying their own property because they are being asked to pay a fair market price that frees up social housing for the more needy and that is where the government is aiming this policy, to free up more social housing for those who genuinely need it because they are on a low income.

#### **Supplementary question from Councillor N Knowles**

I assume that, because you're in favour of this policy, your emphasis would not be on the council and / or the local authority's preferred option i.e. with Wyre Forest Community Housing from actually building more houses. Wouldn't you agree that it's a diversion from what we should be doing i.e. by writing to people asking for their wages whether it comes from Wyre Forest Community Housing or us? It's just inflicting an extra £1,000 on people who certainly around here cannot afford it.

#### **Supplementary answer from the Cabinet Member for Transformation**

I think it is dangerous to conflate two things, one is building more social housing. I am certainly not against building more social housing. However this is aimed at getting people to pay a fair market rent for the social housing which they are tenants of. I might say people are by definition able to pay a fair market rent if their income is £31,000 and above out of London and £40,000 or above in London so your statement that people can't afford it because they are social tenants is incorrect. The fact that they are social tenants does not necessarily mean that they can't afford to pay a fair market rent. If they can afford it they should pay that fair market rent whether they are in social housing or in the private market. If they can't afford to pay, those are the people who are most in need of supported social housing.

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

Does the Leader have a view or comment on the Boundary Commission proposal to include Hartlebury as part of the new Wyre Forest parliamentary constituency?

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

In short yes, about five minutes' worth, and if you can wait and bear with me until agenda item 12 I will comment on the proposals at that stage.

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

Whilst it is acknowledged that figures for the recycling of household waste may not always be a full comparison of like-with-like, why can't Wyre Forest achieve a similar level of performance as Welsh authorities: average 60%; best, Ceredigion, 68%; worst, Blaenau Gwent, 49%?

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

Councillor Shaw's question is trying to compare apples and pears. There is a different and much more expensive approach to recycling in Wales and the government in England is not funding councils to achieve such high recycling rates. I have spoken with Ceredigion County Council's Waste Services Manager and their recycling achievement figures of 68% include garden waste, street sweepings and food waste. They do not claim household recycling achievements; they use the term municipal waste recycling.

It is important to note that the devolved Welsh government has a zero waste strategy and has pumped millions of pounds into their authorities to achieve high efficiency results. We spend less than £39.00 per household per year in Wyre Forest; authorities in Wales are spending three times that.

Our targets are pooled with all other authorities in Worcestershire and Herefordshire. Most local authorities' dry recycling (green bin) rates in England will be between 25% - 29% with the remainder built up from garden waste: for 2015-16 our green bin recycling rate was 27%.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire have agreed targets of 50% by 2020 for dry recycling and composting combined. When the energy from waste plant at Hartlebury is in operation, 78% of the total waste will either be recovered or recycled, with only 22% going to landfill. The Council is making every effort to increase the uptake of brown bins to improve our composting levels. A recent review of all Worcestershire District Councils placed Wyre Forest's waste services as the cheapest across the County.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor J Shaw**

Would the Cabinet Member undertake to look at a similar authority to this one, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, which has a recycling rate of 59%. If we find we are not doing certain types of recycling could we not look at taking on some of the services which other similar district councils provide and reach much better recycling targets.

### **Supplementary question from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

I will undertake to investigate along those lines.

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

Lord Porter, (Conservative), Chairman of the Local Government Association, has expressed the LGA's concern that the Homelessness Reduction Bill currently before Parliament increases the duties of councils by creating new categories of person who must be assisted, without providing a concomitant increase in funding. He explains how councils struggle to meet their existing obligations and observes that, under the existing criteria, numbers seeking help are rising. He expresses the LGA's view that the government should address the increasing gap between household incomes and rising rents, especially in the privately rented sector, and calls for the construction of greatly increased numbers of

socially rented properties.

Will the Leader of the Council bring Lord Porter's statement to the attention of Mark Garnier, MP, and inform us of his response?

(Full copy of the LGA statement provided to Leader)

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Health, Well-being and Housing**

Yes I will definitely make Mark Garnier MP aware of your question and will circulate his response to Council.

**Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Health, Well-being and Housing**

Could the Cabinet Member tell me: How many events have been run by WFDC at Kidderminster Town Hall so far in this Financial Year? For each event what was the cost of the artistes, what were the additional costs (lighting, sound, advertising etc), what was the selling price of the tickets, how many tickets were sold for each event?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Health, Well-being and Housing**

There have been two events so far in this financial year, the Beer Festival and the Dreamers, there are eight more programmed between 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016 to 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The Beer Festival realised a profit of £500 and despite disappointing ticket sales the Dreamers event realised a surplus of £25. Last year's events realised an overall net income of £5,336.

The Cabinet Member offered to give Councillor Oborski a detailed break down of the events after the meeting.

**Supplementary question from Councillor F Oborski MBE**

Is the Cabinet Member satisfied that our staff have the commercial marketing expertise necessary to make successful and profitable events at the Town Hall?

**Supplementary answer from the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Health, Well-being and Housing**

Yes I am. It is a learning curve with every event organised and as each event has made a profit I feel they are doing a very good job and they are putting on a number of varied events. They are making the most of the website and facebook to promote the events and making it easier to purchase tickets on-line.

**Question from Councillor S Miah to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

If, as seems likely, Kidderminster Town Council refuses to take on the maintenance and operation of the St Georges Park paddling pool, will the cabinet member agree to continue to fund the operation of the pool which is a much loved and well used facility serving a deprived area of

Kidderminster?

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

The District Council can no longer afford to support the operation of an outmoded paddling pool when there is a modern splash play facility in Brinton Park, serving Kidderminster and the wider District. If the Town Council does not wish to take on the cost, the paddling pool would be decommissioned. The District Council is presently spending around £35,000 annually on the upkeep of the three paddling pools in the District which it cannot continue to cover.

**Supplementary question from Councillor S Miah**

I feel angry that none of the Councils is willing to take on the cost, the leisure centre has moved further away which was an easily accessible amenity. Would the Cabinet Member meet with me, parents and residents and explain why the paddling pool will not be funded and kept open?

**Supplementary answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

I gave you the answer in my first reply. I must remind you that it is not just St George's park: it is all paddling pools across the District.

**Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Traders and shoppers in Kidderminster have faced huge disruption during the ongoing Town Centre Regeneration Works which were originally intended to be completed by December 2015, then by April 2016 and now, apparently during October 2016.

Shoppers and Traders in Bewdley were similarly inconvenienced by the work on the new Medical Centre and the disruption to traffic and trade caused this summer by the work on St Anne's Church in Load St.

On page 70 of the Kidderminster Shuttle of Sept 10th this Council announced Increases to Car Park Charges due to come into effect on October 16th.

In the light of the effects on traders and shoppers caused by all these works does he not feel that the Council should show that it understands the financial impacts of these works by postponing these Car Park Charge increases?

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

I do not feel that there is any case for this Council to postpone the announced car park charges which were approved by the Cabinet last December. Car park usage has not declined as a result of the improvement works in Kidderminster Town Centre, and the temporary reduction in car parking capacity in Bewdley will be addressed once the works to Load Street car park are completed, which will result in an increase in the overall car parking capacity. There is no proven link between the number of people using our car parks and the level of trade in

particular businesses.

**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 of the Council Announcements**

The Leader referred Members to his tabled report. He announced that with effect from 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016, he was making changes to membership and portfolios within his Cabinet.

He advised Council that Councillor T Onslow had stood down from the Cabinet to concentrate on her role as Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, to which she was appointed after joining the Cabinet in May. Councillor I Hardiman would remain as Deputy Leader and take over the portfolio as Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration. Councillor R Vale would be appointed as Cabinet Member for Operational Services.

The Leader thanked Councillor Onslow for her valued contribution to the work of the Cabinet since May.

**C.44 Motions Submitted under Standing Orders**

**One motion had been received in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1).**

**Motion from Councillor J Shaw, Labour Group**

While Council welcomes the postponement of a final decision, it notes with alarm the government's planned £170m reduction in funding for community pharmacies. Council notes that key payments for pharmacies would be phased out, leading to the closure of as many as 3,000 retail outlets, with a consequent increased focus on warehouse dispensing and online services.

We believe that the Government's plans threaten patient access to pharmacies and pharmacy services in Wyre Forest. Our local pharmacies are at risk of closure, or being forced to cut services such as free delivery of prescription drugs, and advice on medicines and family planning. Such developments would put more pressure on GPs and hospitals, have an impact on social care services, and be at odds with strong professional sentiment to increase the use of pharmacists.

Therefore, we call on the government to abandon these cuts and maintain a fully-funded community pharmacy service, and request the Leader of the Council to write to Mark Garnier MP, Wyre Forest Clinical Commissioning Group, the Secretary of State for Health and NHS England, expressing this view.

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Councillor Shaw presented the motion and stated that the government had announced that it had made its decision to reduce the funding with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016. He stressed the importance of the services proved by the community pharmacies and asked Members to support the motion.

The Cabinet Member for Health, Well-being and Housing tabled an amendment to the motion from the Conservative Group.

A robust debate on the amended motion took place and upon a vote, the amendment was agreed.

**Decision: The following Conservative Group amendment to motion on Community Pharmacies be agreed:**

**While Council welcomes the postponement of a final decision about funding for community pharmacies, it acknowledges that there has been significant growth in the number of pharmacies from 9,748 in 2003 to 11,674 in March 2015, an increase of nearly 20%. Council welcomes the investment in modern pharmacy facilities in Wyre Forest, for example as part of new medical practices in Hume Street, Kidderminster and at the Kidderminster Medical Centre which opened in August. Council also acknowledges the important role that pharmacies play in community-based health services, that reduce pressure on other parts of the NHS and social care system.**

**Council recognises that, despite the real terms increase in funding over this Parliament, the NHS needs to continue to modernise and make efficiency savings and that the Government is right to review what role pharmacies can play in achieving this, including increased use of modern technology. Council believes that no public service can continue to use service delivery models from the 1970s or earlier.**

**Council welcomes the announcement by the Community Health and Social Care Minister David Mowat MP that the Government will spend time to make sure that the Department for Health is making the correct decision about reforms that are right for pharmacies, right for the NHS and right for the public more generally.**

### **C.45 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders**

There were no urgent motions.

### **C.46 Local Pay Arrangements, 2018-2022**

A report was considered from the Chief Executive which asked for authorisation for the Head of Paid Service to commence negotiations with the unions about local pay arrangements for the period 2018 to 2022, including potential changes to terms and conditions such as sickness pay.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the report and reminded



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Members that the Council had local pay agreements in place for 2014 to 2018. He added that the local pay arrangements had avoided pay increase costs worth around £120,000 a year for the Council by 2017.

A robust debate ensued and several Members expressed concern over the possibility of imposing changes of staff who do not accept the proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Resources reiterated that the recommendations were to commence negotiations and a further report would be brought back to Council for approval. He added that the local pay arrangements had not only provided certainty to the Council in its financial strategy; it also gave staff the knowledge that they would receive a pay increase every year for the stated period.

#### **Decision: The Council authorises the Head of Paid Service:**

- 1. to commence negotiations with the recognised unions about local pay arrangements for the period 2018 to 2022, including potential changes to terms and conditions such as sickness pay, in accordance with the broad remit set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report to Council;**
- 2. to report back to Council to obtain approval of the finalised proposals so that they can be implemented with effect from 1 April 2018.**

#### **C.47 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies**

A report was received from the Chief Executive which invited Council to consider and agree its response to the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals on the boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies.

The Leader of the Council led Members through the report and advised that the review was looking to reduce the size of the House of Commons from 650 members to 600. He added that their final reports had to be submitted by 1st October 2018. It was intended that the resulting changes would be implemented at the next general election in May 2020.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that out of courtesy he had written to the Leader of Wychavon District Council, the Ward Member for Hartlebury and the Chairman of the Parish Council, advising them that the item was on the agenda for consideration.

Members discussed the proposals in depth, and following a show of hands the recommended response was agreed.

#### **The Council SUPPORTS:**

- 1. the retention of a constituency named "Wyre Forest" which will include the whole of the district of Wyre Forest and be wholly located within Worcestershire;**

- 2. the inclusion of Hartlebury in the Wyre Forest Parliamentary constituency;**
- 3. if the current proposals of the Boundary Commission are implemented, a request for a review of local government boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission to consider the case for including Hartlebury in the district of Wyre Forest, on the basis that any such review would not involve or require a review of warding arrangements in the present Wyre Forest district area.**

**C.48 Policy and Budget Framework – Matters which require a decision by Council**

**Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

- Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2015/16**

**Decision:**

- 1. The actual 2015/16 prudential and treasury indicators be approved.**
- 2. The annual treasury management report for 2015/16 be noted.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.00pm