

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,
KIDDERMINSTER

14TH DECEMBER 2016 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: R Bishop (Chairman), D Little (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, 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, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, J A Shaw, J D Smith, R J Vale, S J Walker, S J Williams and G C Yarranton.

C.49 Prayers

Prayers were said by Reverend Hugh Burton, Kidderminster East Parish.

C.50 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Wilson.

C.51 Declarations of Interests by Members

There were no declarations of interest.

C.52 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the Ordinary and Special meetings held on 28th September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.53 Public Participation

Council received a 300 signature petition from Councillor S Miah regarding St George's Park Paddling Pool.

Councillor Miah spoke on behalf of the petition, a summary of the points made is as follows:

- St George's Park serves the wards of Offmore and Comberton and

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Broadwaters. It is the nearest park to the Centre of Kidderminster.

- The Park is looked after by volunteers, the Friends of St George's Park.
- The paddling pool is a prominent feature of the park.
- It is used by very young children.
- Paddling pool has been a feature of the park for many years.
- The park was used heavily during the summer.
- The paddling pool is the only water feature immediately available in that area.
- The residents and users wish for it to remain open.
- Any decision to close the paddling pool will drive families away from the park which in turn will attract antisocial behaviour.
- The cost of running and maintaining the paddling pool does not outweigh the needs of the community who use it.

C.54

Questions

Three 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 it is the Administration's Policy to scrutinise our staff and employees terms, conditions and wages in an effort to save money, would the Leader agree that the Chief Executive, should keep a record (perhaps kept by admin staff) of each time he leaves Council HQ to attend outside meetings, seminars and functions etc., so that a time - crucial log of his activities on behalf of WFDC can help to build a picture of imperative "outside" meetings and events attended, and allow Councillors, staff and others to best appreciate their availability to address and solve problems and issues in-house, and absolutely ensure "best value" in our collective efforts to close the financial gap between income and expenditure, and allow everyone to appreciate that Chief Officer time and the time of other employees is valued equally.

Answer from the Leader of the Council

Thank you for your question, I think this is a reference to Council's decision to look at terms and conditions across the board, and any changes to terms and conditions mean changes to all Members of staff and not just some. The Chief Executive as do other Senior Officers and less Senior Officers alike keep a diary and a record of all of the meetings that they attend both internal and external, and I as Leader, all of the Corporate Leadership Team and ESOs have access to the Chief Executive's diary so in relative terms there is already a record and I do not believe anything else is required. I fundamentally believe that all of the meetings the Chief Executive attends are in the best interest of this Council, its residents and the tax payers that we all serve.

Supplementary question from Councillor N Knowles

I would like to make it clear that I would expect the Administration to not just scrutinise the Chief Officer but all of our employees about meetings attended

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particularly outside of Council and within the community. I hope that we do that and I hope that we estimate the value of all such meetings because it is very important. I have been around a long time and I know in

the past sometimes some meetings are not imperative to attend, we are all supposed to be equal working for Council.

Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council

I can assure this chamber and the residents we serve that I as Leader and my Administration do not personally scrutinise every single meeting that our Officers go to. We place trust and faith in our Chief Executive, in our Directors, in our Senior Managers who manage staff, that is the role of the Head of Paid Service and I have absolute confidence in our Corporate Leadership Team, in our Senior Managers and in our middle Managers. Over the past 15 years I have been on the Council, the amount of external meetings and partnership meetings Officers have gone to because of the reduction in budgets and the reductions in staff we have had in the past, are greatly reduced and I am confident our Officers use their time productively. We are told to trust our staff and we should do just that.

Question from Councillor J Shaw to the Leader of the Council

Will you invite to another Members' Briefing in this municipal year those councillors who represent this council on Community Housing boards, but did not take the opportunity, in person or in writing, to inform councillors of their activities on our behalf at the Briefing held on 13th October 2016?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

There are two further Member Forums scheduled for this municipal year; 12th January and 9th March and as they already have agenda items scheduled for them, I do not have any plans to invite the Members who weren't able to come and present at the last meeting to a future meeting at this stage.

Supplementary question from Councillor J Shaw to the Leader of the Council

What does the Leader of the Council consider to be accountability in the context of our representation on Wyre Forest Community Housing for example the representative of this Council on the Vestia Board, quite an important function in the life of Wyre Forest District, and the representative on the Wyre Forest Community Housing Board itself. What is their responsibility to the wider public and to us? Are we not entitled to know what decisions they are taking on our behalf?

Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council

Appointments to external bodies are democratically taken decisions by this Council and as such are accountable to this Council. He refers to the

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representative on Vestia and the representative on Wyre Forest Community Housing but it would go for any of the other representatives as well, Councillor Shaw knows who they are and he knows that if he has any questions or queries or wants to raise any matters with them I am sure they

would be happy to answer his questions without the necessity for a further Members Forum. It was Councillor Shaw who requested that reports be given to a Members Forum and I acquiesced to that request in good faith and I have done my part moreover and that will remain the position.

Question from Councillor J Shaw to the Leader of the Council

Does the Leader of the Council agree with the unanimous decision of Stourport Town Council to oppose the imposition of the Council Tax referendum principle on town and parish councils, as suggested in a recent central government consultation paper?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

Yes.

Supplementary question from Councillor J Shaw to the Leader of the Council

I am grateful for that answer and therefore I will ask the Leader in the context of paddling pools, if therefore is he happy that, if the Town Council agrees to take over the riverside paddling pool, and seeks to pay for it in the normal way which is through the council tax and the cost of that paddling pool is £12,000, the increase in the precept for that purpose would be 6.3%?

Supplementary answer from the Leader of the Council

I suspected that this is what the supplementary might be, and this is where our agreement stops. The provision that the DCLG are looking at in relation to capping precept levels for Town and Parish Councils is a consultation, so we don't know whether the Government are going to do that. I have made written representations to our Member of Parliament, and I know others have, about the fact that, given small Town and Parish Councils quite often only have means of income by precepting, this perhaps is not one of the wisest things they have ever gone out to in terms of consultation. Therefore there is no absolute that this will happen. But of course Stourport Town Council like many other Town and Parish Councils have reserves, they can obtain funding in other ways so the notion that if the Government do what they are going to do means that Stourport Town Council would have to have a referendum in order to fund the paddling pool certainly for the municipal year 17-18 and 18-19 is absolute rubbish and Councillor Shaw jolly well knows it.

C.55

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 both Members and Officers for their generous donations for the Christmas foodbank collection.

C.56 Leader of the Council Announcements

The Leader referred Members to his tabled report.

C.57 Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders

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

Motion from Councillor F M Oborski MBE, Independent and Lib Dem Group

Council accedes to the request from Kidderminster Town Council and agrees that WFDC will operate the St George's Park Paddling Pool during the summer of 2017 to allow Kidderminster Town Council, the Friends of St George's Park and local District and County Councillors to have more time to seek funding so that they can potentially take over the operating of the pool from the 2018-2019 financial year.

Councillor Oborski presented the motion and stated that the request from the Town Council would not alter the financial burden of the District Council but would allow the newly formed Town Council to establish their budget stability before taking on any commitments. She asked Members to support the motion.

The Leader of the Council tabled an amendment to the motion from the Conservative Group. He stated that the District Council had made it clear for the last four years that the operation of the paddling pools would cease following the investment in the modern splash pad facility in Brinton Park, which was used by residents from across and outside of the District.

A full and robust debate on the amended motion took place. A number of Councillors expressed the view that there seemed to be a realistic prospect of agreement being reached following further discussion.

Upon a vote the amendment to the motion was agreed. Councillors N Knowles and V Higgs voted against the amendment and asked for their votes to be recorded.

Decision: The following Conservative Group amendment to Motion on St George's Park Paddling Pool be agreed:

Council notes the request from Kidderminster Town Council and:

- **Welcomes the excellent offer that Wyre Forest District Council**

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has made to Kidderminster Town Council under which it would provide revenue funding equivalent to 100% grant in 2017-18 and 50% grant in 2018-2019 and an additional one off £2,000 if the Town Council agrees to the asset transfer of St George's Park Paddling Pool by 7th February 2017, as set out in the Cabinet's proposed budget strategy;

- **Notes that the Town Council has had lengthy notice of the intention to cease operating the paddling pool, including the clear answer given by the Deputy Leader at this Council's meeting in September;**
- **Notes that some members of the Town Council are hesitant about committing to revenue expenditure of £4,283 a year when, as a result of the District Council's generous offer, the Town Council would in fact not face any revenue expenditure until 2018-19.**

C.58 Urgent Motions submitted under Standing Orders

There were no urgent motions.

C.59 Political and Constitutional Issues

A report was considered from the Solicitor to the Council on a number of constitutional issues including appointments that had arisen since the last meeting of Council.

Councillor M J Hart nominated Councillor D Little as Vice-Chairman of the Council, to serve for the remainder of the municipal year 2016/17. This was seconded by Councillor I Hardiman.

Decision:

- 1. Councillor D Little be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Council, to serve for the remainder of the municipal year 2016/17.**
- 2. The change to the appointment of Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report be agreed with immediate effect.**
- 3. The revised rules on public speaking in section 7 (council procedure rules) of the constitution as set out in appendix 1 of the report be agreed.**
- 4. The changes to dates of Audit Committee meetings in the period May to July 2017, as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report be agreed.**

After being invested with his Badge of Office, Councillor D Little made his

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Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Vice-Chairman. He thanked Council for his appointment and felt privileged to be asked to take on the role.

C.60 Review of Polling Places and Polling Districts in the Wyre Forest District

A report was considered from the Returning Officer & Chief Executive on the outcome of a review of polling places and polling districts in the Wyre Forest District.

The Chairman advised Members that the agenda item was limited to the specific issues raised in relation to the Offmore & Comberton and Mitton Wards that were identified following the elections and referendum in May and June this year.

She added the report did not relate to other electoral wards in Wyre Forest and asked Members to ensure any contributions relate only to the Offmore & Comberton and Mitton Wards.

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the recommendation, which was welcomed and seconded by Councillor F M Oborski.

Decision: The changes to the Polling Places and Polling Districts in the Wyre Forest District as set out in Paragraph 4.1 (Chart 1 and Chart 2) of the report be made from the ordinary elections in May 2017.

C.61 Policy and Budget Framework

a) Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 3rd November 2016

- **Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2016/17**

Decision: The Treasury Management Mid-year Review and updated Prudential Indicators be approved.

b) Recommendations from the Audit Committee, 28th November 2016

- **External Audit Arrangements**

Decision: Wyre Forest District Council opts in to the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors for 5 years commencing from 2018/19.

c) Recommendations from Cabinet, 22nd November 2016

- **Review of Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/18**

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Change presented the recommendations and outlined the technical changes to the scheme which would avoid the scheme costing the authority extra money to administer. Following a detailed discussion and upon a show of hands the recommendation was agreed. Councillors N Knowles and V Higgs voted against the recommendation and asked for their votes to be recorded.

Decision: From 1 April 2017 the technical changes to align the scheme with housing benefit, tax credits and Universal Credit outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the Cabinet report are adopted in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

- **Amendments to Capital Programme**

The Cabinet Member for Resources moved the recommendations which were seconded by the Leader of the Council. Members welcomed the proposals and unanimously voted in favour of them.

The Provision of Temporary Accommodation

Decision: The Capital Programme be amended to include the costs of £267,060 associated with the conversion works, with funding as detailed in paragraph 5.6 of the open report.

Industrial Units Investment Business Case

Decision: The Capital Programme be amended to include the costs to accommodate the purchase of the land and construction of the industrial units together with the requisite revisions to the revenue budget as set out in the detail of Appendix 3 of the exempt report.

Note: The detailed amounts are set out in the exempt report and are taken into account in the global adjustments to the capital programme set out below.

Leisure Centre Provision

Decision: The Capital programme be adjusted to take account of the proposed financial changes resulting from the demolition of the former Glades Leisure Centre and the confirmed capital receipt from Stourport Sports Centre as set out in paragraph 2.1.1 of the exempt report.

Note: The detailed amounts are set out in the exempt report and are taken into account in the global adjustments to the capital

programme set out below.

Public Realm

Decision: The Capital programme be adjusted to take account of the proposed financial changes resulting from the Kidderminster Town Centre Public Realm works as set out in paragraph 2.1.2 of the exempt report.

Note: The detailed amounts are set out in the exempt report and are taken into account in the global adjustments to the capital programme set out below.

Decision: The total adjustments to the capital programme arising from the four items above are:

Additions to gross capital costs £ 2,777,095

Funded by

Increase in contributions from third parties £105,000

Changes in amounts of capital receipts £783,060

Increase in prudential borrowing £1,743,065

Direct revenue funding £80,970

Capital Grant £65,000

Total funding: £2,777,095

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.28pm.