

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,
KIDDERMINSTER

10TH MAY 2017 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: D Little (Chairman), J-P Champion (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, J Baker, R Bishop, S J Chambers, S J M Clee, J R Desmond, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, 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, H S Williams, S J Williams, R Wilson and G C Yarranton.

C.1 Prayers

Prayers were said by Rev. Denise Williamson, Foley Park Methodist Church.

C.2 Election of Chairman

Councillor D Little was nominated as Chairman. This was moved by Councillor M Hart and seconded by Councillor I Hardiman.

Decision: Councillor D Little be elected as Chairman of Wyre Forest District Council for the ensuing municipal year.

C.3 Chairman – Investiture and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

After being invested with his Chain of Office, Councillor D Little made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chairman.

C.4 Chairman's Response

The Chairman thanked Members for his appointment as Chairman. He felt honoured and humbled to be given the opportunity and would carry out his duties with a passion. He announced that his charities would be the Air Ambulance and Macmillan Nurses.

C.5 Retiring Chairman

The Leader of the Council thanked the retiring Chairman, Councillor R Bishop, for her hard work over the past 12 months. She had been very active in the

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local community and had represented the Council at many civic engagements across the County.

C.6 Retiring Chairman – Presentation of Badges

The retiring Chairman was presented with a Past Chairman's badge. Councillor Bishop thanked everyone for all the support she had been given during her year of office. She had raised in excess of £2,000 for her charity, Kidderminster and District Youth Trust. She gave special thanks to her consort, Councillor N Gale.

C.7 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Councillor M Hart nominated Councillor J-P Champion as Vice-Chairman. This was seconded by Councillor I Hardiman.

Decision: Councillor J-P Champion be elected as Vice-Chairman of Wyre Forest District Council for the ensuing municipal year.

C.8 Vice-Chairman – Investiture and Declaration of Acceptance of Office

After being invested with his Badge of Office, Councillor J-P Champion made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Vice-Chairman.

C.9 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

C.10 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor J Smith declared that, in relation to agenda item 15 – Changes to the Governance Structure of The Community Housing Group (CHG), she was a Member of the CHG but was covered by a general dispensation relating to outside bodies which covers all Members.

Councillor C Rogers declared that he was a Member of the CHG and was covered by the same dispensation.

Councillor S Miah declared that he was a Member of the CHG and was covered by the same dispensation.

Councillor J Hart declared that he was a Member of the CHG and was covered by the same dispensation.

Councillor M Rayner declared that she was a Member of the CHG and was covered by the same dispensation.

Councillor S Clee declared that he was a Member of Vestia and was covered by the same dispensation.

C.11 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd February 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.12 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

C.13 Questions

There were no questions.

C.14 Chairman's Communications

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

C.15 Changes to the Governance Structure of The Community Housing Group

The Leader of the Council presented a report from the Chief Executive which asked Members to consider the Council's position on changes to the governance structure of the Community Housing Group, and moved the recommendations as set out in the report. The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being seconded the proposal.

Councillors N Knowles and J Shaw spoke against the recommendations. Councillor Shaw expressed concern over the removal of the role of elected representatives on the Group and the loss of accountability to Councillors and tenants. Councillor F Oborski MBE stated that as a local authority the Council had a duty to carry out the law and, whilst it may not be what Members personally would want to see passed, the Council was not in a position to be selective on what pieces of legislation it implemented. She welcomed the opportunity for Councillors to be able to put themselves forward for consideration in the event of a vacancy arising on the board under the new structure.

Upon a show of hands the recommendation was agreed. Councillor N Knowles, J Shaw and V Higgs voted against the proposal and asked for their votes to be recorded.

Decision:

- 1. The changes to the governance structure of the Community Housing Group (CHG) be supported;**
- 2. the three Councillors serving on the CHG membership be mandated to sign in favour of the written special resolution to**

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convert CHG into a community benefit society and to adopt rules governing the society;

- 3. any question of mandating how the Council shareholder should vote in future would be a matter for Cabinet to decide be noted;**
- 4. delegated authority be given to the Solicitor to the Council to terminate the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Community Housing Group relating to Community Member Nominations.**

C.16 Political and Constitutional Structures 2017/2018

Council received a report from the Solicitor to the Council on the proposed political and constitutional structures for the municipal year 2017/2018.

The Leader of the Council drew Members' attention to the additional papers which had been circulated following the declaration of the by-election result on 5th May 2017. He moved all recommendations in the report subject to two amendments to the appointments to outside bodies. The first was replacing Councillor R Vale with Councillor R Wilson on Bewdley Museum Management Committee, as Councillor Vale would sit on the Committee in her County Council role, and the second was the substitution of Councillor R Bishop with Councillor S Chambers on the Wyre Forest Local Children and Young People's Trust.

Councillor N Knowles moved three amendments en bloc to the appointments to outside bodies. Upon a show of hands the amendment was lost.

Decision:

- 1. The proposed Political Management Structure of committees for 2017/2018 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved.**
- 2. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees as contained in Appendix 2 be agreed.**
- 3. The Municipal Calendar as set out in Appendix 3 be adopted.**
- 4. Approve the revised chart of political balance as set out in Appendix 4 be approved.**
- 5. The appointments to outside bodies as set out in Appendix 5 be agreed, subject to the substitution of Councillor R Vale with Councillor R Wilson on Bewdley Museum Management Committee and the substitution of Councillor R Bishop with Councillor S Chambers on Wyre Forest Local Children and Young People's Trust.**

- 6. The Solicitor to the Council be authorised to settle any outstanding details relating to the political structures and to make changes as necessary to the Council's Constitution to give effect to the Council's decisions and any other revisions necessary to reflect needs or circumstances.**

C.17 Members' Annual Activity Reports and Attendance 2016/2017

Council received the schedule of Members' Activity reports which gave details of activities in their role as District Councillors for the 2016/2017 municipal year and a record of attendance.

Decision: The reports and attendance be noted.

C.18 Annual Reports for the Municipal Year 2016/2017

Council received the annual reports from the Leader of the Council, and the Chairmen of both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Ethics and Standards Committee.

Decision: The Annual Reports for the Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Ethics and Standards Committee be noted.

C.19 Leader of the Council Announcements

The Leader referred Members to his tabled report.

C.20 Motions Submitted under Standing Orders

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

Motion from Councillor Nigel Knowles, Leader Labour Group

"Wyre Forest District Council is determined to make a positive difference to the economic and social structure of our District, and to provide an income stream to alleviate short falls in our budget.

Council approved the borrowing of £35million to help achieve that ambition, and all Council members should be included in the project.

There is a real need to provide housing in the District, both social and private residential and affordable to accommodate all of those 2,000 on the housing waiting list or those who are struggling to get onto the housing ladder with a mortgage, often presently unaffordable.

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We welcome the prospect of WFDC, and a suitable partner, being a provider of new and refurbished rented housing and accommodation at fair rent levels.

Council urges that the project gets underway at the earliest opportunity, and therefore will illustrate suitable sites and units, and seek a building partner.

We will continue to support, given the strictures of legislation, local, social community housing groups.

Council will press ahead with the provision of small scale start-up industrial units on our currently available sites.

We will endeavour to be a strong player for this sector, with partners who can give the best terms and conditions for young people who can benefit from apprenticeships and fair wages in environments where health and safety is a priority, and also have the opportunity to join a trade union.”

Councillor Knowles presented the motion and stressed the importance of all Members being given the opportunity to be involved in the project to enable them to make a real contribution towards this essential part of the District Council’s programme.

The Leader of the Council tabled an amendment to the motion on behalf of the Conservative Group. He stated that housing and employment was vitally important to the local communities across the District, and outlined the importance of achieving an income from investments to support the financial position of the Council. He assured Members that the projects would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and in response to concerns raised by the Chairman of the Local Plans Review Panel, Councillor F Oborski MBE, he advised that the process would not prejudice the review of the Local Plan, which would play a vital part in the scheme by allocating housing and employment land across the District.

Councillor Knowles accepted the amendment to the motion and urged all Members to support it. A robust discussion ensued and concerns were raised about the provision of housing for care leavers and the people across the District who were on low incomes and unable to obtain a mortgage.

Upon a show of hands the motion as amended was agreed.

Decision: The following motion received from the Leader of the Labour Group, as amended by the Conservative Group be agreed:

Wyre Forest District Council is determined to make a positive difference to the economic and social structure of our District, and to provide an income stream to alleviate short falls in our budget.

Council approved the borrowing of £35million to help achieve that ambition, and notes that, while not all political groups voted for the

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budget, all Council members will be included in the project by consideration of reports at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Council accepts there is a real need to provide housing in the District, both private residential and all types of affordable tenures, and will continue to address those on the housing waiting list or those who are struggling to get onto the housing ladder with a mortgage, often presently unaffordable.

Council welcomes the opportunity of being a provider of new and refurbished rented housing and accommodation at fair rent levels, where this is financially viable, and of working with suitable partners on such projects where appropriate.

Council supports projects getting underway at the earliest opportunity, and therefore endorses the illustration of suitable sites and units and efforts to seek potential partners.

Council welcomes the grant from the Government to support development of community-led housing projects in Wyre Forest and will work with local community groups and others to ensure most effective use of the funding.

Council welcomes the Cabinet's decision to press ahead with the provision of small scale start-up industrial units on our currently available sites.

Council believes that supporting housing and economic growth in the district is the best approach to improved community well-being, including access to jobs and appropriate housing to meet residents' needs.

C.21 Urgent Motions submitted under Standing Orders

There were no urgent motions.

The Chief Financial Officer left the meeting at this point.

C.22 Senior Management Structure

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive which proposed changes to the senior management structure of the Council. The Leader of the Council moved the recommendations and outlined the rationale for the review of the management structure following the resignation of a deputy chief officer post holder.

Decision: The creation of the post of Corporate Director: Resources which would be filled by the Chief Financial Officer with effect from 1

June 2017 be agreed.

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