

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,  
KIDDERMINSTER

12TH DECEMBER 2018 (6PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: S J Williams (Chairman), K Henderson (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, J Baker, J-P Campion, S J Chambers, M Cheeseman, A Coleman, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, N Harris, J A Hart, M J Hart, V Higgs, N Knowles, D Little, N Martin, S Miah, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, J D Smith, A Totty, R J Vale, S J Walker, G Webster and H S Williams.

**C.51 Prayers**

The Chairman led Council in prayers.

The Chairman thanked all Members who had contributed to the food bank collection. He advised that Councillors M Rayner and F M Oborski MBE were doing a sponsored sleep out on Friday evening for the Church Urban Fund to raise funds for a homeless project. He said that both Councillors had sponsorship forms for those wishing to support the cause.

**C.52 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**C.53 Declarations of Interests by Members**

There were no declaration of interests.

**C.54 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.55 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**C.56 Questions**

One question had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order A5 by a Member of the Council.

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

Does the Leader of the Council agree that solar panels are an important asset in developing alternative energy and that Wyre Forest District Council could take a big step forward in a solar panel energy programme by installing solar panels onto the roof of the proposed hub and associated buildings which are currently being refurbished in the Green Street Depot and would he issue instructions to begin that programme now?

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

In essence there are three questions in one. The first part, yes, of course I do agree that solar power is an important asset in developing alternative energy. In respect of the second part of Wyre Forest District Council taking a step forward to put solar panels on the roof of the proposed hub and associated buildings as part of the refurbishment, no. Councillor Knowles will be aware as a result of his letter to the Chief Executive and the reply he received on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018, that having considered the position and consulted the architect, regrettably the roof structure would not support them. The parapet in block B would create overshadowing. Regrettably the incentive grants from government are no longer available so it would not be financially viable. Therefore I am not in a position to issue instructions to begin that programme now.

**Supplementary Question from Councillor Knowles**

I am very disappointed with the Leader of the Council's response. I do think that it is never too late to do many things. Would he reconsider his answer in the coming months because solar energy and alternative energy systems could be a money earner for Wyre Forest District Council and give a cleaner environment?

**Supplementary Answer from the Leader of the Council**

No, I will not reconsider the position because if you listen carefully to the answer that I gave in the first place it is not possible practically.

**C.57 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 advised that he had been unable to attend the Mayor of Pershore's Christmas Concert event which was listed on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

**C.58 Leader of the Council Announcements**

The Leader of the Council referred Members to his tabled report.

**C.59 Motions Submitted under Standing Orders**

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

**Motion from the Labour Group**

“We call on the Conservative Administration to immediately stop their outward investment policy and to redirect officer time into researching and working on direct investment projects into the Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley areas.

Direct local investment would create jobs and help construct a new dynamic economic sector that would strengthen our two Local Enterprise Partnerships investment strategy for Wyre Forest, and create a more certain and locally sustainable income stream for the Council.”

Councillor N Knowles presented the motion. He said it was eminently sensible that the Council would get the most benefit from inward investment in buildings, creating jobs and investing in housing units for local people. He added that it was not good to divert money to Solihull or Bromsgrove. He felt it was important for local people to walk around the three towns and see the benefits of investing locally. The Motion was seconded by Councillor V Higgs.

Councillor J-P Campion entered the meeting at this point, (6.16pm).

A discussion ensued. Councillor F M Oborski MBE said that as far as she was aware it was Council policy to prioritise investments within Wyre Forest. She added that in her opinion it was absolutely right that, if there were no investment opportunities within the Wyre Forest area, and our professional advisors notify us of opportunities within our Local Enterprise Partnership areas that would bring in a good return over and above the cost of borrowing the money to make the purchase, then it would be sensible to pursue them.

The Cabinet Member for Resources said that the administration had made it abundantly clear both at Council during the budget processes and at scrutiny that first and foremost we want to see investments made in Wyre Forest. He said that over the last number of years the Council had been proactive in terms of making investments from the £25m capital portfolio fund within the District. He outlined a number of the investments which included a retail unit in Kidderminster Town Centre, working in partnership with the Community Housing Group to provide social housing at Comberton Place and industrial units at another location in the town. He added that the authority had to be realistic. If the aim was to have a strong mixed portfolio which was low risk with sound returns the Council would have to consider looking outside the District. He said he could not support the motion as it would take away the flexibility that we currently have to invest out of the area.

#### **Agenda Item No. 4**

A request for a named vote was defeated. Upon a show of hands, the motion was defeated.

#### **C.60 Urgent Motions submitted under Standing Orders**

There were no urgent motions.

#### **C.61 Policy And Budget Framework**

##### **a. Recommendation from the Licensing and Environmental Committee 1st October 2018 - Review of the Gambling Act 2005 Revised Statement of Principles Consultation Results**

Councillor J Baker moved the recommendation for approval, which was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection.

**Decision: The revised Statement of Principles 2019–22 attached at “Appendix 1” of the report to the Licensing and Environmental Committee be approved and published.**

##### **b. Recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 1st November 2018 - Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2018-19**

The Chairman of the Treasury Management Review Panel, Councillor F M Oborski MBE moved the recommendation for approval, and was seconded by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor H Dyke.

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

##### **c. Recommendations from the Cabinet, 13th November 2018 – Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2019/20**

The Cabinet Member for Resources presented the recommendations. He said that the proposal was not about amending the 20% minimum threshold; it was about protecting those people in receipt of benefits and as far as possible making the scheme easier for the Council to administer. He said that the proposed changes were fair and would improve the scheme. He thanked the Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services Manager, Lucy Wright, and her team for the tremendous amount of effort they have put into devising the scheme. He said he was proud of the changes to the scheme and formally moved the recommendations for approval. The Leader seconded the recommendations for approval by Council.

**Decision: From 1st April 2019 the Council Tax Reduction Scheme be amended as outlined in paragraph 3.11 of the report to Cabinet.**

**Agenda Item No. 4**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 6.39pm.