

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY,
KIDDERMINSTER

25TH SEPTEMBER 2019 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: S Miah (Chairman), P W M Young (Vice-Chairman),
G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, J F Byng, V Caulfield, S J Chambers,
A Coleman, R H Coleman, B S Dawes, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke,
C E E Edginton-White, N Gale, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M J Hart,
K Henderson, L J Jones, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, F M Oborski MBE,
T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, S E N Rook, D R Sheppard,
J W R Thomas, A Totty and L Whitehouse.

C.36 Prayers

Prayers were said by Rev Carey Saleh, St Michael and All Angels, Stourport and All Saints, Wilden.

C.37 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Aston.

C.38 Declarations of Interests by Members

There were no declarations of interests.

C.39 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C.40 Public Participation

The Chairman welcomed Ben Bird, Joe Hillier and Karl Buckley to the meeting to thank them for making the Council proud of their good deeds as they go about their daily work.

The Chairman said who knew we would have an internet star amongst our employees who would appear on Good Morning Britain with Eamonn Holmes and Ruth Langsford, be called on the phone by Zoe Ball and have over 4m

Agenda Item No. 4

“hits” on social media, as well as trans Atlantic interest from our friends in the USA?

He said that Ben had displayed care and kindness to his friend Mercy on her 100th birthday. Councillors know that this was not a one off – Ben regularly talks to her and promised her he would remember her 100th birthday. Ben’s crew mates Karl and Joe ably assisted him and we thank them too.

The Chairman added that Steve Brant and Linda Draycott from Operational Services said “We often talk about the depot being like a family – displaying family values and kindness and looking after each other. We are all so proud of Ben and the humility he has shown “now he is famous” and the genuine care he shows to Mercy. We are proud of all of the teams who make people smile on their rounds with a friendly wave, day in day out, in all sorts of conditions.”

On behalf of the Council the Chairman passed on heartfelt thanks to Ben, Joe and Karl for making a difference to our residents and presented them with a gift.

C.41

Questions

Seven questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order Section 7, 1.8 by Members of the Council.

1. Question from Councillor Nathan Desmond to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services

Can the Cabinet Member please explain to me and to the wider public of the district why, at the last full council meeting in July, the Vice-Chairman of this authority abstained from supporting a very important motion, proposed by his own administration, on WFDC supporting LGBT + communities by flying the flag on Wyre Forest House, during Pride week, which was supported by all political parties.

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

The essence as to why we come together in this Chamber is about democracy. The essential elements of democracy are about freedom of political expression, freedom of speech and the majority rules. The Progressive Alliance is the joining together of different political preferences and our purpose is to lead this Council. We do not have a party whip system and we respect the views and opinions of all. I am a little confused at Councillor Desmond’s question because on the night of the 24th July, this chamber provided a good demonstration of democracy; we all sat within our political preferences and all of us were given the opportunity to share our views and opinions. The motion was carried as the majority rules, at no point were the Progressive Alliance agreed to a party whip system and we will continue to hold each member as an individual and respect their views and opinions. I hope members across the floor will respect that.

Supplementary question

Will the Cabinet Member confirm that the Vice Chairman will do all that he can in his capacity as Chairman of this authority to support the LGBT + communities and secondly raise the flag next year with pride, and will he work tirelessly as a community leader to eradicate homophobia across the district which is all sadly too prevalent.

Supplementary answer

Thank you, I did pre-empt your supplementary question. I have spoken to Councillor Young and he will do his utmost to support whatever is required.

2. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

Would the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and Planning confirm the following:-

1. How many tenancy agreements are currently in place at Wyre Forest House?
2. If she is aware of any tenancy agreements that are coming to an end and if so which ones?
3. What was the gross income on all tenancy agreements in 17/18 and 18/19 and what is the projected income for 19/20?
4. What was the gross income on room hire in 17/18 and 18/19 and what is the projected income for 19/20?
5. What plans are in place to fill the additional space made available as a result of some staff moving to the Green Street Depot and Hub?
6. What percentage share of the building will either be externally let or have the potential to be externally let after all those staff due to relocate have relocated?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments

1. 9.
2. Yes; one 'Just2Easy Ltd' is due to end later next month, no more expire in 2019.
3. Gross income in 2017/18 £144,242; for 2018/19 £134,994 and projected for 19/20 £137,200.
4. Gross income in 2017/18 £16,090; for 2018/19 £10,124 and projected for 19/20 £10,000.
5. There are plans to relocate some staff within Wyre Forest House as well

Agenda Item No. 4

as transferring more of the Community & Wellbeing team to Green Street, that will free up space in the ground floor north wing which is then available to let. Officers have already begun to promote the space as available for external letting.

6. Currently approximately 38% of the building is let to external tenants and this will rise to potentially 48% of the building if the additional space is successfully let.

Supplementary question

Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that the decision to rationalise the office accommodation and move to a single site, in particular here at Wyre Forest House, making ongoing revenue savings of over £1/2m pa, and from the figures you just quoted, at least an additional £1/2m worth of income over 3 years, has been fully vindicated and justified, and it was a sound and wise decision taken by the then Conservative administration, a decision supported by herself and indeed the Independent Group, Councillors Mr and Mrs Dyke? And also that it was very sensible for the taxpayers of the district and those that said this would be "Tory Towers" and indeed a white elephant, made by a very prominent local politician not a million miles away from here has proven to be completely wrong and inaccurate and they should very much regret that stance took at the time?

Supplementary answer

Thank you for reminding everyone that both I and Councillors Mr and Mrs Dyke supported the move to a single site. I am happy to confirm that we have always believed that a single site was the best way for staff to operate. I regret the fact that this is now less of a single site than it was originally intended to be.

3. Question from Councillor John Byng to the Leader of the Council

At the Localism Forum meeting held on 23rd July between Wyre Forest District Council and the three Town Councils the Leader of the Council stated that localism is a way of 'sharing' the load.

Does this mean that in offering services and buildings to the Town Councils there will continue to be ongoing contributions to the running costs as opposed to transitional arrangements that sees contributions ceased after 4 or 5 years and would he like to categorically confirm that services will not cease under his leadership of the Progressive Alliance?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

No administration could give assurances that they will not be ceasing any services. We did inherit a substantial black hole of a deficit of £2.1m and it has got to be sorted in the next couple of years. I went to the Town Council meetings in all three towns and the message that was given in each of them is the whole localism agenda. The localism agenda is about the Town Councils taking on responsibility for many services, particularly those that are

Agenda Item No. 4

non-statutory, in their own areas. We will provide funding over a period of years until eventually they are either taken on or the services will cease. We are having to be severe because it is a severe situation because of government cuts over the last decade or more. The austerity

period is reflected on all local authorities, some of whom are in a far worse pickle than we are ourselves with our current budget projections.

Supplementary question

Bewdley Town Council have today received some costings from the District Council, however they are incomplete. There is no mention of toilets, car parks, nature reserves and staff costs. As there are no specific costs mentioned how can Bewdley Town Council make any kind of decision on Localism before 2020? Could the Leader of the Council supply the specific costs?

Supplementary answer

The whole point of this exercise is the Treasurer giving as much basic information to the Town Councils as they want now. Further details on specific costs, such as running costs of toilets, are precisely those details that each Town Council can request. Councillor H Dyke has chaired the sessions in each of the three venues and the same information is available to each Town Council, there is nothing being hidden. We are an open and transparent administration and we will share all the costs; they are true costs and nothing will be hidden.

4. Question from Councillor Ian Hardiman to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

Does the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection value the work of this District's Parish Councils?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection

I can confirm that I and the administration value the work of all Parish Councils. They play an important part of our work across the area and are very efficient and hard working partners.

Supplementary question

Was the Cabinet Member party to, and does she now agree that it was inappropriate to send the email of 2nd September to Parish Chairmen informing them that the bi-annual meetings with the District Council's Chairman and Leader which have traditionally been held over many years, would no longer be held. Appropriately the Parish Chairmen should have been invited to discuss the relevance of such meetings for the future and therefore will she reconsider the matter please?

Supplementary answer

Agenda Item No. 4

Thank you, firstly I wasn't party to and secondly I wasn't invited so I wasn't aware that such a meeting was held. Consequently I was made aware and I did some investigating. The Leader of the Council was given very short notice of this meeting and was unable to find any evidence of what actually

took place at them; there were no minutes or any construction to the meetings for what was to be discussed. I attended the Parish Forum the other evening along with the Leader of the Council and it was expressed at that meeting by some of the Members from the Parishes that they were disappointed. At the meeting the Leader did promise to review the situation during the year.

5. Question from Councillor Tracey Onslow to the Leader of the Council

In the proposal to make 3 posts in the Community, Well-Being & Environment Directorate redundant, the proposal is for the current Chief Executive post to take on the responsibilities of the CWE Corporate Director and the CWE Corporate Director post to then be made redundant.

Can the Leader advise if the reverse of this was also investigated and costed i.e. one of the Corporate Directors becoming Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service and the post of the Chief Executive being deleted?

Could the Leader further advise as to why this restructure is being taken in isolation and not part of a wider restructure where the senior management of the Council could be looked at collectively?

Answer from the Leader of the Council

The Head of Paid Service certainly discussed with the Cabinet and myself, as is in any restructuring proposal, the range of options that were available. Councillor Onslow's hypothetical alternative would not have worked as it is not possible to abolish a post if the whole thing is being retained which is what the question suggests. I appreciate that the question was submitted before Councillor Onslow had had the opportunity to see the report on tonight's agenda. Paragraph 3.7 deals with the points which you raise about the possibility of future proposals relating to other parts of the Council and that is clearly spelt out in the report.

Supplementary question

What other options were looked at and could we have the costings for those then please? And secondly, given that Wyre Forest District Council was rated in the bottom of 50 councils in the UK for community health and wellbeing in the report by NWEDR, could he give reassurance that the obliteration of the management of CWE will ensure no further cuts to frontline services?

Supplementary answer

This is the same response I gave to one of the Member's colleagues earlier. No administration is going to give those sorts of assurances. Staff however, I

Agenda Item No. 4

believe, trust this administration. What does surprise me is that a question like this should come up now and I just get the impression that the opposition are trying to be difficult because successive Conservative administrations of this authority have been served by a Chief Executive post for 15 years; they have had ample opportunity to consider the role if

they wanted to and they haven't. I hope that the Councillor is not suggesting that structural questions should be settled by reference to which Officers involved incur the lowest costs; that could constitute direct discrimination of grounds of age and could leave the Council wide open to legal challenge. I will discuss with our Director of Finance and our Chief Executive what information on the costing can be made available to the Member.

6. Question from Councillor Marcus Hart to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

Would the Cabinet Member for Operational Services agree with me that the investment in the Green Street Depot and new customer service centre was both long overdue and necessary and would he further confirm that he is proud of all of the staff who work for us at the Depot?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

Thank you for your question which I note is not dissimilar to your question from last Council, and therefore could I refer you to page 16 of tonight's agenda. As I said then I am sure all Members welcomed the investment in the Green Street site which was long overdue. It will now provide modern fit for purpose accommodation and facilities for all staff who work there. Although we may not agree with the re-location of the customer service centre to the Green Street site, we recognise that the investment was far too forward to readdress and I hope customers will find the new customer service centre more satisfactory than the previous location. I am sure all Members, including myself, are proud of all the staff that work for this Council both here at Wyre Forest House and Green Street. You saw tonight just a small recognition of how we appreciate the three staff members who took it upon themselves to mark the 100th birthday of a local resident. A wonderful act of kindness witnessed by millions across social media. This Council like all businesses cannot function without good, loyal staff, and I am sure all Members will agree with me that we have some of the best in the area.

Supplementary question

Would the Cabinet Member explain to me therefore, and he refers to a similar question I asked last time but we hadn't seen at that point the press release from this Council on 21st August 2019 issued at 11.57 hrs, why neither he as one of the relevant Cabinet Members nor any other Cabinet Member was quoted on that press release. It is exceptionally unusual why we are no longer led by Politicians. Can he confirm to me that when he visited the new customer service centre when it opened on 9th September, he was impressed with the facilities and can he confirm indeed that he has visited and indeed his colleagues have visited as well?

Supplementary answer

I do apologise that no Cabinet Member was quoted on the press release; I am sure that was a short sightedness on all our behalf. Yes, we have all had a quick look around the facilities that we have at Green Street; most impressive and I am sure all staff that work there will find them enjoyable and a nice atmosphere to work in.

7. Question from Councillor Chris Rogers to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

Given his party's vehement opposition to make the Vale Road car park chargeable, could the Cabinet Member for Operational Services advise me and this Council on when the Progressive Alliance will make Vale Road a free car park again?

Answer from the Cabinet Member for Operational Services

It was your then administration that decided to bring in the charges to the Vale Road car park on the basis that all car parks across the district should be treated on a fair, equitable and consistent basis. Bringing in these charges did have a negative effect on many local residents, shoppers and town centre businesses together with their staff. However, I hope he will agree with me that things have moved on since then and that as a Member of this Council we should be working together to reduce the significant shortfall in our finances and not raking up past political differences. What the car parking strategy will look like in the future you will have to wait until later in the year when we bring proposals forward as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Supplementary question

Surely it is disingenuous. Your opposition to car parking hasn't changed, surely you still oppose them, or have you changed your mind as you realise you have to pay the bills? Some members of the public may not understand, you are going to have a very good answer for them.

Supplementary answer

This is something we inherited from the previous administration. As I have said, what the car parking strategy will look like in the future will be brought forward later in the year so please wait until then to see what happens.

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 of the Council referred Members to his tabled report.

C.44 Motions Submitted under Standing Orders

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

1. Notice of Motion from Councillor F M Oborski MBE

“Council recognises that not all disabilities are visible.

Council therefore resolves to support the Hidden Disabilities Awareness Scheme which encourages those with such disabilities to wear the discrete sunflower badges and lanyards.

Council will ensure that all frontline staff are aware of the scheme and recognise that those wearing the badge or lanyard may need extra help.

Council further resolves to display the Hidden Disabilities Scheme Information Poster in all its public buildings and encourage other providers to do likewise and to promote the scheme via the Annual No Barriers Mike Oborski Awards.”

Councillor F M Oborski MBE presented the motion. She said that the scheme was becoming very noticeable nationally having had a fairly slow start; Gatwick airport was in fact the first public body and organisation to recognise it. She said that a lot of us know people who have disabilities which are not visible; they may be disabilities such as autism, arthritic conditions and heart conditions. She added that there were a lot of members of our community that suffer from hidden disabilities and hoped that Council would agree with her that promoting the sunflower logo was something that we should all be proud to do. She said that she was absolutely delighted that at its last meeting, Kidderminster Town Council agreed to adopt the scheme and will be displaying posters in the Town Hall, and, in addition to receiving their No Barriers certificate, award winners would also be given a laminated copy of the sunflower poster. She asked all Members to support the motion and hoped that it would be a unanimous decision.

Councillor S Griffiths said that she was delighted to second the motion. She explained that she was well aware of the daily challenges faced by people with disabilities; and not everyone with a hidden disability required additional support. However she believed that the sunflower lanyards were an easy way for people to let others know if they do need additional support.

The Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart, said that he and his group wholeheartedly supported the motion. He said it was important that all individuals in our society with hidden disabilities are properly supported. He agreed that it was really important that our frontline staff were aware of the scheme but arguably all our staff should be made aware. He said fundamentally it's no good just the Councillors and employees knowing about the scheme, he said we all need to ensure that the general public, businesses, shops, pubs, restaurants and cafes across the three towns in the district also

Agenda Item No. 4

know that if a member of the public is wearing a discrete sunflower badge, that they know what it means and that the person with that hidden disability might just need a little more time or additional assistance.

Councillor Oborski was happy to accept the amendment to remove the word 'frontline' and just have 'staff'. She said that as local Members, we

could all support the scheme and promote it in shops, pubs and other businesses within our own areas to ensure that the scheme is widely known.

Upon on a show of hands, the amended motion was unanimously agreed.

Decision: The amended motion be agreed.

Council recognises that not all disabilities are visible.

Council therefore resolves to support the Hidden Disabilities Awareness Scheme which encourages those with such disabilities to wear the discrete sunflower badges and lanyards.

Council will ensure that all staff are aware of the scheme and recognise that those wearing the badge or lanyard may need extra help.

Council further resolves to display the Hidden Disabilities Scheme Information Poster in all its public buildings and encourage other providers to do likewise and to promote the scheme via the Annual No Barriers Mike Oborski Awards.

2. Notice of Motion by the Conservative Group

"This Council needs to examine new ways of investing to create revenue income to fund our important local services.

Under Government finance rules, councils are not allowed to use capital to plug annual funding gaps but they can invest in projects which generate an income.

Other councils such as West Suffolk Council are reaping the benefit of such a project, investing to deliver an income for the benefit of local communities and for the environment.

Such a scheme would have both an environmental and economic benefit.

This Council resolves to request the Cabinet to investigate establishing a solar farm on land in this District which it owns and bring a report back to Full Council in this municipal year."

Councillor I Hardiman presented the motion on behalf of the Conservative

Agenda Item No. 4

Group. He said that West Suffolk Council, through its local authority owned solar farm, has raised more than £1.2m in funds to support frontline services in the past three years. He further explained that Lakenheath solar farm was one of the largest Council owned solar farm and through sales to the national grid have raised nearly £4m in funds since it was set up in August 2016; a percentage of those funds are earmarked for supporting frontline services. He said over the last 12 months the solar farm has generated enough electricity to power to supply around 3,300

homes and offset carbon dioxide emissions from approximately 1,500 cars. He said that we, like West Suffolk Council, should be reducing our impact on the climate but also creating an income stream to support services and other ambitious projects.

The motion was seconded by Councillor C Rogers.

An amendment to the motion was tabled by Councillor V Caulfield. She thanked the Conservative Group for moving the original motion and said it was worth noting that constructing a solar farm on Council land could still provide an income stream for the Council; however the West Suffolk Council example was completed before the feed in tariffs were removed. She further explained that it was not just about income generation; surely the main focus is to reduce our emissions. She said that generating electricity from solar and other renewable will significantly reduce our impact on the planet. Councillor Caulfield added that with the rise in electric vehicles and the need to be net carbon zero, there was a need to look at different renewable energy schemes and how generated energy can be stored more effectively.

Councillor A L'Huillier said she was very happy to second the amendment. She said as a district we recognise that we face a climate emergency and as such we should be striving to lead the way; both independently and jointly with other Council's to create green energy and work towards reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions in as short a time as possible.

Councillor M Hart said that the original notice of motion was about investing in regeneration projects to bring an income into the Council. It just so happened that in the notice of motion there was an example of a solar farm. The original motion had nothing to do with a climate emergency. He said on this occasion the Conservative Group regrettably reject in its entirety paragraphs 3 and 4 of the amendment because it is not in the spirit and sentiment of which the original notice of motion was tabled.

A discussion ensued and a vote on the amendment tabled by Councillor Caulfield was taken and agreed.

For clarification, the Chairman confirmed that the amended motion had now become the substantive motion. Upon a show of hands the motion by the Conservative Group, as amended, was agreed.

Decision: The Notice of Motion by the Conservative Group, as

amended by Councillor V Caulfield be agreed:

This Council needs to examine new ways of investing to create revenue income to fund our important local services.

Under Government finance rules, councils are not allowed to use capital to plug annual funding gaps but they can invest in projects which generate an income.

Council regrets that the opportunities which existed some ten years ago were not taken up at that time and further regrets that the removal by Government of Feed In Tariffs for new Solar Panel installations means that they no longer provide as significant an income stream as previously.

Council notes the EC Harris Report commissioned in 2014 and in light of the climate emergency, requests Cabinet to revisit the report and investigate other initiatives for zero emission energy production and/or storage, such as those carried out by Nottingham city council.

C.45 Urgent Motions submitted under Standing Orders

There were no urgent motions submitted under Standing Orders.

C.46 Pay Arrangements 2021 onwards

A report was considered from the Head of Paid Service which sought Council's agreement to arrangements for determining pay increases from April 2021 and for a pay and grading review.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He said that pay rates are very important to our hard working staff. For many years it has been a local agreement and one of the first things that this new administration said back in May was that at the first feasible opportunity the Council would return to the national pay agreements.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services seconded the proposal.

An amendment was tabled by the Conservative Group. Councillor M Hart formally moved the amendment to: agree that the Head of Paid Service commence negotiations with staff and trade unions with a view to agreeing a new 3 year local pay agreement from 1st April 2021 and for the final decision to be taken at or before the December 2020 meeting of Full Council; endorse the need for a pay and grading review as set out in paragraphs 4.4 to 4.6; and agree that a final decision on the pay and grading review be a matter for decision by Full Council.

Agenda Item No. 4

Councillor Hart explained that the amendment was empowering the Head of Paid Service to commence negotiations with staff and trade unions to see if a new local pay deal can be made. He said that the Conservative Group firmly believe that the previous two arrangements where we were able to secure local agreements were a sensible course to take. He added the report clearly sets out the annual savings that had been achieved as a result of the decision and it provided certainty for the Council and more importantly it provided certainty for our staff. In conclusion he said that going back to the national agreements gave no guarantee that the pay budget would not go up and therefore meant that the organisation would inevitably have to make posts redundant in order to keep within the same financial envelope.

Councillor N Desmond seconded the amendment and reserved his right to speak.

The Leader of the Council said that he was unable to support the amendment. He said the Council had a significant funding gap to address, and acknowledged that returning to the national pay agreement would mean that the Council has no control over the pay increases; and like many other local authorities who don't have that control the costs may well be higher. However, he believes that it is right and proper for valued staff to be properly rewarded and not expected to do a full job for a cut-price wage. He said the administration was proud of the staff and we believe this is a way of showing them how proud we are. In conclusion he said that the Progressive Alliance had set out its alternative approach which was unanimously and warmly welcomed by the Unions and urged all his colleagues to reject the amendment.

A robust debate ensued. Councillor T Onslow said that she would support the amendment purely because of paragraph 4.7 of the report. She said she did not believe that Council staff would be happy to lose fellow members of staff that they currently work with in order that they can be paid more. The sentiment was echoed by Councillor S Chambers.

Councillor Desmond said that Local Government and this authority are still in a precarious position; we still have a £2m funding gap. He added that going to the national pay agreement would cost the authority more money and why would you want to lose control over this very important issue. He said pay was the biggest ticket item for the authority; having the flexibility of having a local pay agreement gave the certainty that you can budget for that period.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection said that she believed that the talk about redundancies was scaremongering and frightening for staff; no one in any form of business life can ever predict that nothing bad is going to happen. She said that the administration was trying to do the right thing for our staff.

A vote on the tabled amendment by the Conservative Group was taken. Upon a show of hands the amendment was defeated.

Councillor M Hart tabled a further amendment to the substantive

Agenda Item No. 4

recommendation 2.3 as set out in the report. He proposed that a final decision on the pay and grading review be a matter for decision by Full Council. He said that it was really important that on such a fundamental issue for our staff that the matter is determined by this sovereign body and not as set out in the delegation.

Councillor Desmond seconded the proposal. He said that it was too an important issue to put back to Cabinet and the decision should be made by all Members.

A vote on the amendment tabled by Councillor Hart was taken and defeated.

Councillor Oborski MBE spoke in support of the substantive recommendations. She said that, whilst local pay arrangements have served the Council well in helping to address its financial position, the Progressive Alliance's view is that it is now appropriate to demonstrate to staff that the Council values its employees in the same way as most of the other Councils do and should be appropriately rewarded by returning to national pay agreements to determine the percentage increases.

A vote on the substantive recommendations was taken, and agreed.

Decision:

1.1 Council CONFIRMED that percentage pay increases for all staff with effect from 1 April 2021 onwards will be in accordance with the relevant national agreements;

1.2 ENDORSED the need for a pay and grading review as set out in paragraphs 4.4 to 4.6 of the report;

1.3 DELEGATED to the Head of Paid Service, in consultation with the Cabinet, Corporate Director: Resources and Solicitor to the Council, finalisation of the pay and grading review with the objective of being cost neutral but subject to the financial envelope set out in paragraph 4.6 of the report.

C.47 Apprenticeship Charter

Council considered a report from the Solicitor to the Council which sought endorsement of the Apprenticeship Charter.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services presented the report and formally moved the recommendation for approval. She said that the authority have been pleased to work with UNISON and GMB in developing the Charter. She added that the Charter reinforced the Council's commitment to apprenticeships; which provide an important route for people to obtain qualifications and help to develop the workforce for the future.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Cabinet Member Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments said that it was absolutely vital that this Council supports apprenticeships in its widest possible sense and was delighted to second the recommendation.

The vote was carried unanimously.

Decision: Council ENDORSED the Apprenticeship Charter

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8.14pm for a comfort break. The meeting resumed at 8.26pm. Councillor K Henderson did not return to the meeting.

C.48 Corporate Plan and Financial and Policy Context for the Medium Term Financial Strategy

Council received a report from the Chief Executive which, in line with the Cabinet's recommendations of 18th September 2019, asks Council to adopt the Corporate Plan for 2019-2023 and notes the suggested approach to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which will be the subject of consultation.

The Leader of the Council presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He said that the Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision and priorities for the district over the next four years. He added that the cross-party Strategic Review Panel had a vast amount of varied and detailed feedback to consider when producing recommendations on the plan.

The Leader explained that the report set out the suggested approach the MTFS. He said that the administration recognised that there are some difficult and potentially controversial choices ahead; however we have to be honest and recognise that closing the funding gap will mean facing up to these decisions. He added the Strategic Review Panel on 28th October will provide a forum for Members to debate these ideas in more detail. He said all Members of the Council were welcome to attend the meeting and scrutinise the administration's proposals before they are published in December.

The Cabinet Member Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments seconded the proposals.

A discussion ensued and, upon a show of hands, the recommendations were agreed.

Decision:

1.1 a) The Corporate Plan in appendix 1 of the report be adopted;

b) The suggested approach to the medium term financial strategy set out in paragraphs 4.9 to 4.27 of the report be noted, and that this

will now be the subject of consultation prior to the Cabinet considering the medium term financial strategy at its meeting in December.

C.49 Policy And Budget Framework – Matters which require a decision by Council

**a) Recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee
5th September 2019**

- **Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2018-19**

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart presented the recommendations for approval. Councillor Desmond seconded the proposal.

Decision:

1.1 The actual 2018-19 prudential and treasury indicators in the report be approved;

1.2 The actual 2018-19 non-treasury prudential indicators for Capital Portfolio Fund property acquisitions be approved;

1.3 The annual treasury management report for 2018-19, including information on the non-treasury prudential indicators for Capital Portfolio Fund acquisitions be noted.

b) Recommendations from Cabinet – 18th September 2019

- **Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Enforcement Policy**

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection presented the recommendations and said that this policy had been discussed at the last Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting and a decision was made that all the Councils would be provided with the same information and policy. She said that it had received full support at Cabinet and was delighted to recommend it to Council. The Leader of the Council seconded the proposal.

Decision: Council ADOPTED the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy so far as it relates to non-executive functions, for use in relation to any formal action under the legislation delegated to the service by the Council.

C.50 Management Structure Review

Agenda Item No. 4

The Chairman addressed Council. He said that colleagues will have seen that there is a confidential appendix to the report. He said it will not help the flow of debate if Council has to chop and change unnecessarily between open and private session and he intended to allow as much as possible of the discussion on the item to be in public. He was therefore going to take any contributions that are specifically about the appendix at the end of the debate just before moving to a vote on the recommendations in the report. He added that the motion to exclude press and public would be moved before any discussion on the appendix.

The Leader of the Council presented a report from the Head of Paid Service which sought Council's endorsement of two proposed changes to the management structure. He formally moved the recommendations for approval.

The Leader said that the background to the report clearly sets out that the Council has a £2m funding deficit; and the administration has to take its responsibility seriously. He said we had an opportunity to make reductions by deleting three management posts in the Community, Well-being and Environment Directorate. He added that much of the workload within the Directorate had changed, particularly with the Localism agenda and other issues. He said that it was important to make clear that it is not about targeting people; it is about taking responsible decisions, and he believed that this is the right thing for the Council to do at this point in time.

The Leader said that it was not an easy decision for the Cabinet to agree to the proposals and he hoped that people will support the senior members of staff affected by the proposals.

The Cabinet Member Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments seconded the proposals.

Councillor M Hart formally moved an amendment on behalf of the Conservative Group. He said he was inviting Council to authorise the Head of Paid service to undertake a full management restructure across all 3 directorates of the Council with all officers on band K or above who hold a management position being in scope with a view of bringing in a new management structure which produces a minimum full year revenue saving of £300k per annum; and the Head of Paid Service to be authorised to commence full consultation with staff, trade unions and all relevant stakeholders, on a proposed restructure for a decision to be taken at the February 2020 meeting of Full Council for formal implementation from 1st April 2020.

Councillor Hart said that given the financial position of the authority, the Conservative Group wants to do all it possibly can to protect frontline services. He added that the restructure of only one directorate does not go far enough. To be fair, equitable and consistent to all officers who hold a senior management post, it needs to be looked at holistically.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Desmond. He urged all

Agenda Item No. 4

Members to support the amendment; he said it was disproportionate to look at one directorate in isolation and a more strategic approach to the whole management structure was needed.

Councillor M Rayner said that she could not support the amendment. She said it was quite clear that the proposals are part of the transformation framework. She said that transformation is about looking at things in a logical, evidence-based way and not a 'slash and burn' approach.

Councillor Oborski expressed her concern over the amendment. She said that very detailed discussions and negotiations had taken place with those members of staff identified in the report and are expecting to move on. She added that if the amendment is accepted the Council would be throwing their personal plans into turmoil. They have given us brilliant service and it has been acknowledged that their roles are in a way coming to an end and the proposals in the report are the most appropriate way for them to be treated.

A vote on the amendment tabled by Councillor Hart, on behalf of the Conservative Group was taken and defeated.

C.51 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Decision: Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in paragraphs 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

C.52 Management Structure Review: Appendix 1 – Financial Information

A discussion was held on the financial aspects of the report. A vote on the substantive recommendations took place and was agreed.

Decision:

1.1 Council APPROVED:

a) The removal of the post of Corporate Director: Community Well-being and Environment; and

b) The one off termination costs that arise from the removal of that post and the post of Cultural Services and Marketing Manager

1.2 Council CONFIRMED that, if the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations were to be made and come into force before the dates of termination, it would grant or apply for any necessary exemption from the effect of those Regulations, so far as permitted by the Regulations and subject to any procedural requirements imposed by the Regulations;

1.3 Council authorised the Head of Paid Service to implement the above decisions.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.50pm.