

Open

# Council

# Agenda

To be held remotely  
6pm  
Wednesday, 23rd September 2020



## Council

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**COUNCIL MEETING**

**15<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL AND HONORARY ALDERMEN**

**PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Dear Member

**YOU ARE INVITED** to attend a meeting of the Wyre Forest District Council to be held remotely at **6.00p.m. on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020.**

**The meeting will be available to stream from the Council's live meeting streaming channel**

<https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/streaming.aspx>

The Agenda for the meeting is enclosed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "I R Miller".

Ian Miller  
Chief Executive

## **Declaration of Interests by Members – interests of members in contracts and other matters**

Declarations of Interest are a standard item on every Council and Committee agenda and each Member must provide a full record of their interests in the Public Register.

In addition, alongside the Register of Interest, the Members Code of Conduct (“the Code”) requires the Declaration of Interests at meetings. Members have to decide first whether or not they have a disclosable interest in the matter under discussion.

Please see the Members’ Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council’s constitution for full details.

## **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) / Other Disclosable Interest (ODI)**

DPI’s and ODI’s are interests defined in the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the District.

If you have a DPI (as defined in the Code) in a matter being considered at a meeting of the Council (as defined in the Code), the Council’s Standing Orders require you to leave the room where the meeting is held, for the duration of any discussion or voting on that matter.

If you have an ODI (as defined in the Code) you will need to consider whether you need to leave the room during the consideration of the matter.

### **(A) TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council

1. Is the ultimate decision making Body.
2. Determines the Budget (but reserves powers to itself in relation to requirements).
3. Is responsible for appointing (and dismissing) the Leader of the Council.
4. Appoints at its Annual Meeting, the Regulatory Committees, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other Committees/Forums necessary to conduct the Council’s business.
5. Decides on matters where the Cabinet is not minded to determine a matter in accordance with Council policy.

### **(B) MATTERS RESERVED TO THE COUNCIL**

1. Those reserved by Law e.g. levying a rate, borrowing money, promotion of or opposition to a Bill in Parliament.
2. Matters reserved to the Council by financial regulations.
3. The adoption and amendment of Standing Orders, including the powers and duties of Committees and other forums.
4. Power to make, amend, revoke or enact or enforce any byelaws.
5. The determination of the objectives of the Council.
6. Matters of new policy or variation of existing policy as contained within the budget and policy framework.
7. Local Development Framework adoption.
8. Any function where a decision would be contrary to a plan, policy, budget or strategy previously adopted by the Council, which would be contrary to the Council’s Standing Orders, Financial Regulations or Executive arrangements.
9. The Scheme of Delegations to Officers.

Wyre Forest District Council

Council

Wednesday, 23rd September 2020

To be held remotely

Part 1

Open to the press and public

<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Prayers</b>  To be read by Rev Megan Gibbins, Parish of Ribbesford with Bewdley & Dowles and Wribbenhall Parish	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interests by Members</b>  In accordance with the Code of Conduct, to invite Members to declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's) and / or Other Disclosable Interests (ODI's) in the following agenda items and indicate the action that they will be taking when the item is considered.  Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Election of Vice-Chairman</b>  To elect a Vice-Chairman of the Council for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2020/2021.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>(Verbal) Acceptance of Office by the Vice-Chairman</b>  The Vice-Chairman will read out the Declaration of Acceptance of Office (which will be formally signed on another occasion, when he or she will be presented with the Badge of Office).	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Minutes</b>  To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 and the Minutes of the special meeting held on 28 <sup>th</sup> July 2020.	9

7.	<p><b>Public Participation</b></p> <p>In accordance with the Council’s scheme for public representations at meetings of Council, one member of the public has registered to speak in order to present a petition.</p> <p><i>If you wish to make representations on an urgent matter that has arisen since the deadline and you could not reasonably have known about it at the time, you should register your interest in making representations no later than 9am on the day of the meeting of Council. In the case of a request to make representations on an urgent matter, the Solicitor to the Council will rule on whether or not the matter is urgent and that ruling will be final.</i></p>	
8.	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p>No questions have been submitted in accordance with Standing Order Section 7, 1.8 by Members of the Council.</p> <p><i>In the case of an urgent matter that has arisen since the deadline, and could not have been reasonably known at that time, it must be delivered in writing to the Solicitor to the Council no later than 9am on the day of Council.</i></p>	
9.	<p><b>Chairman’s Communications</b></p> <p>To note the engagements of the Chairman of the Council since the Council’s last meeting.</p>	27
10.	<p><b>Leader of the Council Announcements</b></p> <p>To receive announcements from the Leader of the Council.</p>	
11.	<p><b>Motions Submitted under Standing Orders</b></p> <p>No motions have been received in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1).</p>	
12.	<p><b>Urgent Motions submitted under Standing Orders</b></p> <p>To consider motions in the order they have been received which, by reason of special circumstances, should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 4.1 (vii)).</p>	

13.	<p><b>Committee Appointments</b></p> <p>To fill two casual vacancies among chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees, for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.</p>	28
14.	<p><b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee Final Report and Recommendations - Consideration of the Flooding Motion from Council</b></p> <p>To receive the final report and recommendations from the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee following the resolutions of Council at its February and May 2020 meetings.</p>	30
15.	<p><b>COVID-19 Recovery Framework – Results of Remote Working Councillor Survey</b></p> <p>To consider a report from the Chief Executive on the findings of the Members’ survey on remote working.</p>	35
16.	<p><b>Policy and Budget Framework</b></p> <p>Matters which require a Decision by Council.</p> <p><b>(a) Recommendations from the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee – 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2019-20</b></li> </ul> <p>Please note that the reports and associated documents, referred to above, have been circulated electronically to Members. Public inspection copies are available on request. Please refer to the front cover for contact details.</p>	56
17.	<p><b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor to the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</b></p>	
18.	<p><b>Exclusion of the Press and Public</b></p> <p>To consider passing the following resolution:</p> <p>“That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of “exempt information” as defined in the paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act”.</p>	

**Part 2**

**Not open to the Press and Public**

<b>19.</b>	<b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Solicitor to the Council before the commencement of the meeting, which the Chairman by reason of special circumstances considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.</b>	
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WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

HELD REMOTELY

15TH JULY 2020 (6PM)

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**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 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.16 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Rev. Nigel Taylor, Team Rector Kidderminster Ismere.

**C.17 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Aston.

**C.18 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**C.19 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.20 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**C.21 Questions**

Two questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Orders (Section 7, 1.8) by Members of the Council.

**1. Question from Councillor Anna Coleman to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Could the Cabinet Member with responsibility confirm that they will undertake a full review of the Bewdley parking initiative and produce a

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summary of this including a survey of participating traders so that the data can be analysed and made available for all members with a view to informing future parking initiatives in Bewdley?

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

Can I thank Councillor Coleman for her question, to which the answer is yes.

### **2. Question from Councillor Lisa Jones to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection**

Could the Cabinet Member advise me what conversation/discussions/letter or emails have been sent to Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council or any of its members by herself, other cabinet members or officers of WFDC in the last 6 months in respect of a possible asset transfer of the WFDC owned car park in the village?

*The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection advised that as the question was not just about Localism, it would be answered by the Leader of the Council.*

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

The answer is yes to all those items Councillor Jones lists. All those communications have taken place. However at the end of the day it is now down to the Parish Council to decide what they want to do with that car park, in conjunction with ourselves. We will keep all members informed of the outcome of that.

## **C.22 Chairman's Communications**

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

## **C.23 Leader of the Council Announcements**

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:

A number of items have presented themselves over the last few months, not least of which is the financial situation following the Covid-19 pandemic and the loss of income the authority has dramatically seen on a lot of its services. At the moment the authority is totally dependent on the Government supporting us through this crisis. Whilst a lot of money has come from Government, there is going to be a significant financial shortage at the end of this pandemic. We have a very diligent treasurer in Tracey Southall. Her and her team are continually working out what cash is needed where, as the funding doesn't always come through precisely as the government indicates.

The authority is currently encountering an issue over the leisure centre. The company that run the centre on behalf of the Council is claiming for

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costs as a result of the lockdown. The Council is also losing the fee that it gets from them every month for the use of the centre. Jane Alexander and other officers are putting a huge amount of work into resolving this. This is an issue faced by many councils across the country.

There was some good news yesterday; the Government has announced that they will be making funds available to tackle flooding along the river Severn. We are all aware of the circumstances around the devastating events that happened in Bewdley, Stourport and other surrounding areas of the river Severn. Hopefully the money will be available in readiness of any winter floods. Councillor Oborski has advised that the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) have committed some money towards the same issue of sorting out the problem of flooding in that area; so we keep our fingers crossed and look forward to some positive news from both the LEP and the Government in the future.

There are ongoing discussions relating to the membership of LEPs. The Council is currently a member of both the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) and Worcestershire LEP. We may not have the option of remaining in the GBSLEP as the Government are looking nationally where there is an overlap, and working towards authorities only being able to be part of their county's LEP. We have had lots of benefits of being in the GBSLEP over many years, so that is a concern.

The administration is keen to develop the Cabinet Advisory Panels (CAP) as a means of cross-party involvement on issues of interest to the district. The CAP on the Green Agenda has had its first meeting. The Panel is chaired by the Council's only Green Member, Councillor Caulfield, and it has set its programme of work for the year.

When the Progressive Alliance took over the administration of the Council last May, we had a number of priorities; the green agenda was one of them along with housing issues. Both of these will remain a priority as we move into our second year of administration.

There will not be an annual general meeting of the Council this year. We had agreed that, if we could not hold it by September, we would not have one. I am pleased to say that Councillor Shazu Miah will continue as Chairman for the remainder of this municipal year through to May 2021, when the next AGM will be held. All the positions that are currently occupied will continue to be held by the post holders. This will ensure there is some stability as we work into our second year of the administration.

It has been an exciting first year. However the excitement has been tarnished by what has happened particularly relating to Covid-19.

Throughout the district I am sure there is not a family that isn't affected by the aftermath of the pandemic and our thoughts and prayers are with all those people. We hope that there can be some return to normal in the not too distant future. We have the issue at the moment about when and how Council offices may reopen. We certainly know that the pandemic has not gone away. There are many people about who could potentially develop it

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at the moment so we have to remain alert. We have been exceptionally cautious and the home working appears to be going well. Dealing with the issues has been led by our Head of Paid Service, Ian Miller; I believe we must carry on with the same actions for the foreseeable future. There is no sign of it easing at the moment; so let's use our common sense.

As a Council we are getting a lot of compliments on the way we operate and the way our staff are working. They have all worked non-stop, they are so flexible in what they are doing across the whole of the patch. I am not going to pick out individual departments: the whole Council staff of Wyre Forest have done what they can for the public of Wyre Forest during these very difficult circumstances.

### **C.24 Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders**

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

#### **1. Notice of Motion from Councillor V Caulfield**

Councillor Caulfield presented the motion. She explained that during lockdown 1.3m people bought a bike which caught shops off guard by the spike in demand. Purchases using the cycling to work salary sacrifice scheme increased by 120% compared to the same month last year, and with greater access to e-bikes means that people can now commute longer distances to work on a bike. She said that in May the Government announced a new era for cycling and walking in the form of the Active Travel Fund. This fund would enable County Councils to implement measures to create safer environments for both walking and cycling. The idea being that this would allow cycling in particular to replace journeys previously made by public transport and in the longer term it would also deliver significant health, environmental and congestion benefits.

Councillor Caulfield said it was disappointing that Worcestershire County Council had received only half of the funding from phase 1 as it did not match the brief.

The motion was seconded by Councillor A L'Huillier. She said cycling had been a big part of lockdown for many families and had brought about an outdoor active culture that was widely encouraged in many countries, but not to such an extent in our own. She said that the majority of bike users within the district would agree that there was huge scope to improve the infrastructure within the district; a view that was shared by the Wyre Forest Cycle Forum.

She said the district already had some excellent facilities; the trails in the Wyre Forest, Burlish Top and the new pump track in St George's park. If the authority was able to maximise on this golden opportunity from Central Government and further explore the many local cycling partnerships and initiatives within the district, there was a real opportunity to create our own cycling district benefiting the health and wellbeing of our constituents; encouraging increased tourism whilst simultaneously advancing the green

agenda.

On behalf of the Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart formally moved an amendment to the notice of motion which was displayed electronically for all members to read. He explained that a large part of the amended motion was the same as the substantive. However the amendments were subtle but nevertheless important.

He said that the difficulty with the substantive motion was that it asserts criticism that the County Council was not ambitious enough in its first tranche of bidding and suggests that it won't be ambitious in its second tranche. He said it could be argued that this could not be further from the position. Indeed Wyre Forest had benefited from the first tranche of funding with the active cycling route between Kidderminster and Stourport as a result of the Silverwoods housing development and strategic employment site. He added that the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph of the substantive motion made reference to maintaining social distancing and, whilst no one was decrying the need for social distancing and health issues, there was a need to be cautious about putting in permanent measures for something that is hopefully temporary.

In relation to paragraph 4 of the substantive motion, Councillor Hart said the Group had difficulty with the modal shift from driving to active travel. He said that an overwhelming majority of members of the public drive a motor car or have access to one. He added that it was great to see that there had been an increase in cycle sales, but felt it would not be maintained. We had seen so many people walking and cycling because they have had more time to do it as they had not been at work or school and time has been more available. As unacceptable it may be to the green lobby, this will not be the panacea. The authority should embrace people whether they want to walk, cycle, travel by bus or taxi, or drive a motor vehicle; not one size fits all.

He said the Conservative amendment was more appropriate and hoped that it would be supported.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor C Rogers. He said that nobody was arguing about the pursuit of getting people healthier and more active. He was well aware of the benefits of cycling. However he did not agree with the motion as worded, asking to increase the amount of space for social distancing. He added that, having spent a lot of time cycling recently, on all the routes he had used locally there was no need for any more space; people are socially distancing automatically, they are already a bike's length apart and the only time they get close to each other is when they pass each other in opposite directions and the period of time they are in close contact is momentary. He said he had a problem with telling the County Council how they should be doing things, and we should be leaving this issue to the transport experts as that is what they are employed to do.

Councillor Caulfield declined to accept the amendment.

A discussion ensued. Several members spoke in favour and against the

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amendment. Councillor Oborski said that it was important to embrace and encourage alternative forms of transport. Councillor Edginton-White said that the Government grants had been generated as a result of the current situation we are experiencing with Covid, plus some forward thinking as to how this can improve things into the future. She said it was appropriate that maintaining social distancing and improving residents' health and well-being was absolutely vital in the original motion if we are going to encourage the County Council to be more ambitious. She added that she did not like criticising anyone, but did not want to have missed opportunities and felt that making it more general about grants in the future would be a mistake.

Councillor S Chambers spoke in favour of the amendment. She said that, whilst she did not disagree with the sentiment of the original motion, she believed that the increase in cycling had been as a leisure activity as opposed to going to and from work as the majority of people had been working from home. She said in Wyre Forest a lot of residents had to commute outside of the district to go to work and the only way they could do that was by motor car. She said that we should try to be as green as possible by encouraging electric cars and installation of charging points, and encouraging people to use public transport. It was important not to lose sight of the fact that the car industry plays a major role in the Worcestershire economy; the car is not necessarily the big baddie, and in particular the electric car was something that we should be looking forward to as the future of motoring.

Councillor T Onslow said that it would be hypocritical for her to support the original motion as she travels all across West Mercia and would not be able to do so by cycling; therefore she could not vote for the motion and then continue to use her motor vehicle. She added that another issue is that so much of Wyre Forest's economy is based on tourism, and most of the tourists are coming in from areas a distance from Wyre Forest: they bring children with them and would not be able to do that in a more active form of travel. Therefore for reasons of not wanting to be a hypocrite and the effect of a modal shift from driving could have on the district's tourist economy she would be supporting the amendment.

The Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection said that supporting the original motion did not mean that you would no longer be able to use a motor vehicle again; the motion was a way of improving the way forward; improving where and how we live to better our health and well-being.

Upon a show of hands the vote on the amendment was defeated.

Councillor Hart said that having considered the matter as a Group; they did not want to quarrel with the sentiments of active travel, the green and cycling agenda. Therefore the Conservative Group would not be voting against the substantive motion; however they would take the unusual step of abstaining on this occasion.

Following a roll call, the vote on the substantive motion was carried.

**Decision: The Motion from Councillor V Caulfield be agreed;**

**Council welcomes the positive impact increased cycling and walking has on residents' health and well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

**Council is committed to improving air quality across the district and recognises the benefits of active travel in improving residents' health and the Council's priority of a safe, clean and green living environment.**

**Council urges Worcestershire County Council to submit a more ambitious bid for the 2nd tranche of the Emergency Active Travel Fund to create increased space for walking and cycling, in order to maintain social distancing, as well as improve residents' health and well-being in the longer term.**

**Council will implement measures to encourage residents to continue cycling and walking within existing resources and capacity, whilst working to support the County Council and other partners such as the cycle forum in facilitating a modal shift from driving to active travel.**

## **2. Notice of Motion from Councillor L Whitehouse**

Councillor L Whitehouse presented the motion as printed in the agenda. He said that as were many, he was shocked and angered by the killing of George Floyd, the last few weeks had shone a light on racism, discrimination and the injustice experienced by some of those from black minority and ethnic communities. He said it was important to carefully reflect on the injustices in our community and throughout the world. He said we need to address the reality and impact of anti-black racism which has been highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement; and now more than ever before it was vitally important to ensure this is a turning point. He said that we must stand resiliently into the face of adversity supporting our communities who are affected. He added that members must listen to residents and work cross party to deal robustly with any issues or concerns presented.

Councillor Whitehouse spoke at length about the links to the slave trade and slave ownership specifically in Wyre Forest, and explained in detail about the life and works of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw.

Councillor S Rook said she was very happy to second the motion; whilst it was important to make a stand against episodes of racist brutality such as what had been seen, to say racism was down to a few bad apples ignored the systemic racism that she believes is embedded in society. She explained that the Black Lives Matter movement was more than about one incident, and had been around since 2013. She added that racism was a complex and multi layered issue that was embedded in society. She said, unless the structural inequalities were tackled, people were being complicit

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with it and urged members to support the motion for those very important reasons.

On behalf of the Conservative Group, Councillor M Hart read out and formally moved an amendment to the notice of motion which was displayed electronically for all members to read and consider.

He said that the Group accepted substantial parts of the original motion; no one who is decent, tolerant and humane could support any form of racism or systemic racism anywhere in our society and the Conservative Group wholeheartedly condemn it.

He said that it was admirable what the mover of the motion was trying to do. However part of it felt like a history lesson of all what had gone on in the past. History had its place, which was in the past, and we should learn from it. He added that we should not repeat the woes and evils of our forefathers, but history cannot be re-written. He said there was a need to be responsible, measured and proportionate in our response, and felt that the amendment did this.

At 7.52pm Council agreed unanimously to suspend the Council Procedure Rules (Standing Orders) 1.1 (iii) to allow the meeting to continue past 8pm.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor N Desmond. He said the spirit of the amendment was about achieving unity and moving forward on this very important issue. The abhorrent and truly disgusting death of George Floyd had resonated the issue around the globe recently, and racism in any form was abhorrent and had no place in our society.

He said he believed that everybody wanted a diverse, tolerant and free society where colour, religion and creed simply did not matter and was not a barrier to a successful and prosperous life. He added that as a nation he felt that a lot of racial barriers had been broken down over the years and felt that we had a more tolerant and inclusive society now than 30 or 40 years ago. He said people cannot become complacent as unfortunately racism had not been fully eradicated and, as community leaders, members must do all they can to continue the fight against it.

He said the amendment was helpful and engaging. He said it significantly altered paragraph d of the substantive motion, as everybody would agree that slavery in all forms is disgusting and abhorrent. However he failed to see how dredging up historic wrongs dating back well over 200 years, both locally and nationally, was helpful. He said he believed by doing this it undermined the strong message of wanting to end racism and have a more tolerant society. He urged all members to support the amendment which he felt was more inclusive, engaging and had more support with residents across the Wyre Forest community.

Councillor Whitehouse declined to accept the amendment.

Councillor F Oborski MBE urged the mover of the substantive motion to remove the reference to Bangladeshi and Filipino communities, and the



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mover of the amendment not to include reference to the Polish community as it completely diluted the Black Lives Matter point. She said she welcomed the amendment to include the reference to the Holocaust Memorial pledge.

A lengthy, robust debate ensued. The Chairman ensured that the debate remained respectful and all members were given the opportunity to express their view and ideas freely, without fear of interference or persecution, which is an essential part of democratic debate.

Councillor Whitehouse said it was clear from the debate that all members support the Black Lives Matters campaign. He added that he was happy to amend part of his original motion to remove the reference to specific communities, and was happy with paragraph d and g of the amended motion, but was not happy with the “all lives matter” reference as he believed that some communities were offended by that phrase as it took the shine off the Black Lives Matter movement.

A vote on the amendment was taken, and agreed.

Councillor Hart formally moved the amended motion as the substantive motion, which was seconded by Councillor Desmond.

Councillor Oborski moved a further amendment to the motion. In moving the amendment she said that it did not take away the fact that all lives matter, but it does recognise that in the current particular circumstances it sends a message to the black and ethnic minority communities that recognises that they sometimes experience things that are worse than what others experience. The amendment was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services.

The meeting was adjourned at 8.56pm and resumed at 9.05pm.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Oborski was displayed electronically for all members to read and consider.

Councillor Hart thanked Councillor Oborski for the amendment. However he felt that it still put a division in place between Black Lives Matter and all lives matter, and favoured one cohort of society over another; he said that we should not have division, we should have unity.

Councillor Oborski explained the reason for the amendment as it was in response to the Black Lives Matter campaign within the country, and it should be acknowledged.

A vote on the amendment put forward by Councillor Oborski was taken by way of a roll call. Upon the casting vote of the Chairman, the amendment was agreed.

Councillor Hart said that, having lost the argument on this important issue, it would be inconsistent for the Conservative Group to vote in favour of the new substantive motion, and would abstain from voting.

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Councillor Oborski thanked Councillor Hart for his words and hoped that the motion would now be approved without the use of the Chairman's casting vote. She said the length of the debate showed the passion that is felt for this issue, and the division between members was very small and was an indication of where we are at this moment in time in relation to Black Lives Matter. She commended her amended motion to Council.

Upon a show of hands the vote was carried.

**Decision: The Motion from Councillor L Whitehouse, as amended by the Conservative Group and further amended by Councillor F Oborski MBE be agreed;**

**Council:**

- a Reaffirms its unequivocal condemnation of racism, xenophobia and hate crimes, in line with its resolution of 27 July 2016 (C.29);**
- b Recognises and welcomes the contribution that people from black and minority ethnic groups have made to the community in Wyre Forest.**
- c Stands fully with the 'Black Lives Matter' global campaign against violence and systemic racism towards black and minority ethnic people and stands fully against violence and systemic racism towards all people. While accepting that all lives matter regardless of background, Council recognises that at this present moment in time it is important to recognise the need to focus on 'Black Lives Matter' and that all lives matter, regardless of ethnicity or background, and we condemn anarchy and support the rule of law;**
- d Expresses its deep regret about the historic role should any individual or company based in the Wyre Forest have played a part in the slave trade;**
- e Commits itself to using its powers to achieve diversity in the public realm;**
- f Welcomes the motion passed by Kidderminster Town Council on 10 June 2020 and resolves to honour Kidderminster's connection with Ukawsaw Gronniosaw by naming an area of public space in his memory, for example through the Future High Streets Fund project, and any such similar individuals;**
- g Endorses and supports the Holocaust Memorial Pledge read out by the Chief Executive on Holocaust Memorial Sunday and its commitment to fight the evils of genocide, anti-semitism, racism, xenophobia and discrimination and condemn the evils**

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**of prejudice, discrimination and racism, and that we value a**  
**free, respectful and democratic society.**

**C.25 Urgent Motions Submitted Under Standing Orders**

There were no urgent motions submitted under Standing Orders.

**C.26 Interim Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Consideration of the Flooding Motion from Council**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Hart, presented a report which updated Council on the work of the Committee undertaken to date into the issues relating to the floods in February 2020.

Councillor Hart thanked members of the Committee for their work in considering this important matter. He said it had reminded members of the devastation and real issues many residents in Bewdley, Stourport and, to a lesser extent, Wolverley had to endure across a number of weeks in February. He added that so far the Committee had met three times to consider this item and had been diligent and forensic in their questioning of the representatives from the Environment Agency, and other key witnesses as part of their evidence gathering.

He said that, at their meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, the Committee plan to hear from the flood forums, and those businesses and residents who were directly or indirectly affected. He explained that, as the Committee were part way through its investigations, he did not want to predetermine anything but suspected that there may be a call for more permanent barriers at the Beale's Corner side of the river in Bewdley. He welcomed the Government announcement of £5.2billion of flood money that will be available nationally over a 6-year period; whilst Bewdley was not specifically mentioned, following consideration of all evidence, there may be a case for resources to be made available for the Wyre Forest area.

Councillor Edginton-White said that she would like to reassure residents that all of the Council Officers, representatives from the Environment Agency, and other agencies the Committee have spoken to so far have given a very thorough account of what had happened, what they see as being lessons learned, and things that can be done in the future. She added that in her opinion the Committee would have the most important insight into the flooding issues from the residents and businesses. She said that, once the input from local people had been fed into all the data that had been collected, she was hopeful that there would be some positive outcomes.

Councillor D Sheppard said that it was important to consider how Dowles Brook had contributed to the flooding at Bewdley and what could be done to stop the brook causing problems in the future.

**Decision: The report be noted.**

Councillor C Barnett left the meeting at this point, (9.36pm)

**C.27 Policy And Budget Framework – Matters which require a decision by Council**

**a) Recommendations from Cabinet 7th July 2020**

**• COVID-19 Recovery Framework**

The Leader presented the recommendations and formally moved them for approval. The proposals were seconded by the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments.

Councillor M Hart spoke on behalf of the Conservative Group; he said that they would be supporting the recommendations as it was right and proper that the authority consulted staff and unions on home working. He said that whilst the proposal was to maximise home working at the optimum level, it was important to remember that home working for everybody was not the panacea. He added that there could be merit for possibly working one or two days a week at home if there was a need to work without interruptions. However the move to single site accommodation was to unite teams so that they could share good practice and have the opportunity to bounce ideas off each other which was much harder to do remotely. Whilst the introduction of home working over recent months has been a way of getting through the current crisis, not everybody liked this way of working.

In supporting the recommendations, Councillor Hart said the Conservative Group requested two undertakings. Firstly, that together with the Head of Paid Service, the Leader provides sufficient papers so that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can have a good look at the proposals before they are presented to Council in December. He said it was important to involve all members, and a good forensic look at these matters would be helpful as it may shape and change the way the authority delivers its services in the future. Secondly, they would like to see some real quantitative data and evidence, in particular around productivity; and that Managers were ensuring that the work force were as, if not more, productive working from home as opposed to in the office environment.

In conclusion, he said the authority should not denounce or decry working from Wyre Forest House; lunch time activities such as the walking group and five-a-side football team were all things that were important to people's health and well being, which must be considered. Whilst it may reduce the Council's carbon footprint and road congestion as people would not have to drive to the office all the time, it was important that views were sought by consulting staff, unions and members.

A discussion ensued. Councillor Onslow said that she supported the consultation. However she did not agree with the proposal to minimise face-to-face customer service. She said the Council represented the district's taxpayers and as such should not be minimising how people can get in touch with us; not everybody had access to on-line resources. Councillor R Coleman said that it was important to recognise that, whilst some people enjoy it, not everybody is able to cope with working from

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home.

Councillor Desmond said that he too would support the proposals but had deep reservations and concerns about significant home working on a wider scale, and welcomed the detailed report that will follow later in year.

He said that he supported the request from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the item to go to the Committee as any significant changes to staff terms and conditions must involve members, and he would need to be persuaded by real statistical evidence and data that home working does increase productivity. He asked how the Chief Executive proposed to monitor productivity and ensure that his managers are carrying out due diligence with their staff to make sure that productivity is being maximised and increased.

Councillor Desmond acknowledged that the authority had a financial black hole that will worsen following the Covid pandemic. He said that the authority should be doing home working for the right reasons. If it was about minimising building space to sell off or rent to private companies in order to generate income, in his opinion that was not the right thing to do. Once teams have moved out of the building it would be very difficult to bring them back in house when other companies are renting office space. He added that this was a massive strategic issue for the Council and all members must be fully engaged.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and Capital Investments said that it was not just the District and County Councils looking at more people working from home. There is going to be wholesale change in all sorts of employments. However there was no reason to assume that, just because an organisation decides that it doesn't need the whole of its building all of the time, there is a guarantee that anybody else will want to lease it off them.

She added that it was quite likely that, in all sorts of businesses, the "new normal" will mean not everybody working from home, but more people working from home some of the time. She said that people's health and wellbeing at work was not just about participating in social activities such as joining the Wyre Choir or playing football. There were things like "water cooler conversations", which give people the opportunity to meet casually with colleagues in the office space which then leads to conversations that spark off against each other, which are missing when working from home. She said that for some people working from home for some of the time is useful but she did not believe there were very many people who would only want to work from home and not have the opportunity to interact with colleagues in that way.

In response the Leader advised that he had discussed the issue with the Chief Executive and the Cabinet. He said at the end of the day the authority had little or no choice at the moment with the current situation that we are all in and staff have adapted to it very well.

He added that it was the Government's decision to limit face to face contact

## **Agenda Item No. 6**

along with everything else and it has proved effective. Staff have responded well and the public are happy with the way they are getting their service from Wyre Forest District Council. He said that this is down to the good will of the Council's staff that have adapted to something that to many was strange; not just working with computers at home but using remote meeting technology. He said the authority has very good IT professional staff that have facilitated their colleagues throughout the district to do that very well.

The Leader further explained that any optimum level would not be decided until there had been a full consultation and after proper deliberation. He agreed there was the opportunity to share good practice whilst working at Wyre Forest House, but equally that could be done from home. He said that it may be described as a crisis; however it was a crisis that was working very well at the moment. We would not want to lose that just by saying we will all go back to working as we were before. He added that there were many opportunities to be able to work as efficiently, or even more efficiently, by working from home.

He said that the Chief Executive and the administration would listen to what the staff say in the consultation and listen to what the public say in any discussions because that is the whole point of having members. He said it may cause concern about potentially not having face to face meetings. However the authority has done exceptionally well in getting payments out to everybody during the crisis and without face to face meetings. At the moment the authority does not have a choice due to the rules laid out by Government in relation to social distancing.

In relation to the parameters for home working, the Leader explained that it was not a fad: it was a national situation. Businesses across the world were coming to the same conclusion: why would Wyre Forest have to be different and go back to how it was before the pandemic? He added that the Council's financial situation was going to get a lot worse after Covid. If the authority can make any savings from the current situation, that would be most welcome but it will be about how the Council can operate most effectively.

The Chief Executive addressed Council. He said the authority had a financial gap that it had to close, and the final position was far from certain.

The authority was still waiting for the details of the additional funding for loss of income that was announced by the Government on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. He said the likelihood was that the Council's financial position will have worsened as a result of the Covid pandemic: it certainly won't have improved. Therefore the need for the Council to reduce its costs and raise income is going to be even greater and that was the strategic context for the proposals.

The Chief Executive added that members may not think it was the best motivation for why the authority should look at the pattern of working and how staff are organised but that was the context we are working in and it cannot be ignored.

## Agenda Item No. 6

He added that, now many of the staff are home working, this was absolutely the right time for the Council to be consulting about the extent to which home working becomes the norm. He said it would not necessarily be for everyone but, as the Government has given no indication when the guidance on social distancing will come to an end, at least for the foreseeable future, the authority would not be able to go back to how things used to be.

In response to concerns raised about productivity, the Chief Executive advised that it would be easy to share the statistics which will be done for the Scrutiny Committee on this matter to show whether there has been any change in performance as a result of home working. He said that one thing for members to bear in mind is of course the authority already had a significant number of people working from home before the pandemic took hold; a large proportion of the revenues and benefits team have been working from home for many years and this has been very successful. He added that, given all the extra work they have achieved in the last few months, he would be confident that we have not seen any dip in productivity other than that what would have been caused by all the extra tasks the Government has asked the authority to perform in that area.

Upon a show of hands, the vote was carried unanimously.

### **Decision: Council agreed:**

- 1.1 To authorise the Head of Paid Service to initiate formal consultation with staff and unions with a view to maximising home working at the optimal level, in order to minimise the building space that the Council occupies (paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4), with a further report to Council no later than December 2020 to seek Council's approval of any changes to terms and conditions;**
- 1.2 That a survey of Councillors should be undertaken about the impact of remote working on them, with a report and any recommendations being submitted to Council in September.**

### **b) Recommendations from Cabinet 7th July 2020**

- Property Flood Grants – Amendment to Capital Programme**

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health, Well-being and Democratic Services presented the recommendation and formally moved it for approval. The Leader seconded the proposal.

Councillor Hart welcomed the Government grant and said the proposal would be fully supported by the Conservative Group.

Upon a show of hands, the vote was carried unanimously.

### **Decision: Council approved an amendment to the Capital**

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**Programme to include expenditure of £650,000 to provide Property Flood Grants fully matched by DEFRA funding, noting that the exact level of expenditure will be dependent of the number of eligible applicants received.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 10.07pm.



WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

TO BE HELD REMOTELY, REMOTELY

28TH JULY 2020 (6PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: S Miah (Chairman), P W M Young (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, G W Ballinger, C J Barnett, J F Byng, V Caulfield, S J Chambers, A Coleman, R H Coleman, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, N Gale, S Griffiths, I Hardiman, P Harrison, K Henderson, L J Jones, A L L'Huillier, N Martin, F M Oborski MBE, M Rayner, C Rogers, S E N Rook, J W R Thomas, A Totty and L Whitehouse.

**C.28 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: M J Hart, T L Onslow, and D R Sheppard.

**C.29 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**C.30 Business and Planning Act 2020 – Delegation of Functions**

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive which sought to delegate the Council's functions in sections 1 to 10 of the Business and Planning Act 2020 to Bromsgrove District Council for exercise by Worcestershire Regulatory Services, in order to enable them to consider and process any applications received within the tight timescales set by the Act.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. She said the Government announced what is now the Business and Planning Act 2020 on 25<sup>th</sup> June. It passed all its stages in the House of Commons on 29<sup>th</sup> June but took longer to pass through the House of Lords, receiving Royal Assent on 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

She explained that a Government amendment tabled on 15<sup>th</sup> July was the first time that it became clear that the functions about pavement licences would not be executive functions. This change to the Bill came too late for the full Council meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July and this is why it had been necessary to organise a special meeting of Council to deal with the 2020 Act.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection added that it was important that the authority considered the Act rapidly

## **Agenda Item No. 6**

after Royal Assent as businesses in Wyre Forest can already submit

applications. She said, as of last night, no applications had been received and it was understood only two applications have been made elsewhere in Worcestershire.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Community Protection further explained that the Act sets out very tight timescales for public consultation and then decision-making. If the authority did not make appropriate arrangements for handling any applications that come forward in Wyre Forest, the licence is deemed to be granted for a period of 12 months.

She said the report sought Council's approval of the policy set out in appendix 1 to the report. The policy includes in paragraph 6.3 that the fee will be £100 and in paragraph 12.1 that licences will be for 6 months. She added that these are only temporary licences under a regime which will come to an end in September 2021. She suspected that there would be very few applications outside pedestrianised areas of Kidderminster Town Centre, as pavements were generally not wide enough to accommodate furniture and leave enough space for pedestrians, wheelchair users and others.

The Chairman of the Licensing and Environmental Committee, Councillor P Dyke, seconded the proposals.

Upon a show of hands, the vote was carried unanimously.

### **Decision: Council:**

- (a) DELEGATED the Council's functions in sections 1 to 10 of the Business and Planning Act 2020 to Bromsgrove District Council for exercise by Worcestershire Regulatory Services;**
- (b) AGREED the Wyre Forest District Council Policy on Pavement Licences;**
- (c) AUTHORISED the Solicitor to the Council in consultation with the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place and Corporate Director: Resources to make any necessary amendments to the service level agreement and other documents governing the Council's relationship with Worcestershire Regulatory Services and to the Council's Fees and Charges.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 6.14pm.

**Chairman's List of Functions – 2020/21**

**JULY 2020**

-

**AUGUST 2020**

15/08 - 75th VJ Day Commemoration at St Mary's Church

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

Attendance at the Veterans breakfast club

Attendance at Berrington Court to receive a donation for HELP

\* Denotes attendance by Vice Chairman

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

23<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

Committee Appointments (2<sup>nd</sup> revised report)

OPEN	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	The Leader of the Council
<b>DIRECTOR:</b>	Solicitor to the Council
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Caroline Newlands, Ext. 2715 caroline.newlands@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1: revised table of political balance

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To fill two casual vacancies among chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees, for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year; and to approve the revised table of political balance.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 The Council is asked to agree the appointment of Councillor Mary Rayner as Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee and Councillor Claire Barnett as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.**

**2.2 The Council is asked to approve the revised table of political balance in Appendix 1.**

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Council is responsible for establishing the political structures which are not the responsibility of the Leader and Cabinet. Council appointed Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees at its meeting on 22 May 2019. They have continued to serve for the municipal year 2020/21 because no annual general meeting has been held in 2020, as a result of COVID-19.

3.2 Councillor Miah has given notice of standing down as Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee with effect from 22 September 2020. Councillor Aston has given similar notice of standing down as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee from the same date.

3.3 It falls to Council to fill the two vacancies for the remainder of the municipal year. Appointments to Committees for the municipal year 2021/22 will be dealt with at the annual general meeting in May 2021.

- 3.4 Two Councillors resigned from the Conservative group last week, after dispatch of the agenda for this meeting. They have joined the Independent Community and Health Concern group. It is necessary for the Council to approve a revised table of political balance.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 There has been a change to political balance as a result of the two Councillors moving from the Conservative to the ICHC group. In line with the legislation, only political groups are entitled to an allocation of seats on committees. The revised table of political balance is set out in Appendix 1 for Council's approval.
- 4.2 Whichever members are appointed to the two vacancies among chairmen and vice-chairmen of committees may require consequential adjustments to political groups' nominations for membership of the Committees. The Solicitor to the Council will liaise with groups as necessary in light of the appointments and the change in political balance.
- 4.2 The administration continues to be formed by the Progressive Alliance, which consists of the Independent Community and Health Concern group and Independent, Liberal Democrat & Green Group and which has a majority of members of the Council.
- 4.3 The Progressive Alliance's proposals for the two vacancies are set out in paragraph 2.1 above.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no significant financial implications arising from this report.

**6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Overall, membership of committees will continue to comply with political balance in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

**7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as the report relates to appointments to be made by full Council.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 Appropriate arrangements will be made to provide training and support for the members appointed to the roles to ensure that they can perform effectively.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 Council is invited to fill the two casual vacancies identified in the report and to approve the revised table of political balance.

**10. CONSULTEES**

10.1 Corporate Leadership Team

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 Local Government Act 2000, Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

		Conservative		Labour		Independent Community and Health Concern		Ind, Lib Dem & Green Group		Others		Total
No. of Cllrs.			12		2		11		8	0		33
Percentage			36.36%		6.06%		33.33%		24.24%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
<b>Executive Cttees</b>												
Membership												
Appts & Appeals	5	2	1.82	0	0.30	2	1.67	1	1.21	0	0.00	5
Audit cttee	8	3	2.91	0	0.48	3	2.67	2	1.94	0	0.00	8
Ethics & standards *	6	2	2.18	0	0.36	2	2.00	2	1.45	0	0.00	6
<b>Scrutiny</b>												
Scrutiny Committee	10	4	3.64	1	0.61	3	3.33	2	2.42	0	0.00	10
<b>Regulatory</b>												
Planning	12	4	4.36	1	0.73	4	4.00	3	2.91	0	0.00	12
Lic & Env	12	4	4.36	1	0.73	4	4.00	3	2.91	0	0.00	12
Total	53	19	19.27	3	3.21	18	17.67	13	12.85	0	0.00	53
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>35.85%</b>		<b>5.66%</b>		<b>33.96%</b>		<b>24.53%</b>		<b>0.00%</b>		<b>100.00%</b>
Difference between % No. of Cllrs. And % Number of Seats		-0.51%		-0.40%		0.63%		0.29%		0.00%		

\* the table shows only district councillor members

1. Each member is required to notify the Proper Officer which political group, if any, he or she wishes to be identified with. A group comprises of two or more members.
2. Each Group Secretary is required to notify the Proper Officer which members of his or her groups he/she wishes to sit on each relevant committee or sub-committee.
3. The allocation of seats required the rounding up or down of calculated figures to give whole numbers.
4. Single party representatives and independent members (who do not form part of a political group) are not legally entitled to seats on committees to which the rules of proportionality apply.

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL  
23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Final Report and Recommendations**

**Consideration of the Flooding Motion from Council**

Council agreed a motion at its meeting in February that requested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate issues relating to the floods in February and March. The motion is set out in the briefing paper of 11 June.

In May, Council agreed an extension to the deadline, to September 2020, for the Committee to report back about the flooding issues, and any earlier relevant information from the Environment Agency, which was provided in an interim report to the July 2020 meeting of Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met 4 times and spent 6 hours considering this matter. The Committee considered a briefing paper from the Chief Executive at its meeting on 11 June on how the Committee may wish to approach the task that it had been set. A special meeting of the Committee was held on 25 June to gather evidence from the Environment Agency. At the meeting on 2 July members received reports from Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and a presentation from Severn Trent. At its meeting on 3 September the Committee had a further evidence gathering session with members of the public and businesses. The Committee received two written representations from local residents and heard first-hand evidence from seven Bewdley residents who shared their personal experiences with members.

The Committee heard some very persuasive, compelling and heartfelt submissions about the devastating impact that the floods had caused. It had brought to life the reality that it wasn't just water: it was dirty flood water contaminated with sewage and diesel, that has had a long-term impact on residents and brought a lot of inconvenience, misery and displeasure to their lives.

The public speakers raised a number of issues and questions during their submissions, which included:

- were the barriers deployed in February different to those usually used?
- should the Environment Agency, in the knowledge that the flood in 2000 reached 5.56 metres, have installed barriers that are fit for purpose and can deal with levels of 6 metres or more as they do on the Bewdley side?
- concerns about the standards of the installation of the Property Level Protection (PLP), and the subsequent failure of the PLP;
- the delay in the deployment of the barriers despite the national news coverage of Storm Dennis, which resulted in damage to several homes and vehicles;



- following the barriers being overtopped, it was reported that between 70 – 140 properties were evacuated. However the cost benefit analysis previously applied to protect 19 houses did not merit the investment, although it is clear from the mass evacuation that the emergency services did not believe only 19 properties were at risk.

The issues raised have been referred to the Environment Agency for a response back to the Committee.

The Committee also heard from Bewdley Town Council about the ongoing partnership between the Environment Agency and their Community Flood Group Plan. The new cost benefit formulae proposed by the Government and the Environment Agency were welcomed. This will recognise the wider impact of flooding and the bridge closure on the whole community including residents' access to work and services; the economy of the Town; and the protection of historic buildings and the conservation area.

The evidence-gathering sessions have given an opportunity for partners to set the scene and to give their evidence and for members to scrutinise and ask questions. The Committee has been diligent and expeditious in its work. The review into this matter has been a reminder of the devastation and real issues residents and businesses in Bewdley, Stourport-on-Severn and Wolverley had to endure across a number of weeks in February/March. The Committee recognises that there are still some households and businesses that have not been able to return to their premises. It is regrettably the case that repairing premises after flood damage can take considerable time and this demonstrates why every reasonable effort to prevent flooding should be taken.

The Committee thanks the partner agencies, volunteers, members of the public and Council officers for taking part in this review. The written and oral reports received have been very open, honest and candid.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Weather patterns continue to show ever more extreme impacts, very probably a consequence of global warming. The risk of future flooding in Wyre Forest from higher and more concentrated levels of rainfall will remain: the issue is how the risk might be limited. Ultimately, flood defences operate only to a particular height and therefore there can be no guarantee that they will not be overtopped or that water will not find its way around them. Difficult choices may have to be made. For example, measures to manage river flows in different ways need to be considered, such as use of agricultural flood plains to “store” water and reduce the peak flow through communities along the river.

The Committee commends the multi-agency approach in dealing with the emergency as a result of the flooding caused by Storms Ciara and Dennis in February 2020. Public agencies, voluntary organisations and volunteers all responded in assisting residents and businesses affected by flooding; this included the deployment of flood defence barriers, evacuating residents from their homes, welfare checks on those residents who had chosen to remain in their properties,

pumping out flooded properties, responding to highway drainage issues and providing financial support for those affected in the form of a Community Recovery Grant, council tax and business rate relief. On behalf of local residents and businesses, the Committee pays tribute to all of them. Many worked long and hard hours and, for those “on the front line”, this was often in difficult weather conditions and sometimes in situations where individuals were placed at some personal risk.

As part of the evidence gathering, it became clear that having all key agencies in one location during the response had proved to be invaluable to the efforts. A ‘Bronze’ cell established in Bewdley Town Centre by the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and the Worcestershire Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) had worked very well as it provided a place where the emergency services and local authority could co-locate. The Bronze commander (fire service) could then direct activity on the ground and would report back to the TCG at regular intervals.

As can be seen in the Environment Agency’s detailed report (page 35 of the agenda for 25 June), the Committee has been informed that the Agency is considering the case for a permanent flood scheme for Beale’s Corner, Bewdley. The Environment Agency is aiming to complete the initial review by the end of the summer.

The Committee recognises the compelling evidence from the public speakers that the cost benefit analysis previously used for assessing flood barriers was not met for Beale’s Corner as there were only 19 properties affected. It would be difficult for the Environment Agency to acknowledge that this is still the case, as it has emerged that in excess of 70 properties were affected and evacuated. If a property is evacuated, it is done for a reason.

The Committee very much welcomes the Government announcement that there will be £5.2 billion of money for flood protection available nationally over a 6-year programme. Whilst the announcement did not specifically mention Bewdley, it is important to ensure that a case be made for any available resources to come to the Wyre Forest area.

The work being done by the River Severn Partnership, which is led by Shropshire Council and the Environment Agency, offers the possibility of further strategic interventions that might mitigate future flooding events along the river, to the benefit of communities from Shrewsbury downstream to the Severn Estuary. The District Council and Worcestershire County Council are involved in the partnership. The initial award of Government funding to support this work is welcome.

An area of concern raised was the delay in the initial deployment of barriers along Severnside South in Bewdley. As there was a clear indication of adverse weather conditions, which had led to the deployment of barriers on Severnside North, earlier deployment on Severnside South could have saved a number of properties from flooding. The Committee recognises that the cause was extreme local rainfall, which also caused flooding in Tenbury, rather than the usual pattern of rainfall in the headwaters in Wales causing flooding some days later.

**The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommends to Council:**

- a) Following the initial review by the Environment Agency in relation to a permanent flood scheme for Beale's Corner, Bewdley, it is imperative and an absolute priority that a business case be worked up. A letter be sent to the Environment Agency indicating strong support for permanent flood defences in that area;
- b) submissions be made to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and other relevant authorities to support the case for Government funding to alleviate flooding in the Wyre Forest area, both for specific flood defence schemes in the district, in particular Beale's Corner, Bewdley, and for water management interventions being developed by the River Severn Partnership;
- c) the Environment Agency be asked to review its barrier deployment procedure for Bewdley in light of the experience in February; to take account of the possibility of extreme local rainfall events. Assurance be sought from the Environment Agency that, until such a time as there is a permanent solution, the temporary barriers are not removed and continue to be deployed in an appropriate way ensuring that they are fit for purpose and that they are an appropriate height. The Environment Agency be invited back to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give formal feedback on the review;
- d) a letter be written to the Member of Parliament for Wyre Forest seeking his full support to lobby for permanent flood defences at Beale's Corner, Bewdley;
- e) the authority works with the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), all relevant partners and the Environment Agency in the composition of the business case;
- f) while noting that other areas of the district were flooded, in light of the compelling and persuasive arguments received during the scrutiny exercise, the first priority is to press for permanent defences at Beale's Corner, Bewdley on the Wribbehall side;
- g) endorsement that the multi-agency approach with the statutory and voluntary partners within the Wyre Forest should continue and that there are appropriate relevant and timely means of communication by all interested stakeholders in particular with those most directly affected, namely businesses and residents;
- h) the Environment Agency be asked to look very carefully at the issues surrounding the major impact that Dowles Brook had on the flooding events and to include this area in any future water management interventions.

## Appendix 1 - Background Papers

11 June 2020 - Briefing paper from the Chief Executive

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55848\\_20200611\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55848_20200611_o_and_s_agenda.pdf)

Evidence Gathering: 25 June 2020 – Report from the Environment Agency

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55870\\_20200625\\_special\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55870_20200625_special_o_and_s_agenda.pdf)

Evidence Gathering: 2 July 2020 – Reports from Worcestershire County Council and West Mercia Police

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55896\\_20200702\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55896_20200702_o_and_s_agenda.pdf)

Evidence Gathering: 2 July 2020 – Report from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55898\\_20200702\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_report.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55898_20200702_o_and_s_report.pdf)

Evidence Gathering: 2 July 2020 – Report and presentation from Severn Trent

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55943\\_20200702\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_report.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55943_20200702_o_and_s_report.pdf)

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55944\\_20200702\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_report.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55944_20200702_o_and_s_report.pdf)

15 July 2020 – Interim report to Council

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55938\\_20200715\\_council\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55938_20200715_council_agenda.pdf)

Evidence Gathering: 3 September 2020 – Feedback from members of the public

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55999\\_20200903\\_special\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55999_20200903_special_o_and_s_agenda.pdf)

Government funding programme announcement

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-billion-pound-investment-as-government-unveils-new-long-term-plan-to-tackle-flooding>

River Severn Partnership

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s23516/18%20November%20Cabinet%20Report%20-%20River%20Severn%20Partnership%20-Final.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/river-severn-partnership-secures-over-40m-boost-for-flood-defence>

# WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL  
23<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

## Members' Survey – Remote working

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Graham Ballinger, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategy and Finance
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Ian Miller, Chief Executive
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Suzanne Johnston-Hubbold Senior Communications and Engagement Officer
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 – response to main survey questions

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To report the findings of the Members' survey – remote working.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Council is asked to:

2.2 **NOTE the findings of the Members' Survey – Remote Working summarised in this report;**

2.3 **NOTE that remote meetings by members will be kept under review, in consultation with the Chairman of Council and Group Leaders, taking the findings of the consultation into consideration when changes to the current arrangements become possible.**

### 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 As part of the Covid-19 recovery framework it was agreed that a survey of Councillors should be undertaken about the impact of remote working on them. That decision was taken at Council on Wednesday 15 July 2020.

3.2 The online survey was launched on Friday 28 August 2020. A link to the survey was sent via email to all Councillors. The deadline of noon on Friday 11 September was given.

3.3 On Tuesday 8 September a further email was sent to Councillors reminding them of the deadline. Reminders were also included in the Members' Bulletins on Wednesday 2 and Wednesday 9 September.

3.4 A total of 30 surveys were completed. The key findings are summarised in section 4.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 There is a clear division of opinion on most questions.
- 4.2 41% of respondents felt that remote working had been effective for them, but 31% felt it had not.
- 4.3 For the majority of councillors, lockdown was the first time they had used video conferencing technology (60% had not used it before). Now 90% are using it once a week or more, which means that most councillors have had to build new skills in use of technology. This could have other applications for councillors' work now and in future e.g. running on-line surgeries.
- 4.4 Zoom has been used to conduct remote council meetings. At the time of the survey, Members had, on average, attended 14 meetings each using the technology. They find it easy to use too. Members were asked to rate how easy they found Zoom to use, with 1 being very difficult and 10 being very easy. The average score was 8 out of 10. Only one respondent gave it a score below 5. Difficulties with logging on and poor internet connection were given as reasons why members did not find it easy to use.
- 4.5 Again opinion was fairly equally divided as to whether video conferencing had given members more opportunities to attend formal meetings. 43% felt it had, while 33% said it had not. Committee minutes show the number of observers at meetings has increased. For example, at Cabinet in May 2020 there were 12 observers and 9 in July. This compares to four observers at each of the Cabinet meetings in June, July and September 2019. The evidence of the number of observers attending Cabinet meetings suggest that, in fact, members have had more opportunities to attend formal meetings than in the past.
- 4.6 More than half of respondents (57%) felt that remote formal council meetings were not more effective than face to face. 30% felt there was no impact on effectiveness, while 13% said they thought remote meetings were more effective.
- 4.7 37% of respondents had found it easy to hold meetings with officers during lockdown, while a third (33%) said they had not. On average respondents rated the effectiveness of video conferencing with officers as 6 out of 10 (10 being extremely effective). Several members commented that they had not used video conferencing to contact officers. Others felt face to face meetings were better for interaction and debate. More than a third (37%) felt that officers working from home had not impacted on their working relationship but 43% felt it had.
- 4.8 Members highly rated the teams they have worked with in ICT and Democratic Services to facilitate remote working. The helpfulness and availability of colleagues has been highlighted in many responses.
- 4.9 Overall more respondents have positive views about the use of technology for remote meetings and find it easy to use. However the majority do not think remote meetings are as effective. Respondents were happy to use the technology and found it useful during the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic. The comments highlighted that remote meetings suit some members' circumstances more than others, with

issues such as childcare or work commitments being mentioned (with both positive and negative responses being provided) as well as reduced travelling. Several respondents commented that they missed human interaction and found discussion less free-flowing during remote meetings.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The introduction of remote working technologies has had a minor cost impact. Zoom licences were purchased within existing budgets. The technology installed for remoting working is being used more widely than formal council meetings and assists with day-to-day council business.

**6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Changes were made to the constitution at an Extraordinary Council meeting in April 2020 to enable remote meetings to be held. Those changes could be in place until May 2021 under the terms of the Council's decision.
- 6.2 Tighter restrictions on social gatherings (Rule of 6) were introduced on Monday 14 September. The new rule means a person must not meet with people from other households socially in groups of more than 6. This does not apply to work settings but Members are not employees. COVID-19 Secure venues can still host larger numbers in total but groups of up to 6 must not mix or form larger groups. Along with the extant guidance on social distancing in buildings, this means that there is no prospect of full council meetings being held face-to-face for the foreseeable future.

**7. EQUALITY IMPACT NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 A screening has been undertaken and there has been found to be no significant adverse impact due to the introduction of remote meetings. Remote meetings are making it easier for all sectors of the public, including the disabled, to access our meetings. This is also true of members who have mobility issues and who can now attend from their homes. Prior to lockdown only Council and Planning meetings were webcast. Now all formal meetings are being live streamed and available to watch through catch up. This makes it more convenient to access the Council's democratic process as the vast majority of residents (those with an internet connection for a tablet, laptop or smartphone) do not need to leave their homes. Committees are now attracting approximately double the average number of live views. From April to July we live streamed a total of 8 planning and full council meetings which had an average live audience of 63. For the previous 8 webcasts of these meetings, the average number of live views was 31. The August planning committee attracted 468 live views alone.
- 7.2 Because the Council has been live streaming all meetings, it has made it easier for the media to "attend" and report on meetings than in the past when only some meetings were webcast: for example, meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were never webcast as resources were focussed on decision-making meetings. This indirectly serves to promote access to the democratic process for all members of the community.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 Remote working for members was introduced to make sure the Council is compliant with Covid-19 regulations. Future arrangements will have to continue to comply with relevant legislation and Government guidance.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The survey has shown a mix of views among councillors about the benefits and disbenefits of remote meetings and remote working. The Council has a duty to minimise risk to both members and staff, as well as the public, who have a right to attend meetings. In line with current legislation and guidance, there are no plans for any formal meetings to be held face-to face at present.
- 9.2 The situation will be kept under review in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and group leaders.

**10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 Corporate Leadership Team.
- 10.2 All Members' views were sought as part of the survey.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Section 78, Coronavirus Act 2020

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7/section/78>

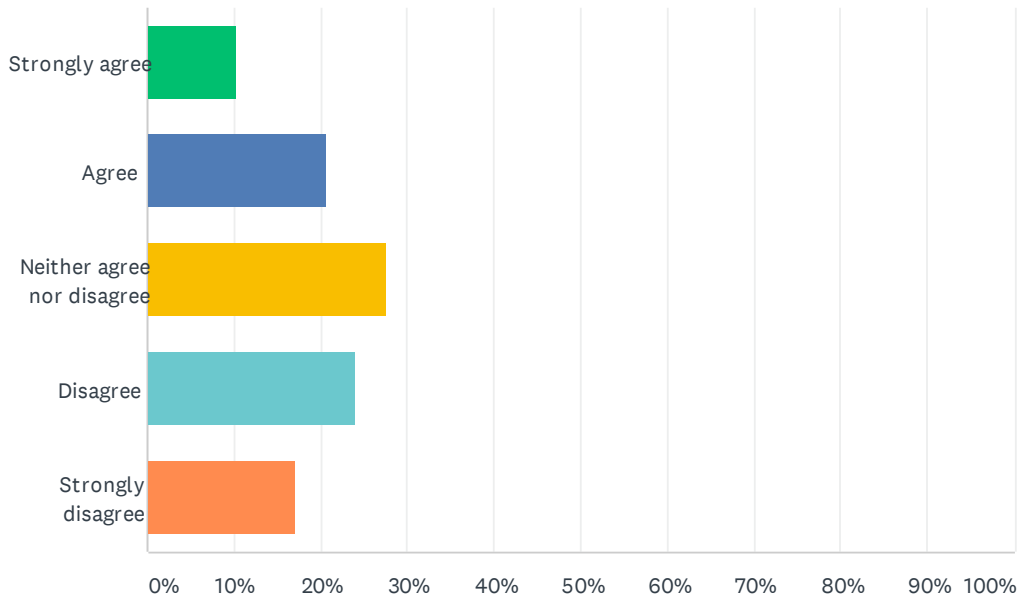
- 11.2 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No 392

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2020/392/contents/made>



### Q1 To what extent do you agree with the statement - "Remote working has not been effective for me as a councillor?"

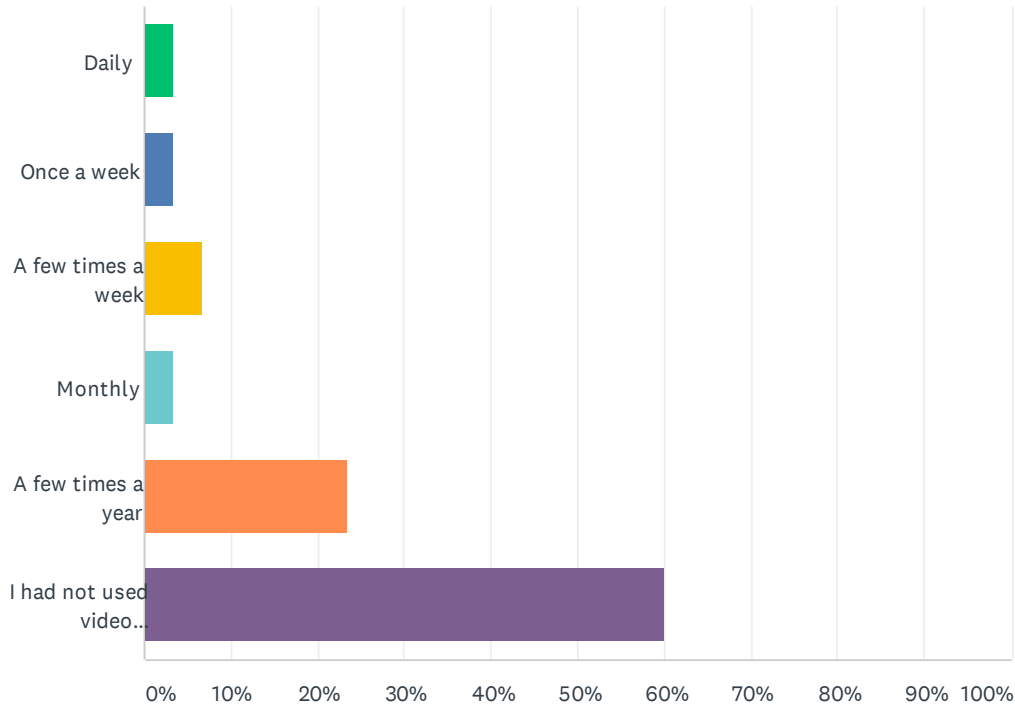
Answered: 29 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	10.34%	3
Agree	20.69%	6
Neither agree nor disagree	27.59%	8
Disagree	24.14%	7
Strongly disagree	17.24%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>29</b>

**Q2 Prior to lockdown approximately how often were you using video conferencing technology? (This includes anything like Zoom, Facetime, Skype, WhatsApp video calls etc.)**

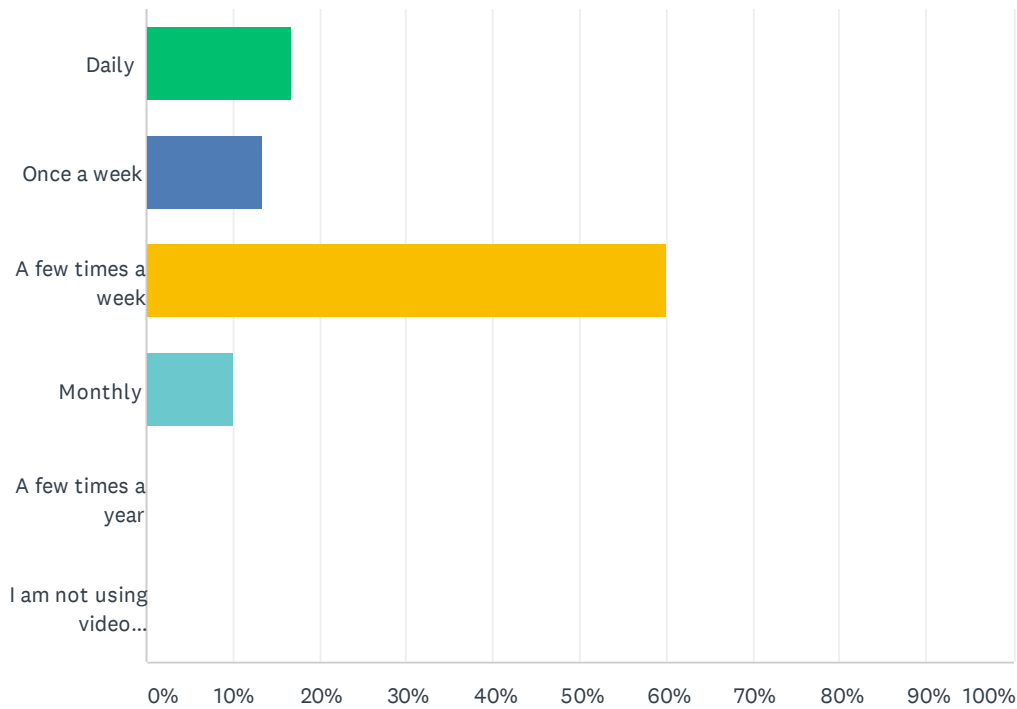
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	3.33%	1
Once a week	3.33%	1
A few times a week	6.67%	2
Monthly	3.33%	1
A few times a year	23.33%	7
I had not used video conferencing before	60.00%	18
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>30</b>

### Q3 Approximately how often are you using video conferencing now?

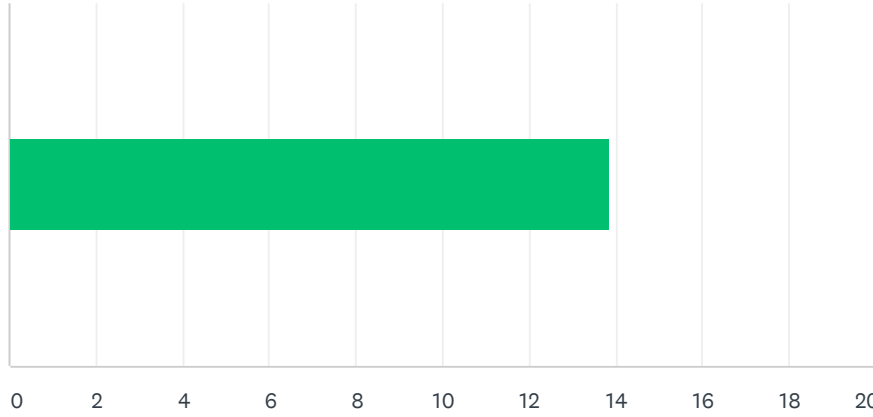
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Daily	16.67% 5
Once a week	13.33% 4
A few times a week	60.00% 18
Monthly	10.00% 3
A few times a year	0.00% 0
I am not using video conferencing	0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>

**Q4 We have been using Zoom for our formal council meetings. How many formal Wyre Forest District Council meetings have you attended using Zoom? This is either as a member of the committee or as an observer.**

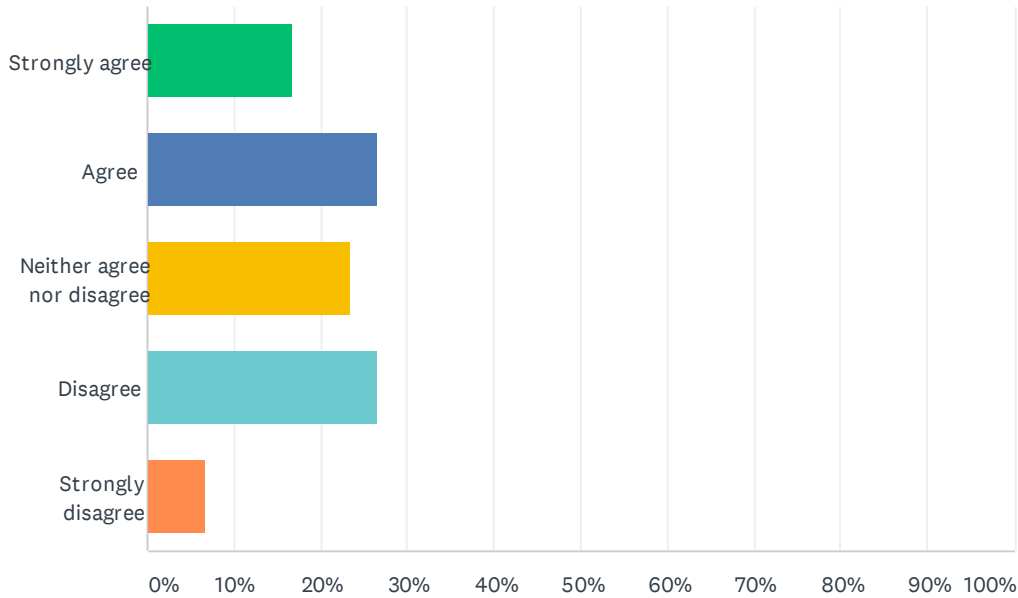
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	14	416	30
Total Respondents: 30			

**Q5 To what extent do you agree with the statement – “The use of video conferencing technology has given me the opportunity to attend more district council meetings.”**

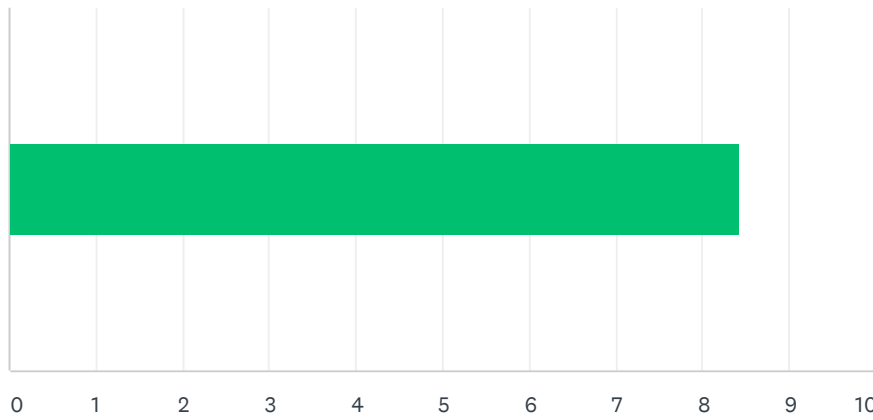
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	16.67%	5
Agree	26.67%	8
Neither agree nor disagree	23.33%	7
Disagree	26.67%	8
Strongly disagree	6.67%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>30</b>

**Q6 How would you rate Zoom for ease of use – 1 being very difficult to use and 10 being very easy to use.**

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	8	253	30
Total Respondents: 30			

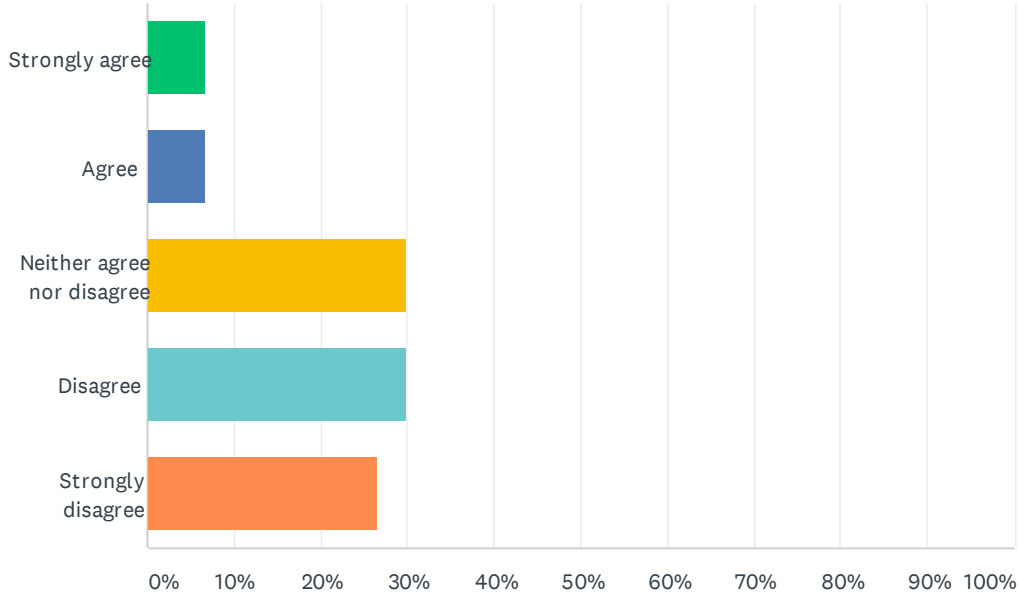
## Q7 Why did you give Zoom this rating for ease of use?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 3

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I think it is easier to operate and understand than other systems. I have also used it several times so have built up experience and confidence	9/10/2020 6:50 PM
2	Easily understood/ IT officer help ensures problem solving	9/10/2020 4:43 PM
3	I like it, but think the signing in to meetings could be simpler when not using the links	9/10/2020 4:33 PM
4	Sometimes it's not easy to access	9/10/2020 2:53 PM
5	I have problems getting onto it some times. It has got more frequent of late with difficulty	9/9/2020 5:53 PM
6	Because it's true!	9/9/2020 8:59 AM
7	Easy to log in and use "blue hand" not able to see everyone on the same screen in larger meeting	9/8/2020 8:13 PM
8	It is far easier than MS Teams	9/8/2020 6:00 PM
9	It is ok if the technology is working, but screens freeze and internet locks out. Also, it is ok as an interim measure but politics should be about debate, which is not easy when you have such a structured environment - so we have ended up with a person presenting and then just questions which sometimes are ill-timed because the debate has moved on so it comes to making points, because there is a lack of instantaneous interaction among people.	9/8/2020 5:43 PM
10	I just found it easy straight away.	9/8/2020 5:29 PM
11	It's good as long as long as you have good wifi reception which sometimes can be hit and miss.	9/8/2020 4:35 PM
12	It's easy	9/3/2020 4:40 PM
13	It's straight forward	9/2/2020 6:14 PM
14	The technology is better than Skype and Teams.	9/1/2020 9:08 PM
15	When working it is a good tool a few teething problems when I started but on The whole a good tool	9/1/2020 7:06 PM
16	Sometimes difficult to log in	9/1/2020 6:52 PM
17	Very simple to use and understand.	8/31/2020 12:10 AM
18	It's relatively simple to connect but not the same as face to face meetings	8/30/2020 10:48 PM
19	It was user friendly	8/30/2020 8:51 PM
20	I'm now conversant with Zoom, but others [including hosts and co-hosts] are not always as conversant as they might be.	8/30/2020 8:05 PM
21	Because I did. It's simple to use	8/29/2020 10:57 PM
22	Our IT staff have been brilliant in making it all come together. My only previous experience of Zoom et al has been through weekly video calls to family living abroad!	8/28/2020 11:56 PM
23	It is very efficient from District council, The IT Staff are always very helpful if I get a problem and quickly deal with it to make it very efficient and worthwhile	8/28/2020 6:39 PM
24	There have been a small number of times it has been difficult to access Zoom	8/28/2020 4:52 PM
25	Found it very easy to use	8/28/2020 3:56 PM
26	Zoom is OK but I've never hosted zoom meeting myself.	8/28/2020 1:00 PM
27	Click on the link and you are admitted. You have a better view of participants than in a physical meeting. The only downside is an issue with wi-fi, which has only happened once.	8/28/2020 11:20 AM

**Q8 To what extent do you agree with the statement – “The formal council meetings are more effective being held remotely than they were face to face.”**

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0

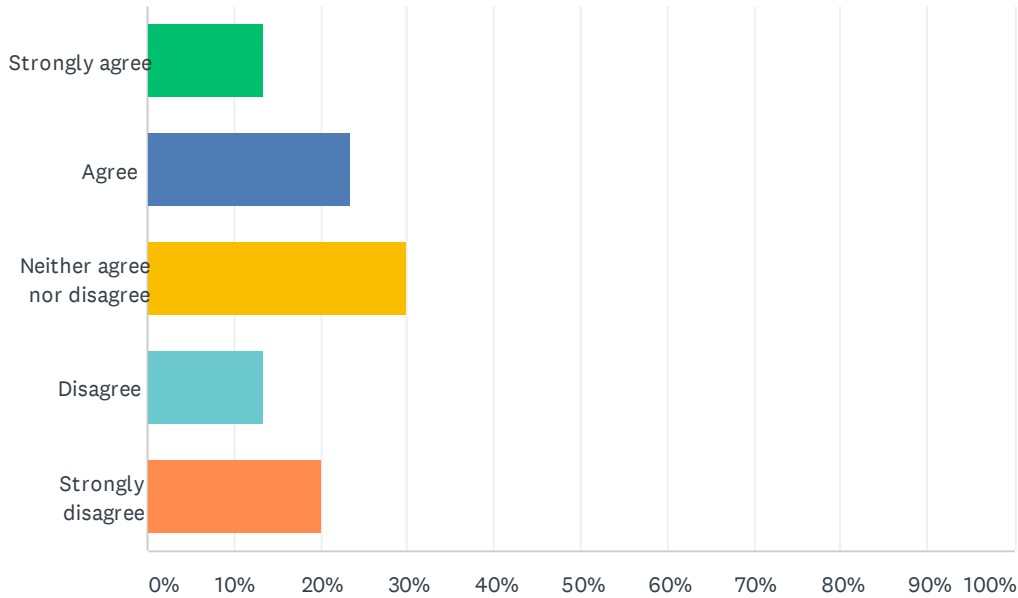


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	6.67%	2
Agree	6.67%	2
Neither agree nor disagree	30.00%	9
Disagree	30.00%	9
Strongly disagree	26.67%	8
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>30</b>



**Q9 To what extent do you agree with the statement – “ I have found it easy to hold meetings with Wyre Forest District Council officers during lockdown.”**

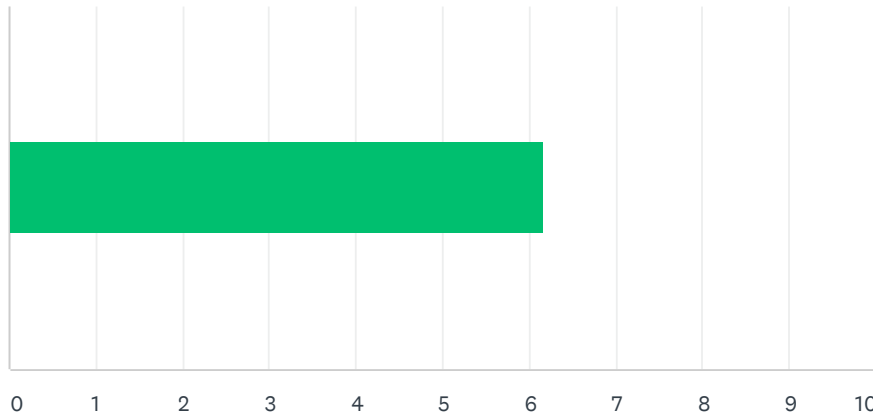
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	13.33%	4
Agree	23.33%	7
Neither agree nor disagree	30.00%	9
Disagree	13.33%	4
Strongly disagree	20.00%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>30</b>

**Q10 How effective do you think video conferencing has been for informal meetings with Wyre Forest District Council officers ? 1 being not very effective at all and 10 being extremely effective.**

Answered: 29 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	6	179	29
Total Respondents: 29			

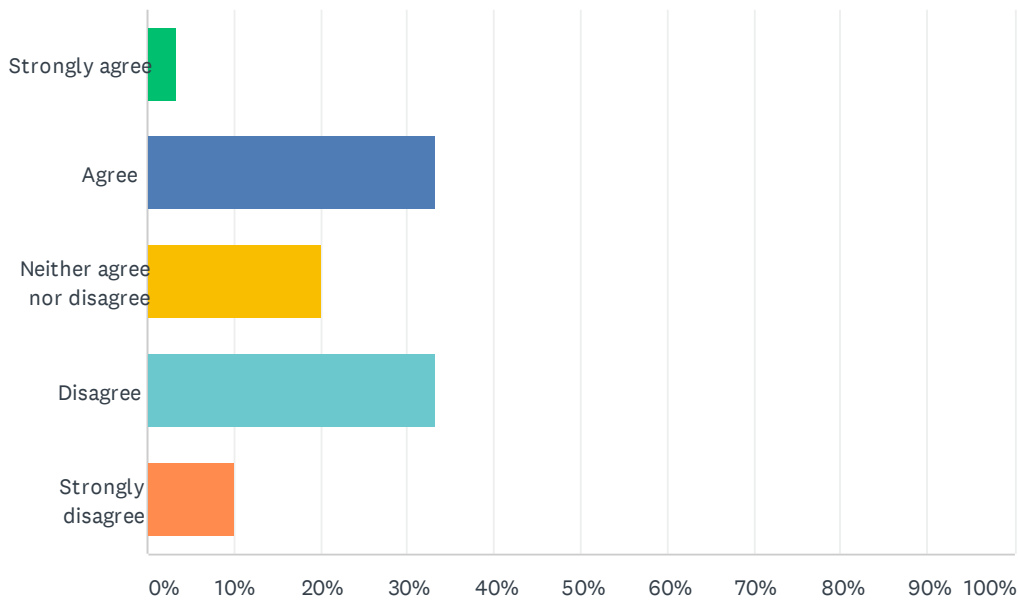
## Q11 Why did you give it this rating?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 3

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Based on my experiences . It was also necessary to have some kind of remote meetings because of the COVID restrictions	9/10/2020 6:50 PM
2	Not as good as real face to face meetings	9/10/2020 4:43 PM
3	Not applicable to me	9/10/2020 4:33 PM
4	Although the use of virtual meetings is useful we are social beings and need to interact with one another	9/10/2020 2:53 PM
5	It is because informal meetings are still not the same as face to face	9/9/2020 5:53 PM
6	Because that's my opinion which is what you asked for. This is a pointless question.	9/9/2020 8:59 AM
7	easier to arrange mutually convenient times	9/8/2020 8:13 PM
8	It is difficult to engage properly with the Council Solicitor as she does not have good broadband at home	9/8/2020 6:00 PM
9	When you phone, person who answers now advises that the Officer you need is working from home, they will email them to call you. No-one in the same office can be offered as an alternative, because they are not their either. I have had 3 occasions to contact WFDC and all have been met with not very good service - you do get their in the end, but if I hadn't got individual Officers numbers, it would be onerous. Cant imagine what kind of service our residents, who pay for our service are getting. Operational staff, refuse guys and Adam S, of course have been brilliant, as usual.	9/8/2020 5:43 PM
10	Never had a problem, even when I was away for a few days.	9/8/2020 5:29 PM
11	Have not taken part in many one to one meetings	9/8/2020 4:35 PM
12	It's easy	9/3/2020 4:40 PM
13	It does not have as much involvement as face to face meetings	9/2/2020 6:14 PM
14	They are ok in times of national crisis but they should not be the future. They stifle free flowing debate.	9/1/2020 9:08 PM
15	Much rather meet in person	9/1/2020 7:06 PM
16	It's pretty easy but sometimes in less official meetings there is a lack of control	9/1/2020 6:52 PM
17	We are not seeing officers as often as we do normally.	8/31/2020 12:10 AM
18	With officers working from home, it is lacking commitment	8/30/2020 10:48 PM
19	Some internet links were not always good	8/30/2020 8:51 PM
20	I've not tried it.	8/30/2020 8:05 PM
21	Because I did It doesn't affect me	8/29/2020 10:57 PM
22	Not always clear whether or not the informal meeting call you are requesting occurs on an officers time off for leave or other personal reasons.	8/28/2020 11:56 PM
23	This is because and it goes for formal meetings as well, the opportunity to make a statement is not always acknowledged so I do not always have my say.	8/28/2020 6:39 PM
24	As I understand it we only have 1 licence for Zoom which has meant that if it is being used for a meeting for others that prevents you being able to have a meeting at the same time.	8/28/2020 4:52 PM
25	Found it easy	8/28/2020 3:56 PM
26	Good result always.	8/28/2020 1:00 PM
27	Sometimes a face to face meeting can achieve more, especially on site. Otherwise, video conferencing works well	8/28/2020 11:20 AM

**Q12 To what extent do you agree with the statement – "Officers working from home has not impacted on our working relationship."**

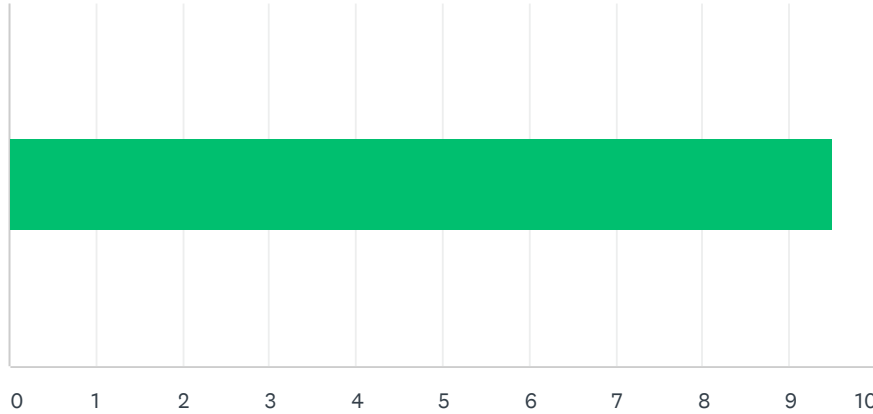
Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	3.33%	1
Agree	33.33%	10
Neither agree nor disagree	20.00%	6
Disagree	33.33%	10
Strongly disagree	10.00%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>30</b>

**Q13 How would you rate the support you have had from the IT team to take part in remote meetings? With 1 being extremely unhelpful and 10 being extremely helpful.**

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	10	285	30
Total Respondents: 30			

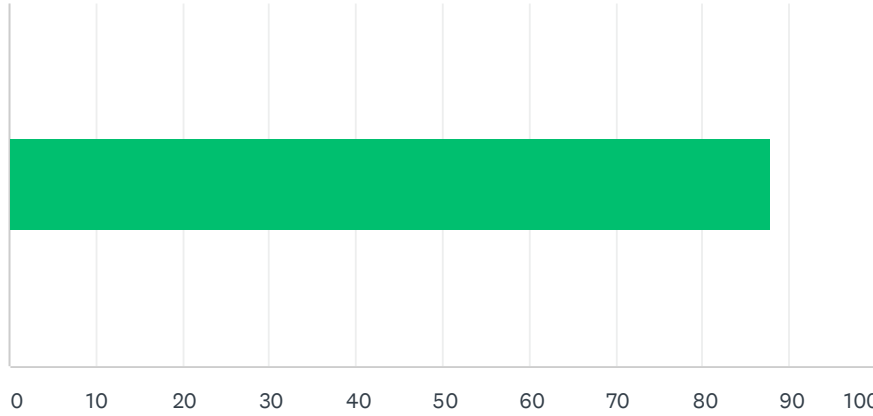
## Q14 Why did you give the IT team this rating?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 3

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Because I have needed their support quite often and they have always been most helpful and patient	9/10/2020 6:50 PM
2	Very Responsive help..	9/10/2020 4:43 PM
3	Always on hand to assist	9/10/2020 4:33 PM
4	The team have been very helpful	9/10/2020 2:53 PM
5	They are an excellent team with loads of patience and have done an excellent job. If I have difficulties as I said I do they are always there to help and quickly too	9/9/2020 5:53 PM
6	Because that's my opinion which is what you asked for. This is a pointless question.	9/9/2020 8:59 AM
7	excellent support. Always available to help things run smoothly	9/8/2020 8:13 PM
8	If I ever have a problem they immediately sort it	9/8/2020 6:00 PM
9	After about 3 attempts to get into different meetings, the error around the email system was fixed, now it works every time	9/8/2020 5:43 PM
10	Because they are good at what they do. I personally didn't need help, but other members did and they facilitated it.	9/8/2020 5:29 PM
11	Always ready to help, no problem to big. Full credit to the team for getting us where we are today.	9/8/2020 4:35 PM
12	Helpfel	9/3/2020 4:40 PM
13	At the start I needed a lot of support but they were always helpful	9/2/2020 6:14 PM
14	I am impressed with how helpful certain officer in the team have been.	9/1/2020 9:08 PM
15	There when you need them	9/1/2020 7:06 PM
16	Nothing was too difficult for them	9/1/2020 6:52 PM
17	They have been fantastic.	8/31/2020 12:10 AM
18	The team have been quite helpful, but I haven't had to ask for help much	8/30/2020 10:48 PM
19	They have dealt with all my issues	8/30/2020 8:51 PM
20	I've not needed IT support.	8/30/2020 8:05 PM
21	Because that's what I thought	8/29/2020 10:57 PM
22	Consistently helpful!	8/28/2020 11:56 PM
23	They are excellent, what more can be said	8/28/2020 6:39 PM
24	Because they deserve it	8/28/2020 4:52 PM
25	Always were available	8/28/2020 3:56 PM
26	Brilliant team and very speedy!	8/28/2020 1:00 PM
27	My initial lack of knowledge was easily overcome by the IT team	8/28/2020 11:20 AM

**Q15 How do you rate the support with remote working you have had from Democratic Services team? With 1 being extremely unhelpful and 10 being extremely helpful**

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	88	2,636	30
Total Respondents: 30			

## Q16 Why did you give the Democratic Services team this rating?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 4

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Again because they have always been helpful	9/10/2020 6:50 PM
2	Always do their best to assist/guide	9/10/2020 4:43 PM
3	Not applicable	9/10/2020 4:33 PM
4	Again the team are excellent	9/10/2020 2:53 PM
5	They are an excellent team and very helpful	9/9/2020 5:53 PM
6	Because that's my opinion which is what you asked for. This is a pointless question.	9/9/2020 8:59 AM
7	excellent support	9/8/2020 8:13 PM
8	Always helpful, never complain	9/8/2020 6:00 PM
9	Don't think Ive had reason to contact them, so cant really say. Service prior to lockdown was always good though	9/8/2020 5:43 PM
10	They have been good	9/8/2020 5:29 PM
11	Always ready to help with any problems	9/8/2020 4:35 PM
12	N/a	9/3/2020 4:40 PM
13	Our Democratic Services team are very good.	9/1/2020 9:08 PM
14	All ways there when needed	9/1/2020 7:06 PM
15	Because it was deserved	9/1/2020 6:52 PM
16	They are extremely helpful.	8/31/2020 12:10 AM
17	It is just not working together	8/30/2020 10:48 PM
18	They are very supportive	8/30/2020 8:51 PM
19	The meeting number and. password numbers have always arrived in good time and worked.	8/30/2020 8:05 PM
20	Because I deemed it the most appropriate	8/29/2020 10:57 PM
21	Again- nothing is seen as too much trouble- first rate despite ever decreasing manpower resources.	8/28/2020 11:56 PM
22	The team are very good and helpful and will contact me by phone if they need clarification. Also excellent for helpfulness	8/28/2020 6:39 PM
23	Because they deserve it	8/28/2020 4:52 PM
24	Again it has been seamless	8/28/2020 3:56 PM
25	Always very helpful, nothing changed.	8/28/2020 1:00 PM
26	There have been no problems	8/28/2020 11:20 AM



## Q17 If you have any other comments you would like to make about remote working please write them in the box below.

Answered: 18 Skipped: 12

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Whilst Zoom has worked, I miss the human interaction ; if the situation continues for too long we are in danger of losing our human relationships and bow to technology (computers) rather than have them as tools.....	9/10/2020 4:43 PM
2	I do it but I find it not always conducive to a meeting.	9/9/2020 5:53 PM
3	This is not the way forward!!!	9/9/2020 8:59 AM
4	Having remote meetings has enabled me to attend and experience a wider range of council meetings. Some meetings haven't been as efficient, particularly full council. I find it easier to manage work and child care commitments with virtual meetings.	9/8/2020 8:13 PM
5	Remote working only works if everyone has a really good broadband connection. I am lucky but other members and some officers regularly "freeze"! I am also lucky to have a dedicated study at home which I can use.	9/8/2020 6:00 PM
6	Yes if it's possible I would like to continue remote working at the time I can't attend in person. It would be ether to remotely attend than not at all.	9/8/2020 5:29 PM
7	Unsure of how many meetings have attended remotely but in general very easy. Would like this to be an option in the future for all meetings.	9/3/2020 4:40 PM
8	Travel time is obviously reduced which is great but I do enjoy face to face meetings especially for full council and scrutiny	9/2/2020 6:14 PM
9	It has its place but we should not think that all or even some meetings should be held remotely long term. People can have much better free flowing discussions face to face. The idea of WFH was to remove officers from working in 6 plus buildings across the district and bring them under one roof for greater efficiency. The concept now that we would have 200 working long term goes completely against this concept.	9/1/2020 9:08 PM
10	I have worked 90% of my life from home and have no issues with it	9/1/2020 6:52 PM
11	It's a helpful way of communication during the difficult times, but not as effective as face to face meetings	8/30/2020 10:48 PM
12	Remote council meetings are designed for retired or people with no children. At 6pm with young children it's a nightmare to go live at home with a council meeting. Total impractical. We have to get back to meetings held in WFH. Also the constitution is undemocratic for Full Council with only two motions allowed and the executive not having to answer supplementary questions, it protects the executive from accountability and scrutiny.	8/29/2020 10:57 PM
13	Surprised how successful it has been for me - I thought I was too old a dog to be taught new tricks	8/28/2020 11:56 PM
14	no comment	8/28/2020 6:39 PM
15	Although the remote working has worked well I think there is still a need when possible for face to face human meetings when possible.	8/28/2020 4:52 PM
16	None	8/28/2020 3:56 PM
17	It was totally stressful free. Thanks to all.	8/28/2020 1:00 PM
18	It works well.Only the atmosphere of the Council Chamber is missing	8/28/2020 11:20 AM

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL  
23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK  
MATTERS WHICH REQUIRE A DECISION BY COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –  
8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

**Purpose of Report**

To consider recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on matters outside the policy framework or approved budget of the Council.

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Would Councillors please note that the related reports and documents have not been included in the Council book, as they have already been sent to Members via the Overview & Scrutiny agenda. A public inspection copy is available on request. The policy documents, referred to below, have been posted on the Council's website. See the report on page 73 of the pdf at this link:

[http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc56014\\_20200908\\_o\\_and\\_s\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc56014_20200908_o_and_s_agenda.pdf)

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL	CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE
<p><b>Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2019-20</b></p> <p><b>Recommend to Council to:</b></p> <p><b>1.1 Approve the actual 2019-20 prudential and treasury indicators in the report;</b></p> <p><b>1.2 Approve the actual 2019-20 non-treasury prudential indicators for Capital Portfolio Fund property acquisitions;</b></p> <p><b>1.3 Note the annual treasury management report for 2019-20, including information on the non-treasury prudential indicators for Capital Portfolio Fund acquisitions.</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor M Hart</b></p>