

Leader's announcements

8 December 2021

The major fire at Hoo Farm Industrial Estate on Monday prompted – as usual – a smooth and effective response from the emergency services and the wide range of partners that deal with significant emergencies. Council will want to join me in extending thanks to the staff of all agencies involved. Thankfully, there were no injuries and there was no need for the Council to open a rest centre as we had to do a couple of months ago when there was a serious fire elsewhere in Kidderminster.

The level of COVID infections in Wyre Forest has generally remained lower than the rest of Worcestershire in recent weeks, but the emergence of the Omicron variant and new legal requirements and guidance imposed by the Government show that we cannot be complacent. Staff of Worcestershire Regulatory Services are working to support businesses in complying with the requirements on wearing of face coverings.

Since Council's meeting in September, we have had the excellent news of the £17.9m grant from the Levelling Up Fund which involves projects led by the county council, Kidderminster town council and this Council. There is a recommendation to amend the capital programme on tonight's agenda. I would like to extend thanks to Ostap Paparega and the team at North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration in securing this very positive outcome. We also had positive news about a number of projects being funded from the Community Renewal Fund, including the cleantech Betaden boot camp that will be hosted at Wyre Forest House and provide 90 days of support to start-up and scale-up businesses in Worcestershire to enter the growing green sector of the economy.

The budget consultation is open until midday tomorrow (Thursday 9 December) and I am pleased to say that we have already had over 700 responses. If members have still not taken part, details of how to do so are at this link: [Have your say on Cabinet's budget proposals | Wyre Forest District Council \(wyreforestdc.gov.uk\)](https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/cabinet/budget-proposals) The Cabinet will carefully consider the responses as we formulate our draft medium term financial strategy which will be presented at the Cabinet meeting on 21 December.

Council will have the opportunity tonight to pay tribute to Tracey Southall and Mike Parker, our corporate directors who leave at the end of this month. I would like to thank them for their support to me over many years, not just since May as Leader of the Council but also during my time as a Cabinet member and as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. I wish them and the other staff who are leaving us shortly, including Elaine Brookes, our Facilities and Asset Manager, well for the future.

Finally I would like to extend to all members and staff my wishes for a peaceful and happy Christmas, as we look forward to further positive progress in 2022.