

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER**

**18 DECEMBER 2024 (6PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), B Brookes (Vice-Chairman), D Morehead, T L Onslow, C Rogers and D Ross.

**Observers:**

Councillors: N Martin and A Sutton.

Observed remotely: Councillor F M Oborski MBE.

**CAB.45 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**CAB.46 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**CAB.47 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 November 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CAB.48 Call Ins**

No decisions had been called in since the last Cabinet meeting.

**CAB.49 Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**CAB.50 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**CAB.51 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025-28**

A report was considered from the Head of Resources and S151 Officer; and Chief Executive that provided the Cabinet with financial information in order to make proposals for the Budget Strategy for the period 2025-28, in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the S151

Officer for providing the detailed report and appendices.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that the core functions of the Council remained the things that it was required to do by statute. He said those costs were around £5.5m or 45% of the total spend. He added that the remainder was discretionary and delivered on the corporate plan and accounted for around £3.8m or 31%, with a further £3m (24%) spent on corporate costs.

The Cabinet Member further explained that the Council would continue to focus on increasing commercial activity and efficiency savings. He added that some services may have to be reviewed if the Government failed to recognise the pressures on Councils across the UK and failed to increase the revenue support in order that all the services that residents had come to appreciate were maintained.

The Cabinet Member added that within the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) the budget contained four Cabinet spending proposals as set out at paragraph 6.4 of the report. He outlined each proposal in turn.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

**Decision: The Cabinet NOTED:**

- 1.1 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 1 of the report.**
- 1.2 The recommendations in the separate Capital Strategy 2025-2035 report that are intrinsically linked to the MTFS report.**

**The Cabinet ENDORSED and RECOMMEND to the Strategic Review Panel for scrutiny:**

- 1.3 The Council's updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy;**
  - 1.3.1 There are 4 Cabinet spending proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2025-28 (paragraph 6.4) as follows;**
    - a) a further capital investment of £50k for disabled inclusive play equipment in all of our play areas across the district, which will have a revenue cost for the borrowing of £2,500 in 2025-26 and £7,500/year in future years;**
    - b) Additional funding for an additional Environmental Protection Officer to bring the total number to 3 for 2025-26 and 2026-27, which will have a cost of £41,140 in 2025-26 and £43,120 in 2026-27;**
    - c) Additional funding in 2025-26 and 2026-27 for civil enforcement to increase the number of officers from 5.7 to 7.7. This extends the funding approved in the 2024-25 MTFS at a cost of £13,030 in**

**2025-26 and £51,190 in 2026-27;**

- d) Additional funding in 2026-27 for 2 street scene officers to extend the provision of a year round blitz/hot spot reactive service until 31st March 2027 at a cost of £60,270 in 2026-27.**

**In addition, approval is sought for:**

- e) New commercial income targets from the Commercial Strategy Delivery Units to support the Wyre Forest Forward Transformation and Financial Resilience programme, increasing the existing target by £35,000 in 2025-26, £75,000 in 2026-27 and £115,000 in 2027-28. The new income target in 2027-28 becomes £289,000;**
- 1.3.2 The level of net expenditure and resultant Council Tax for 2025-28 as per paragraphs 4.8 including the revenue implications of the Capital Strategy report also on the agenda;**
- 1.3.3 The fees and charges in line with this strategy and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2025-28, as shown in Part 3 of Appendix 3 (paragraph 3.23 also refers) which incorporate decisions taken by Council on 11th December 2024 in respect of licensing fees and charges;**
- 1.4 The Cabinet APPROVED:**
  - 1.4.1 The fees and charges as set out in Appendix 3 – Part 2.**
  - 1.4.2 That the budget contained in the papers are the subject of consultation with residents and business ratepayers for the 4 week period commencing 19th December 2024.**

## **CAB.52 Capital Strategy 2025-35 and Capital Programme Update**

A report was considered from the Head of Resources and S151 Officer that provided the Cabinet with the draft Capital Strategy for 2025-35 and the Capital Programme update 2025-26 onwards.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that the CIPFA Prudential Code required Local Authorities to produce a Capital Strategy to demonstrate how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management contributed to service objectives and the delivery of desired outcomes. He added that the most recent update to the Prudential Code incorporated changes which restrict Councils using borrowing to finance commercial property investment solely for generating yield.

The Leader thanked the Head of Resources and S151 Officer for the

comprehensive report, and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

**Decision:**

**1.1 The Cabinet ENDORSED and RECOMMEND to the Strategic Review Panel for scrutiny:**

**The Council's updated Capital Strategy:**

- a) Approve the Capital Strategy 2025-35 at Appendix 1 including the associated Quantitative Indicators in Appendix 3;**
- b) Approve variations to the Capital Programme and Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendix 2A and 2B and include a new annual allocation of £100k from 2026-27 to support a Corporate Property Investment Programme (CPIP) and an allocation of £120k in 2025-26 for the replacement of carpark ticket machines;**
- c) Approve the limits for gross debt of non-treasury property investments compared to net service expenditure and for Capital Portfolio Fund as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 3.**

**1.2 The Cabinet APPROVED:**

**That delegation is given to the Deputy Chief Executive: Economic Development & Regeneration in consultation with the Head of Resources and Solicitor to the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Capital Portfolio Fund, to update the Capital Portfolio Strategy Policies in year if required.**

**CAB.53 Wyre Forest Health Action Plan Update**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on action to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in Wyre Forest.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

The Cabinet Member gave a detailed summary of the background and key issues set out in the report.

He explained that the Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board oversees local health commissioning and leads on the strategic planning and co-ordination of local health services. He added that the Health and Wellbeing Board was required to develop a strategy for improving the health and wellbeing of people who live and work in Worcestershire; the 'Being Well in Worcestershire' Strategy covers the period 2022-2032.

The Cabinet Member further explained that the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan

outlined action taken by the Council in 2024 to help improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities in Wyre Forest. He advised that the new Health Action Plan for 2025 had been developed to continue the work around raising awareness and working in partnership.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor N Martin, presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 December 2024.

The Leader acknowledged the request from the Committee to write to the Member of Parliament for Wyre Forest. He said that the authority takes the mental health issues of young people within the district seriously and was happy for the Cabinet Member to take forward the request to write to the MP to lobby the Government for further support and funding.

**Decision: Having had regard to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 December 2024;**

**The Cabinet:**

**1.1 NOTED the update on delivery of the Health Action Plan in 2024.**

**AND**

**1.2 APPROVED the Wyre Forest Health Action Plan 2025.**

**CAB.54 Cost of Living action plan**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that provided an update on actions carried out in 2024 to progress delivery of the Cost of Living Action Plan 2024-25.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

The Cabinet Member gave a detailed summary of the background and key issues set out in the report. He explained that the cost of living continued to affect many households in the district to varying degrees. He said the Council had responded by developing and delivering a Cost of Living action plan to support those in the greatest need within the community, based on a series of summits attended by a wide range of partner organisations.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 December 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts and Community Safety said that the authority continually looked at different ways of reaching communities and used all means of communication available to them to achieve this.

**Decision: Having had regard to the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 December 2024;**

**The Cabinet:**

**1.1 NOTED the update on delivery of the Cost-of-Living Action Plan in 2024.**

**AND**

**1.2 APPROVED the Cost of Living Plan for 2025.**

**CAB.55 Warm Homes: Local Grant**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth that sought approval to enter into a procurement exercise to appoint a contractor to undertake the works required to deliver the Warm Homes: Local Grant (WHLG).

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that funding was being made available to local authorities through the Warm Homes Local Grant programme.

He further explained that the appointment of a suitably qualified contractor(s) would allow for the work that is programmed to be undertaken within the programme time period. He said the use of the Community Homes Investment Consortium (CHIC) would ensure that there were suitably qualified companies with experience of undertaking large complex development projects bidding for the work.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 December 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being thanked the Head of Strategic Growth for producing this and the two previous reports. He said a huge amount of work had gone into the reports and for which he was very grateful.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 December 2024;**

**The Cabinet:**

**1.1 APPROVED the procurement exercise and the tender evaluation model set out in the appendix to the report.**

**AND**

- 1.2 GRANTED delegated authority to the Head of Strategic Growth, in consultation with the Solicitor to the Council, Head of Resources and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing to make any non-material amendments to the tender documents and evaluation criteria, evaluate the submissions received from the tender process and to award the contract(s) to undertake the works required.**

**AND**

- 1.3 AGREED to amend the capital programme to include up to £3,850,000 for WHLG from financial year 2025-2026 to financial year 2027-28, in line with the final grant notification.**

**CAB.56 Wyre Forest District Council Local Enforcement Plan**

A report was considered from the Head of Strategic Growth on the Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Local Enforcement Plan (LEP) which had been updated to include a process flowchart.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the Head of Strategic Growth for compiling the report and for the work that had gone into it.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that the Enforcement Team was handling an unusually high volume of cases, 185 cases had been opened in 2024 so far, with 123 pending. He said since 2020, 826 new cases had been opened.

The Cabinet Member further explained that the LEP now included a flowchart to clarify the enforcement process and timeframes. He added that the LEP was initially approved in March 2023, and the update aimed to better guide Enforcement Officers in handling cases. He said the LEP was available for members of the public to see and offered clearer expectations regarding enforcement procedures and timelines.

The Leader seconded the recommendations.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations from its meeting on 5 December 2024.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 December 2024;**

**The Cabinet APPROVED the adoption of the amended Local Enforcement Plan.**

**CAB.57 Response to consultation: enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings**

### **Agenda Item No. 3**

A report was considered from the Chief Executive to agree a response to the consultation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Leader presented the report and formally moved the recommendation for approval.

The Leader gave a summary of the background and key issues detailed in the report. He explained that the previous Government issued a call for evidence about remote and hybrid meetings between March and June 2021, however no action was ever taken in respect of that. He added that the new Labour Government have launched a consultation on such matters as remote attendance and proxy voting. He said that the response supported the need for change in the legislation as there was a place for remote attendance so that people who may find it difficult to get to a meeting due to ill health or a disability, would be able to attend remotely. He said it was important that there was compliance with the duties under the Equality Act.

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services seconded the proposal.

**Decision: In line with the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from its meeting on 5 December 2024;**

**The Cabinet APPROVED the response in Appendix 1 of the report.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.52pm.

The meeting is available for viewing on the Council's website.  
<https://wyreforestdc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>