

**KIDDERMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 6pm on Monday 29 July 2024
In the Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House**

Present:

Councillors G. Connolly (Town Mayor), J. Aston J. Beckingham, B. Brookes, L. Carroll, Vicky Caulfield, D. Chambers, B. Connor, H. Dyke, N. Gale, D. Hine, S. Hollands, Mary McDonnell, Shazu Miah, F. Oborski (MBE), M. Rayner, D. Round and Mike Smith,

In Attendance: Hugh Peacocke, Chief Executive, Adam Stockhall, Operational Services Manager and Rob Beeston, Operational Services Officer.

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All members were present at the meeting.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ben Brookes declared that as Cabinet Member for Operational Services with Wyre Forest District Council that he would leave the meeting for Agenda Item 7, "Devolution Programme".

36. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Nil

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting of Kidderminster Town Council held on 26th June 2024.

38. REGENERATING KIDDERMINSTER

The Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Ostap Paparega, Deputy Chief Executive, Regeneration and Commercial, Wyre Forest District Council.

Mr. Paparega gave a presentation on plans for regeneration in the town centre of Kidderminster, with expenditure up to £45M planned on 4 current sites and a further phase after that.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Paparega for his presentation to the meeting.

39. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

The meeting agreed to suspend Standing Orders and to take item 7 on the agenda "Devolution Programme" before item 6, "Operational Services Office Re-location"

40. DEVOLUTION PROGRAMME.

Rob Beeston, Operational Services Officer, gave a presentation to the meeting outlining the role and current services delivered by the Council's Operational Services Team.

(Councillor Ben Brookes left the meeting at this stage)

Mr. Beeston then progressed to tell members of discussions between officers of the Town Council and the District Council regarding the possible transfer of 4 small parks at the following locations:

- 1) King George V Park – Marlpool Lane
- 2) Willowfield Park – Willowfield Drive
- 3) Forester Way Park – Forester Way
- 4) Jerusalem Walk Park – Broad Street.

The District Council's devolution proposals also referred to other longer-term transfers.

Members expressed a number of concerns around the condition of some of the assets in question, the funding arrangements for any possible transfers and how the Town Council might maintain these assets in the future.

Members agreed that the Town Council needs to determine its overall strategy in these matters before progressing further with any proposed transfers.

RESOLVED:

- A) To authorise officers to negotiate the transfer of the four parks.
- B) Agree for the Public Realms Operations Manager and Officer to continue negotiations with the remaining Parks and Assets through a phased approach.
- C) To appoint 4 members of the Council to the negotiating team (1 from each of the Council's 4 political groups), and
- D) To invite the relevant officers and Cabinet members of the District Council to a meeting of the Town Council to consider a devolution programme before negotiations progress any further.

41. OPERATIONAL SERVICES OFFICE RE-LOCATION

The Mayor referred to the report regarding a proposed office relocation for the Council's Operational Services team and invited Mr. Adam Stockhall, the Council's Operational Services Manager, to tell the meeting more about the proposal. Mr. Stockhall pointed out that it would not be possible to deliver the Town Council's operational services from the Town Hall and that an alternative location would need to be found before the Town Council vacates its current accommodation at Wyre Forest House.

Members discussed this issue and asked that officers what other options might be available to address this problem.

The meeting felt that this matter could not be properly considered until the Council's approach to further devolution had been clarified.

RESOLVED: To defer further consideration of this matter until such time as the Town Councils approach to future devolution of services was determined.

42. INTERNET BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Mayor referred members to the report sent by the CEO asking for approval for internet banking with Handelsbanken. The CEO pointed out that the Council had resolved to switch its banking arrangements from Barclays Bank to Handelsbanken and that internet banking would be an essential part of this arrangement.

RESOLVED:

- A) To authorise Hugh Peacocke (CEO) and Adam Stockhall (Operational Services Manager) to sign and execute on behalf of the Council all agreements and actions required in connection with the Corporate Internet Services, including the appointment of administrators to the services, and
- B) That the Bank is authorised to accept an electronic signature of an authorised user and/or an administrator on a document as being conclusive of that person's intention to sign the documents as if they had applied their manuscript signature.

43. VOTE OF SYMPATHY

The meeting passed a vote of sympathy to the family, relatives and colleagues of the Speller Metcalfe operative who was recently deceased at the Town Hall site.

44. THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024-25

The Council added to the Forward Work Programme required at Minute No. 40 above.

The Mayor concluded the official business of the meeting at 8:13 pm.