

KIDDERMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting held at 6.00 pm on 25th June 2025,
in the Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House.

Present:

Councillors Doug Hine (Town Mayor), John Aston, John Beckingham, Ben Brookes, Liam Carroll, Vickie Caulfield, Darren Chambers, George Connolly, Bernadette Connor, Mark Crosby, Helen Dyke, Nicky Gale, Steve Hollands, Mary McDonnell, Shazu Miah, Fran Oborski (MBE), Mary Rayner and Mike Smith,

In Attendance:

Mr H. Peacocke, Chief Executive
Mr. R. Beeston, Public Realm and Operations Officer.

3. Apologies:

None

4. Absent:

None

5. Declarations of interest

Councillor Ben Brookes declared that as he was an Executive Member at Wyre Forest District Council, that he would withdraw from the meeting for item 12 on the agenda: Local Government reorganisation and Devolution Proposals.

6. Public Question Time

There were no questions from members of the public.

7. Approval of Minutes

3.1 RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meetings of Kidderminster Town Council held on 16th April 2025

3.2 RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meetings of Kidderminster Town Council held on 15th May 2025

8. Town Centre Team – West Mercia Police

The Town Mayor reported that due to their involvement in an incident in town that the Police were unable to send their representatives for this presentation. It was agreed to ask if they could attend a future meeting.

9. Town Mayor's Report

The meeting received a report from the Town Mayor, Councillor Doug Hine, on his first month in office, since elected Mayor. The Mayor thanked the Council staff for their work on civic events since the last meeting of the Council-namely, V E 80 Day, Mayor-making and the Mayor's Sunday.

10. Town Hall Update

The CEO highlighted the following:

- Mr Curtis Fudge was appointed Business Development Lead from 11/6
- The podium in front of the Town Hall is currently under construction and expected to be completed by 18th September.
- KTC staff have now returned to the town Hall, but due to the ongoing construction works, it is not open to the public. Accordingly, any Committee or Council meetings scheduled until 30th September will be held at Wyre forest house. From 1st October, they will be held in the Town Hall.
- The official re-opening ceremonies are now deferred until early November. Trial events will be held in October, to test the various facilities and services to ensure that they are all in proper working order before the official re-opening ceremonies take place.
- The CEO reported on increased costs due to bespoke fire doors (£45,000), a handrail for the podium (£11,000) and £5,000 for snow rails on the roof, which would also help to reduce the risk of accidents from falling slates. The CEO is to check if the fire doors are an issue for KTC staff now occupying the town Hall.

11. Minutes of Committee meetings held since the April meeting of Full Council

Members noted the minutes of the Committee meetings held since the last meeting of the Council.

12. Financial Regulations

The Mayor told the meeting that it was good practice to review the Regulations on an annual basis and he invited the CEO to present the review. The CEO told the members that the review had regard to the following matters:

- A. Issues raised in the internal auditor's report
 - 1.13 - Internal Audit reports to F & O Committee(External must go to Full Council)
 - 1.14 - Finance functions for Finance and Overview committee
 - 1.15 - To cover delegations to Committees
 - 8.8 - Exclude transfers between bank accounts held in the same branch.

- B. Some anomalies in the current regulations
- 2.2- Name of committee clarified (Finance and Overview)
 - 5.4 - Clerk delegations re invoices
 - 6.10 - Clerk and Officer to change supplier details
 - 7.2 - Remove reference to Councillor's allowances- only the mayor receives an allowance.

RESOLVED: to approve the Financial Regulations, as reviewed.

13. Outside Bodies

The meeting received and noted reports from Councillor Steve Hollands (Friends of St Mary's Church Committee and Councillor Doug Hine (Town Centre Partnership, County Association of Local Councils)

RESOLVED: To make the following appointments:

	Organisation	Councillor Appointments
1)	Carpet Museum Trustees	Mike Smith
2)	CALC NALC Super Councils Network	Doug Hine (Deputy Helen Dyke) John Beckingham
3)	Friends of St Mary's Church Committee	Steve Hollands
4)	Historical Societies Group	Darren Chambers
5)	Community Transport in Wyre Forest	George Connolly
6)	Fairtrade	Bernadette Connor
7)	Wyre Forest Young People's Forum	Vicky Caulfield
8)	Kidderminster BID- Observer at Board meetings	Liam Carroll
9)	The Kidderminster Dementia Action Alliance	John Aston
10)	The Civic Society	Ben Brookes
11)	Historic Opportunities Group	Fran Oborski, Darren Chambers and Bernadette Connor
12)	Clare Witnell and Blount Charity	George Connolly

The CEO was asked to check if Community Transport in Wyre Forest and Fairtrade were still operating.

14. Wyre Forest Consultation- Local Government reorganisation

The Mayor told the meeting that the District Council was carrying out a public consultation on the Government's Local Government Reorganisation proposals.

The Town Council was invited to respond as a corporate body.

RESOLVED: That the CEO informs the District Council that if the proposed Local Government reorganisation takes place, that the Town Council favours the one unitary council covering all of Worcestershire.

Cllr. Ben Brookes left the meeting while the Council considered the next item.

15. Local Government reorganisation and Devolution Proposals

The Mayor told the members that arising from the local government reorganisation proposals the District Council had invited the Town Council to respond regarding the transfer of assets, together with any request for transitional financial support that might be provided over a short period.

Wyre Forest Council believes that the town councils would wish to retain local ownership of, and provide a sustainable future for, assets that are loved and enjoyed primarily by the district's residents.

The Town Council was asked to review the list of assets held by the District Council in the parish of Kidderminster and to determine which assets this Council wished to have transferred to Kidderminster Town Council, rather than a new unitary authority.

The Mayor referred to the CEO's report, which listed the assets owned by the District Council within the parish of Kidderminster. This matter was considered by this Council's Finance and Overview Committee on 11th June and their recommendations had also been sent to all members.

Mr. Rob Beeston, the Council's Public Realm and Operations Officer dealt with members' questions regarding parks and open spaces and car parks.

RESOLVED:

1. Parks and open Spaces:

1.A To request the District Council to adopt a strategic approach to the transfer of assets and to designate Kidderminster Town Council as the Parks Authority for Kidderminster.

This proposals excludes:

- The two Public Realm parks, which should only be revisited after the completion of the connectivity project.
- The nature reserves, which should be transferred to organisations which specialise in these matters
- White Wickets, until such time as the issues around title are resolved and the condition of the assets made satisfactory, or finance provided to render them satisfactory.

1.B Arising from this decision, to defer the proposed transfer of King George V Park, Willowfield Park, Forester Way Park and Jerusalem Walk Park.

2. Car parks

2. To request the transfer of strategic town centre car parks, which are important town centre infrastructure. The following car parks are recommended:

- Aldi Long Stay Car Park
- Bateman's Yard, and
- Market Street

3. Leisure Centres

KTC officers to discuss this with other Town Councils who manage leisure centres

4. KTC Services Depot at Crosbie Grove

To request the transfer of the unit at Crosbie Grove, currently occupied by KTC Services team.

5. To authorise officers:

- To conduct due diligence on all proposed asset transfers
- To assess the financial implications—short and long term
- To consider associated risks, including legal liabilities and provide regular reports to the Finance & Overview committee
- To consider maintenance obligations and delivery capacity and provide regular reports to the Operational Services Committee

6. To require Wyre Forest District Council to fund the relevant independent surveys carried out by Kidderminster Town Council before any proposed asset transfer

7. To require WFDC to pay KTC legal fees for any transfer

8. To advise the District Council that there should be no financial impact on the Town Council arising from these arrangements in 2026-27, with further financial support in 2027-28

The Mayor adjourned the meeting from 8.05 pm to 8.15 pm. Councillor Mary McDonnell left the meeting at this stage.

16. Internal Audit Report 2024-2025

The CEO advised the meeting of the officers' responses to the issues raised by the Internal Auditor. He told the Council that while the end of year accounts appeared satisfactory, that he had advised the internal auditor that the Council's financial position was challenging as there was no longer any grant funding towards the expenditure arising on the Town Hall project. He also told the internal auditor that the Council was aiming to address these matters by seeking approval to borrow up to £1.25M.

The CEO told the Council of the progress that had been made addressing many of the other issues which the Internal Auditor had raised during the year.

RESOLVED:

- To receive the Internal Auditor's report, in full
- To approve the responses from the CEO to the items raised in the report, and
- To direct the CEO to report quarterly to the Finance and Overview Committee on progress made on the issues raised in the report.

17. End of Year Accounts 2024-2025

The Town Mayor told the Council that the CEO had signed and published the Council's annual accounts for approval.

The CEO told the meeting that both the income and expenditure had increased significantly due to the costs of the Town Hall Transformation Project. This was also reflected in the increase in total borrowings.

He presented the Annual Internal Audit Report and the meeting noted the comments at items C, D, J and L of the Internal Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25.

RESOLVED:

A) To receive the Annual Return (subject to external audit) for the financial year 2024/25.

B) To receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report.

C) To approve each individual paragraph (1-9) of the Annual Governance Statement as defined at Section 2 of the Annual Return:

1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required. Independent examination or audit.

D) To authorise the signing of the Annual Governance Statement by the Mayor and the Clerk

E) To adopt the accounts and to authorise the signing of the Annual Return (subject to external audit) by The Town Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer, in line with the regulatory requirement to sign the accounts by 30 June 2025.

18. The Forward Work Programme

- Noted that the Council was seeking representation from the Bus Companies operating in Kidderminster and the Cabinet Member for Transport at Worcestershire County Council
- The BID are due to make a presentation to the October meeting
- The Climate Emergency to be discussed at the October meeting
- West Mercia Police- Kidderminster town Centre Team
- Cllr Caulfield to make a presentation on the Incredible Edible Project

The official business of the meeting concluded at 8.45 pm

Signed: _____
Town Mayor.

Date: _____