

Open

# Council

# Agenda

6pm  
Wednesday, 13 May 2026  
Council Chamber  
Wyre Forest House  
Finepoint Way  
Kidderminster



## Council

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2. The Council meeting is open to the public except for any exempt/confidential items. These items are normally discussed at the end of the meeting
3. The public are welcome to speak at meetings of Council provided they have requested to speak in advance of the Agenda being published. Details of the guidance for public speaking can be found on our website [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk)
4. If you have any special requirements regarding access to the venue and its facilities including audio and visual needs please let us know in advance so that we can make arrangements for you.
5. This Agenda can be made available in larger print on request; if you require a copy please contact:

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**COUNCIL MEETING**

**5 May 2026**

**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 **at 6.00p.m. on Wednesday 13 May 2026**, in the Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster.

The Agenda for the meeting is enclosed.

Yours sincerely

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

Ian Miller  
Chief Executive

## **Disclosure of Interests**

**Members and co-opted Members of the Council are reminded that, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and the statutory provisions of the Localism Act, they are required to consider in ADVANCE of each meeting whether they have a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), an other registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda. If advice is needed, Members should contact the Monitoring Officer or other legal officer in good time before the meeting.**

If any Member or co-opted Member of the Council identifies a DPI or ORI which they have not already registered on the Council's register of interests or which requires updating, they should complete the disclosure form which can be obtained from Democratic Services at any time, copies of which will be available at the meeting for return to the Monitoring Officer.

Members and co-opted Members are required to disclose any DPis and ORIs at the meeting. Where the matter relates to a DPI they may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation.

Where the matter relates to an ORI they may not vote on the matter unless granted an advance dispensation.

Where a Member or co-opted Member has an NRI which directly relates to their financial interest or wellbeing, or that of a relative or close associate, they must disclose the interest at the meeting, may not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not stay in the meeting unless granted a dispensation.

Where a matter affects the NRI of a Member or co-opted Member, the Code of Conduct sets out the test which must be applied by the MEMBER to decide whether disclosure is required. Again please ensure you have spoken in ADVANCE to the relevant legal officer and determined whether it is appropriate to declare the NRI and leave.

## **Conduct at formal meetings**

Members are reminded that whilst they may differ from time to time on political views, it is important that they always treat each other with respect.

Debate can be robust without being personal or unkind.

Members help is appreciated in ensuring the highest standards of conduct at formal meetings.

## **(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.

## **WEBCASTING NOTICE**

This meeting is being filmed\* for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's website site ([www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk)).

At the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 1998. The footage recorded will be available to view on the Council's website for 6 months and shall be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy.

**By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to be filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and or training purposes.**

If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should sit in the Stourport and Bewdley Room where they can still view the meeting.

If any attendee is under the age of 18 the written consent of his or her parent or guardian is required before access to the meeting room is permitted. Persons under 18 are welcome to view the meeting from the Stourport and Bewdley Room.

**If you have any queries regarding this, please speak with the Council's Legal Officer at the meeting.**

\* Unless there are no reports in the open session.

Wyre Forest District Council

Council

Wednesday, 13 May 2026

Council Chamber, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster

Part 1

Open to the press and public

<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
1.	<b>Prayers</b>  To be read by Rev Sallie Butcher, Wyre Forest West (Baynton, Clows Top, Far Forest, Heightington, Mamble and Rock)	
2.	<b>Election of Chairman</b>  To elect a Chairman of the Council for the Municipal Year 2026-2027.	
3.	<b>Chairman – Investiture and Declaration of Acceptance of Office</b>  To invest the Chairman of the Council with the Chain of Office after which the Chairman will make his or her Declaration of Acceptance of Office.	
4.	<b>Chairman’s Response</b>  The Chairman of the Council will express thanks for his or her election.	
5.	<b>Retiring Chairman</b>  The Leaders of the largest political groups will thank the retiring Chairman of the Council.	
6.	<b>Election of Vice-Chairman</b>  To elect a Vice-Chairman of the Council for the Municipal Year 2026-2027.	
7.	<b>Vice-Chairman – Investiture and Declaration of Acceptance of Office</b>  To invest the Vice-Chairman of the Council with his or her Badge of Office after which the Vice-Chairman will make a Declaration of Acceptance of Office.	
8.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	

9.	<p><b>Declarations of Interests by Members</b></p> <p>In accordance with the Code of Conduct, to invite Members to declare the existence and nature of any disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI), an other registrable interest (ORI) or a non-registrable interest (NRI) in relation to any matter on the agenda.</p> <p>Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>To approve as a correct record and sign the Minutes of the last meeting held on 25 February 2026.</p>	10
11.	<p><b>Public Participation</b></p> <p>In accordance with the Council's Scheme for Public Speaking at Meetings of Full Council, to allow members of the public to present petitions, ask questions, or make statements, details of which have been received by 12 noon on Friday 1 May 2026.</p> <p><b>No requests for public participation were received by the deadline.</b></p> <p><i>If you wish to speak 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 speaking no later than 9am on the day of the meeting of Council. In the case of a request to speak on an urgent matter, the Director of Legal &amp; Governance will rule on whether or not the matter is urgent and that ruling will be final.</i></p>	
12.	<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>	21
13.	<p><b>Leader of the Council Announcements</b></p> <p>To receive announcements from the Leader of the Council.</p>	
14.	<p><b>Political and Constitutional Structures 2026/2027</b></p> <p>To consider a report from the Director of Legal &amp; Governance on the proposed political and constitutional structures for the municipal year 2026/2027.</p>	23
15.	<p><b>Members' Annual Activity Reports and Attendance 2025/2026</b></p> <p>To note the schedule of Members' Annual Reports giving details of their activities in their role as District Councillors for the 2025/2026 municipal year and to receive a record of Members' attendance for the 2025/2026 municipal year.</p> <p><i>These reports are available electronically on the website</i></p> <p><a href="https://forms.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/council/docs/doc61322_20260513_council_report.pdf">https://forms.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/council/docs/doc61322_20260513_council_report.pdf</a></p>	50

<p><b>16.</b></p>	<p><b>Annual Reports for the Municipal Year 2025/2026</b></p> <p>(a) Cabinet</p> <p>(b) Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>(c) Ethics &amp; Standards Committee</p> <p>(d) Audit Committee</p>	<p>51</p> <p>56</p> <p>61</p> <p>63</p>
<p><b>17.</b></p>	<p><b>Questions</b></p> <p>To receive questions submitted by Members of the Council and the replies of the Leader of the Council, or relevant Cabinet Member, in accordance with Standing Order 1.9, details of which have been received by 12 noon on Friday 1 May 2026.</p> <p><b>Six questions have been received by the deadline.</b></p> <p><i>In the case of an urgent matter that has arisen since the deadline above, and could not have been reasonably known at that time, it must be delivered in writing to the Director of Legal &amp; Governance no later than 9am on the day of Council.</i></p>	<p>68</p>
<p><b>18.</b></p>	<p><b>Motions Submitted under Standing Orders</b></p> <p>To consider Motions in the order in which notice has been received.</p> <p><b>No motions were received by the deadline.</b></p>	
<p><b>19.</b></p>	<p><b>Emergency Motions submitted under Standing Orders</b></p> <p>To consider Emergency Motions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 4.1 (i).</p>	
<p><b>20.</b></p>	<p><b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Director of Legal &amp; Governance 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>	
<p><b>21.</b></p>	<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

22.	<b>To consider any other business, details of which have been communicated to the Director of Legal &amp; Governance 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**

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

**25 FEBRUARY 2026 (6PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: P Harrison (Chairman), G Connolly (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, E Bourne, B Brookes, J F Byng, L Carroll, V Caulfield, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, K Gale, N Gale, J Griffiths, I Hardiman, M J Hart, K Henderson, D Little, N Martin, M McDonnell, S Miah, D Morehead, F M Oborski MBE, T L Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, D Ross, D Russell, A Sutton, L Whitehouse, N Wilson and P W M Young.

**C.67 Prayers**

Prayers were said by Rev Jason Borlase of Kidderminster Baptist Church.

**C.68 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Drew.

**C.69 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interests were made.

**C.70 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**C.71 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**C.72 Chairman's Communications**

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

The Chairman thanked those that had attended or donated to his charity dinner in January. He advised that an afternoon tea event was planned for 15<sup>th</sup> April.

**C.73 Leader of the Council Announcements**

The Leader of the Council referred members to his tabled report. A copy of the announcements is available for viewing on the Council's website.

[https://forms.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/council/docs/doc61185\\_20260225\\_council\\_report.pdf](https://forms.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/council/docs/doc61185_20260225_council_report.pdf)

**C.74 Independent Remuneration Panel Report for 2026/27 and Subsequent Years**

Council received a report from the Solicitor to the Council to decide the scheme of allowances to be paid to Members for the municipal year 2026/27 and for subsequent years.

The Leader presented the report and formally moved the recommendations for approval. He thanked the members of the panel; Tim Hipkiss, Clair de Groot and Wayne Jay for conducting the review.

Councillor D Ross seconded the proposal.

Upon a vote, the proposal was agreed.

**Decision: Council;**

- 1.1 NOTED the report;**
- 1.2 DECIDED that the basic and special responsibility allowances should be increased by 3.2% with effect from 1 April 2026 as recommended by the panel; and**
- 1.3 DECIDED that basic and special responsibility allowances should be uprated from 1 April 2027 in accordance with the NJC pay increase for the majority of staff for April 2026.**

**C.75 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-2029 and Capital Strategy 2025-2035**

A report was received from the Head of Resources that invited Council to approve the Council's budget for 2026-2029 having considered the proposed budget decision recommended to Council by Cabinet.

The report also sought approval of the Capital Strategy for 2026-2036 including prudential indicators which set limits for non-financial investments and to fulfil the key requirements of the MHCLG Investment Guidance. As part of the overall approval sought the report of the Head of Resources in respect of statutory duties placed on Local Authority Chief Financial Officers in relation to budget setting and monitoring was considered.

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

The Cabinet Member thanked the Head of Resources and Section 151 Officer and her team for the preparation of the report. He advised that as

## Agenda Item No. 10

Worcestershire County Council had not set their budget, he was unable to announce the full council tax requirement as he would normally do at the meeting. He explained that this function had been delegated to the Audit Committee which would meet following the agreement of the budget and council tax requirement for Worcestershire County Council.

The Cabinet Member said despite the below inflation increase in core spending power the Council had produced a balanced budget and a three-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

He explained that the Council's reserves for this year were forecast at £5.1m and for the year 2027-2028 £4.3m. He added that this was due to the administration's focus on increasing income, increasing savings and with the prudent management of the council's investments by its excellent Treasury Team. The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the spending proposals put forward by Cabinet.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member said that the budget and spending proposals delivered on the manifesto, and delivered for business, the town and parish councils, and for the residents in Wyre Forest.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

On behalf of the Labour Group, Councillor L Carroll moved an amendment as detailed in appendix 5 of the report. He gave a summary of the alternative proposal relating to environmental protection.

Councillor M McDonnell seconded the amendment.

A debate on the amendment ensued.

**Named votes on the Labour Group proposal were recorded as follows and the amendment was defeated:**

For (3)

Councillors: L Carroll, J Griffiths and M McDonnell.

Against (29):

Councillors: J Aston, E Bourne, B Brookes, J Byng, V Caulfield, G Connolly, N Desmond, H Dyke, P Dyke, K Gale, N Gale, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M Hart, K Henderson, D Little, N Martin, S Miah, D Morehead, F Oborski MBE, T Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, D Ross, D Russell, A Sutton, L Whitehouse, N Wilson and P Young.

Abstained (0)

A robust discussion on the substantive budget proposals took place.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio addressed a number of issues raised during the debate and he thanked the opposition

Groups for submitting their alternative budget proposals as part of the budget setting process. He urged Council to support the proposals as detailed in the report.

**A named vote on the substantive budget proposals was recorded as follows and was agreed:**

For (32)

Councillors: J Aston, E Bourne, B Brookes, J Byng, L Carroll, V Caulfield, G Connolly, N Desmond, H Dyke, P Dyke, K Gale, N Gale, J Griffiths, I Hardiman, P Harrison, M Hart, K Henderson, D Little, N Martin, M McDonnell, S Miah, D Morehead, F Oborski MBE, T Onslow, M Rayner, C Rogers, D Ross, D Russell, A Sutton, L Whitehouse, N Wilson and P Young.

Against (0)

Abstained (0)

**Decision: Council;**

**1.1 THREE YEAR BUDGET, CAPITAL STRATEGY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK 2026-2029**

**1.1.1 APPROVED the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2026-2029.**

**1.1.2 APPROVED the Cabinet Proposals – taking into account the impact on the Council’s Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2026-2029 as shown in the tables in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.5 of the report and as set out below:**

- a) Tackle illegal parking and abandoned cars by continuing to fund extra Civil Enforcement Officers. We will maintain the temporary increase in staffing levels planned for 2026-27 into 2027-28 at a cost of £42k in 2027-28.**
- b) Help to keep our streets free from environmental crimes. We will tackle antisocial behaviour and help our residents to feel safe in their communities by expanding the current level of staffing in our environmental protection team at a cost of £43k/£90k in 2026/27 and 2027/28.**
- c) Fund an increase in litter picking activity in the tourist season to help keep streets, parks and public spaces looking their best for everyone at a cost of £30k/£32k in 2026/27 and 2027/28.**
- d) Provide extra support for cultural events over the next 2 years to bring more people into our towns, help people feel proud of where they live and support people’s wellbeing at a cost of**

£25k in both 2026-27 and 2027-28.

- e) **Increase funding to support delivery of the key actions in the Kidderminster 2040 Vision, making it a sustainable place that celebrates its heritage and natural environment including strengthening the museum sector. A one-off transformation grant payable over two years to support development of a new business model for the Museum of Carpet in order for them to become an alternative heritage museum body at a cost of £25k in both 2026-27 and 2027-28.**
- f) **A core funding allocation to support continuation of economic development activity within the district that was previously funded from UK Shared Prosperity Fund. No new generic funding streams were announced for Worcestershire Districts in either the Budget or the Comprehensive Spending Review. This allocation could support continuation of existing projects for example the Business Growth Service delivered by Worcestershire LEP to protect jobs and deliver economic growth at a cost of £70k in both 2026-27 and 2027-28.**
- g) **Support the wider roll out across the district of on street recycling/litter bins, enhancing cleanliness and environmental sustainability and boosting recycling rates. Initial pilot to be run in our three town centres in 2026-27 with further roll-out in future years if successful at a cost of £3,500 in all three years – 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29.**
- h) **The revenue implications of the capital spending proposal to deliver the new vision for Bridge Street – a redevelopment scheme to revitalise the area with a sustainable, heritage led proposal that attracts visitors and businesses, a cost of £3k in 2027-28 and £22k in 2028-29.**
- i) **Continuation of the policy to support localism and facilitate the transfer of assets to local council control in order to keep them community focussed and for the transfer of income generating assets such as small car parks in return for the taking on of further service. This will be considered on a case by case basis when the Government’s decision in respect of unitarization is known.**
- j) **An increase to the commercial income target for the Commercial Strategy Delivery Units to support the Wyre Forest Forward Transformation and Financial Resilience programme. We will increase demand for our charged for services to achieve an increase the existing target of £52k in 2027-28, and £70k in 2028-29.**
- k) **An increase to the efficiency and transformation targets by reviewing how services are delivered, being smarter about**

how they are procured and how we intervene to reduce the need for late-stage services £55k/£85k/£110k

- 1.1.3 APPROVED the fees and charges in line with this Strategy, and the impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2026-2029, as shown in Appendix 3.**
- 1.1.4 APPROVED the Council's updated Capital Strategy:**
- a) Approval of the Capital Strategy 2025-2035 set out in Appendix 1 of the December Cabinet report and the updated, associated Quantitative Indicators set out in Appendix 2C of the report.**
  - b) Approval of variations to the Capital Programme as set out in Appendices 2A, of the report (which updates Appendix 1 of the Capital Strategy report to December 2025 Cabinet).**
  - c) Notes the indicative Vehicle, Equipment and Systems Renewals Schedule as set out in Appendices 2B, of the report (which updates Appendix 1 of the Capital Strategy report to December 2025 Cabinet).**
  - d) Approval of the limits for gross debt for non-treasury investments compared to net service expenditure and for commercial income as a percentage of net service expenditure as set out in Appendix 2C of the report.**
- 1.1.5 APPROVED that any Final Accounts savings arising from 2025-2026, together with surplus Earmarked Reserves, be allocated by the Head of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio.**
- 1.1.6 APPROVED the General Fund Revenue Budget including all updates from the position in December 2025 as set out in the report.**
- 1.2 COUNCIL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES**
- 1.2.1 That Council Tax is increased by the higher limit specified by the Government of 2.99% and, noting that the Council has delegated the Council Tax setting decision under Chapter III of Part I of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to the Audit Committee:**
- a. ENDORSES setting the Council Tax for Wyre Forest District Council on a Band D Property at £258.08 for 2026-2027 which represents an increase of 2.99% on Council Tax from 2025-2026.**
  - b. ENDORSES the provisional Council Tax on a Band D Property in 2027-2028 of £265.80 and £273.75 in 2028-2029, being**

increases of 2.99%.

- 1.2.3 **NOTED** the Head of Resources' (as Chief Financial Officer) opinion on the budget proposals, recommended by the Cabinet in the report, as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

**C.76 Policy And Budget Framework – Matters which require a decision by Council**

**Recommendations from Treasury Management Review Panel, 9 February 2026 - Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27**

The Chairman of the Review Panel, Councillor K Gale presented the recommendations and formally moved them for approval.

Councillor D Ross seconded the proposals.

Upon a vote, the proposals were unanimously agreed.

**Decision: Council;**

- 1.1 **APPROVED** the restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2026-27 to 2035-36, along with the Liability Benchmark, included in Appendix 3 of the report.
- 1.2 **APPROVED** the updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2027 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5).
- 1.3 **APPROVED** the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 **APPROVED** the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3.
- 1.5 **NOTED** that the Capital Strategy 2026-36, to be approved separately by Council, sets out the policy statement covering non-treasury investments including the related suite of prudential indicators.

**C.77 Policy and Budget Framework**

**Recommendations from Cabinet, 11 February 2026 - Food Waste Collections**

The Cabinet Member for Operational Services presented the recommendations and formally moved them for approval. He said that this was an important issue for the authority and a decision that the administration had not taken lightly. He said that the Conservative Group

## Agenda Item No. 10

were not against the principle of food waste collection. However due to the lack of additional revenue funding to cover the cost of the collections, there was no other option for the Council.

The Cabinet Member said he welcomed the capital funding received from Central Government for the procurement of vehicles. However, if the authority continued with the food waste collections it would be putting its revenue finances under catastrophic pressure.

The Leader seconded the proposals.

A discussion ensued. Upon a show of hands, the recommendations from Cabinet were endorsed.

**Decision: Council ENDORSED the decisions taken by Cabinet:**

- (a) **not to award a contract following the recent procurement exercise;**
- (b) **not to make any arrangements for weekly collections of food waste from domestic properties until the Government provides additional funding to cover the cost of the new burden.**

### C.78

#### Questions

Four questions had been submitted by members of the council in accordance with standing orders.

**1. Question from Councillor P Young to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda**

Regarding the allocation of section 106 money: who is responsible for deciding to which project the funds should be allocated?

**Answer from the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda**

The Planning Team, as you would expect, work closely with the recipients of the funding and developers to determine the requirements of any Section 106 based money on a development.

Section 106 monies are restricted through legislation and guidance and must be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, such as obliging the developer to contribute to things such as affordable housing, schools, education or highways, and must be directly related to that development. They must also be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

The developer contributions will be aimed at provision of the project nearest to the development which as I have said in most cases will be highways infrastructure onto the site or roads directly affected by the increase in traffic or education contributions to the local primary or secondary schools. Furthermore, officer reports have to outline specific

## **Agenda Item No. 10**

projects where the financial contribution for public open space will be spent and the reasons why the request for a financial contribution accord with the local plan policy.

And then finally, the Planning Committee here at Wyre Forest District Council will make the final decision and agree where the section 106 monies will be spent.

### **Supplementary question**

For clarification who is exactly responsible? Because money from my ward has gone to other projects and other wards without any consultation with the ward councillors. Can the councillors of the ward be consulted?

### **Answer**

As I said, this is really clear that it goes through from the development. It clearly has to be aligned with local plan policy and determined with the developers and with the Planning Team. It will then come to the Planning Committee to make that final decision.

In terms of local councillors having an input into that, well, of course, they have an input into the local plan, as do our residents about what we would determine the need for the local environment is. So the mechanism is there, but there is governance around this that is set through the local plan policy and through the Planning Team to determine where those section 106 monies will be spent.

### **2. Question from Councillor L Carroll to the Leader of the Council**

Can the Leader please name who will sit on the interview panel for the appointment of the independent Chair of the committee overseeing the allocation of the Labour Government's Pride of Place funding in Birchen Coppice?

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

It is a board that is going to oversee this Pride in Place funding and the proposed interview panel are the Member of Parliament, the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, the Deputy Chief Executive, the Head of Strategic of Growth and someone independent of the Council such as the Principal of Kidderminster College.

### **Supplementary question**

We all saw the video on Facebook and the text about it being independent and non-political, and yet all elected officials named are currently from the Conservative administration and none are coming from the ward itself, even from their own party. How is this board of interviewers going to ensure that the chair is independent and it is not influenced by party politics?

### **Answer**

The question and the premise of it are completely fanciful. The video made it abundantly clear that this Council in accordance with the national guidance and the rules will be seeking to interview an independent chair.

## Agenda Item No. 10

Yes, three of the members of the panel happen to be a member of a certain political party, but we have professional officers sitting on the panel. The person who is appointed as the chair cannot be an elected member of any authority. The rules and the parameters and the guidance are that they are local to the area.

I have made it abundantly clear, as have the other contributors to that video, that we would love a community champion from the heart of the community, whether that's a local pastor, a local headteacher, a local business person, a local vicar, any key person such as a chairman of a residents' group. Somebody who has a real and keen interest, who has the ability and the skills to take forward what is a substantial amount of money; £20 million made up of part capital, part revenue, to invest in our communities to tackle health inequalities, health and wellbeing, and all those things that it is meant to tackle.

So, I have no doubt, that the members of that interview panel will appoint the right person for the job.

### **3. Question from Councillor P Young to the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda**

What is the latest position regarding the following disused sites:

The former Post Office in the Horsefair

The British Heart Foundation on New Road

### **Answer from the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda**

In terms of the British Heart Foundation site, we have purchased the top half of the site which is closest to Iceland and we are currently finalising the acquisition of the bottom half of the site. We are also in discussion with interested parties about the site's redevelopment and we would aspire to bring a plan to Council later in the year.

Regarding the former post office, I am unable to go into more detail as it is commercially sensitive, but please be assured that we are pursuing legal options for this site and we will update Council as soon as we can.

### **Supplementary question**

I wonder if the Cabinet Member can give us some indication of any time scales, because especially in connection with the site in the Horsefair, it has been an eyesore for many years and so has the other one?

### **Answer**

In terms of the British Heart Foundation site, as I have said, hopefully that will be later on this year and by year, I mean 2026.

In terms of the former post office, I am afraid I cannot because there is a legal process that needs to take place, but we can assure you that we are actively pursuing that and we will give an update as soon as we can.

### **4. Question from Councillor P Young to the Leader of the Council**

Are Consultants being employed to advise on the proposed new Unitary

authority and what is the anticipated cost?

**Answer from the Leader of the Council**

I will interpret your question to mean are Consultants being engaged by Wyre Forest District Council. The answer is no.

**Supplementary question**

Do I take it from that, we are engaging with other local authorities who have already gone unitary and have been a unitary authority for quite some time so that we can learn from their mistakes and from their successes?

**Answer**

We are engaging with the local government family across Worcestershire and of course colleagues around this chamber will recall that when it came to the ultimate vote and the decision there were two options, either a North and a South Unitary Authority or a single one.

Wyre Forest District Council supported a one unitary approach. The County Council funded consultants as part of that concept and submission. We as a District Council did not fund anything towards those consultants.

Moving forward, I have little if any doubt, when the Government announces its decision for Worcestershire, then there will be a huge amount of work to be undertaken. Our medium-term financial strategy sets out what money has been allocated for local government reorganisation costs.

It may very well be then that we need to engage the services of consultants as a local government family to do various items of work. The Secretary of State on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February announced £63 million in additional capacity funding to the 21 local areas undergoing reorganisation across the whole programme, building on the £7.6 million provided. Worcestershire and Wyre Forest will get its fair share, so there will be an amount of cash that we will need to use in order to implement local government reorganisation.

I hope that is clear to Councillor Young and indeed members across the Chamber.

**C.79 Motions Submitted under Standing Orders**

No motions were received by the deadline.

**C.80 Emergency Motions submitted under Standing Orders**

There were no emergency motions.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.18pm.

**Chairman's List of Functions – 2025/26**

**February 2026 to May 2026**

Tues 24 Feb	Mayor of Ludlow Quiz night and raffle	Ludlow Brewery
Sat 28 Feb	Mayor of Droitwich Showcasing Voices Unlimited Concert 2pm	Norbury Theatre, Droitwich
Sat 28 Feb	Mayor of Kidderminster's Ball <i>Chairman and *Vice Chairman attended</i>	Kidderminster Town Hall
Sun 01 Mar	Mayor of Pershore Mayoral Civic Service	Pershore Abbey
Mon 09 Mar	Commonwealth Day - flag flying ceremony 2026	Wyre Forest House
Sat 14 Mar	Wyre Forest Symphony Orchestra Concert	Kidderminster Town Hall
Tues 17 Mar	Kidderminster Male Choir A Concert for Kemp Hospice	Kidderminster Town Hall
Fri 20 Mar *	Wyre Forest Young Voices Reaching for the stars concert *	St. Georges Church Kidderminster *
Sat 21 Mar	The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace By Gig Caratis	Kidderminster Town Hall
Thur 26 Mar	Mayor of Stourport-on-Severn's Afternoon Tea	Paisley at 106 Stourport-on-Severn
Fri 27 Mar	Chairman of Malvern Hills DC tourism event	Elgar's birthplace, Lower Broadheath
Fri 27 Mar *	Chairman of Bromsgrove DC Comedy Night *	Bromsgrove Golf Centre *
Sat 28 Mar	Kidderminster Choral Society event	Kidderminster Town Hall
Thur 02 Apr	Mayor of Ludlow, Maundy Thursday Afternoon Tea with music	Rockspring Community Centre, Ludlow
Fri 10 Apr	Mayor of Stourport-on-Severn, Coffee & Cake Morning	Civic Centre, Stourport-on-Severn

## Agenda Item No. 12

Thur 16 Apr	Mayor of Worcester, Beyond the Barricade – A West End Spectacular	The Swan Theatre, Worcester
Sat 18 Apr	Mayor of Worcester, Stars, Stripes and Brass music event	The Guild Hall, Worcester
Sun 19 Apr	Mayor of Evesham, Mayor's Civic Service	All Saints Church, Evesham
Fri 24 Apr	Mayor of Redditch, Charity Civic dinner	Abbey Hotel, Redditch
Sun 26 Apr	Wyre Forest Scouts, St. Georges Day Parade	From Aggborough Stadium to Town Hall, Kidderminster
Sun 26 Apr	Wychavon District Council Civic Service *	All Saint's Church, Evesham *
Thur 30 Apr	Mayor of Stourport-on-Severn, Curry Night	Severn Tandoori, Bridge Street, Stourport-on-Severn
Sat 02 May	Official opening of Talbot Park, Kidderminster	Worcester Street, Kidderminster

\* Denotes attendance by Vice Chairman

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

13 MAY 2026

Political and Constitutional Structures 2026/2027

<b>OPEN</b>	
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	The Leader of the Council
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	Director of Legal & Governance
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	Caroline Newlands, Ext. 2715 caroline.newlands@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Appendix 1 - Amendments to the Constitution Appendix 2 - Political management structure <a href="https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees-and-meetings/council-democratic-structure/">https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees-and-meetings/council-democratic-structure/</a> Appendix 3 - Committee appointments Appendix 4 - Municipal calendar Appendix 5 - Appointments to outside bodies Appendix 6 - Political balance

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consider the Political and Constitutional Structures for the municipal year 2026/2027.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

The Council is asked to:

- 2.1 AGREE** the revisions to the Constitution as set out in section 4 and Appendix 1.
- 2.2 APPROVE** the proposed Political Management Structure of committees for 2026/2027 as set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 AGREE** the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees as contained in Appendix 3.
- 2.4 ADOPT** the Municipal Calendar as set out in Appendix 4.
- 2.5 AGREE** the appointments to outside bodies as set out in Appendix 5.
- 2.6 APPROVE** the revised table of political balance in Appendix 6.
- 2.7 Authorise** the Director of Legal & Governance to settle any outstanding details relating to the political structures and to make changes as necessary to the Council's Constitution to give effect to the Council's decisions and any other revisions necessary to reflect needs or circumstances.

### 3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Council is responsible for establishing the political structures which are not the responsibility of the Leader and Cabinet. Under the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Leader of the Council is responsible for appointments to the Cabinet and allocating responsibilities to Cabinet members. Since 2011, the Council has appointed the Leader of the Council under the “strong leader” model.
- 3.2 It remains Council’s role to establish such Committees as it thinks fit to carry out the discharge of functions which are not the responsibility of the Cabinet. It also appoints their Chairmen and Vice Chairmen.
- 3.3 Under section 7, 1.4 of the Council’s constitution, it is a function of full Council to make appointments to external bodies including relevant joint committees. Vacancies that arise during the course of the municipal year are dealt with by the Cabinet.
- 3.4 Under Article 15 of the Constitution, it is for full Council to agree material changes to the constitution. There are several such amendments proposed, which are set out in section 4 below and Appendix 1.

### 4. **KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 Following the elections on 4 May 2023, four political groups have been formed and the administration is provided by the Conservative group which holds 18 of the 33 seats. The Conservative group’s proposals for the 2026/2027 political structure are detailed in Appendix 2.

#### **Political Balance**

- 4.2 Council approved the political balance at its meeting on 10 December 2025. There has been a recent change with a member having left the Conservative group and is now sitting as a non-aligned independent member of the Council. It is therefore necessary for Council to re-calculate political balance, as set out in Appendix 6.

#### **Amendments to Constitution**

- 4.3 Cabinet on 8 April approved the timetable for production of the next local plan. **The Local Plans Review Panel** will therefore need to commence its work later this month and Council is being asked to appoint its chair and vice chair. The terms of reference of the Panel in section 5 of the constitution have been reviewed to check that they remain relevant. Some changes are proposed. These include re-balancing non-voting representation among parish councils. Potential sites for development are likely to be considered in all parishes. While the focus will remain on development within town and (where they exist) settlement boundaries, the consequences of Government policy about housing growth targets and about development near train stations such as Blakedown mean that it is possible or likely that further releases of green belt land may be required. The panel’s membership is therefore proposed to include representatives from Churchill & Blakedown and Stone parish councils, in recognition that Government policy and other factors are likely to result in focus on sites to the east and north east of Kidderminster. Other changes provide greater clarity about the basis for the confidential

nature of the panel's work. The local plan is ultimately recommended to Council by Cabinet and therefore, even though it may be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as well, the panel's recommendation should be to the Cabinet. The proposed terms of reference are set out in Appendix 1, with changes from the previous terms of reference highlighted in bold.

- 4.4 In line with the Council's decisions, the Director of Legal & Governance will amend the constitution accordingly.

### **Committee Appointments**

- 4.5 After determining its political structures and allocations of seats to committees, Council must appoint Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to committees. The nominations for these posts are set out in Appendix 3. The Director of Legal & Governance will fill other seats in accordance with the nominations from the respective political Groups.

### **Municipal Calendar**

- 4.6 The calendar of meetings for 2026/2027, attached at Appendix 4, has been prepared based on the Council's proposed decision-making structure and in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

### **Outside appointments**

- 4.7 Each year the Council appoints Members as representatives on a number of outside bodies.
- 4.8 The attached schedule at Appendix 5 details the appointments due at this time and the number of nominations required for each body. Members will note that the appointments are made for the municipal year 2026/2027 unless otherwise annotated.
- 4.9 The schedule in Appendix 5 sets out the proposals for who should be appointed in each case. The proposals have been shared with Group Leaders.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The proposals comply with the requirements of Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 which require one or more Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be established. The proposals comply with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 in respect of licensing committees.
- 6.2 There is no change to the allocation of seats on committees, which reflects political balance in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

**7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and it is considered that there are no discernible impacts on the six equality strands.

**8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 8.1 There are no significant risks associated with the proposed political management structure for 2026/2027.

**9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The proposals contained within this report meet the requirements of the relevant legislation including the Local Government Act 2000 and provide clear links to the Council's priorities.

**10. CONSULTEES**

- 10.1 The Chief Executive.
- 10.2 Group Leaders – in respect of the municipal calendar, appointments to outside bodies and terms of reference of the Local Plans Review Panel.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000, Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Local Government and Housing Act 1989, The Police and Criminal Justice Act 2006; Schedule 1 to the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000; the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 as amended by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 No. 881; the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 No 234.

**In Section 5 (terms of reference) of the constitution, insert the following as the terms of reference for the Local Plans Review Panel.**

## **12. Local Plans Review Panel**

To make recommendations to **the Cabinet** on the content of the Council's local plans and related documents including reviewing them in the light of consultation and national policy. To consider responses on other councils' local plans including neighbourhood plans in Wyre Forest.

Membership: nine members, to be allocated in accordance with political balance. The membership includes the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the review panel who will be appointed by full Council. The panel may co-opt:

- **one member** nominated by Stourport-on-Severn Town Council;
- **one member** nominated by Bewdley Town Council;
- **one member** nominated by Kidderminster Town Council;
- **one member nominated by Stone Parish Council;**
- **one member nominated by Churchill & Blakedown Parish Council.**

Co-opted members will be non-voting.

**Much of the information available to and considered by the Panel will be covered by the provisions of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and will be exempt from disclosure, for example because it is information relating to any individual (such as landowners or developers) or information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (such as landowners or developers). Information shared with the Panel would also be highly likely to**

**benefit from one or more of the exemptions from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act such as section 36 (prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs) or section 43 (commercial interests).** As such it is necessary that all members of the LPRP, including co-optees, observe the Council's "Access to Information Procedure Rules" contained within the Council's Constitution; **and that they recognise that any failure to observe confidentiality could represent a breach of the code of conduct.**

**COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**  
**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**COMMITTEES 2026/2027**

Appointments and Appeals Committee  Chairman: Vice-Chairman:	Leader of the Council Deputy Leader
Audit Committee  Chairman: Vice-Chairman:	Councillor Kevin Gale Councillor George Connolly
Overview and Scrutiny Committee  Chairman: Vice-Chairman:	Councillor Nicky Martin Councillor Fran Oborski
Licensing and Environmental Committee  Chairman: Vice-Chairman:	Councillor Ian Hardiman Councillor Ken Henderson
Licensing Sub-Committee	A rota of 3 Members of the Licensing and Environmental Committee, including, and chaired by, the Committee's Chairman or Vice-Chairman.
Planning Committee  Chairman: Vice-Chairman:	Councillor Robin Drew Councillor John Byng
Ethics and Standards Committee  Chairman: Vice-Chairman:	Councillor Nicky Gale Councillor Emily Bourne
Strategic Review Panel  Chairman: Vice-Chairman:	Cabinet Member for Finance Leader of the Council
Local Plans Review Panel  Chairman: Vice-Chairman:	Councillor Robin Drew Councillor Fran Oborski

MAY 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1	2	3
4 Bank Holiday	5 CLT	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 CLT	13 6pm Council	14 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	15	16	17
18	19 CLT 6pm Planning	20 6pm Audit	21 Cabinet/CLT	22 10.30am Local Plans Review Panel	23	24
25 Bank Holiday  School half term week	26	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1 10.30am Licensing & Environmental	2 CLT	3	4 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	5	6	7
8	9	10 5pm Group Leaders  6pm Cabinet	11	12	13	14
15	16 CLT  6pm Planning	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 CLT	24 Cabinet/CLT	25	26	27	28
29	30					

JULY 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		1	2 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	3	4	5
6	7 CLT	8 10.30am Local Plans Review Panel	9 5pm Group Leaders  6pm Cabinet	10	11	12
13	14 CLT	15 6pm Council	16	17	18	19
20 School Summer Holiday	21 CLT  6pm Planning	22	23 Cabinet/CLT	24	25	26
27	28	29 6pm Audit	30	31		

AUGUST 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
					1	2
3 10.30am Licensing & Environmental	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 CLT	12	13	14	15	16
17	18 6pm Planning	19 Cabinet/CLT	20	21	22	23
24	25 CLT	26	27	28	29	30
31 Bank Holiday						

**Agenda Item No. 14 Appendix 4**

**SEPTEMBER 2026**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
	1	2	3 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	4	5	6
7 6.30pm Parish Forum	8 CLT	9	10 6pm Ethics & Standards	11	12	13
14	15 6pm Planning	16 5pm Group Leaders 6pm Cabinet	17 Cabinet/CLT	18	19	20
21 10.30am Local Plans Review Panel	22 CLT	23 6pm Council	24	25	26	27
28	29	30 6pm Audit				

\* TMRP meeting & training to be programmed in

OCTOBER 2026

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
			1 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	2	3	4
5 10.30am Licensing & Environmental	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13 CLT	14	15	16	17	18
19	20 6pm Planning	21 Cabinet/CLT	22	23	24	25
26 School half term week	27 CLT	28	29	30	31	

\* TMRP meeting to be programmed in (October / November)

\*\* Strategic Review Panel to be programmed in (October / November)

**Agenda Item No. 14 Appendix 4**

**NOVEMBER 2026**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
						1
2	3	4	5 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	6	7	8
9	10 CLT	11 5pm Group Leaders  6pm Cabinet	12	13	14	15
16	17 6pm Planning	18 Cabinet/CLT	19	20	21	22
23	24 CLT	25 6pm Audit	26	27	28	29
30						

\* TMRP meeting to be programmed in (October / November)

\*\* Strategic Review Panel to be programmed in (October / November)

**Agenda Item No. 14 Appendix 4**

**DECEMBER 2026**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
	1	2	3 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	4	5	6
7 10.30am Licensing & Environmental	8 CLT	9 6pm Council	10	11	12	13
14	15 6pm Planning	16 5pm Group Leaders  6pm Cabinet	17	18 Schools close for Christmas holiday	19	20
21	22 CLT	23	24 Offices Closed	25 Bank Holiday	26	27
28 Bank Holiday	29 Offices Closed	30 Offices Closed	31 Offices Closed			

JANUARY 2027

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1 Bank Holiday	2	3
4 Schools return from holiday	5	6	7 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	8	9	10
11	12 CLT	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 6pm Planning	20 Cabinet/CLT	21	22	23	24
25	26 CLT	27	28	29	30	31

\* TMRP meeting & training to be programmed in (January / February)

\*\* Strategic Review Panel to be programmed in (x2)

**Agenda Item No. 14 Appendix 4**

**FEBRUARY 2027**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
<b>1</b> <b>10.30am</b> <b>Licensing &amp;</b> <b>Environmental</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Overview &amp;</b> <b>Scrutiny</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> <b>CLT</b>	<b>10</b> <b>5pm</b> <b>Group</b> <b>Leaders</b>  <b>6pm</b> <b>Cabinet</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> <b>School half term</b> <b>week</b>	<b>16</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Planning</b>	<b>17</b> <b>Cabinet/CLT</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> <b>CLT</b>	<b>24</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Council</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>

\* TMRP meeting & training to be programmed in (January / February)

**Agenda Item No. 14 Appendix 4**

**MARCH 2027**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
1	2	3	4 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	5	6	7
8	9 CLT 6pm Ethics & Standards	10	11	12	13	14
15 6.30pm Parish Forum	16 6pm Planning	17 Cabinet/CLT	18	19	20	21
22	23 CLT	24 6pm Audit	25 School Easter holiday commences	26 Bank Holiday	27	28
29 Bank Holiday	30	31				

**Agenda Item No. 14 Appendix 4**

**APRIL 2027**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
			<b>1</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Overview &amp;</b> <b>Scrutiny</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b> <b>10.30am</b> <b>Licensing &amp;</b> <b>Environmental</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Schools return</b> <b>from Easter</b>  <b>5pm</b> <b>Group</b> <b>Leaders</b>  <b>6pm</b> <b>Cabinet</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> <b>CLT</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Planning</b>	<b>21</b> <b>Cabinet / CLT</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> <b>CLT</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>		

MAY 2027

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
					1	2
3 Bank Holiday	4	5	6 Unitary council elections	7	8	9
10	11 CLT	12 6pm Council	13	14	15	16
17	18 6pm Planning	19 Cabinet/CLT	20	21	22	23
24	25 CLT	26 6pm Audit	27	28	29	30
31 Bank Holiday School half term week						

JUNE 2027

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1	2	3 6pm Overview & Scrutiny	4	5	6 School half term week end
7 10.30am Licensing & Environmental	8 CLT	9 5pm Group Leaders  6pm Cabinet	10	11	12	13
14	15 6pm Planning	16 Cabinet/CLT	17	18	19	20
21	22 CLT	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

**Agenda Item No. 14 Appendix 4**

**JULY 2027**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Sunday</b>
			<b>1</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Overview &amp;</b> <b>Scrutiny</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> <b>5pm</b> <b>Group Leaders</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Cabinet</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> <b>CLT</b>	<b>14</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Council</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Planning</b>	<b>21</b> <b>6pm</b> <b>Audit</b> <b>School</b> <b>summer</b> <b>holiday</b> <b>commences</b>	<b>22</b> <b>Cabinet/CLT</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> <b>CLT</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	

## Representation on Outside Bodies 2026/2027

<b>External Body</b>	<b>Representative 2025/2026</b>	<b>Representative 2026/2027</b>	<b>Number of Representatives</b>
Age UK	Councillor Nicky Gale	Councillor Nicky Gale	1 Councillor
Bewdley Development Trust	Councillor Emily Bourne	Councillor Emily Bourne	1 Councillor
Bewdley Museum Management Committee	Relevant Cabinet Member - Councillor Ian Hardiman Councillor Paul Harrison Councillor John Byng	Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts and Community Safety Councillor Paul Harrison Councillor John Byng	Relevant Cabinet Member plus 2 Bewdley & Rock Ward or Wribbenhall & Arley Ward Councillors
Birchen Coppice Family Hub (formerly 10:32 Wyre Forest Early Help)	Councillor Nicky Gale	Councillor Nicky Gale	1 Foley Park and Hoobrook Ward Member
Local Councils Network	Leader of the Council: Councillor Marcus Hart Substitute: Deputy Leader, Councillor David Ross	Leader of the Council: Councillor Marcus Hart Substitute: Deputy Leader	Leader, Deputy Leader as named substitute
Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Partnership Assembly	Relevant Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris Rogers Substitute: Councillor Paul Harrison	Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being Substitute: Councillor Paul Harrison	Relevant Cabinet Member 1 named substitute
Local Government Association General Assembly	Leader of the Council Councillor Marcus Hart	Leader of the Council Councillor Marcus Hart	Leader of the Council

External Body	Representative 2025/2026	Representative 2026/2027	Number of Representatives
PATROL (Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London) Adjudication Joint Committee	Relevant Cabinet Member – Councillor Nathan Desmond Substitute: Councillor Ian Hardiman	Cabinet Member for Operational Services Substitute: Councillor Ian Hardiman	Relevant Cabinet Member, 1 Councillor as named substitute
Stourport Forward Board	Councillor Chris Rogers	Councillor Chris Rogers	1 Stourport Councillor / 1 Officer
Stourport on Severn Social Day Centre Association (Charity No. 256775) - representative and trustee (T/A Elizabeth Mills Centre)  (formerly The Elizabeth Mills Centre)	Councillor Dave Little	Councillor Dave Little	1 Stourport Councillor
West Mercia Police and Crime Panel	Relevant Cabinet Member - Councillor Ian Hardiman	Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being	Relevant Cabinet Member
West Midlands Employers Shareholder Board	Relevant Cabinet Member - Councillor David Ross	Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio	Relevant Cabinet Member
Worcestershire County Council Corporate Parenting Board	Councillor Fran Oborski	Councillor Fran Oborski	1 Councillor (Expectations from WCC: Relevant Cabinet Member or Councillor with relevant experience)
Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Councillor Paul Harrison	Councillor Paul Harrison	1 Councillor

External Body	Representative 2025/2026	Representative 2026/2027	Number of Representatives
Worcestershire County Council Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board – co-opted member for scrutiny of Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership	Councillor Ian Hardiman	Councillor Ian Hardiman	1 Councillor
Worcestershire County Waste Forum	Relevant Cabinet Member – Councillor Nathan Desmond	Cabinet Member for Operational Services	Relevant Cabinet Member
Worcestershire Health and Well-being Board	Relevant Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris Rogers Substitute: Councillor Paul Harrison	Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being Substitute: Councillor Paul Harrison	Relevant Cabinet Member 1 named substitute
Worcestershire Health Improvement Group	Relevant Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris Rogers	Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being	Relevant Cabinet Member
Worcestershire Leaders’ Board	Leader of the Council, Councillor Marcus Hart Substitute: Deputy Leader, Councillor David Ross	Leader of the Council, Councillor Marcus Hart Substitute: Deputy Leader	Leader, Deputy Leader as named substitute
Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board	Relevant Cabinet Member - Councillor Ian Hardiman & Chairman of Licensing & Environmental Committee – Councillor Ken Henderson	Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts and Community Safety & Chairman of Licensing & Environmental Committee	2 Councillors (Past practice: Relevant Cabinet Member & Chairman of Licensing & Environmental Committee)
Wyre Forest Citizen's Advice Bureau - Management Committee	Councillor Ken Henderson	Councillor Ken Henderson	1 Councillor

<b>External Body</b>	<b>Representative 2025/2026</b>	<b>Representative 2026/2027</b>	<b>Number of Representatives</b>
Wyre Forest Community Leisure Association Ltd - Local Partnership Board	Relevant Cabinet Member - Councillor Ian Hardiman Councillor Nicky Gale	Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts and Community Safety Councillor Nicky Gale	2 Councillors / 2 Officers
Wyre Forest Youth Network (formerly Wyre Forest Local Children and Young People's Trust)	Relevant Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris Rogers Councillor Kevin Gale	Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being Councillor Kevin Gale	2 Councillors including relevant Cabinet Member / 1 Officer
Wyre Forest Nightstop and Mediation Service Management Committee	Relevant Cabinet Member – Councillor Chris Rogers	Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being	Relevant Cabinet Member

**Outside Bodies – Wyre Forest District Councillors Representing North Worcestershire Districts (for information).**

The Leaders of Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest will agree North Worcestershire representation on the bodies below for 2026/2027.

<b>External Body</b>	<b>Representative 2025/2026</b>	<b>Representative 2026/2027</b>
Worcestershire LEP	Councillor Sharon Harvey Substitute: Councillor Karen May	Councillor Substitute: Councillor
Worcestershire Local Access Forum	Councillor Robin Drew	Councillor

**Armed Forces Champions (for information)**

These appointments are to be made by the Leader of the Council.

	<b>2025/2026</b>	<b>2026/2027</b>
Armed Forces Champion	Councillor Kevin Gale Councillor Alan Sutton	Councillor Kevin Gale Councillor Alan Sutton

		Conservative		Labour		Independent/ Green		Liberal		Non-aligned cllrs		Total
No. of Cllrs.			18		3		8		2		2	33
Percentage			54.55%		9.09%		24.24%		6.06%		6.06%	100.00%
<b>Executive Cttees</b>												
Membership												
Appts & Appeals	5	3	2.73	1	0.45	1	1.21	0	0.30	0	0.30	5
Audit cttee	8	4	4.36	1	0.73	2	1.94	1	0.48	0	0.48	8
Ethics & standards *	7	4	3.82	1	0.64	2	1.70	0	0.42	0	0.23	7
<b>Scrutiny</b>												
Scrutiny Committee	12	7	6.55	1	1.09	3	2.91	1	0.73	0	0.73	12
<b>Regulatory</b>												
Planning	12	7	6.55	1	1.09	3	2.91	1	0.73	0	0.73	12
Lic & Env	12	7	6.55	1	1.09	3	2.91	1	0.73	0	0.73	12
Total	56	32	30.55	6	5.09	14	13.58	4	3.39	0	3.39	56
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>57.14%</b>		<b>10.71%</b>		<b>25.00%</b>		<b>7.14%</b>		<b>0.00%</b>		<b>100.00%</b>
Difference between % No. of Cllrs. And % Number of Seats		2.60%		1.62%		0.76%		1.08%		-6.06%		

\* 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.

**Index of Members' Activity Reports Received as of the date of publication of the Council Agenda**

Electronic Copies of all reports are available on the Internet

<b>Name</b>	<b>Attendance Percentage for 2025/2026</b>	<b>Number of Meetings Attended</b>
Cllr John Aston	80%	12
Cllr Emily Bourne	100%	5
Cllr Ben Brookes	93%	13
Cllr John Byng	100%	22
Cllr Liam Carroll	68%	15
Cllr Vicky Caulfield	67%	10
Cllr George Connolly	96%	22
Cllr Nathan Desmond	95%	18
Cllr Robin Drew	94%	15
Cllr Helen Dyke	68%	19
Cllr Peter Dyke	100%	16
Cllr Kevin Gale	96%	22
Cllr Nicky Gale	87%	13
Cllr Jackie Griffiths	70%	7
Cllr Ian Hardiman	94%	15
Cllr Paul Harrison	100%	29
Cllr Marcus Hart	100%	26
Cllr Ken Henderson	100%	8
Cllr David Little	92%	22
Cllr Nicky Martin	92%	22
Cllr Mary McDonnell	82%	14
Cllr Shazu Miah	89%	8
Cllr Dan Morehead	92%	12
Cllr Fran Oborski	93%	26
Cllr Tracey Onslow	89%	8
Cllr Mary Rayner	100%	17
Cllr Chris Rogers	100%	18
Cllr David Ross	92%	24
Cllr Danny Russell	87%	13
Cllr Alan Sutton	72%	13
Cllr Leigh Whitehouse	100%	8
Cllr Nick Wilson	60%	3
Cllr Peter Young	80%	8

The calendar of meetings is agreed at the beginning of each municipal year. Occasionally the need arises for additional meetings to be arranged at short notice which not all Members are able to attend due to previous commitments. The table shows only the meetings in the agreed municipal calendar: additional meetings are ignored.

# Cabinet Annual Report 2025-2026

## Report from the Leader of the Council

It gives me great pleasure to present my third annual report as Leader of the Council for the third municipal year of this four-year term, having previously presented such reports from 2014-2019. I will return to the length of this term later in this report.

The political make-up of the Council in 2025-2026 has changed a little since 2024-2025.

The make-up of the Council is now: -

Conservatives	18
Independents	7
Labour	3
Liberals	2
Green	1
Independent	2

(non-aligned)

There are 4 groups formed from 31 councillors.

Ensuring the right size and skills make-up of the Cabinet, to make sure that the key strategic decisions affecting the Council and most importantly the residents of the Wyre Forest whom it serves, is essential.

The minimum size of the Cabinet is 3 and the maximum is 10. Ever since the Cabinet system was introduced at Wyre Forest District Council the Cabinet has ranged between 5-7 members, with the vast majority of that time having at least 6 members.

There have been changes to my Cabinet since the 2024-2025 report namely

Cllr. David Ross took over the role of Deputy Leader of the Council in September 2025 from Cllr. Ben Brookes and Cllr. Nathan Desmond took on the role of Cabinet Member for Operational Services from Cllr. Ben Brookes in October 2025. Cllr. Tracey Onslow stepped down as Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Arts and Community Safety in October 2025 and she was replaced by Cllr. Ian Hardiman who made a return to the Cabinet as a direct replacement in that role.

Cllr. Dan Morehead remained as Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Planning and the Green Agenda, Cllr. Chris Rogers as Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Well-being and myself as Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategy.

As well as being Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr. David Ross remained as Cabinet Member for Finance and Capital Portfolio.

A Corporate Plan was approved by Cabinet and unanimously supported at Council in the autumn of 2023 and in 2025-2026 we have been relentlessly delivering on that. That is evidenced by the administration's budget proposals approved by full Council in February 2026 with the addition of extra litter picking resource, additional funding to extend the civil enforcement officer posts and resource for an additional environmental protection officer.

At the core of the Cabinet's thinking is delivering on Economic Regeneration, keeping our District, safe, clean and looking good and ensuring that we are a transformational and commercial Council that is financially sustainable. This is why we have approved expenditure of £70,000 in the February 2026 budget for the years 26-27 and 27-28 for funding towards the Growth Hub (providing much sought after advice and guidance for small and medium enterprises) as a result of the UKSPF coming to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026.

We have also approved a one off transformation grant of £50,000 payable over two years, £25,000 in 26-27 and £25,000 in 27-28 to support the Kidderminster Carpet Museum transition to a wider Kidderminster Heritage Museum.

I was also very keen to demonstrate action on the Green Agenda and hence have given it more prominence at a senior level by allocating this responsibility within a Cabinet role. We are still committed to delivering Electric Vehicle Charge points in our WFDC car parks.

The Cabinet has been pleased to continue with an element of free car parking in Bewdley, Stourport and Kidderminster and indeed to encourage residents to shop locally we have frozen all car parking charges in our WFDC car parks for 26-27.

I was also delighted to produce a balanced budget for 2026-27 and a medium-term financial strategy that sees the Council not exhaust its reserves over that period. Clearly in year 3 as it presently stands the Council is drawing heavily from its reserves. Throughout 2025-2026 the Cabinet has worked hard with the corporate leadership team to continue ways to identify savings and efficiencies and grow our income without affecting front line services important to the public, including investing in areas of importance to the public in line with our corporate priorities, such as accessible play equipment, additional resource for civil enforcement officers and additional resource for litter pickers.

Council tax has increased by 2.99% which is approximately £7.50 per year on a Band D property or 14 pence per week!

The Cabinet has met 7 times during this municipal year.

The Old Court was officially opened in January 2025 and I am pleased to report that in the first year of operation we achieved an occupancy rate of 66% of net lettable office floorspace with four tenants occupying 9 of the 13 office suites in the building. This generated a first-year rental income of £88,500.

The Council purchased the Piano Building and Bus Station in February 2024 and appointed a multi-disciplinary professional team to manage the delivery of the project. Planning permission was granted in 2024 and the building has now been refurbished by our Contractors Speller Metcalf and handed over to the council at the end of October last year.

We have the ground floor earmarked for food and beverage (F&B) and three floors for office space. The office space is marketed by GJS Dillon and the F&B units by Creative Retail. Last year, for the office space, the council had initial interest from one of the world's largest providers of flexible office spaces and for the F&B units from a pub chain; an independent restaurant; and a sports bar. Since the new year, discussions have been held with a company interested in taking on the entire first floor office space and three businesses interested in the F&B units on the ground floor.

At Wyre Forest House 86% of net lettable space has been let out to eight tenants. This brings in gross rental income of £323k a year and £158k of IT support charge and therefore makes a valuable contribution to our commercial income.

The Connectivity Project, which has been named The Talbot Park in honour of Charles Talbot MBE, has been completed by our contractors McPhillips and handed back to the council and was officially opened on 2 May. This is a fantastic public open space providing a safe and accessible link from Bromsgrove Street and the proposed Lion Fields housing development to the town centre.

The Talbot Park completion concludes the delivery of several major regeneration projects in Kidderminster town centre, which totalled over £40m of investment from government through the Future High Streets Fund and Levelling Up Fund grants, and from this council.

This administration is committed to build on this success and continue to invest in our district and this is reflected in the new priority pipeline of projects, including the Lion Fields housing development in Kidderminster; Bridge St car park redevelopment in Stourport and Bewdley Museum improvements.

Progress is underway across all the priority pipeline projects.

An advisory team, which includes housing development, legal, procurement and quantity surveying specialisms, for the procurement of a joint venture development partner for the Lion Fields scheme has been appointed and a comprehensive procurement pack has been prepared and is currently

undergoing final reviews and checks. All essential surveys required to inform the developer procurement have been instructed, and regular coordination meetings are being held with all relevant parties. It is envisaged that the invitation to tender will be published by the end of May 2026.

The Stourport Bridge Street scheme is nearing completion of RIBA Stage 2, following a comprehensive consultation in early 2026, where Option 2 emerged as the preferred approach among those expressing a view. We have sought to balance these views, while maintaining deliverability. A news release to update the public on the outcome of the consultation was issued on Thursday 30 April. A planning application will be submitted in July.

The improvements at Bewdley Museum, which include the enclosure of the porch to provide additional flexible space, have been completed in April.

We continue our desire to regenerate the former Crown House site in Kidderminster and will work with any interested parties to see the site redeveloped.

Work has finally been completed by the Environment Agency and Severn Trent on the flood defences for Wribbenhall and it is very pleasing that Bewdley is back to being fully open for business.

The Government are imposing housing targets on us which mean that in circa 5 years our land supply runs out and we now need to start refreshing our local plan and our green belt may very well be at threat as there simply will not be enough brown field land. Our annual housing target will increase from 276 to 584, an increase of 112%. We kick started our local plan process in the autumn for our call for sites and at Cabinet in April 2026 set out the local plan timetable. We have also asked for a further call for sites for Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

Everyone will be aware of the Government's White Paper announced on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024 clearly setting out that all remaining 21 shire county areas will have their councils abolished and a unitary authority must be formed during the lifetime of this Parliament. Whilst we are very disappointed that WFDC will be abolished we understand that is clearly the policy of the new Government.

If we must have a unitary authority we believe that a Worcestershire Unitary Authority would be best, keeping the county together and not merging with anyone outside of Worcestershire.

After much discussion over the last 18 months, ultimately there were two proposals submitted to Government, one for a Unitary Worcestershire supported by WFDC and Worcestershire County Council and one for a North Worcestershire and South Worcestershire model. Government have now consulted on these proposals and we await their decision by the summer recess in 2026. On the Government's current timeline we will cease to exist on 1 April 2028. This would mean our term of office would be extended by one year until our successor unitary authority takes over responsibility for

functions in April 2028, with elections to the new authority taking place in May 2027 instead of elections to WFDC.

I would like to thank my Cabinet and all elected members for the work they do on behalf of all of our residents, businesses and communities. I would also like to place on record my grateful thanks to the Chief Executive, Corporate Leadership Team and all officers within the Council for their help and support this year. I know that the challenges within local Government grow ever larger year on year, but the drive and commitment shown by the officers within our Council never ceases to amaze me.

I would also like to place on record my thanks to my Cabinet colleagues for their support and counsel during the last year. Also, importantly to all elected members of the Council across the political divide as I know ultimately all elected members get elected for one common aim, to deliver good public services and for the betterment of all residents across the district. They do a difficult job in a challenging environment and in a society where sadly many in public office are targeted in all forms of communication. Together we play a vital role in local democracy, and it was clearly evident when the budget in February was supported cross-party unanimously.

Finally, the last year has been challenging and I have little, if any, doubt that this year will be even more so, but I am confident we will all continue as members and officers to work together for our common aim in delivering for the residents, businesses and tax payers of Wyre Forest.

**Councillor Marcus J. Hart**  
**Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategy**

## **Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2025-2026**

### **Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

It's a pleasure to be writing my third annual report as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and once again thank the administration for the opportunity to carry out the role.

The committee has met 10 times during this municipal year.

The committee was made up as follows:-

7 Conservative Group – Councillors: J Byng, G Connolly, N Gale, K Gale, P Harrison, D Little and D Russell.

3 Independent & Green Group – Councillors: V Caulfield, H Dyke and N Martin.

1 Labour Group – Councillor M McDonnell

1 Liberal Party Group – Councillor F Oborski MBE

During the year we have had a number of changes to the committee membership namely:

Councillor K Gale replaced Councillor N Desmond.

Councillor J Byng replaced Councillor I Hardiman.

and for the next municipal year, Councillor L Carroll will replace Councillor McDonnell.

In this municipal year, we have considered 48 reports in all, which includes updates from various service areas.

This has been another busy and productive year for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, characterised by detailed reading, careful analysis of reports, and a high level of constructive challenge. Throughout the year, members have engaged in meaningful discussion and robust debate, reflecting the committee's commitment to effective and transparent scrutiny.

The committee has played an important role in reviewing council performance across a range of key areas, including the Council's financial position, service delivery, and progress against the Corporate Plan. These core areas remain central to ensuring that the Council is operating efficiently and delivering for residents.

I would like to thank all members for their active engagement and for putting forward a wide range of topics for scrutiny. As a result, the committee has been able to develop a deeper understanding of several important issues, including:

### **Agenda Item No. 16 (b)**

- The challenges facing the Brinton Park project, alongside an updated assessment of its delivery progress
- The work of Worcestershire Regulatory Services and their role in ensuring compliance across a range of functions
- The condition and maintenance of Wyre Forest District Council's assets, as well as progress in the delivery and installation of electric vehicle charging points

One of the more challenging discussions this year took place at the February 2026 meeting, where the committee was asked to consider the implications of diverging from central government recommendations regarding the introduction of food waste collections. While the committee fully recognises and supports the environmental rationale for food waste collection, it also carefully considered the financial realities facing the Council.

Members were clear that the introduction of such a service must not come at the expense of the Council's financial stability or lead to reductions in essential services for residents. The committee therefore emphasised the importance of ensuring that any new statutory requirements are fully and properly funded by central government. It was agreed and recommended that this issue should be revisited by the committee within nine months to allow for further clarity and updated financial information.

Overall, this year has demonstrated the value of strong and independent scrutiny in supporting effective decision-making and safeguarding the interests of the local community. A special thank you goes to all officers involved, my vice chair Councillor Oborski and Marta Starostina for her continued support on exploring the effectiveness of WFDC Overview and Scrutiny.

**Councillor Nicky Martin**

## Scrutiny at Wyre Forest

For this municipal year, the Council's scrutiny function was carried out through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee consisted of 12 cross party Members. The workload included scrutinising proposals for new or amended policies before their consideration by the Cabinet and Council, undertaking detailed reviews into existing procedures and policy, and monitoring the schedule of proposed decisions as set out in the Council's Forward Plan.

## Review Panels

Review Panels are in depth investigations into issues conducted by Members outside of the formal Scrutiny Committee setting. Only a Member of the Scrutiny Committee may Chair a review panel established following a request from the Committee. They allow more detailed work on particular topics and make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which in turn make recommendations to Cabinet. Their flexibility allows for a wide range of evidence sources, guests and methods of evidence gathering to be considered.

Changes were made to the reporting of the Treasury Management Review Panel in 2022. The Scrutiny Committee appoints the Chairperson and the recommendations from the Panel now flow directly to Council.

The following Panels have taken place during the 2025/2026 year:

Name	No. of meetings	Purpose
Treasury Management	2	Allowed detailed scrutiny and training in respect of treasury management. Recommendations from the Panel were made to Council.

## Recommendation Tracking

As Scrutiny Committees can only make recommendations and do not take decisions, it is important to keep track of what has happened to the recommendations made by Scrutiny.

After recommendations have been made, all members receive the Cabinet decision list which records what decision Cabinet took in respect of any scrutiny committee recommendations. This is a clear means of tracking the outcome of recommendations.

## Public and Stakeholder Involvement in Scrutiny

Scrutiny is an important means of involving the community in the Democratic Process. If you have any suggestions or comments for issues affecting your area which you feel Scrutiny could consider, please contact the Democratic Services Team via email: [committee.section@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.section@wyreforestdc.gov.uk) telephone: 01562 732763, or in writing to Democratic Services, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster DY10 7WF.

More information on Scrutiny at Wyre Forest District Council can be found at <https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/transparency-and-freedom-of-information/freedom-of-information-publication-scheme/how-we-make-decisions/scrutiny/>

## Terms of Reference - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Reviews the policies of the Council and the Cabinet and recommends to the Council or the Cabinet:
  - (i) Whether any new policies are required.
  - (ii) Whether any existing policies are no longer required.
  - (iii) Whether any changes are required to any existing policies.
  - (iv) Whether any action is required to make the policies more effective.
2. Reviews the discharge of Cabinet functions, and recommends to the Council or the Cabinet:
  - (i) Whether any action should be taken to improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of those functions.
  - (ii) Whether any action should be taken to improve the co-ordination of the various functions within the Authority, or with any other person or body.
  - (iii) Whether the function should continue to be discharged or be discharged in another way.
3. Reviews any decisions or proposed decisions of the Council and of the Cabinet. In undertaking such reviews, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall in particular consider:
  - (i) Whether the relevant criteria were used.
  - (ii) Whether the decision is in accordance with the budget and policy framework of the Council.
  - (iii) Whether the decision or action was within the powers of the Authority.
  - (iv) Whether the decision was lawful.
  - (v) Whether the decision contributes to the efficient, effective, and economic discharge of the function.
4. Recommendations should all take account of the following:
  - (i) Whether the decision should be reconsidered, and if so, what alternative decision should be taken.

**Agenda Item No. 16 (b)**

- (ii) Whether the proposed decision should be taken or taken in a different form.
  - (iii) Whether any further action should be taken in the experience of that decision to ensure proper or better implementation of decisions.
  - (iv) Whether any further actions should be taken in the experience of that decision to improve the manner or quality of decision-making for the future.
5. Considers any matters which affect the Council or its administrative area or the inhabitants of that area and makes recommendations to the Council or the Cabinet arising from that consideration.
  6. External Partners  
Reviews the performance and effectiveness of the Council's external partner organisations, including the duty to scrutinise the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
  7. Review Panels  
Establishes time limited Review Panels which focus upon specific issues of concern raised by Members through a Scrutiny Proposal Form, consider evidence, and subsequently make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A protocol for the establishment of Review Panels is attached as Appendix C at section 10 of the Constitution.
  8. Review the Forward Plan  
Regularly reviews the Forward Plan with a view to deciding which, if any, forthcoming items require consideration.
  9. Sets and agrees an Annual Work Programme and prioritises the work of the Committee.
  10. Ensures consideration is given to encouraging public participation and engagement in functions of the Committee.
  11. Ensures that the views of any invitees and co-opted Members (where appropriate) are taken into account when conducting investigations.
  12. Monitors the implementation of scrutiny recommendations.
  13. Reviews and scrutinises relevant public bodies and partners in the district, including the Council's contribution and relationship with them. Where necessary, requesting them to address overview and scrutiny about their activities, performance, particular decisions, initiatives, or projects.

## **Ethics and Standards Committee Annual Report 2025-2026**

### **Report from the Chairman of the Committee**

We have had another quiet year.

We have not had any conduct issues or legislative updates to consider this year; therefore no meetings were held.

**Councillor Nicky Gale**

### **Role of the Standards Committee**

1. Promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members.
2. Assists the councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
3. Advises the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct.
4. Monitors the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
5. Advises, trains or arranges to train councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.
6. Considers complaints against any member relating to alleged breach of the Code of Conduct, to make findings of fact and decisions in respect of the action to be taken, and where necessary to make recommendations to full Council.
7. Grants dispensations, if necessary, to councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
8. Exercises (1) to (6) above in relation to the parish councils' wholly or mainly within the Wyre Forest District area and the members of those parish councils'.
9. Recommends approval and adoption of relevant codes, plans and policies.
10. Oversees the Whistle Blowing Policy.
11. Keeps the operation of the constitution under review as far as it relates to ethics and standards of behaviour.

### **Member Activity Reports**

Members continue to submit an annual activity report which outlines their activities during the municipal year, significant work has been undertaken to ensure that the reports are detailed and are a useful tool for Members of the

electorate to see the activities their elected Member have been undertaking during the municipal year.

## **Membership of the Ethics and Standards Committee**

(7 Councillors, 3 co-opted Independent Members non-voting, 3 Parish Councillors non-voting)

Chairman: Councillor Nicky Gale

Vice-Chairman: Councillor Emily Bourne

Councillors: Robin Drew, Mary McDonnell, Mary Rayner, Nick Wilson and Peter Young

Independent Members: R Reynolds and Rev J A Cox

Parish Council representatives: Councillors S Billett, S Fowler and D Killingworth.

**AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT – Report of the work of the Audit Committee during 2025-26**

**Report from the Chairman of the Audit Committee**

As the Chairman of the Audit Committee, I am very pleased to present this annual report which sets out the role of the Audit Committee and summarises the work we have undertaken as a committee during the financial year 2025-26. I hope that this Annual Report helps to demonstrate to all stakeholders the vital role that is carried out by the Audit Committee and the contribution that it makes to the Council's overall governance arrangements. I would also like to express my thanks to those officers and members who have supported the work of this Committee by presenting, discussing, challenging and debating solutions to the ongoing risk, control and governance environment of the Council. The following training sessions have been delivered in the year by external or internal providers:

- Fraud awareness - principles of good fraud risk management practice
- External Auditors perspective on how to be an effective Audit Committee
- Risk Management - principles of risk management, including how it supports good governance and decision making
- Values of Good Governance - arrangements to uphold ethical standards for both members and staff
- Introduction to Treasury Management part 1
- Introduction to Treasury Management part 2

The remaining core knowledge areas, as set out in CIPFA's knowledge and skills framework for Audit Committee members, are programmed to be covered in 2026-27.

The committee has been well attended this year and there has been constructive questioning by members throughout. There have been no major areas of concern for the committee to note or report back on which is reassuring for the Council.

**Role of the Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee aims to operate in accordance with The CIPFA Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022 this publication replaced the "Audit Committees, Practical Guidance for Local Authorities" produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in 2018. The Guidance defines the purpose of an Audit Committee as follows:

1. Audit Committees are a key component of an authority's governance framework. Their function is to provide an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management.
2. The purpose of an Audit Committee is to provide those charged with governance, independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment and the integrity of the financial reporting and annual governance processes. By overseeing internal and external audit it makes an important contribution to ensuring that effective assurance arrangements are in place.

The role and responsibilities of the Audit Committee are set out in written terms of reference which are reviewed regularly by the Committee taking into account relevant legislation and

recommended good practice. Audit Committee considered CIPFA’s practical Guidance for Local Authorities in March 2026 and the Terms of Reference, which were last refreshed by Council in May 2024, were reviewed to ensure that they remain in line with good.

The Committee’s responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following matters with a view to bringing any relevant issues to the attention of the Council:

- Oversight of the integrity of the Council’s financial statements
- Oversight of governance, risk management and internal control arrangements
- Oversight of the external auditors’ performance, objectivity, and independence
- Oversight of the performance of the internal audit function.

In order to help the Committee meets its oversight responsibilities, each year, management organise training sessions for the Committee on subject areas within their remit.

**Meetings and Membership**

The Committee met **six** times during the year. During 2025-26, the Audit Committee comprised of eight non-executive members as follows - attendance shown in [ ]:

5 Conservative Group:

N Desmond (Chairman) up to 27 October 2025 [100% ]

G Connolly (Vice Chairman) up to 9 December 2025 (Chairman) wef 10 December 2025 [100% ]

P Harrison appointed to the Committee 29 October 2025 (Vice Chairman) wef 10 December 2025 [100% ]

J Byng [100%], K Gale [83% ] and A Sutton [83%]

2 Independent & Green Group – Councillors: M Rayner [100%] and P Young [67%]

1 Labour Group – Councillor J Griffiths [83%]

The Audit Committee have carried out a self-assessment on the effectiveness of the Committee. The results show that the majority of respondents believe that the current members of the Audit Committee are competent and have recent and relevant experience. Other attendees at Committee meetings were the Head of Resources and s151 Officer, Internal Audit Manager, Principal Accountants and Deputy s151 Officers, external auditors and other members of the Corporate Leadership Team. The Head of Resources and Internal Audit Manager (BDO) were available throughout the year to meet with the Audit Chair and Vice Chair and any other Committee members privately allowing a forum for the Committee to discuss any issues in more detail directly.

**How the Committee has discharged its responsibilities:**

Key Audit Committee activities	May	July	Sept	Nov	Feb	March
<b>Financial Reporting</b>						
Accounting policies updates						•
Considered the draft 2024-25 Annual Statement of Accounts		•				
2024-25 Statement of Accounts				•		
External Audit Certificate				•		
<b>External Auditors</b>						
Plan for year-end audit 2025-26 including Informing the Risk Assessment						•

## Agenda Item No. 16 (d)

Key Audit Committee activities	May	July	Sept	Nov	Feb	March
Review of External Audit Findings in relation to the Statement of Accounts (Audit completion report)				•		
Auditors Annual Report				•		
External Audit Progress Report						
<b>Internal Audit</b>						
Internal Audit Annual Report and Assurance Statement Report 2023-24	•					
Review of progress reports	•	•	•	•		•
Follow-up of recommendations report	•	•	•	•		•
2025-26 Annual Audit Plan						•
<b>Governance, Risk Management and Counter Fraud</b>						
Approved the draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2024-25	•					
Annual Governance Statement Action plan progress report	•			•		
Financial Management Code Self Assessment				•		
Review of the Risk Management Strategy						•
Review of Corporate Risk Register and Risk Appetite Statements	•					
Updates on Strategic/Corporate Risks Treatment Actions	•	•	•	•		•
Review of Counter Fraud Arrangements			•			
Annual Review of Effectiveness of Audit Committee – Self Assessment						•
Audit Committee Annual Report to Council						•
Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman		•		•		
Code for Statutory Officers	•					
Anti-Money Laundering Policy				•		
<b>Special Meeting</b>						
Council Tax setting					•	
Audit Committee Forward Plan	•	•	•	•		•

### Financial Reporting

The Committee is responsible for monitoring the integrity of the financial statements and reviewing the financial reporting judgements contained therein. The financial statements are prepared by officers with appropriate qualifications and expertise. In respect of the year to 31st March 2025, the Committee reviewed the 2024-25 financial statements. In carrying out these reviews, the Committee

- Reviewed the appropriateness of the Council's accounting policies and monitored changes to and compliance with accounting standards
- Discussed a report from the external auditors at that meeting identifying the significant accounting and judgemental issues that arose in the course of the audit
- Considered the letter from the external auditors concerning enquiries of management and those charged with governance

Councillors commended officers for preparing the Financial Statements to a high standard and for their presentation to the Council's External Auditors in accordance with the statutory timetable and for their work with the external auditors ensuring the financial statements were signed off by the statutory financial closedown deadline for authorities.

### **External Auditors**

The Audit Committee has responsibility for overseeing the Council's relationship with the external auditor including reviewing the quality and effectiveness of their performance, their external audit plan and progress, their appointment and their audit fee proposals.

In line with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Council opted in to use Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) who led the procurement of external auditors on behalf of nearly all local authorities during 2022. The PSAA consulted with the Council regarding the appointment of Bishop Fleming to audit the accounts of Wyre Forest District Council for five years from 2023-24. The appointment started on 1 April 2023, with the 2023/24 Statement being the first set of accounts audited by the firm.

During the year Bishop Fleming undertook the audit from late July to October. They identified presentational and disclosure adjustments to the notes to the financial statements, and raised recommendations for management, these resulted in a small number of presentational changes to the draft financial statements. An unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements was given well in advance of statutory deadline of 27 February 2026. The Final Audit Completion Report and Auditors Annual Report was received on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2025. WFDC is among fewer than half of authorities to have an unbroken run of completed audits with no disclaimed audits; and remains one of no more than five authorities which have had audits completed within the statutory deadline every year.

### **Internal Audit**

The Audit Committee reviewed and agreed a risk based annual internal audit plan for 2025-26 in March 2025, which the Committee agreed was appropriate to the scope and nature of the Council. The Committee reviewed progress reports at each meeting. These reports enable the Committee to monitor the progress of the internal audit plan, to discuss key findings and the plans to address them. The Committee considered the Internal Auditor's opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the control environment and reviewed the effectiveness of Internal Audit. The committee are satisfied that internal audit arrangements ensure that the function is sufficiently resourced with an adequate level of experience and expertise.

### **Governance, Risk Management and Counter Fraud**

The Audit Committee is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk. The Audit Committee considered the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements, the control environment, and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements, through the review and approval of internal and external audit reports. Internal audit activity focuses on the areas of greatest risk to the Council, and the external auditor annual report will highlight the key areas of potential

control weakness in the Council. Key weaknesses identified by either Internal Audit or External Audit are reported in summary reports to the Audit Committee to enable Committee to seek assurance that action is being taken on risk related issues. The Audit Committee monitored the effective development and operation of the risk management strategy, reviewing and challenging the content of the corporate risk register, associated arrangements and action plans. The Committee oversaw the production of the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and received an update regarding progress on the AGS action plan.

In addition, the Committee discussed the Council's Counter Fraud Arrangements, reviewed the annual self-assessment against the Financial Management Code and approved the updated Anti-money laundering policy.

### **Plans for 2026-27**

Our priorities for 2026-27 are to continue to meet our duties as specified in the constitution.

We will:

- Continue to review governance arrangements to ensure the Council adopts the latest best practice.
- Continue to support the work of Internal and External Audit and ensure appropriate responses are given to their recommendations.
- Oversight of internal audit arrangements, in line with the new Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in UK Local Government, ensuring robust internal controls are in place and providing an appropriate level of challenge.
- Continue to help the Council to manage the risk of fraud and corruption
- Equip existing and any new Members to fulfil our responsibilities by providing more detailed and effective training on all key areas of responsibility including procurement, governance and fraud.
- Review and where agreed, implement best practice guidance identified in CIPFA's Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police
- Continue to embed the Council's revised complaints policy, procedures and reporting requirements in line with the Ombudsman's new Complaints Handling Code

This annual report to Full Council supports the recommended engagement and outputs in Cipfa's Position Statement by reporting transparently on the Committee's work during the past year, and its compliance with its over-arching Terms of Reference and the Cipfa Statement. Through its self-assessment exercise, it has evaluated its impact and identified any areas for improvement, which will be incorporated into the action plan when the Annual Governance Statement is considered in May 2026. The report should provide assurance to the public and to all those charged with governance that the Committee fulfils its purpose and can demonstrate its impact.

### **COUNCILLOR George Connolly**

Chairman, Audit Committee

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL  
13 MAY 2026**

**QUESTIONS**

**1. Question from Councillor L Whitehouse to the Leader of the Council**

Given the fairly recent decisions by two members of your group to step away and sit as non-aligned councillors, how do you interpret this shift, does it reflect isolated personal choices or does it point to deeper concerns about political leadership, direction or internal cohesion within your group that merit public explanation?

**2. Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Can the Cabinet Member tell me if the incidence of Japanese Knotweed growing in the district is being increasing or decreasing and how many outbreaks of this destructive plant are currently known?

**3. Question from Councillor V Caulfield to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Following Council's decision not to proceed with mandatory food waste collections. Can the Cabinet member advise whether the government has responded to council on this decision?

**4. Question from Councillor F Oborski MBE to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me: How many abandoned vehicles have been dealt with by WFDC Staff during 2025-26 and is the number increasing or decreasing year on year?

**5. Question from Councillor V Caulfield to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Does the Cabinet Member value collaborative working with our local schools?

**6. Question from Councillor V Caulfield to the Cabinet Member for Operational Services**

Can the Cabinet Member share whether any progress has been made on reducing use of glyphosate since I last asked over 6 months ago?