PRESENT:

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

Councillors: J C Simmonds (Chairman) and S J Williams.

Officers: Ms C Eynon, Development Control Manager and Mrs C May, Principal Committee Officer.

**TOWN AND PARISH REPRESENTATIVES**

**Bewdley Town Council** - Councillor Mrs E M Davies.

**Broome Parish Council** – Councillor D. Pheysey.

**Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council**

Mrs Y L Scriven (Clerk).

**Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council** – Councillor Mrs P V Hayward.

**Kidderminster Foreign Parish Council** - Councillor B Corfield.

**Rock Parish Council** – Councillors E Batten and K A Perkins.

**Rushock Parish Council** - Councillor J W Jennings

**Stone Parish Council** – Councillor R Hobson and J A Jordan.

**Stourport-on-Severn** - Councillors E Mills and W G Jones.

**Upper Arley Parish Council** – Councillors D Cox and T H Whatmore.

**Wolverley and Cookley Parish Council** – Councillor M A W Hazlewood.
1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: C D Nicholls, Wyre Forest District Council, N Knowles, Bewdley Town Council, L McCurrigh, Rushock Parish Council, Ms P Edwards Executive Officer, Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils and Ms M Bryan, Area Democracy Officer, Worcestershire County Council.

2. **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14th October 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman of Wyre Forest District Council, Councillor J Simmonds, chaired the meeting. He welcomed all present to the meeting and asked everyone present to introduce themselves.

4. **PLANNING DECISIONS**

The Development Control Manager gave an oral report on the following matters, the key points of which are summarised below:

a) **How cross boundary planning decisions are made**

There are two aspects to cross boundary planning decisions:

i) **Applications which cross boundaries between a local planning authority and a neighbouring planning authority**

Where a proposed development site crosses boundaries between a local planning authority and a neighbouring planning authority, the applicant must submit the application to both planning authorities. However, the fee is payable only to the authority in which the largest part of the site is located. Each authority can determine only the application relating to the part of the site in its own area. Consequently they have to liaise so that their decisions, and any conditions imposed, are consistent.
ii) Applications which cross boundaries between parishes

Where an application site is located in more than one parish, the Council consults with all of the parishes involved. Wyre Forest District Council also endeavours to consult parishes when an application site is adjacent to their boundaries, but that is not a statutory requirement. If any objection is received, the application is referred to the District Council’s Planning (Development Control) Committee for a decision, as Planning Officers have no delegated powers to determine applications where there are objections.

i) Consultation with Neighbouring Planning Authorities

Where an application site is adjacent to a neighbouring planning authority, Planning Officers consult that authority and allow up to 21 days for a response, in accordance with the statutory consultation period.

Where the District Council is consulted on applications adjacent to its boundaries, it comments on large-scale and sensitive applications, such as an application regarding a waste transfer site, but it does not normally comment on small-scale, non-controversial proposals.

In the ensuing discussion, members drew attention to developments in neighbouring authorities, adjacent to Wye Forest parishes, which they knew nothing about until planning consent had been given. The site for green waste in Blakedown was one of the examples quoted.

The Development Control Manager advised that the General Development Procedure Order required planning authorities to consult Town/Parish Councils when an application site fell within their boundaries, but there was no statutory requirement for planning authorities to consult them when an application site was adjacent to their boundaries. Wyre Forest District Council case officers did this as a matter of courtesy. Consequently, the District Council’s practice notes did not include any requirement to this effect.

The Development Control Manager advised that the procedure for consulting Parish Councils and neighbouring authorities was set out in the Guide and any member wishing to receive a copy should give their name to the Committee Officer, whose contact details were on the agenda.
At the request of the Forum, the Development Control Manager agreed to:

1. write to South Staffordshire District Council to ask what its policy is on consulting Parish/Town Councils over planning applications for sites adjacent to their boundaries, as it does not appear to be consulting Parish Councils in Wyre Forest District under these circumstances;

2. submit a report to the District Council’s Planning (Development Control) Committee to enable it to review Council policy on cross boundary and adjacent boundary consultation with other planning authorities and Town/Parish Councils;

3. consult Town and Parish Councils within the District over any proposed revisions to planning practice notes, as a result of 2 above, prior to their submission to full Council for approval; and

4. request neighbouring planning authorities to e-mail their weekly lists of planning applications to relevant Town/Parish Councils in the District

c) Guide to Use Classes Order

The Development Control Manager circulated a guide to the Use Classes Order 1972, as amended by the Use Classes Amendment Order 2005 and the General Permitted Development (Amendment) Order 2005. She took members through the guide and drew attention to the following key changes arising from these amendment orders:

1. Use Class A 3, relating to food and drink, has been subdivided to create a new use class A4 for drinking establishments, such as pubs and bars, and use class A5 for hot food takeaways.

2. The classification for internet cafes has been clarified with the result that they now fall within A1 retail use.

3. Night clubs are no longer in use class D2, but are classified as “Sui Generis” and therefore planning consent is needed for a change of use to a night club, the intention being to give greater control over the evening economy.
AGREED

The information be noted.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked the Development Control Manager for her informative reports.

PROGRESS ON PARISH PLANS, TRAINING AND QUALITY PARISHES

Ms J Maturi, Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils’ Development Support Officer, gave a progress report, copies of which were circulated at the meeting, on the following first tier White Paper development initiatives:

- Training - the County Training Partnership and Town/Parish Clerks’ qualification CiLCA
- Parish Charter
- Parish Plans
- Quality Parish Councils

In the ensuing discussion, members raised concerns over the cost of parish council functions and precept levels, whilst every effort was made to keep them as low as possible.

It was noted that Councillor Keith Perkins of Rock Parish Council had taken on the role of “Training Champion” to promote the County Association of Local Councils’ training programme for Parish and Town Councils. He urged all Town and Parish Councils in the District, (councillors and clerks) to participate in training sessions, particularly in view of changes in relevant legislation and rules. He suggested that joint sessions for parish councils in Wyre Forest would be beneficial and Members agreed that attending courses was a good way of networking.

The Chairman asked all members present to convey the message, about the benefits of training, to their Councils. He also asked for the suggestion regarding joint sessions for Wyre Forest parishes to be reported back to the County Association of Local Councils.

Reference was made to the need to encourage more young people to stand for their parish or town council. The point was made also that newly retired people should be targeted as they usually had more time to spare than young people.

It was suggested that perhaps the County Association of Local Councils could write a press release for a local paper on the role of parish councillors to encourage more candidates to come forward.
Members were informed that Bewdley Town Council was trying to persuade older school children to set up a Schools Council to shadow the Town Council. However, it was noted that it was difficult promote activities in schools that were not related to curriculum targets.

**AGREED:**

The report be noted and Ms Maturi be asked to report back to the Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC) on the suggestions detailed above.

**7. WOLVERHAMPTON BUSINESS AIRPORT – UPDATE**

The Principal Committee Officer gave an oral report of a telephone call from Mr Rod Parr, Chairman of Wolverhampton Business Airport Action Group (WAG), regarding the proposed expansion of Wolverhampton Business Airport.

She reported that Mr Parr had given the following update:

The planning application submitted for the extension of the runway at Wolverhampton Business Airport and other matters, to enable commercial flights, is in abeyance. South Staffordshire District Council had commissioned consultants, W S Atkins, to undertake an environmental impact assessment in relation to the application. The consultants had found the application to be inadequate in all respects and the applicant is expected to take until the summer of 2005 to respond to these findings.

There is talk of the original plans being modified, but so far no alternative proposal has been submitted. WAG is monitoring the situation closely and urges local residents to be vigilant. There is concern that if approval is given to a scaled down application, it could be the “thin end of the wedge”.

However some comfort could be drawn from the fact that Wolverhampton Business Airport rated only a brief mention in the Government’s White Paper on Transport, which recorded that the airport’s role would be determined by local requirements. It was not included in the National Air Transport Strategy.

**AGREED:**

The report be noted.
UPDATE ON QUERIES FROM PARISHES

The Forum considered an update on queries raised by Parishes, copies of which were circulated at the meeting. The issues covered were: the new Licensing Act, Highways Partnership Unit issues, Affordable Housing, the Police Community Consultation Group and Air Quality Management Issues.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were raised:

a) Affordable Housing

A member advised that Nexus, a Registered Social Landlord, had submitted a planning application for an affordable housing scheme in Chaddesley Corbett. The proposal was for five bungalows and five houses for renting and five houses, which would be available on a shared equity basis. The District Council had 13 weeks to make a decision and this included a 21 day consultation period for written responses. A previous consultation exercise by the County Rural Housing Enabler had indicated that the majority of respondents wanted social housing to be provided in that parish.

Members raised concerns generally over the high cost of housing, including difficulties experienced by young people in buying homes. An example was given of a small maisonette in Bewdley costing £200,000. The point was made that parishes should press for more affordable housing.

b) Highways Partnership Unit

A member drew attention to concerns expressed by Bewdley Town Council over the adequacy of road maintenance and its view that insufficient funds were spent on rural and minor roads. In her capacity as a County Councillor, she had written to the Leader of Worcestershire County Council on this matter. He had responded (in February 2005) that, whilst specific local problem areas could be cited, evidence showed a real improvement to county roads in recent years.

He had advised that the National Road Maintenance Condition Survey had been undertaken for many years on sample sites on all classes of road across the county. This showed that, whilst the condition of roads, nationally, had been fairly static since 1998, Worcestershire roads had been improving steadily since then and were now approaching the average condition of roads nationally. He had stated that, by April 2004, the condition of minor (unclassified) roads had improved by 6% and the condition of Worcestershire main roads was in the top 25% for local
authorities in the country. Early results for 2004/05 indicated an 18% improvement in the condition of B and C roads. However, the member was not convinced that the condition of rural roads in Worcestershire was improving.

The Forum endorsed these concerns and members cited problems with potholes and poor surfaces on rural and minor roads. For example, reference was made to the condition of road surfaces and the time taken to repair potholes. Members also commented on the quality of these repairs. In their view, they were not up to the necessary standard as they were insufficiently durable. It was felt that not enough funds were being spent on the maintenance of these roads and that parishes should bring pressure to bear for more resources to be allocated for this purpose. In members’ experiences, rural roads were very often no longer quiet roads, as the volume of traffic using them had increased significantly.

A member advised that Rock Parish Council employed a “lengthsman” to clear roadside gutters and drains, which helped to improve road conditions. Reference was made also to the advantage of responsibility for some road maintenance being devolved to parishes and funding being allocated to them for this purpose. It was thought that this might be an issue, which CALC could pursue.

AGREED:

A letter be sent to the Highways Partnership Unit informing it of the concerns expressed at this meeting over the condition of rural roads in the District, particularly potholes and poor road surfaces.

c) Police Community Consultation Group

Members noted that the update report gave contact details for those wishing to be included in the mailing list to receive papers for meetings of the Police Community Consultation Group. The Chairman suggested that Parish Clerks could ask to be included on the list so that Parish Councils could receive this information.

d) Air Quality Management Issues

The Forum was informed that the District Council had approved an Air Quality Action Plan and had ordered an NO2 monitor, which would provide better air quality monitoring data.

In the ensuing discussion, attention was drawn to pollution caused by vehicles queuing to enter or leave industrial estates or shopping areas via constricted access roads. Members wished to know whether potential
pollution problems of this nature were taken into account in relation to planning applications for such developments.

AGREED:

The Highways Partnership Unit be informed that the Forum is concerned over air pollution caused by exhaust emissions from traffic standing in queues at entrances or exits to shopping areas and industrial estates and asked whether it takes this into account when commenting on planning applications for such developments.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Police Call Centre - Hindlip

A member informed the meeting that it was necessary to ask for a log number when making a complaint to the Police Call Centre at Hindlip. She had found that calls were not recorded in the official statistics if a log number was not allocated. Members noted this advice.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

AGREED: The next meeting of the Parish Forum be held on 13th October 2005 at 7 pm in Kidderminster.

(This was subsequently booked into the Earl Baldwin Suite, Duke House, Kidderminster.)