

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

SERVICE POLICY PANEL

THE EARL BALDWIN SUITE, DUKE HOUSE, CLENSMORE STREET, KIDDERMINSTER

21ST NOVEMBER 2006 (6.00PM)

PRESENT:

Councillors: J Holden (Chairman), M J Shellie (Vice-Chairman), Mrs H E Dyke, Mrs S M Hayward, W G Jones, Mrs R L Lewis, Miss M A Mason, C D Nicholls, M A Salter, D R Sheppard, K J Stokes, G C Yarranton.

OBSERVERS:

Councillors: G W Ballinger, N J Desmond – Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, M J Hart – Cabinet Member for Commercial Services, Mrs A T Hingley – Cabinet Member for Planning, Health & Environment, J A Shaw.

SPP.27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Miss S C Meekings.

SPP.28 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTES

Councillor W G Jones was appointed as a substitute for Councillor Miss S C Meekings.

SPP.29 COMPOSITION AND ATTENDANCE OF PANEL

AGREED:

The attendance of the Panel, as per the Attendance Record Sheet appended to the Agenda, be noted.

SPP.30 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made.

SPP.31 MINUTES

AGREED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

SPP.32 CHILDREN'S FUND PRESENTATION

The Panel received a presentation on the Children's Fund from Rachael Brown of Worcestershire County Council.

She went through the slide presentation, the contents of which are attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes. She highlighted the following points:

- a) The Children's Fund was part of a Government agenda which looked at supporting vulnerable children.
- b) The Children's Fund had been set up in 2001 and had been introduced in three tranches. Birmingham had been set up first, Solihull second and Worcestershire and other authorities in the County were third.
- c) An example of how to actively involve children in the fund would be the setting up of a committee in an out-of-hours service for children and allowing them to have their say and also giving them a small pot of money that could be spent with assistance from adults.
- d) A "Wild Explorer" project concentrated on building children's self esteem and social skills. A "Youth Bank" project allowed the children to have their say in how future money could be spent and how the project could be developed.

Rachael Brown responded to members' questions as follows:

- a) Worcestershire County Council continued to look at ongoing projects every quarter. It was likely that when a Children's Fund came to the end of its term, some of the projects would continue with support from the local community.
- b) Ellen Green from the Oldington & Foley Park Community Network had set up a Youth Clubs scheme and it had attracted funding.
- c) The 90 projects and 57 playschemes commissioned were very successful and well attended, even in the rural areas.
- d) The area of Wyre Forest benefited from all the countywide projects. There was a good geographical spread across the county.
- e) Children with disabilities had specialist playschemes for their needs. The children were transported to and from the sessions.
- f) Worcestershire County Council was part of the Children's services and was checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

The Chairman thanked Rachael Brown for her presentation.

Councillor Hart left the meeting at this point (6.20pm).

SPP.33 **SECTION 17 AUDIT – SUMMER 2006**

The Panel considered a briefing paper from the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer on the Council's fourth Section 17 Audit and its progress in meeting the statutory duty as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The following points were noted:

- i. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 provided local authorities, the Police and a number of other key partners with a new legal framework to reduce crime and disorder. Within this, Section 17 of the Act required local authorities to consider the crime reduction potential of all their policies, service provision and other decisions.
- ii. The Council's fourth Section 17 Audit was undertaken in August 2006.
- iii. The purpose of the audit was to help each of the Council's Divisions to:
 - Rate their service delivery against a range of Section 17 standards, as defined by the Audit Commission.
 - Provide evidence to justify achievement and the level or rating indicated.
 - Set development goals where a gap in a service's performance against a particular standard has been identified.
- iv. Members were pleased to note that most Divisions had well-developed responses or actions for meeting their targets. Where gaps had been identified, a development goal for service improvement had been set.

The Community Safety and Partnership Officer left the meeting at 6.25pm.

AGREED:

It was noted that Wyre Forest District Council continues to embed community safety into the planning and delivery of services in order to meet the S17 duty, tackle and sustain the low crime levels in partnership with other agencies and reduce people's fear of crime.

SPP.34 **PLAY DEVELOPMENT**

The Panel considered a briefing paper from the Cultural Services Manager regarding the implementation of the internal review of Play Development.

The Cultural Services Manager informed Members about the internal review of Play Development and highlighted the following points:

More children had participated in the Playgroups this summer.

- a) Summer Action Squads (SAS's) had been formed on 9th March 2006 and they had been aimed at the 10-14 age group. The Summer Action Squads had been well attended and had provided a range of sports, art play and rangers. There was hope in the future that the SAS's could provide similar activities for younger children. She reported that Summer Action Squads were not provided by any other authority in the area.
- b) The Ranger activities had sold out in ten minutes. A camping event had been held overnight in the summer and it had sold out within one hour.
- c) The attendance of the Kids Klub had dropped in the last two years and this was possibly due to more competitors in the area, although the occupancy rates for other activities had been good.
- d) The way forward was to go along the format of Summer Action Squads. The Council still intended to carry on with the Playschemes but reduce them from five to two for 2007. It had not yet been decided where the two Playschemes would be located. If members had any requests for the locations of these two Playschemes, they should inform the Cultural Services Manager of these for consideration.
- e) She also reported that having spoken to children in the District, they had enjoyed the outdoor activities the best.

Members congratulated the Cultural Leisure and Commercial Services Division on the Playscheme work that had been carried out during the summer.

AGREED:

The information be noted.

Councillor Desmond left the meeting at this point (6.45pm).

SPP.35

**PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY AND WYRE FOREST AFFORDABLE WARMTH
STRATEGY**

The Panel considered a briefing paper from the Senior Health and Sustainability Officer on progress made by the Council in delivering the Wyre Forest District Council Sustainability Strategy 2004-2007 and the Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Strategy 2004-2007. The Sustainability Strategy was an internal report. The Affordable Warmth Strategy focused on the more vulnerable households in the District, working together with the Primary Care Trust and the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEAC).

The Senior Health and Sustainability Officer went through the briefing paper and highlighted the following points:

- a) The Wyre Forest District Council Sustainability Strategy and the Wyre Forest District Council Affordable Warmth Strategy would need to be reviewed in early 2007, as it would come to the end of its three year period.
- b) Much work had been done to produce a Climate Change Action Plan. It had been agreed to report progress to members on a regular basis.
- c) A Travel Plan had been adopted for Duke House, Kidderminster. There had been an increase in the business cycle allowance. Showers had been installed and the Car Loan Scheme had also been revised. As a result, the Council offered a 0.5% discount in the interest payable on a loan taken out for employees on Bands A-D. Early indications were that there would be a good take up of this offer.
- d) Paper consumption levels were less encouraging. The amount used this year indicated that there would be an increase on last years total.
- e) A total of 52 households living in fuel poverty had been referred though the Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Scheme to the EEAC.

The Senior Health and Sustainability Officer responded as follows to members questions:

- i. With regard to purchasing new electricity, power was bought for Duke House from the site owners as the Council only rented the site. Recommendations were to be made to the owners about purchasing an alternative source of electricity from another supplier.
- ii. All householders were able to go to the EEAC for advice and apply for a subsidised grant.
- iii. She would supply members with a fact sheet on the latest insulation deals that were on offer. She pointed out that these deals were always subject to change and householders were advised to contact the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on 0800 512012 for up to date information.

AGREED:

- 1. The Wyre Forest District Council Sustainability Strategy and Wyre Forest Affordable Warmth Strategy be reviewed early in 2007.**
- 2. The Senior Health and Sustainability Officer agreed to report back to the panel regarding liaising with the owners of Duke House, Kidderminster with regard to purchasing an alternative source of electricity.**

3. **A fact sheet be circulated by the Senior Health and Sustainability Officer to all members on the latest insulation deals that are on offer.**
4. **The information be noted.**

SPP.36

INTERNAL REVIEW OF KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY (KLOE) FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING

The Panel considered a briefing paper from the Head of Planning, Health and Environment on the Internal Review of Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) for Environmental Health and Licensing.

The Environmental Health and Licensing Manager took members through the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) The Self Assessment was an important part of the process of continual review of service delivery and, although an inspection was not due, the report had been prepared in advance.
- b) The current Environmental Health and Licensing service was a high performing one and it delivered a good quality service.
- c) Noise complaints and food inspection numbers had increased over the last five years.
- d) Wyre Forest District Council employed less full time staff than any other local authority.
- e) The Environmental Health Service was under pressure and recruitment and retention was a problem. There was a shortage of qualified Environmental Health staff throughout the country.
- f) The Human Resources Section was looking at salary levels and pay conditions in neighbouring authorities, in order for comparisons to be made.
- g) The way forward would be to look at training. The section needed more technical support to enable officers to be able to spend more time out on site.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet:

The Improvement Plan be considered particularly where there are budgetary implications for consideration as part of the 2007/08 budget setting process.

SPP.37

COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Panel received an update from Councillor J Holden on matters considered by the County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Holden took members through the minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2006 and advised that the report on Mental Health would be circulated to all members.

He also reported that he had received a document regarding the reducing of the NHS Hospital Chaplaincy service. The service currently included services such as, visits to hospital wards, organising funerals of stillborn babies and support from bereavement officers. It looked as if the Chaplaincy service would be reduced to 1. He had arranged to meet representatives of the Hospital Acute Trust on Wednesday 22nd November 2006 and hoped that this meeting would provide further information.

Members were informed that the Primary Care Trust had reported at a meeting last week that there would be a projected £16 million deficit as a result of a reduction in its budget.

Members were also informed that with regard to the Acute Hospitals, there would be further cuts during 2007 and this might be significant for Worcestershire. The Primary Care Trust were also trying to arrange for a doctor to be at Kidderminster Hospital seven days a week to deal with approximately 2,000 patients who were currently having to travel to Worcester.

Councillor Jones left the meeting at this point (7.35pm).

Members thanked the Chairman for the circulation of the Dentistry information as agreed at the last meeting, (Minute SPP.23 refers).

AGREED:

The information be noted.

SPP.38 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel considered its work programme for the current municipal year with regard to the Community Strategy, Corporate Plan, Annual Priorities and the Forward Plan.

The Chairman reminded members that a Mini Motorcycle Task and Finish Group had been set up from this Panel and was ongoing.

He also pointed out to members that an Ice Rink Task and Finish Group was to be set up but this would be member-led only. He asked members to volunteer to sit on the group.

The Chairman reported that a visit would be made in January 2007 to a fun rink in Cannock and one in Altrincham to see how they operated. He would take photographs and give a presentation to the Panel.

AGREED:

1. **An update on the Mini Motorcycle Task and Finish be reported at the Service Policy Panel on 23rd January 2007.**

2. **An Ice Rink Task and Finish Group be established with the following membership:**

**Councillor J Holden
Councillor Mrs J Salter
Councillor D Sheppard**

3. **The Ice Rink Task and Finish Group visit a fun rink in Cannock and Altrincham and report back to the Service Policy Panel on 23rd January 2007 with its findings.**

Councillor Ballinger left the meeting at 7.40pm and Councillor Mrs Hayward left the meeting at 7.45pm.

SPP.39

PRESS INVOLVEMENT

There was nothing to report.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm