

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

WEDNESDAY 11TH JUNE 2008
(6PM)

Present:

Councillors: G W Ballinger (Chairman), Mrs J Greener (Vice-Chairman), M Ahmed, J Holden, J Phillips, K J Stokes, J Thomas, N J Thomas and G C Yarranton.

Observers:

There were no members present as observers.

CPS.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs H E Dyke and S J Williams.

CPS.2 Appointment of substitutes

Councillor G C Yarranton was appointed as a substitute for Councillor S J Williams.

CPS.3 Declaration of interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CPS.4 Minutes

Agreed:

The minutes of the Corporate Service & Performance Committee meeting held on the 1st April 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

Minute Number CSP145, replace J Thomas with N Thomas who left the meeting at 7pm.

The Chairman advised members that Agenda Item No. 6 – Single Site Update would be considered in the exempt section due to the nature of the information that would be imparted.

CPS.5 The Role of Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee Membership

Members received a verbal report from the Head of Legal & Democratic Services on the role of Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee Members. She highlighted the following points:

Agenda Item 4

1. The Leader of the Council would be the lead Cabinet Member for this committee.
2. The work programme was an important document and would be looked at at each meeting.
3. It was important that members understood their role in the community and how they engaged with people that elected them onto the Council. Members were encouraged to participate in meetings and if they wished something in particular to be looked at, then it could be raised as the subject of a review panel. The review panel would decide what research needed to be done and organisations they wished to contact. Their ideas would be brought back to the scrutiny committee for discussion and a decision would be reached as to whether recommendations should go to cabinet.
4. The success of the scrutiny committee would be down to its members and the work they undertook.
5. In her role of Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal & Democratic would do an assessment at the end of each year to see what scrutiny work had been carried by the scrutiny committee.
6. It was important that Members read their agendas and marked the items they wanted to discuss at the meetings. Preparation was the key to a successful meeting.
7. A member of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee had already been proactive in proposals for a potential scrutiny item.
8. She referred members to the Terms of Reference of the committee.
9. The Forward Plan came out monthly and contained all the key decisions that were scheduled to be considered by committees for the next three months. If a member saw something of specific interest to them, they could follow that item through by attending the meetings at which it would be considered.

A Member was concerned that he had not been included in the consultation on play areas in the district. The Head of Property & Operational Services agreed to pass on his comments to the Head of Community & Partnership Services.

The Chairman advised Members that if there was an item they would like to be included on the work programme, they should raise it and commented that there was lots of opportunity to get involved in the topics that were scrutinised.

Members felt that because the scrutiny committee could not make decisions, the recommendations made would not be accepted by Cabinet. The Head of Legal & Democratic Services pointed out that majority of recommendations taken to Cabinet were agreed.

CPS.6 Single Site Update

This item was considered after the exclusion of the press and public at minute number CPS.15.

CPS.7 Equality and Diversity Update

Members considered a report from the Head of the Chief Executive's Office which informed Members about Equality and Diversity (E&D) matters.

The Head of the Chief Executive's Office took members through the report and highlighted the following points:

1. The purpose of the report was to update members with the latest information on equality and diversity. New legislation was emerging and the report highlighted what was being done nationally and locally.
2. Reports would be produced for the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee during the municipal year, as it was important that all members were kept aware of the changes that were happening.
3. A Single Equality Bill would be taken through Parliament although no timescale had yet been published.
4. The Equality & Diversity Activity Report showed eight events/documents that Wyre Forest had been working on to move various equality issues forward.
5. Future action included internal and external consultation, holding focus groups and putting together questionnaires.
6. The "No Barriers" newsletter would be distributed to all members in due course.

The Policy & Performance Assistant advised Members that if they wished to have a copy of the document "Equal to the Task", then they should contact her..

A member had a concern regarding the Jubilee Swimming Club and the fees they had to pay for the use of the swimming pool. It was pointed out that grant monies could be applied for to assist with costs. It was also pointed out that a task and finish group could be set up to look at Section 106 monies.

Agreed

The information be noted.

CPS.8 Budget Scrutiny Progress Report

The Chairman advised Members that the Head of Financial Services had not been able to attend the meeting and had sent his apologies. He commented that the Head of Financial Services had spoken to the Leader about the budget scrutiny process and would bring a report to the July meeting of Corporate Services with his ideas on how scrutiny of the budget would work for the forthcoming municipal year. There was also a possibility that the public may be involved.

The Chairman also advised members that the budget remit fell under the terms of reference of the Corporate Services committee and the budget panel would consist of members of this committee.

Agenda Item 4

Members were keen to carry on with the budget scrutiny process as they felt that they had had a valuable input into the budget process.

The Financial Services Manager advised members that the Budget Review Panel had previously reviewed the whole of the council's budget book covering both revenue and capital. It had received reports from service managers which outlined details of the service provided together with the resources used to provide that service. In addition, their reports had included details of opportunities for growth as well as opportunities for efficiencies. The Financial Services Manager explained that up until 2007-8, there was the Gershon savings initiative which had now been replaced with a further Efficiency initiative termed the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. This required savings to be made of 3% for the next three years. She explained that the Head of Financial Services was working with the Head of Chief Executive's office to develop an Efficiency strategy.

The Chairman reported that he had a meeting with the Head of Financial Services on 25th June 2008 to go through the budget process.

Agreed:

The Head of Financial Services to present a report to the next Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee on 10th July 2008 on the budget scrutiny process for the forthcoming municipal year.

CPS.9 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 took members through the work programme and it was agreed that two new review panels would be set up— a review on the “No Surprises Protocol” and a Section 106 monies review would be added to the committee's work programme. The Scrutiny/Committee Officer would contact the two members concerned for completion of the scrutiny proposal form and add the items on to the next meetings agenda.

The chairman requested that the recommendation tracking forms for 2007/08 be bought back to this committee for comment and follow up.

It was noted that the item Corporate Governance framework be amended to Corporate Plan.

Agreed

The work programme be approved subject of the following changes:

- 1. The Scrutiny/Committee Officer to arrange for scrutiny proposal forms to be completed by the relevant members for the proposed reviews and be presented to the next meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee on 10th July 2008.**
- 2. The Corporate Governance Framework item be amended to read Corporate Plan.**

CPS.10 Press Involvement

No items were identified for scrutiny that might require publicity.

CSP.11 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Decision:

Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of “Exempt Information” as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CPS.12 Summary of Minutes

The following proceedings were considered after the press and public had been excluded from the meeting. A summary of the minutes relating to these items has been made as “exempt information” would be disclosed if the minutes were published in full.

CPS.13 Minutes

Agreed:

The exempt minutes of the Corporate Service & Performance Committee meeting held on the 1st April 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPS.14 Single Site

A verbal update was received from the Head of Property & Operational Services regarding the current status of the single site project and he agreed to give Members an update at the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.21 pm.