

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 13TH NOVEMBER 2008 (6:00 PM)

Meeting in Public

Present:

Councillors: G W Ballinger (Chairman), Mrs J Greener (Vice-Chairman), M Ahmed, Mrs H E Dyke, J Holden, J Phillips, K J Stokes, J Thomas, N J Thomas and S J Williams.

Observer:

Councillor J-P Campion.

CSP.82 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N J Desmond – Cabinet Member for Community & Corporate Services.

CSP.83 Appointment of Substitutes

No substitute members were appointed.

CSP.84 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CSP.85 Minutes

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd October 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CSP.86 Council Website Developments 2008

The Committee received a report from the Information and E-Government Officer which provided an update on the Council's Website Developments.

The Information and E-Government Officer went through a slide presentation, the contents of which are attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes. The following points were highlighted:

- a. The number of people making website payments and using electronic forms had almost doubled in the last two years.
- b. Colleagues from across the County were working together to design a website that all Worcestershire authorities could utilise but which would be branded for

each authority.

- c. The Committee were shown the latest version of the website front page which used a similar design concept to the BBC website design.
- d. Although the Government were promoting self-service access through websites, face-to-face contact still had a major role to play.
- e. Efficiency savings could be made, for example website transactions costs less than telephone transactions and significantly less than face-to-face transactions.

In response to questions, members were informed of the following:

- a. One major priority would be the redesign of the front page; with a clear link to go straight to the planning section of the website.
- b. On the Parish Council webpage, there was a direct link to Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council.
- c. Although the amount of payments being made electronically was small, one of the benefits of electronic payments was that the hard to reach people could potentially be reached.
- d. Figures for internet access and broadband connections had been produced by the CACI Consumer Register and provided by Worcestershire County Councils Research and Intelligence Unit.
- e. The use of electronic consultations was an area that required further developments.
- f. Training was available to all Members on request on how to navigate the website to achieve maximum benefit from the information and services available.

Agreed: The information relating to the Council Website Developments be noted.

The ICT Manager and Information & E-Government Officer left the meeting at 6.30pm.

CSP.87 Corporate Plan Priorities 2008/09

The Committee considered a report from the Head of the Chief Executive's Office which informed Members of the progress regarding Priorities for 2008/09 as set out in the Corporate Plan 2008/2011.

The Head of the Chief Executive's Office informed the Committee of the following:

- a. The Audit Commission monitored progress on the Corporate Plan Priorities and considered what information had been provided and what had been challenged.

Agenda Item No. 4

- b. If members required further information on the reports, this could be provided.
- c. It was possible to focus on a certain priority and the relevant officer be invited to attend the scrutiny meeting.
- d. Target setting was not easy, especially in cases of partnership working.

In response to questions, the Head of the Planning, Health & Environment responded as follows:

- a. Corporate Plan Priority PHEBP0845a – Kidderminster Regeneration Prospectus. The target of 31st October 2008 had not been met due to continuing work with two external consultants and slipping one Cabinet cycle. The consultation was due to end in December 2008 and would be back on target by February 2009.
- b. Corporate Plan Priority PHEBP0850a – Progress Development Sites, 8 & 8a Bridge Street, Stourport. The target date had been changed due to difficulties with the Compulsory Purchase Order. A public enquiry would be held in February 2009.
- c. The definition of 'Affordable Housing' was in Planning Policy Statement 3.
- d. Residential Social Landlords (RSL's) received funding from the Housing Corporation which was based on a three year programme (2008-2011). Each district in Worcestershire provided the Housing Corporation with a programme that it was expected to deliver. This tied in with the Local Area Agreement three-year target which was agreed by the Government.
- e. Wyre Forest District Council was expected to identify 110 affordable homes but this was dependant upon several issues, i.e. land available, planning permissions.

The Head of Planning, Health & Environment left the meeting at 6.50pm.

The Leader of the Council informed members that the Print Management System had saved the Council £35,000 in the first year and this was identified in the budget book.

In response to a Member's question, the Leader replied that the Treasury Management Review Group had been set up to look at the systems currently in place. An opportunity would be available at Council on 26th November 2008 for Members to ask questions on this issue.

Agreed: The information be noted.

CSP.88

National Indicators

The Committee considered a report from the Head of the Chief Executive's Office which informed Members of progress up to 30th September 2008 of the new National Indicators (NIs) for 2008/09.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Head of the Chief Executive's Office went through the report and highlighted the following:

- a. It was important to focus on all 71 indicators in the report. These related not just to district but to other agencies and public bodies as the Council may be responsible for items as a partner and may also have a community leadership role to play.
- b. Of the 71 indicators set out in the report, the Council was responsible for collecting 50 of them.

Agreed: The information be noted and the next report would be for the year end results.

CSP.89 Corporate Governance Framework

The Committee considered a report from the Head of the Chief Executive's Office which provided Members with a mid-year progress report with the implementation of the Council's Corporate Governance Framework (CGF).

Members were informed that the new Corporate Governance Framework evolved early in 2008.

Agreed: The Committee noted the progress report.

CSP.90 Feedback from Cabinet.

The Committee noted the content of the Cabinet action list of 23rd October 2008 which related to the Single Equality Scheme.

Agreed: The information be noted.

CSP.91 Work Programme

The Panel considered its work programme for the current municipal year with regard to the Sustainable Community Theme, Corporate Plan Aim and the Forward Plan.

The Scrutiny/Committee Officer agreed to contact Members with regard to arranging an additional meeting of Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee to look at the recommendation tracking forms for 2007/08.

Agreed: The Scrutiny/Committee Officer to contact Members to arrange an additional meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee to look at the recommendation tracking forms.

CSP.92 Press Involvement

No items were identified for scrutiny that might require publicity.

CSP.93 Exempt Information

DECISION: Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of

Agenda Item No. 4

the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of “Exempt Information” as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

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.

CSP.94 Minutes

Decision: The exempt minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd October 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

CSP.95 Single Site

A verbal update was received from the Leader of the Council regarding the current status of a single site for the Council.

The meeting ended at 7.25 pm.