

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES

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

3RD DECEMBER 2008 (6:00 PM)

Present:

Councillors: Mrs H E Dyke (Chairman), J Phillips (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, A J Buckley, G H Eeles, Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis, D R Godwin, Mrs S M Hayward, M B Kelly and G C Yarranton.

Observers:

Councillors: J-P Campion, Mrs J Greener, M J Hart, Mrs A T Hingley, Mrs F M Oborski and M J Shellie.

CMS.46 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Mrs P V Hayward and C D Nicholls.

CMS.47 Appointment of Substitutes:

Councillor D R Godwin was appointed as a substitute for Councillor Mrs P V Hayward. Councillor M B Kelly was appointed as a substitute for Councillor C D Nicholls.

CMS.48 Declarations of Interest:

No declarations of interest were made.

CMS.49 Minutes:

AGREED:

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th November 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CMS.50 Flooding:

The Chairman advised that, as the Committee had two items to consider which both related to flooding, Officers would present both reports before receiving questions from Members and the public.

The Chairman of the Joint County and District Review of the Summer 2007 Floods and the District Representative advised the Committee that the Review Panel's remit was to look at the impact of flooding across Worcestershire and the responses

of the emergency services.

Members noted that the Review had investigated the immediate impact of flooding and scrutinised how the event was managed.

The following points were noted in relation to the report:

- i) Many problems had been identified relating to communication between different agencies.
- ii) The exercise did not investigate individual concerns.
- iii) Problems were encountered with obtaining information from the local water authority.
- iv) The press had indicated they would like to work with Local Authorities to ensure that, at the time of an emergency, accurate information was communicated to members of the public.
- v) The County Emergency Planning Team were working with local radio stations.
- vi) It was proposed that the review panel reconvene in 12 months time to review the situation.
- vii) Each PACT Chairman in Kidderminster had been given a grant for the local emergency plan, in other areas Parishes had received these funds to draw together information relating to local vulnerable individuals.
- viii) A major problem identified was that ditch owners had not been ensuring that ditches were kept clear and had been reminded of their duties.

CMS.51 Pitt Review

The Committee considered a briefing paper from the Watercourse Officer advising of the proposed comments of the Head of Planning, Health and Environment and Head of Property and Operational Services in response to the recommendations contained in the Pitt Report.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer advised Members that the Queens Speech had not included any items on flooding, as a result it remained unknown when issues in this area would be addressed by Government.

Members were advised that brook clearance work had taken place in over 85 specific locations in the District although some enforcement action had had to be taken in some cases.

The Head of Property and Operational Services added that the Council had gained experience and knowledge from the floods of summer 2007 in terms of emergency planning.

Members noted that watercourse management was one issue that had contributed to the flooding.

Furthermore, the Head of Property and Operational Services added that since the flooding, the policy on sandbagging had been formalised, a Watercourse Officer had been appointed, and resources had been made available by the District Council and the Red Cross. Aqua sacks had been issued to households for storage, there were also strategic distribution points for sandbags.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Committee noted that there had been difficulties in identifying vulnerable people in the community, in response to this Parishes and PACT Chairman had been approached to establish community plans in their areas.

Members also noted that the Council had been successful in securing one of two trial vehicles in the country that works across all the emergency services.

At the meeting 17 members of the public, two Parish Council representatives and one Town Council representative attended to put forward views relating to these items.

Many of the questions put forward to the Committee concerned emergency planning and the role of volunteers in an emergency situation. The Committee noted that no formal training was provided to volunteers, in matters such as clearing watercourses. Whilst it was acknowledged that the Council did not have the expertise to provide training in this area Members felt that the Environment Agency should be approached to ascertain if they were able to provide training to volunteers.

Questions were put forward by residents who had culverts on their land, some indicated that when they purchased the property local searches had not indicated that there was a culvert present.

The Solicitor advised that in certain cases deeds would reveal riparian ownership and that the Local Authority had to comply with legislation for local searches, which meant it could be criticised if it was found to reveal any non-statutory information.

Members noted that work was underway to locally map this information, however this would not be statutory information once complete.

Members of the public put forward concerns regarding vulnerable people in an emergency situation. Residents indicated that in some areas many residents were elderly which meant that there was not local capacity to offer assistance. The Head of Property and Operational Services advised that the work on community plans with Parishes and PACT's would assist the Council in establishing the location of vulnerable people. Once this information had been collected the next phase would be to assess if any local groups had capacity to assist in an emergency situation.

Recommended to Cabinet:

- 1. That the report on the Implications of the Pitt Review on Flooding take account of recommendations from the Joint Scrutiny Exercise. Consideration be given to recommendations from the exercise and the officers proposed responses to the Pitt Review in so far as they relate to the District Council.**
- 2. A letter be written to the Environment Agency supporting voluntary groups requests for training and the provision of insurance.**
- 3. A letter be written to the local MP expressing concern that the Queens Speech did not include the recommendations from the Pitt Review.**

CMS.52 Section 17 Audit:

The Committee received a report from the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer on the Council's sixth Section 17 Audit and progress in this statutory duty as defined by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer informed Members that this would be the Council's 6th Section 17 paper and that all Local Authorities were required to consider the crime and reduction potential of all their policies, budgetary, other decisions and service provision.

Agreed: The content of the report be noted.

CMS.53 Substance Misuse Strategy:

Members considered a briefing paper from the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer which advised Members of the priorities detailed in the Worcestershire Substance Misuse Strategy.

The Committee noted that the purpose of the Strategy was to set out the agreed direction that agencies work towards and that the strategy provided an overarching framework of objectives and actions.

Members noted that Wyre Forest would deliver the strategy through the Community Safety Partnership.

Recommended to Cabinet:

The Worcestershire Substance Misuse Strategy be adopted.

CMS.54 Driving Standards Agency:

The Vice-Chairman of the Committee advised Members that, following the Committee's recommendation to Cabinet, the Chief Executive had written to the Driving Standards Agency (DSA). The DSA had responded and stated that they did not require any assistance in locating a new site in the District.

Members noted that the Chief Executive had subsequently replied to the DSA letter requesting details of the economic and traffic impact assessments.

Agreed: The information be noted.

CMS.55 Feedback from Cabinet:

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet Action list be noted.

CMS.56 Work Programme:

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

Agenda Item No. 4

The Chairman advised that the item on the Worcestershire and Herefordshire Waste Management Strategy had been deferred to February 2009 as work was still ongoing.

The Leader advised that there would be an additional item for the Committee's work programme to look at the Council's Waste collection Methods. It was noted that this would be an in-depth item and may require a special meeting to discuss.

AGREED:

The work programme for the current municipal year be approved subject to the following amendments:

- 1. The Waste Management Strategy for Worcestershire and Herefordshire be deferred to February 2009.**
- 2. The Council's Waste Collection Methods be added to the Committees work programme. The Scrutiny / Committee Officer liaise with the Head of Property & Operational Services to ascertain when this item will come forward.**

CAR.57 Exclusion of the Press & 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 paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CAR.58 Minutes:

AGREED:

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on the 5th November 2008 be confirmed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting ended at 8:40pm.