

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

4TH FEBRUARY 2009 (6:00 PM)

Present:

Councillors: Mrs H E Dyke (Chairman), J Phillips (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, A J Buckley, Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis, Mrs S M Hayward, C D Nicholls, N J Thomas and G C Yarranton.

Observers:

Councillors: Mrs F M Oborski and M A Salter.

CMS.68 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor G H Eeles.

CMS.69 Appointment of Substitutes:

Councillor N J Thomas was a substitute for Councillor G H Eeles.

CMS.70 Declaration of Interests:

No declarations of interest were made.

CMS.71 Minutes:

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 7th January 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CMS.72 Recommendations from the Alcohol & Substance Misuse Review Panel

Members considered a briefing paper from the Scrutiny/ Committee Officer detailing the recommendations put forward by the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Review Panel.

The Chairman of the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Review Panel advised the Committee that a thorough scrutiny review had been conducted in relation to the alcohol element of the review process. Members noted that work on the substance misuse element of the review was continuing, and that recommendations in this area would be presented at a future meeting of the Committee.

A Member advised the Committee of ongoing problems relating to alcohol related anti social behaviour in St George's Park and of issues with the Police referring local shops that sell alcohol to Trading Standards.

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Members noted that the Review Panel would be commencing work on the substance misuse element of the review process, it was suggested that some local premises did contribute to drug and substance misuse in the area.

It was noted that the key points highlighted in the briefing paper were comments provided by witnesses who had informed the review process, and not necessarily the views of Councillors.

The Committee considered the recommendations put forward by the Review Panel, discussion took place on the proposed questions to put forward to the local MP.

Recommended to Cabinet:

- 1. The local MP be requested to approach Government to put forward the following questions for a response from Government:**
 - i) Is the Government aware of the issues relating to the sale of cheap alcohol?**
 - ii) Has the Government got any plans to tackle the sale of cheap alcohol?**
 - iii) Has the Government any comments on the actions of retailers, such as Wetherspoons, selling cut price alcohol?**
 - iv) Is the Government aware that many young people, under 18, do not directly purchase alcohol, but get it through proxy alcohol sales?**
 - v) Are there any plans to address proxy alcohol sales?**
- 2. No further ARZ's be created in the District as the Police have sufficient powers to control underage drinking, and the control of anti social behaviour and on street drinking could be addressed via other means.**
- 3. Training on drug and alcohol awareness be made available to all District Council Members, to be provided free of charge through the Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team.**
- 4. An education programme throughout schools and colleges be adopted, coupled with publicity in the local media to address misconceptions relating to ARZ's.**

CMS.73 Recommendations from the External Funding Review Panel

The Committee considered a report from the Scrutiny / Committee Officer which detailed the recommendations from the External Funding Review Panel, following its scrutiny of the systems in place within the Council for selecting, applying and monitoring external funding.

The Regeneration Officer advised the Committee that, following the review process, further consultation had taken place with the External Funding Working Group. In order to increase the reporting of external funding bids, Officers submitting applications for funding would no longer be required to complete funding intent forms, these would instead be completed by the Regeneration and Economic Prosperity Section.

The Chairman of the Review Panel advised that comparable local authorities had

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been contacted to ascertain what processes they had adopted for the monitoring and management of external funding.

The Committee noted that no other comparable authority had robust systems in place for managing external funding, and that two authorities had requested to be advised of the outcome of the review process.

Discussion took place on the advantages of having a dedicated external funding officer, Members noted that in having one specialist officer to write bids for funding they would not necessarily have specialist knowledge in the areas for which they were applying for funds.

Furthermore, Members noted that Council Officers, who had submitted bids for external funding, had been hugely successful in their applications and had secured a significant amount of funds for the Council.

Recommended to Cabinet:

- 1. The revised Funding Intent Forms be adopted, as detailed in appendix 1 to the briefing paper.**
- 2. All Officers, who complete bids for external funding, send a full copy of the bid to the Regeneration & Economic Prosperity Section.**
- 3. Financial data regarding the Council's external funding activities be included quarterly in the Members Information Bulletin, together with contact details for the External Funding Working Group.**
- 4. External Funding be a topic for the next Member Briefing Session on 1st April 2009, in order that all Members can be apprised of the Council's external funding activities.**
- 5. The External Funding Working Group hold an event to share the processes in place for external funding within the Council and to highlight best practice.**

CMS.74 Kidderminster Arts Centre

Members considered a request from Councillor Mrs Oborski to scrutinise the need for an arts centre in Kidderminster.

Councillor Mrs Oborski advised that, in light of the current financial situation, the item could be deferred to the next municipal year, as it would be appropriate to consider the item in line with the development of Single Site and the re-development of the Stourport Civic Facilities.

Agreed: The item be deferred to the next municipal year.

Councillor Mrs F M Oborski and Councillor M A Salter left the meeting (7:02pm)

CMS.75 Work Programme

The Committee considered its work programme for the current municipal year with

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regard to the Community Strategy, Corporate Plan, Annual Priorities and the Forward Plan.

The Vice Chairman advised that the Chief Executive of the Council had been writing to the Chief Executive of the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) to ascertain information relating to the traffic impact study the DSA had commissioned.

The Chairman advised that a response had been received from Richard Taylor MP with regard to the questions the Committee had put forward in relation to Post Office closures.

Members noted that the average cost for each of the 42 area plans the Post Office had consulted on was £55k to £60k and that Post Office Ltd was forecasting annual savings of £45million from Post Office closures.

Furthermore it was noted that the item on the Waste Management Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire had been moved forward to the next municipal year and the External Funding Strategy had been added to the Committee's work programme for March 2009.

Agreed:

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

- 2. The Waste Management Strategy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire be moved forward to the next municipal year.**
- 3. The External Funding Strategy be added to the Committees work programme for March 2009.**

The meeting ended at 7:10pm.