

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 5TH MARCH 2009 (6:00 PM)

Meeting held in public

Present:

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

Observers:

Councillors S J M Clee – Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise and Mrs A T Hingley – Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Rural Affairs.

CSP.137 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Phillips and K J Stokes.

CSP.138 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor J Aston was appointed as a substitute for Councillor J Phillips.
Councillor H J Martin was appointed as a substitute for Councillor K J Stokes.

CSP.139 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CSP.140 Minutes

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 17th February 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CSP.141 Recommendations from the No Surprises Review Panel

The Committee considered a report from the Chairman of the No Surprises Review Panel which detailed the recommendations from the Review Panel.

Councillor H J Martin left the meeting at 6.04pm.

The Chairman of the review panel took Members through the report. He thanked the Officers and Members who had assisted in the review. The following points were highlighted:

Councillor H J Martin came back to the meeting at 6.06pm.

a. A Members' lounge at Duke House was not considered feasible in the current

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climate. Members asked the Committee/Scrutiny Officer to obtain details of the usage for the meeting rooms in Duke House, Kidderminster and to report back to the Committee at its next meeting on 9th April 2009.

- b. It was perceived that communication was a two-way process and all Members should be encouraged to return telephone calls from Officers.
- c. It was important that Members received an up to date copy of the Council phonebook.

Agreed:

The Committee/Scrutiny Officer to prepare an analysis of the usage of the Earl Baldwin Suite, Loom Room and Meeting Room at Duke House, Kidderminster and report back to the Committee at its meeting on 9th April 2009.

Recommendation to Cabinet

- 1. An awareness campaign be arranged for officers and Members for “Think Local Member”. This would include posters and possibly a sticker which would remind Officers to inform Members about what was happening in Council wards.**
- 2. An abbreviated copy of the Council phonebook be made available to all Members.**
- 3. A quarterly item be added to the Members’ Bulletin asking for feedback to go to the Strategy, Partnerships & Communications Manager.**
- 4. The No Surprises Protocol be amended. (Updated copy attached at Appendix 1 to these minutes).**
- 5. Officers be requested to include all Council events and activities on the media planner which is on the Council’s intranet.**
- 6. The responses to the “No Surprises” questionnaire be included in the Members Bulletin.**
- 7. A standing item on the Members “No Surprises” Protocol be included in the monthly Core Brief.**

CSP.142 Corporate Plan Priorities 2008/09

The Committee considered a report from the Head of the Chief Executive’s Office on progress up to 31st January 2009 with the Priorities for 2008/09 as set out in the Corporate Plan 2008/2011.

Members considered the report and were informed of the following:

- a. The Audit Commission had recently carried out an inspection of the Council’s Economic Regeneration function and this had been circulated to all Members.
- b. PHEBP08 46a – Rural Regeneration Strategy. The Strategy had now been adopted and all actions were on target. The reason this had been delayed was because it had to be linked up with an EU Scheme called “LEADER”. This scheme would enable EU funding.

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- c. CEOBP08 – Adoption of Use of Resources Strategy. The Audit Commission report was awaited.
- d. PHEBP08 50a – 8 & 8a Bridge Street, Stourport. The Compulsory Order had been withdrawn by the landowner and the next step was to develop procurement of the site
- e. PHEBP08 50b – 23/24 Bridge Street, Stourport. The front of the building had been tidied up, so in theory the target had been achieved. The Planning (Enforcement) Committee had agreed not to proceed with the retrospective planning application.

Members agreed that Improving Efficiency & Value for Money would be included as an item on next month's report.

Agreed:

- 1. The information be noted.**
- 2. The Policy & Performance Officer to arrange for the Improving Efficiency & Value for Money item to be on the agenda for the next meeting of this Committee.**

Councillor S J M Clee left the meeting at 6.30pm.

CSP.143 Comprehensive Area Assessment

The Committee received a report from the Head of the Chief Executive's Office which drew their attention to the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) Framework published by the Audit Commission in February 2009.

The Policy & Performance Officer informed Members of the following:

- a. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) was a new approach to assessing the performance of all local public services in geographical areas, including the Council.
- b. The Audit Commission had published a framework and this document had been sent to Members electronically. This would come into force in April 2009.
- c. The CAA would replace the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and be more streamlined and focus more on partnership working.
- d. The new framework was broken down into two parts – Area Assessment and Organisational Assessment.
- e. The Area Assessment would look at how public services were delivered.
- f. The Organisational Assessment would primarily relate to the Council. A score of 1-4 would be given with 1 being poor and 4 being excellent.
- g. If the Council were to achieve a low score, it would mean that inspectors would visit the council more frequently.

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Members agreed that the whole partnership concept should be looked at in more detail to see whether the Council were getting value for money. The Committee/Scrutiny Officer was asked to arrange for this item to be on the work programme for the next municipal year.

Agreed:

- 1. The information be noted.**
- 2. The Committee/Scrutiny Officer to arrange for an item on Partnership Working to be added to the work programme of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee for the next municipal year.**

CSP.144 National Indicators

The Committee received a report from the Head of the Chief Executive's Office which reported progress for Quarter 3 (up to 31st December 2008 for the National Indicators (NIs) for 2008/09.

Councillor Mrs A T Hingley left the meeting at 6.50pm.

Members went through the report and were informed of the following:

- a. 19 indicators were measured using the Place Survey which had been completed and the data was currently being collated. Results would be reported to Cabinet in April 2009.
- b. Many of the NI set were collected annually, therefore no data had been available for this report. However, work was being undertaken in preparation for the reporting of this data at the end of the financial year.
- c. It was felt the target for NI180, which related to the number of changes of circumstances affecting housing benefit/council tax benefit per 1,000 caseloads, was unrealistic and this needed to be reviewed.

Members requested further information regarding the affect of the current financial situation on housing benefit / council tax benefit claims and whether this would influence future target setting for this NI.

Agreed:

- a. The information be noted.**
- b. The Policy & Performance Officer to provide a response regarding the effect of the financial situation on NI 180.**

CSP.145 Feedback from Cabinet

The Committee noted the contents of the Cabinet action lists of 22nd January 2009 which related to recommendations from the Section 106 Review Panel and the Business (Service) Continuity Plan and 19th February 2009 which related to the review of the Financial Strategy 2009/2012 and Alternative Budget Proposals.

Agreed: The information be noted.

CSP.146 Work Programme

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

The Committee/Scrutiny Officer informed Members of the following:

1. The Equality & Diversity Update would be moved to the new municipal year.
2. Corporate Governance Framework would be deleted from the work programme as it would be presented to Audit Committee in March 2009.
3. Recommendation Tracking Forms would move from 30th March 2009 to 9th April 2009 meeting.

Agreed: The information be noted.

CSP.147 Press Involvement

No items were identified for scrutiny that might require publicity.

CSP.148 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 the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of “Exempt Information” as defined in paragraphs 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CSP.149 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.150 Single Site

The Committee received a verbal update from the Committee/Scrutiny Officer on Single Site.

The meeting ended at 7.01 pm.