

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER 2009 (6.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: G W Ballinger (Chairman), Mrs J Greener (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, J Baker, Mrs H E Dyke, P B Harrison, J Holden, C D Nicholls, J Parish, M A Salter, K J Stokes, J Thomas, N J Thomas and G C Yarranton.

Observers:

Councillor M J Hart.

CR.65 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A J Buckley, J-P Campion, N J Desmond and Mrs F M Oborski.

CR.66 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor G C Yarranton was appointed as a substitute for Councillor A J Buckley.

CR.67 Declaration of Interests

Councillors J Aston, Mrs J A Greener and J Thomas declared a personal interest in agenda item number 6 as they are board members of The Community Housing Group.

CR.68 Minutes

Agreed: The minutes of the meeting held on 15th October 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CR.69 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

CR.70 Budget Review Panel

The Committee received a report from the Director of Resources which gave recommendations from the Budget Review Panel following Stage 1 of the budget process – Service Prioritisation, Application of Prioritisation Model.

The Director of Resources informed Members that a new process for the budget had been introduced this year. Two Budget Review Panel meetings had been held on 14th October and 2nd November 2009 where a prioritisation exercise had been

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undertaken. There had been two pieces of evidence used when prioritising the Council services, these were the Budget Consultation carried out in October 2008 and the Place Survey held early in 2009. The purpose of these two meetings had been to prioritise the Council services according to how the taxpayer had rated them in these surveys and whether they were a statutory or discretionary service.

The Budget Review Panel would be looking at these services in more detail at their meetings in January 2010 with the first meeting being held on 7th January 2010.

Members were informed that the Budget Consultation had been sent to 2,000 householders randomly selected from the Electoral Registration system. There had been approximately 400 responses. The other piece of information used in the process was a MORI Place Survey and this had been sent to 4,000 households and 1,500 replies had been received.

Members were informed that capital funds could only be used for capital projects. However, special dispensation had been granted from the Secretary of State to use capital monies for the redundancies that had been made in March 2009.

A handout was given to the Committee which gave details of the Community & Partnership Services budget areas.

Councillor M J Salter arrived at the meeting at this point, 6.17pm.

The Cultural Services Manager informed Members that the leisure development events had a working budget expenditure of approximately £23,000 with an income of £12,000, with Youth Makes Music breaking even. Majority of the costs for events related to the staff who organised them.

The Director of Resources informed the Committee that all divisions undertook their own evaluation of their services.

The Director of Community & Partnership Services informed the Committee that if they had further questions regarding the handout they could contact her directly and emphasised the link between Cultural Services and the Health and Wellbeing agenda.

Agreed:

Recommendation to Cabinet

To approve the results of the Budget Prioritisation Exercise, undertaken by the Budget Review Panel and recommend them for consideration by Cabinet.

CR.71 Data Quality Policy

The Committee received a report from the Policy & Performance Officer which informed Members of the updated Data Quality Policy and User Guidance and raised awareness of Data Quality.

The Policy & Performance Officer went through the report and informed Members that Covalent training would be held and if they wished to be trained on the system, they should let her know. It was also suggested that the training could be done in

conjunction with looking at the Directorate Business Plans.

In response to a question, Members were informed that much of the data gathered by the authority is submitted to Central Government and so should comply with the Data Quality Policy to ensure accuracy.

Members noted that the Data Quality process had been considered by the Corporate Management Team and they fully endorsed with it.

Members were also informed that Joanna Payne was the Council's Covalent Officer with Rhiannon Crisp as her backup.

Agreed:

- 1. The Data Quality Policy and User Guide be noted.**
- 2. The Committee endorses future awareness raising sessions for Members.**

CR.72 Draft Mobile and Flexible Working Policy

The Committee received a report from the Director of Planning & Regulatory Services and the Corporate Development and Improvement Manager which provided Members with information relating to the Draft Mobile and Flexible Working Policy.

The Director of Planning & Regulatory Services advised Members that the draft policy set out the framework that would provide the Council with improved working for Officers in a range of flexible working practices. A number of pilots had already been undertaken and early indications had shown that flexible working increased in productivity by 15%.

Members were informed that a consultation had been carried out with officer groups, the staff involved in the pilot and the Trade Unions.

It was noted that staff would not be forced to work from home and also not all staff had jobs which would accommodate this way of working.

In response to a question, Members were informed that the demonstrated 15% increase in work productivity arose from more working compared with the work flow rate that was normally achieved whilst staff were office based. The improvements were also through flexible working and not flexi time.

Members were also informed that a projected figure of 10 to 48% for increased productivity had been suggested in a Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) document.

Councillor M J Hart left the meeting at this point, 7.11pm.

Councillor M J Salter and J Holden left the meeting at this point, 7.12pm.

Agreed:

Recommendation to Cabinet:

1. The Committee provide comment on the draft policy.
2. The Committee propose that Cabinet approve the draft policy for adoption by Council, subject to consideration being given to the feedback received from this Committee.

CR.73 Feedback from Cabinet

The Committee noted the contents of the Cabinet action list of 27th October 2009 which related to the Mortgage Review Panel.

Agreed: The information be noted.

CR.74 Work Programme

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

Agreed:

1. The next Budget Review Panel would be held on Thursday 19th November 2009 at 4pm.
2. A report on the Worcestershire Enhanced Two Tier (WETT) Regulatory Services programme would be presented to the 10th December 2009 meeting. Members were informed that they had been sent an email regarding the Executive Summary and the Business Case. There was also a Members briefing at the Civic Centre, Stourport-on-Severn on Wednesday 19th November 2009 at 6pm.
3. An update on Comprehensive Area Assessment would be presented to the 10th December 2009 meeting.

CR.75 Press Involvement

No items were identified for scrutiny that might require publicity.

CR.76 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, 6 and 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CR.77 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.

CR.78 Exempt Minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on the 15th October 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

CR.79 Centralised Office Accommodation

The Committee received a report from the Director of Legal & Corporate Services on Centralised Office Accommodation.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm.