

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER 2010 (6.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), J Phillips (Vice-Chairman), R Bishop, J Greener, I Hardiman, P V Hayward, M A W Hazlewood, J Holden, D J Millis, M Price, K H Prosser, J A Shaw, D R Sheppard and S J Williams.

Observers:

Councillors: M B Kelly, F M Oborski, and T L Onslow.

C&R.45 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Baker.

C&R.46 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor P V Hayward was appointed as a substitute for Councillor J Baker.

C&R.47 Declaration of Interests

Councillor H E Dyke declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item no. 8 "Funding for Affordable Housing" as her husband is an employee of the Community Housing Group.

Councillors J Greener and M B Kelly declared prejudicial interests in agenda item no. 8 "Funding for Affordable Housing" as they are Board Members of the Community Housing Group.

Councillor K Prosser declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item number 10 "Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework Core Strategy" – as he had submitted a planning application.

C&R.48 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

C&R.49 Review of Parks

As part of the review of parks the Friends of the Parks of Wyre Forest had been invited to attend the meeting in order to give Members an overview of the work they had been undertaking.

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The Committee welcomed the Friends of the Parks to the meeting.

Broadwaters Park

Stella Bagnall and Cliff Quinton (Vice-Chairman of Broadwaters Park Friends) were in attendance to update members on activities of Broadwaters Park Friends.

Members received an overview of the work of the Friends of Broadwaters Park including:

- £50,000 had been received from the Lottery to make good all the footpaths, install new paths, picnic benches, and raised beds in the sensory garden, the installation of an audio post and the installation of a large wooden sculpture.
- Two tree stumps had been carved and some up lighting had been repaired.
- A community event to celebrate the lottery funding was attended by approximately 1,000 people.
- The Friends had undertaken some considerable fundraising over the last 7 years and were now concentrating on maintenance of the park rather than any large projects.
- The park was litter picked 365 days a year.
- Monthly maintenance days were held to keep the area fresh and vibrant.
- The Friends currently had 50 members.

In response to a Member's question it was clarified that the Friends of Broadwaters Park did not charge a subscription.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnership Services wished to place on record her grateful thanks for the work undertaken by the Friends of Broadwaters.

Friends of Springfield Park

Gary Darlington and Joe Wagstaff were in attendance to update members on the activities of the Friends of Springfield Park.

The Friends of Springfield Park was a relatively new group which had been set up in September 2009. An overview of what had been achieved over the last 14 months was given which included:

- The Park had a variety of landscaping which included the Stackpool, canal side setting and meadow land.
- Police were assisting The Friends in monitoring anti social behaviour.
- Weekly walks were being conducted and these were proving to be popular.
- A hugely successful 'Step into Summer' event was held where visitors were surveyed for their views on the park.
- 50% said that they came to the park to use the equipment – particularly the playground, 66% perceived that local schools should be involved in a nature project with the park, and 46% commented that the lack of toilet facilities was a problem.
- The Friends were keen to launch a website and Facebook page in order to reach a wider audience.
- Regular litter picking took place.
- 3 major events had been held during the year.
- The Friends held monthly meetings which were attended by local residents, Community Support Officers, Ward Members and Council Parks staff.

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The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnership Services requested that the Newsletter shown to the Committee be circulated to Members electronically.

The Friends were congratulated on the work they had undertaken.

Friends of St. George's Park

Spike was in attendance to give an update to the meeting on the work of the Friends of St. George's Park and outlined the work the Friends had been undertaking which included:

- An informal group of the Friends litter picked the park on a daily basis.
- The park was promoted on shopping bags.
- A bird nesting project had been undertaken.
- A regular newsletter was distributed.
- There used to be 5 fixed tennis nets in the park but one court was used as a MUGA (multi use games area), one as a basketball pitch, one as a BMX track and there was now only one tennis court which was used on a regular basis.
- A graffiti project had been launched and a graffiti artist was commissioned to work with 25 children.
- A number of events had been held in the park including 'Bark in the Park', 'Drum Fun Day', 'Big Lunch' and a Heritage weekend.
- £1,000 had been received from Fairways Tenants Consultative Committee for a notice board to advertise events in the park.

Members commended the Friends of St. George's Park for the work they had undertaken.

Friends of Brinton Park

David Sharpe attended the meeting to give an update on the work of the Friends of Brinton Park which included:

- Monthly meetings were held.
- It was intended to plant perennial plants in the Sensory Garden next spring.
- A bowling green had been opened on Saturday afternoons.
- A number of fundraising events had been held including an Easter Egg Trail, Carnival and Bands in the Park.
- The park had been awarded a green flag award and had also received a grant of £0.5million.
- It was hoped to establish a café in the park

The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnership Services commended the work that the Friends had undertaken – particularly the stance that had been taken on anti social behaviour.

Friends of Baxter Park

Elizabeth March was in attendance as an observer but did not wish to make any comments.

The Chairman of the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee thanked all the Friends of the Parks and commented that the presentations had highlighted the work that was being undertaken in the District's parks.

Agreed: The information be noted.

C&R.50 Wyre Forest District Local Connections Policy

A briefing paper was considered from the Principal Strategic Housing Officer regarding the Wyre Forest District Council Local Connection Policy. This policy was used when developing rural affordable housing schemes, with the aim of ensuring that residents from within that parish received priority for re-housing into that scheme.

The Strategic Housing Services Manager explained that Members had an opportunity to comment at this stage on the draft policy. Members were advised that one of the key concerns that Parish Councils had expressed to Housing Services during its work to identify affordable housing sites, was the need to ensure that any affordable housing development was secured for households with a connection to that parish.

Members made a number of comments as follows:

- A Member commented that in Chaddesley Corbett there were 18 bungalows in the affordable housing scheme but very few were let to local people with local connections. It was queried whether it was possible to retrospectively allocate properties. The Strategic Housing Services Manager clarified that this was not possible because the only way a Registered Social Landlord and developers could be legally bound was through a Section 106 agreement, but that this could be encouraged through the Local Connections Policy.
- The Right to Buy initiative had been attractive in rural areas and had meant less houses being available for rental. That the policy removed the right to acquire was considered to be a good move.
- There was concern that if parishes were given autonomous power to identify areas for housing there could be a problem.
- In response to a question regarding possible autonomous powers being granted by the Government, the Strategic Housing Services Manager commented that she was not aware of any more detail but further details would be released in the forthcoming Localism Bill.
- Sites that had recently been identified were in Chaddesley Corbett and Wolverley.
- A Member felt that conservation areas had consequences for constructing affordable housing.
- Problems occurred when a family moved out of an area and one member of the family remained in the home they had occupied. This needed to be changed.
- Members were advised that working in an area qualified a person for obtaining affordable housing.

Agreed: To recommended to Cabinet that the Local Connection Policy be approved.

C&R.51 Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire First Draft Submission Consultation, September 2010

A briefing paper was considered from the Senior Forward Planning Officer that

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sought Members' views on the proposed representations to be submitted on the Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire – Draft Submission Consultation Document (September 2010).

Members were advised that the Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy was a statutory Development Plan Document that was produced by the County Council as a Minerals and Waste Planning Authority. The Waste Core Strategy set out how all the different kinds of waste produced in the County would be managed between now and 2027.

Section 3 of the report outlined the key issues as identified by officers. A hierarchy of areas which were considered to be suitable to provide new waste management facilities had been detailed and this included Hartlebury. A table was included that proposed a target level for development of waste management facilities by each area in the hierarchy and it was noted that for level 1 areas (which included Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley) the aspiration was 20% however it was felt that the actual percentage of distribution was more likely to be 27%.

The Briefing paper outlined 58 sites throughout the County which were considered to be suitable as locations for new waste management facilities.

A discussion ensued and Members highlighted the following:

- A Member felt that the Blackstone Quarry site was a used site with little potential for further development unless it came with minor or lesser smaller sites involving the use of redundant agricultural or forest buildings. In response, the Regeneration Officer agreed to seek clarification regarding this matter.
- It was perceived that sustainability had been incorporated in the Strategy.
- The possibility of generating energy from waste was acceptable in principle as long as the emissions were of an acceptable level.
- A Member felt that the location of Blackstone Quarry on the map was inaccurate and required correction.

Agreed: To recommended to Cabinet that:

- 1. That the representations attached at Appendix 2 of the report to the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee form the District Council's response to the County's Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire – Emerging Preferred Options consultation document.**
- 2. The additional comment about the location of Blackstone Quarry be included in the representations.**

C&R.52 Funding for Affordable Housing

A briefing paper was considered from the Strategic Housing Services Manager that asked the Committee to consider a bid for Affordable Housing through the Capital Strategy.

Members were advised that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services had been given responsibility to make decisions on the award of financial support for Affordable Housing through the Council's Capital Strategy following

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consultation with the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. The decision would require to be circulated to all Members and could be called in.

Members were advised that in 2007 planning permission had been granted for 2 houses in East Street for the purpose of affordable housing in conjunction with the Community Housing Group.

Agreed: To recommend that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services approve the grant of funding for the building of two rented affordable housing units by the Community Housing Group.

C&R.53 Sustainability Policy

A Briefing paper was considered from the Principal Health and Sustainability Officer that sought endorsement of a Sustainability Policy for Wyre Forest District Council.

The Principal Health and Sustainability Officer advised that the development of the Policy had emanated from the Climate Change Action Plan. Sustainability covered a wide range of topics and the policy was intended to be overarching, as it was considered that a single policy would be most effective and also demonstrate commitment to tackling all of these issues.

Councillor F M Oborski entered the meeting at this point at 7.30 pm.

Members welcomed the policy but recognised that in order for sustainability to work a cohesive and inclusive society was required.

The Principal Health and Sustainability Officer agreed to send a hyperlink to Members where they could access information relating to carbon emissions.

Agreed: To recommended to Cabinet that the Wyre Forest District Council Sustainability Policy be endorsed.

C&R.54 Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework Core Strategy - Adoption

A briefing paper was considered from the Policy and Regeneration Manager. The report was presented by the Senior Forward Planning Officer.

Members were advised that the Inspector's report had been published during mid October. The Inspector's report would form part of the Development Plan for the District. Members were advised that adopting the Strategy would place the Council in a strong position with regard to local planning and regeneration.

Members were informed that the Inspector's report was fully binding, and that the Council would be required to make all the changes as recommended by the report.

With regard to the British Sugar site, the Inspector had consulted on two possible changes to this part of the plan. The final report set out the Inspector's recommendation which reflected the option which the District Council supported through their consultation response. The text set out a clear indication of the acceptability of a significant element of residential development at the site but allowed the precise mix of uses and proportions of land used to be given detailed

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consideration through the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD).

In response to a question from a Member, the Solicitor agreed to enquire whether departures from policy were still required to be sent to Government Office West Midlands.

Agreed: To recommend to Cabinet that the Inspector's Report be accepted in its entirety and that the Core Strategy as set out at Appendix 2 be recommended for adoption by the meeting of Full Council on 1st December 2010 to come into effect on 9th December 2010.

C&R.55 Work Programme

The Work Programme as contained in the agenda had been updated to reflect recent changes that had been agreed by the Chairman.

Agreed: The Work Programme be noted.

C&R.56 Press Involvement

There were no items identified for press involvement.

C&R.57 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 disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

C&R.58 Review of Parks

A Briefing paper was considered from the Cultural Services Manager that provided recommendations for the future management and provision of the service.

Members considered the key issues as outlined in section 3 of the report to the Committee which identified possible savings. It was positive to note that the tree audit was underway and was due to be completed by the end of December 2010. Changes to the way the allotment service was run were proving to be successful.

The Chairman felt that it was positive that most of the Friends who had attended the earlier part of the meeting found the support they received from the Council to be helpful. A Member commented that it was desirable for there to be a greater community involvement but it was not felt that the Council's involvement should be withdrawn.

Agreed: To recommended to Cabinet that further work be progressed to investigate potential savings on the basis indicated in the report to the Committee.

The meeting ended at 8.07 pm.