

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER 2010 (6.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: G W Ballinger (Chairman), P B Harrison (Vice-Chairman), J Aston, A J Buckley, H E Dyke, N Gale, J Greener, T Ingham, M B Kelly, D J McCann, J W Parish, M A Salter, and J Thomas.

Observers:

Councillors: S J M Clee, A T Hingley, and F M Oborski.

CR.61 Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P V Hayward.

CR.62 Appointment of Substitutes

No substitutes were appointed.

CR.63 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CR.64 Co-Option

The Chairman of the Committee suggested to Members that Mr Tavis Pitt be appointed to the Committee as a Co-opted Member.

Agreed: Tavis Pitt be invited to be serve on the Committee as a Co-opted Member.

CR.65 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 14th October 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CR.66 Building Control in North Worcestershire

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services which provided an outline of the proposal to create a North Worcestershire Building Control partnership between the three Councils of Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest.

The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services advised Members that a shared

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service was intended to provide a more resilient service. Members were advised that Building Control had to compete with the private sector, but could only operate on a cost recovery basis. Members were advised that the report sought Members' agreement to the principle of joint working, to be followed by a development and implementation plan.

A discussion ensued, a summary of which is provided below:

- A Member queried whether being based at Bromsgrove meant that staff could potentially be relocated to Redditch at a later date. In response, the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services advised that although Bromsgrove was to host the Service, it did not necessarily entail staff being based there, as the nature of the work required a presence in each District.
- A Member felt that Wyre Forest District Council had a high level of expertise in many areas of its service and that consequently the Council should lead more shared service initiatives.
- The Principal Building Control Officer advised that the proposal to participate in the shared service with Bromsgrove and Redditch originated from Building Control Officers who thought it would be better to be involved in the shared service from the outset.
- In response to a query from a Member, the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services advised that the starting point for the service was not to reduce staff levels or costs, but to improve resilience. Due to the cost recovery nature of the service, it was important to try to improve resilience without immediately looking to alter the balance of revenue and costs.
- A Member requested further information outlining the proposed costs of the new service.

Agreed: To support the progressing of the shared service proposals and to note the contents of the report.

6:30 Councillor S J Clee left the meeting at this point.

CR.67 Financial Update

The Committee considered a presentation from the Director of Resources which updated Members on the financial position of the Council with reference to changes in Government funding.

A summary of the key points raised in the presentation is provided below:

- The Department for Communities and Local Government was to receive a 33% reduction in funding over 4 years.
- Local authorities were set to receive a 28.1% reduction in funding over this period.
- The cuts to councils would be front loaded, so that the biggest cuts were likely to be made in the next two financial years, whereas some authorities such as Fire Services would receive more staggered reductions.
- It was not known what the Council's settlement would be, but this was expected to be clarified on the 2nd December 2010.
- The loss of Concessionary Travel Funding was expected to have a significant impact on the Council.
- Due to a freeze in Council Tax rates, it was expected that a grant would be

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received equivalent to a 2.5% rise in Council Tax, however it was not known whether this would continue beyond the financial year of 2016/17.

- Council Tax Benefit was expected to be run by the Government rather than Councils.
- The interest rate available for Councils to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board had increased from .65% to 1.49%
- A Member queried what the borrowing requirements for the Single Site Project would be, and in response, the Director of Resources agreed to clarify the matter with the Member after the meeting

Agreed: The contents of the presentation be noted.

CR.68 Work Programme

The Chairman advised Members that he had brought this item forward on the agenda order due to a request from the Cabinet to scrutinise the proposed changes to car parking charges which were contained within the report "Wyre Forest Car Parking Review – Phase II". This report was due to be considered by the Cabinet on the 16th November 2010. The Chairman proposed that a special meeting of the Committee be held in order to scrutinise the issue.

A discussion ensued about whether the issue fell within the Terms of Reference of the Committee or those of the Community and Regeneration Committee. In response a Member suggested that a joint Committee meeting could be held to overcome this issue.

Agreed:

- 1) **To hold a special Joint Committee meeting on the 22nd November 2010 at 6pm, in order to scrutinise proposals relating to car parking charges.**
- 2) **The contents of the work programme be noted.**

CR.69 Treasury Management Review Panel Recommendations

The Committee considered recommendations from the meeting of the Treasury Management Review Panel which was held on the 3rd November 2010.

The Director of Resources advised Members that the Council had recently appointed new Treasury Management Advisors and that in the light of this it was recommended that the Council should restate the Prudential Indicators and Limits from the 1st January in order to be able to implement the advice provided by the new Treasury Management Advisors. Members were advised that this would normally be renewed every financial year, but due to changing advisors in between this period it was felt that on this occasion it should be renewed for 15 months until the end of the 2011/2012 financial year.

Members were advised that Sector had been appointed as the new Treasury Management Advisors, but since their appointment they had merged with Butlers, the Council's previous Treasury Management Advisors.

The Vice Chairman advised Members that the recommendation related to two reports which were considered by the review panel, firstly the Treasury

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Management Strategy Statement - Mid Year Review and secondly, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

Agreed:

- 1) **To recommend the Mid-year Review to Cabinet to recommend to Council for approval.**
- 2) **To recommend to Cabinet to recommend to Council for approval the following:**
 - 2.1 **Restate the Prudential Indicators and Limits for the period 1st January 2011 to 31st March 2012 and for the financial year 2012/2013.**
 - 2.2 **Approve the updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st January 2011 to 31st March 2012 (including the introduction of the revised Creditworthiness Policy with effect from 1st January 2011 devised by Sector, the Council's Treasury Consultants), the associated Prudential Indicators and the detailed criteria included in Appendix 3 and 5 to the report to the review panel.**
 - 2.3 **Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1 to the report to the review panel.**
 - 2.4 **Approve the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3 to the report to the review panel.**
 - 2.5 **Revisit the Prudential Indicators in February 2011 as part of the Council's approval of the Financial Strategy 2011 to 2015, as the indicators included within this report are based on current recommendations.**
 - 2.6 **Continue to keep the current Treasury Management Practices (TMP) under review with the assistance of the Council's Treasury Consultants.**

19:06 Councillor J Greener left the meeting at this point.

CR.70 Response to Corporate Performance Clinic Query

At the request of the Chairman, the Committee considered an update from the Policy and Performance Officer regarding feedback from the meeting of the Corporate Performance Clinic which was held on the 26th April 2010.

Members were advised that an action arising from the Corporate Performance Clinic had been to contact Wychavon District Council and enquire as to their performance management system, which was rated as excellent, to identify any good practice which could be adopted by the Council.

Members were informed that all Corporate Performance Clinic reports and

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information would be circulated to Members via the Member Information Bulletin and past agendas and minutes were accessible via Cairo.

Agreed: the contents of the update be noted.

CR.71 Corporate Plan Priorities 2010/11- Progress to September 2010

The Committee considered a report from the Policy and Performance Officer which informed Members of the Corporate Plan Priority actions and performance indicators (PIs) for 2010/11 and progress made against them up until 30th September 2010.

The Policy and Performance Officer informed Members that 13 priority actions had been completed and 7 were progressing but had not yet reached their due date. In addition, 5 PIs were on target, with 3 not on target.

Members were advised that a 3 year Local Area Agreement target for providing 250 affordable housing units was approximately 20% under target, whilst the target for the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting had missed the target of 33% and was at 30.64%.

Agreed: the contents of the report be noted.

CR.72 Worcestershire Local Area Agreement Update

The Committee considered an update from the Policy and Performance Officer which updated Members regarding changes to the Worcestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA) and reported progress on regarding Wyre Forest District Council's contribution towards the current LAA priorities.

The Policy and Performance Officer advised Members that the requirement to report to Government on LAA performance had been abolished, however the Worcestershire Partnership had agreed to continue to monitor performance against key LAA targets.

Members were advised that the targets of most significance to the Council were NI 155 Number of Affordable Homes delivered, NI 186 Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions, NI 188 Adapting to Climate Change, and NI 195a Improve street and environmental cleanliness.

A Member felt that it was a positive development that target NI 117 Number of 16 to 18 Year olds who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) had continued to decrease since September 2010.

In response to a query from a Member, it was clarified that the Sustainability Team were using the Warmer Worcestershire flight data to target Affordable Warmth Grants to those areas most in need of insulation in an effort to tackle fuel poverty.

Members were advised that target NI 195a was not on target, but that this could be explained by the requirement to measure litter in three different locations. It was understood that for this measurement in particular the target had been assessed on a heavily built up area which meant that there was more litter recorded.

Agreed: that the contributions made toward the LAA by Wyre Forest District Council up to the 30 September 2010 be noted.

CR.73 Single Site Update

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which provided a brief update on progress since the last meeting of the Committee and outlined the forthcoming critical dates for Members.

The Director of Legal and Corporate Services advised Members that there was a Members Briefing scheduled for Monday 15th November which would update Members on the plans for the Single Site and to discuss the issue with the architects.

Members were advised that the Planning application for the site was on track.

A Member commented that any carpet used in the building should be made in Kidderminster.

Agreed: The developments outlined in the report be noted.

CR.74 Directorate Business Plans

The Committee considered verbal updates from Members who had shadowed Directorate Business Plans. A summary of the key points raised is provided below:

Community and Partnership Services

- The review of the Corporate Performance Clinic had not taken place as there had not been enough meetings of the Review Panel. A Member perceived that there could have been more meetings of the Clinic and on this basis felt that the item was not truly on target.
- The Chairman commented that if there were any underperforming areas it would be worth inviting the responsible Cabinet Members to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss them.
- Target CP20F relating to developing a protocol with the Community Housing Group for the delivery of neighbourhood agreements had been delayed in order to fit in with the work programme of the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
- Targets CP18C, CP19A, CP19B relating to the review of compliance with the Council's partnership framework, the development of performance management for the partnership performance indicators, and developing performance management reports relating to the Local Strategic Partnership respectively, were not on target but were close to completion.

Planning and Regulatory Services

- Of 108 targets, 93 were on target or completed.
- Parking Services showed four items as overdue, two of which had since been completed which were tarmac repairs to Bromsgrove Street Car Park, and the replacement of a boundary wall in Lax Lane Car Park.
- ICT difficulties had delayed the progress of the Local Land & Property Gazetteer, and the completion date had been amended to the 31st December 2010.
- Work on Rowland Hill Centre toilets was in progress. In response, a Member

queried this and asked for clarification from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services.

Legal and Corporate Services

- All targets on target or completed.

Resources

- Several targets under this heading were no longer required, and the following items were not on target 'HR42 Reopen Job Evaluation Scheme and carry out requests for review of grade', 'IT50 ICT Strategy – Assist with the Implementation of Self & Assisted Service in Revenues and Benefits', and 'AC16B Annual Review of Procurement'.

Agreed:

1) To seek clarification regarding the progress of the Rowland Hill Centre Toilets.

2) The contents of the update be noted.

CR.75 Scrutiny Training Feedback

The Committee considered feedback from two Members who had recently attended a Scrutiny Training event at Worcestershire County Hall.

A summary of the feedback is provided below:

- The event was a county wide training session which involved professional actors interacting with the Members in a variety of scrutiny scenarios.
- The training covered the advantages and disadvantages of scrutiny in comparison with the committee system.
- Scrutiny skills were covered in terms of questioning techniques, planning and scoping methods and general best practice.
- Members worked through several case studies where they discussed how they would conduct a scrutiny exercise and then the actors interacted with the Members as a variety of characters including Cabinet Members, Parish Councillors, Residents and Businessmen.

A Member felt that the Scrutiny process would be benefitted if Cabinet Members were to attend the training session in future.

In addition, a Member perceived that professional development was important for Members and that scrutiny training for all Members should be mandatory.

Agreed: To note the contents of the feedback.

CR.76 Press Involvement

The Chairman advised Members that he would discuss press requirements for the scrutiny of Parking Charges with the Media Office.

The meeting ended at 19:57