

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 9TH DECEMBER 2010 (6.00PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: G W Ballinger (Chairman), P B Harrison (Vice-Chairman), H E Dyke, N Gale, J Greener, P V Hayward, T Ingham, H J Martin, J W Parish, M A Salter, and J Thomas.

**Observers:**

Councillors: J-P Campion, M B Kelly, and F M Oborski.

**CR.77 Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A J Buckley, and D J McCann.

**CR.78 Appointment of Substitutes:**

No substitutes were appointed.

**CR.79 Declaration of Interests**

No declarations of interest were made.

18:02 Councillor T Ingham entered the meeting at this point.

**CR.80 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**CR.81 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

In response to minute CR.74, specifically the request for clarification regarding the Rowland Hill Centre Toilets, a Member commented that a press release had been issued which stated that the works had cost £27,000, and requested that a breakdown of these costs be provided.

**Agreed: A breakdown of the costs of refurbishing the Rowland Hill Centre Toilets be circulated to Members.**

**CR.82 Forward Plan**

There were no items identified for scrutiny within the Forward Plan.

**CR.83 Financial Update**

The Committee considered a verbal update from the Director of Resources regarding the financial position of the Council.

A summary of the key points raised is provided below:

- The Director of Resources advised that the Local Government Settlement had been delayed further. Typically the grant was received towards the end of November, but the Local Government Association had indicated it would be received on the 13th December 2010.
- Members were advised that the settlement posed risks to the Council in terms of reductions in the Council's grant, and also by the reallocation of funding, such as moving Concessionary Travel Funding to the County Council.
- Due to the delay in receiving the settlement, the December meeting of the Cabinet had been cancelled, and the budget proposals would now be considered at a special meeting on the 10th January 2011.
- In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Resources advised that the Council was only expecting to receive a settlement figure for 2011/2012, and that the following two years would be projected by informed estimates. In response to a further query, it was clarified that only one year's settlement information had been received for the 2010/2011 financial year.

The Chairman advised Members that the terms of reference for the Budget Review Panel had been amended and copies were tabled at the meeting, and that dates for the Review Panel had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

**Agreed:**

**1) To note the contents of the presentation.**

**2) To note the amended terms of reference for the Budget Review Panel.**

**CR.84 Development of a New Corporate Plan**

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Development and Improvement Manager which set out the draft Corporate Plan for the period of 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014.

The Chairman of the Corporate Plan Development Review Panel advised Members that the review panel had undertaken a thorough consultation process which included Members, Council employees, local businesses, community groups and schools. Consultation sessions were held at schools in Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley which received a very positive response.

Members were advised that consultees had considered a list of possible priorities for the Council, and that this had included a specific priority relating to young people, but following consultation sessions at the schools it emerged that the students felt that they should not be treated as a special case, and that instead the Council should focus on issues such as regeneration.

Members were informed that the plan set out three priorities which were

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underpinned by strategic actions which set out where the Council wanted to be in 2014.

The Chairman of the Review Panel advised Members that the review panel had felt that the priorities should set an ethos and direction for the Council rather than demand that additional resources be allocated to specific areas.

The Corporate Development and Improvement Manager informed Members that the draft version of the Plan before the Committee was intended for internal use, and that a shorter version would be produced for the public.

The Leader of the Council commented that the draft plan was of high quality and that the Committee and the review panel could be proud of their work.

The Chairman queried whether the Chairman of the review panel was confident that the strategic action "*Working towards meeting current and future housing needs*" could be met, and in response he commented that as part of the consultation process there was a consensus that affordable decent houses needed to be provided, and he felt that the Council could work to facilitate affordable housing construction over the period of the plan. In response to this, a Member commented that to facilitate affordable housing it was necessary to ensure a sufficient supply of land, and that the Council was progressing well in doing so through the Local Development Framework process.

A Member commented that it was positive that the plan had stated aims and objectives which were set out in writing.

The Chairman of the review panel thanked the Corporate Development and Improvement Manager and the Policy and Performance Officer for their efforts towards developing the plan.

**Agreed: To approve the draft Corporate Plan for 2011-2014 and recommend to Cabinet to recommend it to Council for adoption.**

#### **CR.85      Communications Update**

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Partnerships and Projects Manager which provided an update on the Council's communication programme for the period September to November 2010.

The Strategic Partnerships and Projects Manager outlined to Members the key tasks carried out by the Communications Team in recent months including:

- Production of the Council Tax leaflet
- Developing the Media Relations Programme
- Employee Survey
- Redesign of the intranet
- Creating a single database for mailouts
- Publishing WyredIn, the new online magazine for residents

Members were advised that it was the second time the Employee Survey had been carried out, and its results had been benchmarked against those of the previous year.

A summary of the key points raised is provided below:

- There had been a slight drop in the number of respondents who said they enjoyed their jobs.
- Less people felt that they had job security.
- There was an increase in the number of employees who were satisfied with the relationship with their line manager, and also with their colleagues.

In response to a query from the Chairman, the Leader of the Council advised that the Council Constitution set out that the Leader and Cabinet Members would be the principal spokespersons for the Council.

The Chairman queried how the Membership of the WyredIn Editorial Board had been determined, and in response a Member clarified that Group Leaders had been asked to nominate Members.

A Member of the WyredIn Editorial Board advised that the magazine did not mention individual Councillors, and instead focused on promoting community groups.

A Member commented that where the Council's logo was being used on external publications, it was important to ensure that they were checked for errors. In response, the Strategic Partnerships and Projects Manager advised that some publications were produced by partner organisations rather than the Council itself.

The Chairman commented that a takeaway in Kidderminster was displaying a Council logo which dated back several years, and queried whether the Council monitored the use of its logos by businesses and other organisations. In response, the Director of Legal and Corporate Services advised that the logo in question was from the Council's Licensing Awards, and that the Council could ensure that it would be removed.

In response to a question from a Member, the Strategic Partnerships and Projects Manager advised that the number of employees who stated they felt valued by their line manager was in fact 86.75%.

18:56 Councillor P V Hayward left the meeting at this point.

**Agreed: To note the contents of the report.**

**CR.86      Single Site**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Executive which provided a brief update on the progress of the Single Site project.

The Director of Legal and Corporate Services advised Members that a Member Seminar regarding single site which had been scheduled for December 2010 was due to be rescheduled to January 2011, so that the design consultants could provide more details including samples of furniture.

A Member commented that furniture from the Council's existing inventory should, where possible be redeployed at the single site. In response, the Leader of the Council advised that existing furniture that could be reused at the single site would

be, and the remaining furniture would be sold.

The Director of Legal and Corporate Services advised Members that an audit of the Council's existing furniture stock was underway, which would enable a more strategic approach to the furniture requirements for single site.

In response to a query from a Member, the Leader of the Council advised that there would be carpet in some specific areas of the building in order to represent the area's heritage, but that most of the building would be fitted with carpet tiles.

**Agreed: To note the contents of the report.**

19:02 Councillor M B Kelly left the meeting at this point.

**CR.87 Recommendation Tracking**

The Committee considered a summary of the outcomes of recommendations which fell within the terms of reference of the committee which were put forward to Cabinet during the municipal year 2009-2010.

**Agreed: To note the contents of the report.**

**CR.88 Feedback from Cabinet**

**Agreed: To note the contents of the report.**

**CR.89 Work Programme**

**Agreed: To note the contents of the Work Programme.**

**CR.90 Press Involvement**

The Chairman informed the Committee that he intended to discuss publicity requirements for Scrutiny with the Media Team.

**Agreed: The Assistant Scrutiny / Committee Officer to arrange a meeting between the Scrutiny Chairmen and the Media Team.**

The meeting ended at 19:12.