

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 13TH JANUARY 2011 (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, P V Hayward, H J Martin, D J McCann, F M Oborski, J W Parish, M A Salter, and J Thomas.

Observers:

Councillor N J Desmond.

CR.91 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Ingham.

CR.92 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor F M Oborski was appointed as a substitute for Councillor T Ingham.

CR.93 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

CR.94 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CR.95 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

CR.96 Forward Plan

No items for scrutiny were identified within the Forward Plan.

CR.97 New Ways of Working Projects - An Update

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which provided an update on the progress of the Council's Transformation Programme which included the development of a new Shared Services Strategy.

The Chief Executive outlined the progress of the Transformation Programme, and a summary of the key points raised is provided below:

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- In response to a query from a Member, the Chief Executive advised that the ICT Strategy did include a Disaster Recovery Policy, and that the Council's position had strengthened in this area, as now all of the Council's computer data was mirrored at a separate location, which would allow for faster recovery of data. In response, the Chairman requested that details of the Disaster Recovery Policy be provided to Members.
- In response to a query from a Member, the Chief Executive clarified that 50 employees were currently home workers, and that 150 posts were currently identified as possibly suited to mobile and flexible working, and that home workers were included within this.
- It was planned that there would not be a one person one desk approach to the single site and some sharing of desks would be required.
- It was clarified that home working was voluntary, but after three months home working, employees would be offered a change to their contract to include home working. At present there was not a policy of new employees having to work from home, but this would be kept under review and it might be that in future some specific posts might specify working from home as the method of delivery.
- In response to a query from a Member, the Corporate Development and Improvement Manager advised that where home workers did not already have suitable desk furniture, it would be provided by the Council.
- A Member queried what support arrangements were in place for home workers such as those in Revenues and Benefits who may be subject to abusive phone calls from customers. In response, the Chief Executive advised that the support arrangements for home workers would be no different to those of office based workers, and that if home workers experienced such problems, they could contact their managers for assistance and support, and if necessary, take formal action.
- In response to a query from the Chairman, The Policy and Performance Officer advised that she had found home working to be very convenient. She had found the remote IT facilities to be reliable, and during the recent snow and ice she had not needed to attempt to travel to the office.
- The Corporate Development and Improvement Manager informed Members that every home worker had a personal plan set up.
- The Chairman commented that he had some concerns over the possibility of a shared service for Revenues and Benefits, as it had been considered by the Council previously, but added that a full consultation process would be a positive way to move any proposals forward. In response, the Chief Executive advised that the draft Shared Services Strategy would not commit the Council to any shared service, but instead set out the process for identifying and deciding to participate in shared service initiatives.

Agreed:

- 1) The contents of the report be noted and a further update on the Transformation Programme be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Committee in six months time.**
- 2) Details of the Council's Disaster Recovery Policy be circulated to Members.**
- 3) The new Shared Services Strategy for 2011 onwards be endorsed by the Committee and recommended to Cabinet to recommend to Council for adoption.**

CR.98 Financial Update

The Chairman advised Members that the first meeting of the Budget Review Panel had been held immediately prior to the meeting of the Committee, and that there was no further information to impart under this item, unless Members had any specific queries they wished to raise.

CR.99 Report of the Joint Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny

The Committee considered the recommendations made by the Worcestershire Joint Scrutiny Exercise into the Worcestershire Hub.

A summary of the key points raised is provided below:

- The Chairman commented that at the first meeting of the Hub Scrutiny, there was some confusion amongst some of the Members as to the objectives of the Scrutiny, as it was felt that the Worcestershire Hubs in the North of the County were performing well.
- The Customer Service Manager outlined to Members that the report contained a summary of the Council's responses to the recommendations. In particular, Members were advised that recommendations 2 and 11 should instead have said that these recommendations would be considered by the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee, rather than the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet.
- Members were informed that it was not felt that there were any particularly significant recommendations which required action by the Council, as most were already in place.
- Further to recommendation 1, which related to Councillor understanding of the work of the Hub, Members were advised that a briefing session regarding the Wyre Forest Worcestershire Hub would be provided at the next Members' Quarterly Scrutiny Briefing in February 2011.
- With regard to governance of the Hub, Members were advised that a Governance Board had been established but that Membership arrangements were not yet clear.
- Wyre Forest were the only District Council to have passed management of

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the Council website over to the Hub.

- A Member felt that as the Wyre Forest Worcestershire Hub was particularly high performing, the Council should not participate in a shared service for the Hub.
- A Member stated that Worcestershire County Councillors had been issued with a dedicated telephone number for reporting issues directly to the Hub, which was not available to District Councillors.
- The Chairman commented that Members should report issues directly to the Hub, so that requests could be tracked and officers would not be overloaded with direct correspondence. In response several Members stated that they felt in some instances it was easier to contact officers directly for a prompt resolution, without involving a third party. In addition, a Member commented that in certain situations Members should have the ability to contact officers directly, so that they could resolve issues quicker than Members of the public.
- A Member felt that County and District Members should not be seen as two tiers of representation, as both were elected as local representatives. In response, the Chairman advised that he would write to the County Council to clarify the position regarding a dedicated telephone line for County Councillors. In addition, a Member commented that only County Councillors were able to report highways works for resolution via the Kidderminster Lengthsman Scheme.
- A Member who participated in the review as a County Councillor commented that it had been a detailed and lengthy review which had considered more aspects of the Hub's operation than originally intended.
- A Member felt that given the length of time spent undertaking the review, the recommendations were not particularly prescriptive, nor were they very relevant to the Wyre Forest Hub.

Agreed:

- 1) To write to Worcestershire County Council in response to the recommendations on behalf of the Committee.**
- 2) To establish whether Worcestershire County Councillors have been provided with a direct line to access the Worcestershire Hub, and if so, to write to Worcestershire County Council to request further clarification.**
- 3) To note the Council's responses to the recommendations made by the joint scrutiny exercise**

CR.100 Corporate Plan Priorities 2010/11 - Progress up to November 2010

The Committee considered a report from the Policy and Performance Officer which informed Members of the Corporate Plan Priority Actions for 2010/11 and progress made against them up until 30 November 2010.

18:54 Councillor N J Desmond left the meeting at this point.

The Policy and Performance Officer advised Members that all of the priority actions listed in the report were on target, and most were completed.

A Member queried the progress of item PRS BP10, PR50 - Kidderminster Town Centre Strategy, and stated that the action to restructure the Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership by November 2010 had not been completed, as a new Partnership had not been formed at the November 2010 meeting of the Partnership.

A Member queried why item PRS BP10, PR49a - Rewyre Initiative, Eastern Gateway was listed as 90% complete, and not 100%. In response, the Policy and Performance Officer advised that this was because the update was until the end of November 2010, and that it should have been completed by the end of December 2010, and she would respond to Members with clarification.

Agreed:

- 1) To seek clarification regarding the progress of item PRS BP10, PR50 - Kidderminster Town Centre Strategy, with reference to the restructuring of the Kidderminster Town Centre Partnership.**
- 2) To confirm the progress to date of item PRS BP10, PR49a - Rewyre Initiative, Eastern Gateway.**
- 3) To note the progress as outlined in the update.**

CR.101 Corporate Performance Clinic Update - December 2010

The Committee considered a report from the Policy and Performance Officer which informed Members of the outcomes of items discussed at the Corporate Performance Clinic held on the 14th December 2010.

A summary of the key points raised is provided below:

- In response to item RES BP10 FD35a - MOT Testing Station the Chairman commented that they had seen the service advertised, and felt that it could be seen as competition for local garages.
- The Policy and Performance Officer advised that the target response rate for item CAB LP21 - Employees Survey Response Rate, had not been met, and the figure had declined on the previous year.
- The Chairman felt that the Corporate Performance Clinic could focus more on problem areas rather than good news stories.
- A Member queried how the Council would monitor performance following the removal of the obligation to collate many national performance indicators, and the closure of the Audit Commission. In response, the Policy and Performance Officer advised that Central Government had published a list of data which would require publication or reporting against by Councils. In addition, the Corporate Development and Improvement Manager advised that this data set was currently subject to a consultation and that the details

could be provided to Members.

Agreed:

- 1) To clarify the Council's position with regard to advertising for the MOT Testing Station.**
- 2) To circulate to Members details of the consultation regarding the Government's new performance management data set.**
- 3) To note the contents of the report.**

CR.102 Single Site Update

The Committee considered 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 samples of the interior furniture which could be provided at the single site would be available to view at the Civic Centre from the 24th to the 28th January 2011. In response to a query from a Member, the Director of Legal and Corporate Services advised that 5 tenderers had been shortlisted, and that the closure date for the tender process would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

A Member queried what the implications would be for the single site, if there was a change in administration following the May 2011 elections, which was not in favour of the project. In response, the Director of Legal and Corporate Services advised that once the contract had been awarded, then the Council would be bound by that contract.

Agreed:

- 1) To circulate to Members details of the key dates involved in the tendering process for appointing contractors.**
- 2) To note the developments outlined in the report.**

CR.103 Work Programme

Agreed: To note the contents of the work programme.

The meeting ended at 19:17.