

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 3RD MARCH 2011 (6.00PM)

Present

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

Observer: Councillor G W Ballinger.

C&R.86 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D J Millis.

C&R.87 Appointment of Substitutes

No substitutes were appointed

C&R.88 Declaration of Interests

Councillors I Hardiman and K H Prosser declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 relating to future arrangements for the management of sports and leisure centres as they are Board Members of DC Leisure.

C&R.89 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to an amendment on page 7, last line should read: "... require help from staff such as those at the Community Housing Group Offices in Oxford Street."

Councillors Hardiman and Prosser left the room during consideration of the following item.

C&R.90 Future Arrangements for Management of Sports and Leisure Centres

Members considered a scoping paper with regard to conducting a review into the future arrangements for the management of the Council's sports and leisure centres.

It was highlighted that the Council's contract with its current providers would expire in March 2013 and it was necessary to undertake a full appraisal of the options available to the Council for the provision of sports and leisure facilities in order to make a clear recommendation to the Cabinet and Council on the most affordable

and sustainable option.

Members considered the scoping paper and agreed its contents with an amendment to the Terms of Reference as follows:

- The Cabinet Member could also be invited to give evidence.

The following Members put their names forward to be members of the Review Panel:

Councillors J Baker, H E Dyke, J Greener, J Holden, J A Shaw and D Sheppard. (Councillor Phillips stated his intention to be an observer at meetings of the Review Panel).

It was agreed that the Principal Committee Officer would email Group Leaders for any additional participants.

Agreed:

- 1. The information be noted.**
- 2. The Principal Committee Officer to email Group Leaders for any additional participants on the Review Panel.**

C&R.91 Local Investment Plan and the Homes and Communities Agency

A report was considered from the Strategic Housing Services Manager that outlined the origins of the Local Investment Plan (LIP) and its role in supporting funding bids.

Members were advised that all local authorities had been encouraged to develop a LIP with key partners to determine housing investment in an area. The LIP set out the needs to be addressed based on robust evidence from local strategies including the Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Development Framework and other relevant strategies.

The development of LIPs was undertaken by task and finish groups in the north and south of the county and these were supported by Regeneris Consultants who had experience in writing LIPs and the groups were overseen by the Place Shaping Theme Group.

The LIP identified three key strategic priorities:

- Creating the conditions to sustain and generate employment
- Providing the right housing for all communities
- Developing Worcestershire's infrastructure.

The LIP linked priorities to all the schemes that were contained in the appendix to the report.. It was noted that once the LIP had been agreed the Council would try and prioritise some of the sites for various funding streams and investment across the district.

Members discussed the report and the following comments were made:

Agenda Item No. 4

- It was clarified that the LIP was voluntary
- A member perceived that the Council should agree the LIP as if it did not it could be left in the cold without the necessary influence.
- It was clarified that the Council used to be part of the Southern Housing Area which included Warwick and Stratford. However, Warwick and Stratford decided that they did not want to be part of the relationship with Worcestershire Councils. Thus the Southern Housing Area now comprised only Worcestershire Councils.

Recommended to Cabinet: The Local Investment Plan be agreed.

C&R.92 Funding for Affordable Housing

A report was considered from the Strategic Housing Services Manager that asked the Committee to consider a bid for affordable housing through the capital strategy.

The Strategic Housing Services Manager informed Members that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services had delegated responsibility to make decisions on the award of financial support for affordable housing through the Council's capital following consultation with the Community and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

Members were advised that the Council had a target to provide more affordable housing. In particular, the Council had a duty to rehouse people who were homeless. The Council was seeking to significantly reduce the amount of money it spent on temporary accommodation. There was a need for additional housing and support for your people and this had been an issue in Wyre Forest for a number of years.

The purpose of the bid for affordable housing was to bring forward a site in Bromsgrove Street, Kidderminster. Planning permission had been granted for the site. The Foyer Scheme would offer 19 units for young people aged 16 to 25 years. Residents would be required to undertake employment or training.

In order to reduce the grant rate requirement for the Foyer a grant was requested from the Council of £200,000 as the bid was not likely to be successful unless it was made attractive and gave value for money by offering a reduced grant rate.

Members highlighted the following:

- It was hoped that the bid was successful as a number of businesses had spoken out against having the Foyer.
- A member perceived that the service charges were high. In response to this point it was clarified that most of the service charge would be paid for the young person through their housing benefit.
- A Member spoke of his concerns about the service charge and was concerned that if the service charge was benefit based it might be open to abuse.
- With regard to the building of the Foyer it was clarified that the builder would be encouraged to aim for BREAM standards.

Recommended to Cabinet: The Cabinet Member for Housing and Environmental Services to approve the grant of funding in the sum of

£200,000 for the building of nineteen units of affordable housing by the West Mercia Housing Group.

C&R.93 Building Control Service Customer Satisfaction Survey 2010

A report was considered from the Development Manager that summarised the results and feedback from the 2010 Building Control Service Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The Development Manager advised that the Building Control Service operated in a competitive market and in direct competition with the private sector and thus had to actively promote its service. The Building Control Service needed to understand the current position of the service and how it was viewed by users of the service. Further it was reported that a customer satisfaction survey had been conducted during November and December 2010 when questionnaires and an electronic survey were sent to a cross section of users of the service.

The survey produced a 42% response rate and 93% of respondents had responded positively about the service. However, Members were informed that the service would not rest on its laurels and efforts would be made to improve the service year on year.

Agreed:

- 1. The report and the results of the Building Control Service Customer Satisfaction Survey 2010 be noted.**
- 2. The Building Control Team be congratulated on their excellent performance.**

C&R.94 Feedback from Cabinet

The Committee considered the Cabinet Action List from the meeting held on 15th February 2011 which outlined recommendations regarding the review of allocations policy (Home Choice Plus).

Agreed: The contents of the Cabinet Action List be noted.

C&R.95 Work Programme

Members considered a revised work programme. The work programme had been revised owing to a number of items having slipped from the March 2011 meeting.

Agreed: the revised Work Programme be noted.

C&R.96 Press Involvement

There were no items that required press involvement.

The meeting ended at 6.43 pm