

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

CIVIC HALL, CIVIC CENTRE, STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN

MONDAY, 19TH SEPTEMBER 2011 (6.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), T Ingham (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, A J Buckley, N Gale, J Greener, I Hardiman, J A Hart, V Higgs, J Holden, D J McCann, J W Parish, A M Sewell, D R Sheppard and S J Williams.

Observers:

Councillors: M Ahmed, G W Ballinger, J-P Campion, S J M Clee, N J Desmond, P Dyke, B T Glass, D R Godwin, M J Hart, C D Nicholls, F M Oborski, T L Onslow, J Phillips, M A Salter, J A Shaw, N J Thomas and G C Yarranton

OS.41

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting would take the following format.

- The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services would address the meeting and explain the report.
- The five public speakers that had registered to speak would be invited in turn to address the meeting. They would each be allowed to speak for three minutes and ask one supplementary question if they wished.
- Members of the public must remain in their seats, with the exception of the registered speakers when they addressed the committee.
- Members of the Committee would then discuss the report.
- Ward Members may be invited to speak on the debate.
- The Chairman would not allow further speakers from the floor, neither would the Committee enter into a debate with the speakers or other attendees.

The Chairman also appreciated that many of the people in attendance had varying opinions on the item being discussed, she reminded them before the meeting started she would not accept any inappropriate or racist comments, or disruptive behaviour.

If there were any inappropriate comments or behaviour, she would call the meeting to order and ask that the comments or behaviour cease. Failure to comply with the rulings would mean that the individuals concerned would be asked to leave the meeting and, if they continued to misbehave and failed to leave, steps would be taken to remove them from the meeting. This could include calling on the assistance of the police. She hoped that such steps would not be necessary and that everyone present would behave themselves in an appropriate fashion, so that the debate could be heard.

OS. 42 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

OS. 43 Appointment of Substitutes

No substitutes were appointed.

OS. 44 Declaration of Interests

Councillor D McCann declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as he lived near to one of the proposed sites.

Councillor M J Hart declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 – Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as he owned land approximately 500 metres away from one of the proposed sites, although it was not his principal residence.

Councillor J Holden declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as he lived near to several of the proposed sites.

Councillor I Hardiman declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as he lived not too far from several of the proposed sites.

Councillor A J Buckley declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as he lived not too far from several of the proposed sites.

Councillor F M Oborski declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 - Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as she was the Chairman of the Local Development Framework Review Panel.

Councillor C D Nicholls declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as he lived near to two of the proposed sites.

Councillor J Hart declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 – Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, as he lived approximately 500 metres from one of the proposed sites.

OS.45 Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF) Potential Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services advised the Committee that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the findings of an 'Assessment of Potential Sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople' and make recommendations to Cabinet for consideration at the meeting due to be held on Tuesday 20th September 2011 which would decide which sites would be put forward for public consultation. The outcomes of the public consultation would be reported

back early in 2012.

Members were led through the report and advised of the need to ensure appropriate pitch provision was provided for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople within the District. To assist with the work, the Council had appointed a consultancy firm, Baker Associates to undertake the assessment. Baker Associates were a well respected company who had previously worked on infrastructure projects within Worcestershire.

Members were also advised that the Council were already committed to providing additional sites for gypsies and travellers as part of the Core Strategy which set out the Council's blue print for the District, that was adopted in December 2010.

It was also noted that there were already authorised traveller sites in the District which were run by Worcestershire County Council. A number of the sites have planning permission however, some are tolerated sites which do not have planning permission and a decision taken not to remove people from the site.

The Chairman invited the five registered speakers to address the Committee.

Jim Long, elected member for Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council.

Mr Long advised that in relation to the proposed site in Blakedown the consultants report was flawed, the landowners never have and never would identify their land as a gypsy and traveller site.

(Meeting called to order 6.24pm)

He added that the Parish Council supported local housing needs and the site had been allocated for housing and Barratts Homes had recently held an exhibition on the site. Mr Long asked Members for responses to his question that the Blakedown site was wholly unacceptable and never was and never would be available.

A Member advised that he was not in a position to comment on the withdrawal of sites at this stage, the process must be adhered to.

Mr Long stated this did not appear to be appropriate. No other Members wished to comment.

Roger Shade – Blakedown Resident

Mr Shade advised that the chief location of the proposed site was wholly unacceptable, the site was less than 100m from a bridleway and the area was a designated wildlife site and any development must not have an impact on the wild life and access to the site would be an issue. He advised the report was flawed and asked the Committee to recommend the Blakedown site be rejected.

James Arbuthnott - Chair of Stone Parish Council

Mr Arbuthnott advised that the Parish Council heard of the proposals through the Kidderminster Shuttle. He felt as a matter of courtesy the Council should have informed Parish Councils of the proposals. The site in Stone was in the green belt area, had an unsuitable local road system and lacked public amenities. The Parish

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Council had not been consulted and the site is totally unsuitable and he asked that the Committee reject it.

Glenn White – Clows Top Resident

Mr White advised that many residents in the village had been surprised by the report and had only found out about it from the local press approximately three weeks ago, no consultation with local residents had taken place. The report was inaccurate and should recommend that more work was carried out before it was put forward. He expressed a view that the process had been underhand and that needed highlighting. The village had very few facilities and he asked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make a recommendation to refuse the report before any more public money was wasted.

Peter Chatterley – Clows Top Resident

Mr Chatterley advised that over 100 residents in Clows Top were opposed to the process and asked Councillor J Phillips if he thought the Cabinet's decision would be to recommend to go for consultation in October. If this was the case was the meeting not a waste of time? He added the methodology used in the report was incorrect, the report showed a lot of inaccuracies and lack of research. Mr Chatterley asked the Committee to reject the report and send it back to for further research and not waste any more public money.

The Director of Planning and Regulatory Services noted the points raised. However the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were assisting Cabinet to decide on what sites would be put forward for public consultation. The comments expressed were more appropriate for the public consultation. It was also noted that Parish Clerks had been contacted by the Consultants.

Councillor F M Oborski advised Members that an allegation had been made in the Kidderminster Shuttle that she had already made her mind up to where the sites should be, Councillor Oborski confirmed the statement was completely untrue.

As Chairman of the Local Development Framework Review Panel, Councillor Oborski urged the Council to go out to public consultation on all 15 sites, as any sites taken out of the process at this stage would put extra pressure on the sites left in.

A Member expressed his concern over the inaccuracies within the report and asked that the sites identified in Lawnswood be taken off the list as it was within a green belt area and surrounded by residential properties. He added the site identified at Lea Castle had previously been discussed at a public meeting and where it was discussed that the site could be used to house a hospice, sheltered housing or sports facilities. If the site were to be used for gypsy, travellers or travelling showpeople, it would not be compatible with the other users. The site also fell within the green belt and he asked for the site to be removed from the list.

A Member advised that Stourport currently had all the gypsy and traveller sites which were not a problem. However he felt other areas within the district should accommodate new sites.

A Member expressed concern over the local businesses in Sandy Lane, Stourport

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and feared they would re-locate if further sites were agreed for that area.

A Member perceived that the site proposed at Clows Top had already been listed as a brownfield development site and affordable housing was encouraged. However the site was in a difficult area and water supplies were already full to capacity. Due to the flaws in the report and Rock having no previous consultation, he urged all Members of the Committee to reject the report in its entirety and as a District Council to come forward with more appropriate sites.

In response to comments made about contact by the Consultants with Parish Council clerks, the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services confirmed that contact had been made with Churchill and Blakedown, Rock, Stone and Upper Arley Parish Councils.

Agreed:

Recommended to Cabinet:

The report be noted and the Cabinet decide on which site or sites go out to public consultation.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.21 pm.