

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER 2011 (6 PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), T Ingham (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, G W Ballinger, N Gale, J Greener, I Hardiman, P B Harrison, J A Hart, V Higgs, D J McCann, M A Salter, A M Sewell, D R Sheppard and S J Williams.

Observers

Councillors: J-P Champion, N J Desmond, P Dyke, M J Hart, F M Oborski, T L Onslow, J Phillips and J A Shaw.

OS.58 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: A J Buckley and J Holden.

OS.59 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor P B Harrison was appointed as a substitute for Councillor A J Buckley. Councillor M A Salter was appointed as a substitute for Councillor J Holden.

OS.60 Declaration of Interests

Councillor H Dyke declared a personal interest in agenda item 20 – Review of the Homelessness Contract, as her husband works for The Community Housing Group but in an area unrelated to homelessness.

Councillor J Greener declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 20 – Review of the Homelessness Contract, as she is a Board Member of The Community Housing Group.

Councillor N Gale declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 20 – Review of the Homelessness Contract, as she is a Board Member of The Community Housing Group.

Councillor I Hardiman declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 20 – Review of the Homelessness Contract, as he is a Board Member of The Community Housing Group.

Councillor P Dyke declared a personal interest in agenda item 20 – Review of the Homelessness Contract, as he works for The Community Housing Group.

Councillor D McCann declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Worcestershire Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee, as a family member works at Worcester Hospital.

Councillor P Harrison declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 – Review of Grants to Voluntary Organisations, as he is a Board Member of the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Councillor V Higgs declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 – Review of Grants to Voluntary Organisations, as she works for Age Concern.

OS.61 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.62 Worcestershire Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received an update from Councillor Oborski on the six committee meetings held since May 2011 and advised that as part of a series on issues within the NHS, Radio 5 was broadcasting a programme on the failings of geriatric care at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Oborski for her detailed report and asked Members to email or telephone Councillor Oborski direct with any concerns or issues they would like raised at future meetings.

Agreed: The progress report be noted.

OS.63 Recommendations from the Waste Review Panel

The Committee considered recommendations from the Waste Review Panel held on 19th October 2011 on the future arrangements for the collection of Waste and Recycling and the amendment of the terms and conditions of the staff within the Waste and Recycling service.

The Director of Resources advised that the staff consultation period came to an end on 4th November 2011 and initial feedback received from the Unions was the majority of staff were in favour of the proposed changes.

The Chairman of the Review Panel, Councillor Baker, thanked Members of the Review Panel for their participation in the meeting and advised that the Panel felt that the recommendation would contribute to the savings identified within the Financial Strategy 2011 – 13.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. To support the amendment of the terms and conditions of the staff within the Waste and Recycling service in respect of the introduction of a 4 day working week.**
- 2. On the grounds of improvements to the environment and the cost savings it would generate, the frequency of the collection of medical waste be amended to fortnightly, with additional capacity provided if required.**

Councillor T Onslow entered the meeting at this point, (6.30pm).

OS.64 Universal Credits Replacing Housing Benefit

The Committee received a briefing from the Revenue and Benefits Manager on the changes to the Housing Benefit system. Members were advised that the Universal Credit system would bring together a range of working age benefits into a single payment with the aim of:

- Simplifying the system
- Improving work incentives
- Smoothing the transitions into and out of work
- Reducing in-work poverty
- Cutting back on fraud and error.

Members were advised that full details of the changes and how the new systems would work were not known at present and further Member briefing sessions would be held in due course.

Agreed: The update be noted.

OS.65 How Are We Doing? Priorities Performance Update

The Committee considered a report from the Temporary Policy and Performance Officer which updated Members on the performance of the Council up to 30th September 2011, and included Council Priorities.

The Temporary Policy and Performance Officer led Members through the report and advised that work to address the missed targets had been undertaken. Business Plan Member Champions had met with their respective Directors to discuss the progress of the actions.

In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that the address on page 31 of the report should read 94 Shakespeare Drive and not 56 Worcester Road as stated.

In respect of page 46 of the report, a Member asked when the appointment of the Kidderminster Town Centre Manager would be completed. The Leader of the Council advised that the appointment was in the process of being made and Members would be advised when the post was filled. A Member confirmed that following a meeting with the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services, assurance was given that the position would be filled shortly.

A Member expressed concern in relation to page 51 RES PI 35, that the increase in the cost per claim was due to the Worcestershire Hub recharge. The Director of Resources advised that due to changes in the accounting policy, recharge costs were applied to all areas and a recharge from the Hub did not mean the overall costs of the authority had increased. The Director was asked to provide details of all recharges from the Hub to other sections of the Council.

A Member advised that a common theme had appeared in the updates that IT issues have an impact on the target delivery. It was suggested when trials of new IT equipment were undertaken, realistic targets be given to take into account any IT problems.

The Chairman thanked Members who had given an update on Business Plans and asked for meetings to be held with Directors for the next quarterly update.

Agreed:

- **Members to be informed when the new Kidderminster Town Centre Manager was appointed.**
- **The Director of Resources to provide information on recharges from the Worcestershire Hub to other sections of the Council.**

OS.66 Review of Grants to Voluntary Organisations

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Community and Partnership Services on the proposal to conduct a strategic review of the Grants to Voluntary Organisations.

Members were taken through the report and advised that a review had taken place in 2008 which had looked at the monitoring process and the application forms had been updated. The previous review had not scrutinised the funds.

Agreed:

- 1. A review panel be established from Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposal.**
- 2. The Democratic Services Officer to email Group Leaders requesting nominations for the Panel.**

OS.67 South Worcestershire Development Plan Preferred Options Response

The Committee considered a report from the Senior Forward Planning Officer which set out the background to the South Worcestershire Development Plan and the implications for the District Council.

Members were led through the report and advised that concerns raised from the Local Development Framework Review Panel in relation to sustainability of future developments and the impact on services provided by the Wyre Forest District had been addressed in the response.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

The representations set out at Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved by Cabinet for submission to the South Worcestershire Authorities.

OS.68 Call-in Procedure

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which sought the Committee's views on potential amendments to the call-in procedure in the Council's constitution.

Councillor Oborski left the meeting at this point, (7.15pm).

The Chief Executive led Members through page 62 of the report which highlighted the areas for change.

A Member expressed his frustration that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could not recommend straight to Council as he felt it undermined the Scrutiny process.

The Chairman reminded Members of the need to act appropriately or she would adjourn the meeting.

The Member advised he felt strongly about certain issues and apologised to the Committee for his behaviour.

Agenda Item No. 4

A debate ensued about the role of the Transformation Board and Members were advised that the purpose of the Board was for the sharing of information and not decision making.

Agreed: Recommend to the Transformation Board that they formulate wording to give effect to the following changes to the call in procedure set out in paragraphs 9.1 to 9.7 of the report that was considered by the Transformation Board on 13th September 2011.

OS.69 Community Safety Partnership Future Arrangements

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Community and Partnership Services on a review of Community Safety Partnership working across Worcestershire.

Members were led through the report and advised that the merger would not affect the local work carried out within the District would not cease.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. That Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Wyre Forest District Council Cabinet (as the responsible authority) agrees to the restructuring of the current CSP arrangements into two CSPs (North and South Worcestershire) and one county strategic Community Safety Board.**
- 2. The three North Worcestershire CSPs immediately progress the merger into a single North Worcestershire CSP. The responsible Authorities to progress to merger and obtain appropriate local approvals and Home Office agreement to the merger by 1 April 2012 or earlier.**
- 3. Agree to discussions commencing at the earliest opportunity with the Chairmen of Redditch and Bromsgrove CSPs, relevant portfolio holders and Community Safety co-ordinators to progress the merger.**
- 4. Support the continuation of locality based operational and responsive partnership working through the operational management group and appropriate local Wyre Forest representation on the merged North Worcestershire CSP.**

Councillor Onslow and Councillor Baker left the meeting at this point, (7.48pm).

OS.70 Eastern Gateway: Concept Feasibility Report

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration – North Worcestershire which sought Members' views on the Concept Feasibility Report.

Councillor Baker returned to the meeting at this point, (7.51pm). Members were led through the report and advised that it was intended to be used as evidence in support of the emerging Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan.

Members welcomed the detailed report and supported the proposals to the area. A Member asked what funds were available for maintaining the appearance of empty

shops and requested the current percentage of vacant floor space in Kidderminster compared to other North Worcestershire towns.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. The Eastern Gateway: Concept Feasibility Report be approved.**
- 2. The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration to seek clarification on the issues raised and notify Members of the Committee accordingly.**

OS.71 Worcestershire Regulatory Services - Enforcement Policy

The Chief Executive led Members through a report from the Director of Planning and Regulatory Services with set out a proposed revised Enforcement Policy in respect of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS).

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services confirmed that if the policy were to be adopted, Wyre Forest District Council would still have the ultimate say in issues concerning the District.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- The proposed revised Enforcement Policy in respect of Worcestershire Regulatory Services be adopted**

OS.72 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet action list, following consideration of the recommendations from 18th October 2011 be noted.

OS.73 Work Programme

Agreed: The Democratic Services Officer to identify an additional meeting in January 2012 for the responses to the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Site Allocation consultation.

Councillors Gale, Greener, Hardiman and P Dyke left the meeting at this point, (8.05pm).

OS.74 Exempt Information

Decision: Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in paragraphs 2, 6 and 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

OS.75 Review of the Homelessness Contract

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Housing Services Manager in relation to the review of the homelessness; housing advice and housing register contract (the contract) prior to the third year end and considered possible options for the future of the service delivery.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Committee felt issues raised from responses to the consultation with customers, stakeholders and Members be addressed.

Recommend to Cabinet:

- **Option Three “Extend the current contract by two years” as set out in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be progressed.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.35 pm.