

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

THURSDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY 2012 (6 PM)

Present:

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

Observers

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

OS.99 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Holden.

OS.100 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor M A Salter was appointed as a substitute for Councillor J Holden.

OS.101 Declaration of Interests

Councillor J Greener declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 – Recommendations from the Grants to Voluntary Bodies Review Panel, as she is a Board Member on the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Councillor M A Salter declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 – Recommendations from the Grants to Voluntary Bodies Review Panel, as he is a Trustee of the Age Concern Organisation.

Councillor V Higgs declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 – Recommendations from the Grants to Voluntary Bodies Review Panel, as she works for Age Concern.

Councillor D R Sheppard declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 – Recommendations from the Grants to Voluntary Bodies Review Panel, as he is the Stourport Town Council representative on the Management Committee of Stourport Day Centre.

Councillor T Ingham declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 12 – Green Street Conservation Area Designation, Character Appraisal and Management Plan, as he owns property within the boundary of the proposed conservation area.

OS.102 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.103 Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives

The Committee considered a report from the Wyre Forest Matters Partnership Manager on the work undertaken to comply with the setting of the equality objectives element of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Equality Act 2010 replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single act to make the law simpler and to remove inconsistencies. It included the Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force on 5th April 2011. The Equality Duty aims to ensure that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day-to-day work in shaping policy, delivering services, and in relation to their own employees.

Members discussed the draft objectives set out on page 10 of the report and it was felt the second objective; “ensuring the Council’s commitment to equality and diversity is embedded in its strategies and policies”, should already be happening. The importance of the first objective listed was noted, however, it was felt that in order for the Council to achieve this they must ensure that the third objective listed was also taken forward.

Decision: Recommend to Cabinet:

To recommend to Council that it adopts and publishes the following equality objective to meet its duty under the Equality Act 2010:

- **Reduce inequality in access to employment within the District and build links between organisations to enable this, and by promoting good parenting skills and providing support and advice to families from relevant partner agencies and schools.**

OS.104 How Are We Doing? Priorities Performance Update

A report was considered from the Temporary Policy and Performance Officer on the performance of the Council, including its Priorities, for quarter 3 (from 1st October to 31st December 2012).

The Committee were led through the report and advised that Members had been allocated Directorate business plans to monitor but no updates were given by individual Members.

The empty shop grants was raised due to it being off target. A Member asked if the grant information was circulated to estate agents outside of the district and also if the information was circulated to shopping centres within the Wyre Forest area. If this did not appear to be the case, Members asked for this to be actioned. The Temporary Policy and Planning Officer agreed to provide the information to Members.

A Member expressed concern over several of the Environmental Maintenance targets not being met. The issue raised was why the comments column had not been updated since July 2011, therefore Members could not ascertain what progress had been made. The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services provided an update on the restructure within the Team and assured Members that work to address the issues would commence.

Agreed:

- **The report be noted.**

- **The Temporary Policy and Performance Officer to provide information relating to the empty shop grants.**

Councillors J Greener, M Salter and V Higgs left the meeting at this point, (6.20pm).

OS.105 Recommendations from the Grants to Voluntary Bodies Review Panel

A Member of the Panel advised the Committee that the review undertaken was to produce a grant giving strategy that focused the allocation of resources on delivering Council priorities as outlined in the Council Corporate Plan and to produce a methodology for reducing the grant by 17% by 2015.

Councillor D R Sheppard declared a prejudicial interest at this point and left the meeting, (6.34pm), as he is the Stourport Town Council representative on the Management Committee of Stourport Day Centre.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. The general grant funding allocation from 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2015 should be targeted at meeting the needs of as many individuals across the District as possible. The grant funding should reflect the Council priorities of improving Community Well Being and Securing the Economic Prosperity of the District. In order to give stability to those organisations receiving grant funding, it should be given for a 3 year period.**
- 2. The allocation of grant funding should also reflect the ageing population in the District.**
- 3. It is recommended that the following grant allocations cease with effect from:**
 - 1st April 2012:**
 - £1,000 pump priming grant
 - £1,000 emergency grant
 - 1st June 2012:**
 - £1,000 Community Action Wyre Forest
 - £2,960 Relate Worcestershire
- 4. The grant funding should be allocated for a three year period, on a reducing basis, on an equal percentage reduction of 16.5% in 2012/13, 8.3% in 2013/14 and 9.0% in 2014/15 with effect from 1st June 2012.**
- 5. The following organisations will continue to receive funding in line with recommendations 1, 2 and 3 above:-**
 - Citizens Advice Bureau
 - Stourport Day Centre
 - Castle Road Day Centre
- 6. It is recommended that rent support to organisations remains unchanged.**
- 7. The inflationary uplift to Citizens Advice Bureau should cease with effect from 2012/13.**
- 8. At the end of the three year grant giving period and subject to the funds**

still being available, the Council will widely advertise the available grant and the criteria for organisations to apply for funding.

- 9. It is recommended that the Council publicise the Worcestershire County Council scheme when it is finalised which is aimed at supporting the development of community and voluntary organisations. The Council should help to promote the scheme which will make £750,000 available over the next three years.**

Councillors J Greener, M Salter, V Higgs and D Sheppard returned to the meeting and Councillor T Onslow left at this point, (6.38pm).

OS.106 Recommendations from the Budget Review Panel – Consideration of Financial Strategy 2012 / 2015, Cabinet Proposals and Alternative Budget Proposals

The Committee considered the findings of the Budget Review Panels scrutiny of the Cabinets Financial Strategy and alternative budget proposals from the opposition groups.

Members discussed the amendments to the budget proposals submitted by the Independent Community and Health Concern Group following the Budget Review Panel meeting, and were reminded that amendments could be made at any stage for discussion up to the final decision being made by Council.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

Having considered the Cabinet proposals, and amendments from the Independent Community and Health Concern, Labour and Liberal and Independent Groups, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is satisfied that the proposals are all clear, achievable and financially sound.

OS.107 Recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel

The Committee considered recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel of 24th January 2012.

- Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Investment Policy and Strategy Statement for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet, to recommend to Council:

- 1. To approve the restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2012/13 to 2014/15.**
- 2. To approve the updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 and the detailed criteria is included in Section 11 and Appendix 5 of the report to the Treasury Management Review Panel).**
- 3. To approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1 of the report to the Treasury Management Review Panel.**

- 4. To approve the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3 of the report to the Treasury Management Review Panel.**
- 5. That the Treasury Management Review Panel notes that the prudential indicators in the report will be revised in February 2012 as part of the Council's approval of the Financial Strategy 2012 to 2015, as the indicators included within this report are based on current recommendations.**

The Chairman announced that the Director of Resources would be leaving the Authority at the end of February and this was the last Overview and Scrutiny meeting he would attend. He was thanked for all his advice and hard work given to the Scrutiny Committees which had proved to be invaluable.

OS.108 South Kidderminster Enterprise Park, Local Development Order (LDO) – Consultation Document

The Committee considered a report from the Senior Forward Planning Officer on the proposed consultation draft Local Development Order Document which was planned to be implemented within the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park area. The order would help to provide a less restrictive planning regime for businesses within, and locating to, the corridor and to act as a stimulus for an area that has been recognised and prioritised for economic development.

Members expressed concern over the potential lack of development control, it was noted the life time of the order would be three years and after that period a review of the system would take place.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. That the Local Development Order Consultation document, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9th February 2012 is approved for consultation purposes.**
- 2. If adopted, Members are kept informed of developments carried out under the order by way of the weekly planning list.**

OS.109 Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework (LDF): Revised Project Plan (Local Development Scheme)

The Committee considered a report from the Planning Policy Manager which outlined the proposal for the revision of the Local Development Scheme. Members were advised that as outlined by the Government, Councils must continue to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme, specifying the documents that will be Development Plan Documents (DPDs).

The Local Development Scheme was last reviewed in August 2008, prior to the Adoption of the Core Strategy in December 2010. It was therefore considered necessary to provide up to date information relating to the production of the remaining DPDs – the Site Allocations & Policies and Kidderminster Central Area Action Plan (KCAAP). This will give more certainty to local stakeholders, developers and communities.

The Chairman of the Local Development Framework Review Panel thanked the Planning Policy Manager and her team for all their hard work undertaken on the Local Development Framework and acknowledged that there was still a lot of work to take forward.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. Endorse the proposed Revised Local Development Framework Project Plan 2012-15 (LDS) as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 9th February 2012.**

Councillor T Ingham left the meeting at this point, (7.35pm).

OS.110 Green Street Conservation Area Designation, Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The Committee considered a report from the Conservation Officer which advised Members of the responses to the consultation undertaken on proposals to designate Green Street as a Conservation Area.

Members were led through the report and advised that the consultation responses received had been very positive. Members thanked the Conservation Officer for all the hard work which had gone into the report and it was evident very extensive research had been undertaken. It was agreed the background and history of the buildings and points of interest be collated and made available for display in the Carpet Museum and local library.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. The designation of a new Conservation Area at Green Street as shown on the plan attached to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9th February 2012.**
- 2. The owners/occupiers of the buildings and structures it is proposed to include on the Kidderminster Local List be notified of the Council's intention.**
- 3. The Character Appraisal and Management Plan be adopted.**
- 4. The background and history of the buildings and points of interest within the area collated as part of the report be made available for display in the Carpet Museum and local library.**

Councillor T Ingham returned to the meeting at this point, (7.56pm).

OS.111 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet action list, following consideration of the recommendations from 20th December 2011 be noted.

OS.112 Work Programme

Agreed: The work programme for the current municipal year with regard to the Sustainable Community Strategy Theme, Corporate Plan Priority, Annual Priorities and the Forward Plan be noted.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.57pm.