

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER 2012 (6.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), T Ingham (Vice-Chairman), R Bishop, L Davies, N Gale, J Greener, P B Harrison, J A Hart, P V Hayward, V Higgs, D C H McCann, B McFarland, M Rayner, C Rogers, A M Sewell, J A Shaw, D R Sheppard, N J Thomas, S J Williams and G C Yarranton.

Observers

Councillors: G W Ballinger, J-P Campion, N J Desmond, I Hardiman and M J Hart.

OS.51 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Brewer and H J Martin.

OS.52 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor J A Shaw was appointed as a substitute for Councillor H J Martin.
Councillor N J Thomas was appointed as a substitute for Councillor C Brewer.

OS.53 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor T Ingham declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in agenda item number 5 – Council Tax Benefit Reform.

Councillor M J Hart declared a DPI in agenda item number 5 – Council Tax Benefit Reform, as the report covers council tax discount exemptions relating to rental properties.

Councillor N J Desmond declared a DPI in agenda item number 5 – Council Tax Benefit Reform.

Councillor B McFarland declared a DPI in agenda item number 5 – Council Tax Benefit and an Other Disclosable Interest (ODI), in agenda item number 9 – Feedback from Cabinet.

Councillor M Rayner declared a DPI in agenda item number 5 – Council Tax Benefit Reform.

Councillor J A Hart declared a DPI in agenda item number 5 – Council Tax Benefit Reform.

Councillor P V Hayward declared a DPI in agenda item number 5 – Council Tax Benefit Reform.

OS.54 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillors T Ingham, M J Hart, N J Desmond, B McFarland, M Rayner, J A Hart and P V Hayward left the meeting at this point, (6.05pm).

OS.55 Council Tax Benefit Reform

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Resources which provided feedback from the consultation on the Council Tax Discount Scheme (CTDS) which the Council would have to introduce following the Government's decision to replace the national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme with a localised CTDS.

Councillors D C H McCann and C Rogers entered the meeting at this point, (6.11pm).

The Director of Resources led Members through the report and outlined the rationale for the recommended options. Members were advised the legislation required Council's to adopt a new scheme for Council Tax Discounts by 31st January 2013, for implementation on 1st April 2013.

A debate ensued and concerns were expressed regarding the Hardship Fund. Members felt the money available for the fund should be reviewed on an annual basis, and during the first year of the scheme a review be undertaken after the first six months. The Director of Resources confirmed the process for administering the fund had not yet been finalised and would be devised using the systems thinking principles.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. The principles for the scheme as set out in paragraph 5.3 to the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th November 2012 be approved.**
- 2. The changes to the Council Tax exemptions as set out in paragraph 5.6 to the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th November 2012 be approved.**
- 3. The changes to the eligibility criteria for access to Council Tax support as set out in paragraph 5.12 to the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th November 2012 be approved.**
- 4. Option 3 be adopted and limit the support available to people of working age to 90% of their Council Tax liability.**
- 5. A Hardship Fund is created with a maximum contribution from Wyre Forest District Council of £25,000 per annum and approve the proposed criteria for administering the fund included in Appendix 5 to the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th November 2012 be approved.**
- 6. The amount of money available for the Hardship Fund be reviewed on an annual basis. During the first year, a review be undertaken after the first six months.**

Councillors T Ingham, M J Hart, N J Desmond, B McFarland, M Rayner, J A Hart and P V Hayward rejoined the meeting at this point, (6.37pm).

OS.56 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review 2012/13

The Committee considered a report from the Director of Resources which provided Members with a mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management policies and practices and activities in accordance with the revised CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

The Chairman of the Treasury Management Review Panel presented the recommendations from the review panel and confirmed Members were very pleased with the return on the Council's investments.

Agreed:

- **The Treasury Management Mid-Year review be noted.**

Recommend to Cabinet to recommend to Council:

- **The Mid-Year Review and Updated Prudential Indicators be approved.**

OS.57 How Are We Doing? Performance Update

The Committee considered a report from the Business Improvement Officer that updated Members on the overall performance of the Council's Corporate Plan Actions for quarter 2 from 1st July to 30th September 2012.

The Business Improvement Officer advised Members the Council were currently reviewing the leading and lagging measures. In the future separate and more-in depth reports would be produced that would allow Members to look more closely at what was going on in the system. The Business Improvement Officer suggested that the first of these reports would be from the Customer Services Manager at the January 2013 meeting where the Committee would look at the impact of the Systems Thinking intervention in the Revenue and Benefits section and the Worcestershire Hub. Members were advised a briefing regarding Systems Thinking was scheduled for the Members Forum in December 2012. If any Member required further training on the Covalent system, they were advised to contact the Business Improvement Officer.

Members felt the reports were very strategic and were not considered useful for scrutinising progress. The Chairman requested to have percentages added back into future performance management reports.

Agreed: The progress in performance for quarter 2 be noted.

OS.58 Provision of Splash Pads and Review of Paddling Pools

The Committee considered a report from the Cultural Services Manager which updated Members on the key issues relating to the current provision of paddling pools and future provision of splash pad facilities within the District.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Cultural Services Manager led Members through the report and a debate ensued. In response to concerns over health and safety issues, the Cultural Services Manager advised that the splash pad facilities had a non-slip surface and were safer than the current paddling pools.

A discussion took place on the proposals put forward for Stourport-on-Severn, a Member advised the Committee that the Town Council would not be meeting until December 2012, where the item would be considered in principle. Members felt this did not give Stourport Town Councillors sufficient time to consider the proposals.

Councillor V Higgs left the meeting at this point, (7.06pm).

The Committee agreed to amend options 2 and 3 as set out at 4.1 in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 8th November 2012.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

- 1. A splash pad at Brinton Park Kidderminster, adjacent to play area be provided and demolish existing paddling pool.**
- 2. The issue of the future operation of Stourport Riverside paddling pool and the offer of a splash pad be referred to Stourport Town Council.**
- 3. If it was not possible to secure an alternative operator, the paddling pool at Stourport could be demolished.**
- 4. The current surface at St Georges, Kidderminster be repaired and transfer the pump from Brinton Park, Kidderminster to St Georges, Kidderminster to improve filtration and reduce revenue costs.**
- 5. Retain the pool at Northwood Lane, Bewdley as it was in a good state of repair and filtration system is in place.**
- 6. The Council to continue to pursue an asset transfer or agreement to maintain in the future with any willing partner for St Georges, Kidderminster and Northwood Lane, Bewdley pools.**

OS.59 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet action list, following consideration of the recommendations from the meeting on 12th November 2012 be noted.

OS.60 Work Programme

Agreed: The work programme be noted.

OS. 61 Press Involvement

There were no future items that might require publicity.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.26pm.