

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER**

**THURSDAY, 4TH APRIL 2013 (6.00PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), T Ingham (Vice-Chairman), R Bishop, C Brewer, N Gale, J Greener, J A Hart, V Higgs, H J Martin, D C H McCann, B McFarland, J Phillips, C Rogers, A M Sewell, D R Sheppard, N J Thomas, S J Williams and G C Yarranton.

**Observers**

Councillors: A T Hingley, M Price and J A Shaw.

**OS.107 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Davies and M Rayner.

**OS.108 Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor N J Thomas was appointed as a substitute for Councillor M Rayner.

**OS.109 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**OS.110 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

Councillor A T Hingley entered the meeting at this point, (6.02pm).

The Chairman updated Members on the following items:

- All Members of the Council would be invited to attend the Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2013, where Superintendent Purcell would be giving an update on policing in North Worcestershire.
- An acknowledgement to the letter sent from the Committee to the Worcestershire County Council Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure regarding the Worcestershire Infrastructure Strategy Consultation Draft, had been received. It was confirmed the contents of the letter would be discussed with the County Team who were developing the Strategy.

**OS.111 Recommendations from the Housing Review Panel**

The Committee considered the recommendations from the Housing Review Panel meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013 relating to the empty properties within the District.

The Chairman of the Housing Review Panel presented the recommendations and reported the Panel had considered a report which detailed information about empty properties within the district and the actions being undertaken by the Housing Services Team to tackle the number of empty properties.

It was noted tackling empty properties was an important area of work for the authority both in terms of meeting its corporate priorities and also in achieving a higher level of New Homes Bonus by bringing empty properties back into use.

It was acknowledged that funding may not be available immediately, but the issue should be taken into consideration going forward and reviewed when additional funding streams were identified.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:**

- **To bring some of the more difficult longer term empty properties back into use or increase the overall numbers, consideration be given to funding an Officer resource.**
- **When an additional Officer is agreed to, funding of the resource be identified (both revenue and capital may be required).**

**OS.112 Wyre Forest District Council's Carbon Management Plan**

The Committee received a report from the Principal Health and Sustainability Officer which updated Members on the implementation of the Council's Carbon Management Plan.

Members were led through the report and attention was drawn to the progress made on the vehicle fleet, lighting and heating projects.

In response to Members' questions regarding the issues with the heating at the Council's new head quarters, the Principal Health and Sustainability Officer advised the additional energy usage was being monitored and the Council was continuing to work closely with the Carbon Management Trust who would undertake detailed examinations to ascertain the payback period once the issues had been rectified.

**Agreed: The progress on the implementation of the Carbon Management Plan be noted.**

**OS.113 The Green Deal**

The Committee considered a report from the Principal Health and Sustainability Officer which provided Members with an update on the development of the Green

Deal in Worcestershire.

Members were advised the Green Deal was a new national financing mechanism for energy efficiency improvement launched by the Government on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013. It was based on the principle that the energy saving made after energy efficiency measures had been installed in the home or business premises, was used to pay back the cost of installing the energy efficiency measures.

Over the last year, the County and District Councils in Worcestershire had been working together on developing a county wide delivery model for the Green Deal. Members requested a briefing note be provided when further information on the delivery model was available.

**Agreed:**

**The progress on development of a Green Deal delivery model in Worcestershire be noted.**

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

- 1. The final decision on the Green Deal delivery model is delegated to the Director of Economic Prosperity and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning.**
- 2. A briefing note be provided for Members when further information on the delivery model is known.**

**OS.114 Joint Scrutiny of Worcestershire Regulatory Services – Terms of Reference**

The Chairman presented the terms of reference for the joint scrutiny of Worcestershire Regulatory Services which had been initiated by Wychavon District Council.

Members were content with the membership of the team comprising of either the Chairman or Vice Chairman, however felt that the meetings should have an open and exempt session which was consistent with other committee meetings. Members also agreed full minutes should be produced after each meeting.

The Democratic Services Officer was asked to make the necessary changes to points 13 and 14 of the terms of reference and circulate it to Members of the Committee for agreement, prior to them being sent to colleagues at Wychavon District Council.

**Agreed: The Democratic Services Officer to circulate the re-drafted terms of reference to Committee Members for approval prior to sending them to Wychavon District Council.**

**OS.115 Scrutiny Proposal Forms**

The Committee considered a scrutiny proposal form submitted by Councillor V Higgs relating to the apparent lack of parking wardens and excessive parking in

restricted areas in Stourport Town Centre.

Councillor V Higgs presented the form and outlined the issues caused by the traffic congestion within the Town Centre and the adverse effect on air quality, trade and visitor numbers.

Councillor H J Martin left the meeting at this point, (7.19pm), Councillor A T Hingley left at (7.21pm).

Members discussed the proposal and agreed further scrutiny was needed, however the scope of the review should be widened to include the whole of the District.

**Agreed: The proposal be widened to include the whole of the District and progressed by way of a review panel, the Democratic Services Officer to add the item onto the work programme for the new municipal year.**

**OS.116      Feedback from Cabinet**

**Agreed: The content of the Cabinet action list following consideration of the recommendations from the meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013, be noted.**

**OS.117      Work Programme**

**Agreed: The Democratic Services Officer to update the 2013-2014 Scrutiny work programme with the Parking Enforcement Review Panel item.**

**OS.118      Press Involvement**

There were no future items for scrutiny that might require publicity.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.35pm.