

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 5TH DECEMBER 2013 (6PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), T Ingham (Vice-Chairman), G W Ballinger, C Brewer, N Gale, D C H McCann, B McFarland, T L Onslow, J Phillips, M Rayner, C Rogers and J A Shaw.

**Observers**

Councillors J-P Campion, I Hardiman and A T Hingley.

**OS.55 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors V Higgs and A M Sewell.

**OS.56 Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor B McFarland was appointed as a substitute for Councillor A M Sewell. Councillor J A Shaw was appointed as a substitute for Councillor V Higgs.

**OS.57 Declarations of Interests by Members**

Councillor N Gale declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in agenda item number 9 – Sustainable Communities Act Proposed Levy on Large Retail Outlets, as members of her family work for Tesco Supermarket and are in receipt of staff discounts.

Councillor T Ingham declared a DPI in agenda item number 10 – New Leisure Centre Update, as his family own land next to Stourport Sports Centre.

**OS.58 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**OS.59 Annual Crime and Disorder Review**

The Committee received a report from the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer which provided an update on the progress of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Councillor T L Onslow entered the meeting at this point, (6.04pm).

Members were led through the report and reminded that following the merger of the

#### **Agenda Item No. 4**

three district CSP's in Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest to form a North Worcestershire CSP, the District Operational Groups were maintained at a local level and were now identified as Safer District Groups, e.g. Safer Wyre Forest Group.

Councillor D C H McCann entered the meeting at this point, (6.08pm).

In response to questions from Members, the Community Safety and Partnerships Officer confirmed that the Safer Wyre Forest Group worked with the Street Pastors and meetings were regularly held with the Co-ordinator and a representative from the Group sat on their Steering Group.

The Committee considered each of the appendices in turn, and requested further clarification on several points, including definitions for categorising incidents of anti-social behaviour recorded by the Police. The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer agreed to circulate the information to Members of the Committee.

#### **Agreed:**

- **The update report be noted.**
- **The Community Safety and Partnerships Officer to circulate the additional information requested to Members of the Committee.**

#### **OS.60 How Are We Doing? Performance Update**

The Committee received an update report on the performance of the Council for quarter 2, from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

The Business Improvement Officer led Members through the report and advised that none of the projects appeared to be at risk of not being completed.

In response to a Members question regarding community asset transfers, the Director of Community Well-being and Environment confirmed the Council were working with several Parishes to take over tasks such as emptying bins and litter picking. Football clubs and leagues were also being contacted regarding playing pitches.

The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place clarified a couple of points raised by Members relating to the Business measures.

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

#### **OS.61 Council Tax Discount Scheme and the Impact of the Welfare Reform Act**

The Committee received an update report on the Council Tax Discount Scheme and the impact of the Welfare Reform Act.

Members were led in-depth through the report by the Welfare Reform Manager, who was thanked for providing an informative and detailed update.

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The Chairman confirmed an additional meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to take place on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013, to discuss a proposal for the future delivery of the service area.

**Agreed: The update report be noted.**

#### **OS.62 Local Welfare Scheme Update**

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Customer Development Manager which provided an update on the Council's local welfare scheme.

The Corporate Customer Development Manager led Members through the report and advised that all applications for the local welfare scheme were made in person. This allowed the dedicated welfare team of Customer Service Advisors to understand customers needs more than a paper based application would allow.

The Leader of the Council acknowledged the hard work undertaken by the teams in changing the lives of people within the district using the systems thinking process.

**Agreed: The progress on the provision of the Local Welfare Scheme be noted.**

#### **OS.63 Sustainable Communities Act – Proposed Levy on Large Retail Outlets**

The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place presented a report on behalf of the Chief Executive which sought agreement from the Committee on a recommendation to Council on whether or not to back a campaign to introduce a levy on large retail units.

Councillor J A Shaw outlined the background to the campaign and urged Members to support a recommendation to Council to back the campaign as the income received from the levy would be beneficial to the district.

Councillor N Gale declared her DPI at this point.

A debate ensued and several Members expressed concern that if the Council backed the campaign it may make the district less attractive to any future large retailers who may consider moving into the area. However, it was noted if the Government decided to introduce a levy, it would apply throughout England.

Following a show of hands, the Committee agreed the recommendation.

**Agreed: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that Wyre Forest District Council should back the campaign for a levy on large retail outlets.**

Councillor J Phillips left the meeting at this point, (8.06pm).

#### **OS.64 New Leisure Centre Update**

The Committee received a report from the Cultural Services Manager which summarised the progress made on the new leisure centre.

The Cultural Services Manager led Members through the report and advised that the PQQ (Pre qualification questionnaire) had been re-advertised due to the change of site. An amended timetable for the project had been drafted and would be presented at the January 2014 meeting of the Committee.

Members discussed the funding options and disposal of the existing leisure centre sites. Councillor T Ingham declared his interest at this point.

**Agreed: The update report be noted.**

**OS.65 Recommendations from the Local Development Framework Review Panel**

The Committee considered the recommendations from the Local Development Framework (LDF) Review Panel regarding the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth Consultation.

The Planning Policy Manager presented the recommendations and advised that the draft plan had been fully scrutinised by Members of the LDF Review Panel at their meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013. The Planning Policy Manager highlighted the comments made by the Panel which had been incorporated into the draft consultation response.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:**

- **The Draft Consultation response, as attached at Appendix A to the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the Draft Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth be endorsed.**

**OS.66 Feedback from Cabinet**

**Agreed: The content of the Cabinet action list following consideration of the recommendations from the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013 be noted.**

**OS.67 Work Programme**

**Agreed: An additional meeting of the Committee to be held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013 to discuss the proposal to transfer services to Civica's South Worcestershire Partnership and the Worcestershire County Councils subsidised bus consultation.**

**OS.68 Press Involvement**

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

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.28pm.