

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER
THURSDAY, 2ND JULY 2015 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), S Arnold (Vice-Chairman), G W Ballinger, J Greener, A T Hingley, D Little, J Phillips, C Rogers, J D Smith and S J Williams.

Observers

Councillor I Hardiman.

OS.10 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J R Desmond.

OS.11 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor J D Smith was appointed as a substitute for Councillor J R Desmond.

OS.12 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor A T Hingley declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in agenda item 5 – Wyre Forest Blue Light Hub Project, as she is a Member of the Fire Authority and will leave the meeting for that agenda item.

OS.13 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 4th June 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

OS.14 Wyre Forest Blue Light Hub Project

The Committee received a presentation from Hereford & Worcester Fire And Rescue Service on the Wyre Forest Blue Light Hub project.

Members were advised the aim of the project was to develop greater service integration between the work of the Police, the Fire Service and the wider emergency services including voluntary agencies. The creation of the new Hub would potentially see the relocation of the existing three fire stations in the Wyre Forest area into a new purpose-built, centrally located station.

The presentation showed a significant fall in the number of incidents in the Wyre Forest over the last 10 years. Members were assured the proposed changes would

not result in a reduced fire cover across the District.

Members were advised a formal consultation exercise would commence late July / early August for a 12 week period. The Project team were due to report back to the Fire Authority in December, when a decision would be made on whether to proceed with the project.

Agreed: The update be noted.

Councillor A Hingley re-entered the meeting at this point, (6.47pm).

OS.15 Wyre Forest District Local Plan Review: Issues and Options Consultation

The Committee received a briefing paper from the Planning Policy Manager which raised the key issues and questions in developing the Issues and Options Consultation as the first stage in the District's Local Plan Review.

The Planning Policy Manager and Senior Forward Planning Officer presented a series of topic papers which had been considered in depth by the Local Plans Review Panel at its meeting on 18th June 2015.

A discussion ensued and the following points were made:

Public transport – Members raised concerns over whether the Council had the tools to do the job in relation to public transport improvements. Concern that buses were not attractive enough to take them commercially viable; these needs to be addressed through investment in better vehicles.

Air Quality – Members also raised concerns that air quality was a significant issue which had been on the agenda for some years and had not been resolved.

Sustainability Appraisal – Members raised concerns over the limited number of responses received on the SA Scoping Report (3 to date with two more expected). Officers reassured members that it was a technical consultation aimed primarily at the three statutory environmental consultees and that a low response at this stage was not unusual.

Consultants – Members raised concerns over the cost of consultants commissioned to undertake the Objectively Assessed Housing Need and Employment Land Review. Officers advised that these studies formed a fundamental part of the evidence base and consultants were appointed because of their detailed technical nature, their need to remain objective and the limited resources within the planning policy team.

Non-Car Access to Kidderminster – Members were in favour of providing walking and cycling facilities in new developments but questioned whether there was any scope to seek planning obligations from new developments to improve walking and cycling access to Kidderminster from the North and East as currently the ring road and subway system created a significant barrier.

Development in the Green Belt – Members questioned whether this would take

the form of fingers of development so that people were still close to the countryside. Officers advised that should it be necessary to release land from the Green Belt, a comprehensive boundary review would be required to ascertain the most appropriate locations for development but that the Green Belt adjacent to the urban areas would be most likely to be released.

Agreed:

- **The topic papers as set out at Appendices 1-6 of the report and the recommendations from the Local Plans Review Panel be endorsed.**
- **The Draft Consultation Plan as attached at Appendix 8 of the report be used as a basis for undertaking the Issues and Options Consultation in September 2015.**

OS.16 Local Development Scheme

The Committee considered a report which outlined the purpose and content of the revised Local Development Scheme 2015-18.

Members expressed concern over the increasing resource requirements to help facilitate Neighbourhood Development Plans within the District. Notwithstanding the District Council's statutory duty under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations to provide advice and assistance to Parish and Town Councils, Members agreed that if there was a possibility of Parish and Town Councils contributing a reasonable amount towards the cost of the Planning Policy Team's time, it should be explored.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

1. **The proposed Revised Local Development Scheme 2015-18 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be endorsed.**
2. **To explore the possibility of introducing a reasonable charging structure for Parish and Town Councils to contribute towards the resource requirements in developing Neighbourhood Development Plans within the District.**

OS.17 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet action list following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 23rd June 2015 be noted.

OS.18 Work Programme

The Committee reviewed the work programme for the current municipal year. The Chairman advised that a scrutiny scoping form had been received regarding the market provision in Kidderminster Town Centre, as there was a need to establish where the market would fit within the new regeneration of the Town Centre.

Agreed:

- **The work programme be noted.**
- **Members to advise the Committee and Member Services Officer within 7 days of the meeting if they would like to take part in the Market Provision Review Panel.**

OS.19 Treasury Management Review Panel

Members were advised the Treasury Management Review Panel would be set up again and for the municipal year, a training session and first meeting of the Panel was scheduled for Wednesday 2nd September 2015.

Agreed: The Committee and Member Services Officer to contact Members asking for nominations for the Treasury Management Review Panel.

OS.20 Press Involvement

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

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.51pm.