

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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

**THURSDAY, 5TH NOVEMBER 2015 (6PM)**

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**Present:**

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), S Arnold (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, G W Ballinger, J R Desmond, J Greener, D Little, J Phillips, C Rogers and S J Williams.

**Observers**

Councillors: S E Fearn, M J Hart and F M Oborski MBE.

**OS.41 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A T Hingley.

**OS.42 Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor J Baker was appointed as a substitute for Councillor A T Hingley.

**OS.43 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**OS.44 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

Councillor S E Fearn entered the meeting at this point, (6.03pm).

**OS.45 How Are We Doing? Performance Update**

The Committee considered a report from the Business Improvement Officer which updated Members on the performance of the Council for quarter 2 (from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015).

The Business Improvement Officer led Members through the report and outlined the contents of the appendices.

Members discussed the updates and a request was made for additional information relating to action LA029 (percentage of people whose quality of life and sense of wellbeing has improved as a result of Cultural Activities). In response to a Members' question relating to LA044 (number of residents who experience a positive health outcome as a consequence of a housing improvement intervention), the Strategic Housing Services Manager advised that the funding for insulation was no longer available and had contributed towards the decline in recorded numbers.

**Agreed:**

- **The progress in performance for quarter 2 be noted.**
- **The Business Improvement Officer to provide the additional information requested for circulation to Committee Members.**

**OS.46 TOIL / Sickness Statistics**

The Committee considered a briefing note which updated Members on the investigatory work undertaken regarding the increase in the amount of hours forfeited as a result of the TOIL/flex system, which was reported as part of the quarter 1 performance update at the Committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

The Director of Community Well-being and Environment presented the key findings from the analysis of the raw data for one month from quarter 1 of 2015-16. Members were advised that the majority of hours forfeited were by Managers, and the reductions in staffing levels over recent years had been identified as a contributory factor.

In response to Members concern over the sickness levels at the Depot, the Operational Services Manager advised that additional HR resources had been allocated to support teams in reducing both long and short term sickness levels.

The Director of Community Well-being and Environment advised Members that the Leadership Team were planning a review of the current TOIL/flex system as part of the Wyre Forest Forward Transformation Programme, with a view to making the system less complex.

**Agreed: The update be noted.**

**OS.47 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2015/16**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Financial Officer which provided Members with a mid-year review of the Council's treasury management policies, practices and activities in accordance with the revised CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice.

The Chief Financial Officer led Members through the report which had been fully scrutinised by the Treasury Management Review Panel at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015.

The Chairman of the Review Panel, Councillor F M Oborski, advised that the Council's Treasury Management Consultants, Capita, were holding a second training session for Members in February 2016. All Members were invited to attend.

**Agreed: Recommend to Council:**

**To approve the Treasury Management Mid-year Review and updated Prudential Indicators.**

**OS.48 Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2016/17**

The Committee considered a report from the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager which provided the results of the consultation exercise that the Council was required to undertake if there were any proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Members were led through the report and advised that 12 weeks of public consultation had been held from 6<sup>th</sup> July to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2015. A total of 117 responses had been received. It was noted that any proposed changes to the scheme were required to be agreed by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 for implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.

A robust discussion ensued, and Members expressed concern over the issues raised in the official response to the consultation from the Children's Society.

It was proposed and seconded to recommend to Cabinet that the response from the Children's Society be considered when making final recommendations to Council. Upon a show of hands the proposal was carried.

**Agreed:**

**The Committee endorse that the following points are incorporated into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1st April 2016:**

- a) Retention of the hardship fund, to ensure that people who face genuine difficulty in meeting their commitments can be assisted. This support is not available to people who have savings, for example;**
- b) Implement the technical changes outlined in paragraph 2.5 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;**
- c) Reduce the capital limit to £12,000 (in other words, anyone with savings in excess of that sum would not be eligible for support)**
- d) Increase the minimum council tax contribution to be made by working age people to 20%, on the basis that the Council's policy position is that it wants stability and is therefore not minded to make a series of incremental changes nor to review the minimum contribution rate in the medium term.**

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

- e) The submission to the consultation from the Children's Society be taken into consideration when making final recommendations to Council.**

**OS.49 Work Programme**

The Committee reviewed the work programme for the current municipal year. Members were reminded to submit any suggestions for further scrutiny to the Chairman and the importance of asking questions to make the scrutiny process

effective and worthwhile was highlighted.

**Agreed: The work programme be noted.**

**OS.50 Press Involvement**

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

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.15pm.