

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER 2016 (6PM)

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**Present:**

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), M Rayner (Vice-Chairman), J Baker, N Gale, K Henderson, A T Hingley, D Little, F M Oborski MBE, S J Walker and S J Williams.

**Observers**

Councillors: S J Chambers, N J Desmond, S E Fearn, I Hardiman, M J Hart, N Knowles and S Miah.

**OS.37 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: J R Desmond and P Dyke.

**Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor J Baker was appointed as a substitute for Councillor J R Desmond. Councillor F M Oborski MBE was appointed as a substitute for Councillor P Dyke.

**OS.38 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**OS.39 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**OS.40 How Are We Doing? Performance Update**

The Committee received a report from the Head of Transformation and Communications which updated Members on the performance of the Council for quarter 2 (from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016).

Councillor S J Chambers entered the meeting at this point (6.04pm).

Members were led through the report and considered each page of the appendices in turn. In relation to WFF 16/17 19 – Kidderminster Town Centre Public Realm Framework, several questions were asked about the final snagging list of minor outstanding works. The Head of Transformation and Communications was asked to arrange for responses to the questions from the Economic Regeneration Team to be circulated to Members of the Committee.

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

Councillor S Miah entered the meeting at this point (6.15pm).

In response to a Member question about the Stage 3 Safety Audit undertaken on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016, the Leader of the Council confirmed that additional signage within Exchange Street was being considered and there was a proposal for double yellow lines to be included along Oxford Street.

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

#### **OS.41 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2016/17**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Financial Officer and Principal Accountant 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.

Councillor J Baker left the meeting at 6.18pm and returned at 6.20pm.

The Chief Financial Officer led Members through the report and advised that this was the second of 3 statutory reports which would be presented to the Committee in the current municipal year.

Councillor I Hardiman entered the meeting at this point, (6.26pm).

The Chief Financial Officer was pleased to report that there had been no breaches to report and all treasury management activities adhered to the Council's low risk investment strategy. In response to a Member question regarding the remaining Icelandic investments, she confirmed that final repayments were expected within the next 12 to 18 months.

The Chairman of the Treasury Management Review Panel, Councillor F M Oborski (MBE), advised that the report had been fully scrutinised by the Panel at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, and moved the recommendations for approval. Councillor Oborski reminded Members that the next Treasury Management Training Session, which is carried out by the Council's Treasury Management Advisors, Capita, was scheduled to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017 and urged all Members to attend.

**Agreed: In line with the recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel, the Treasury Management Mid-year Review be noted.**

**Recommend to Council:**

**The Treasury Management Mid-year Review and updated Prudential Indicators be approved.**

#### **OS.42 Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2017/18**

The Committee considered a report from the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager which invited Members to provide recommendations to the Cabinet as part of the public consultation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme review for 2017/18.

## **Agenda Item No. 4**

The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager led Members through the report and advised that due to the national changes to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit as part of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 that affect the authorities Council Tax Reduction Scheme, a public consultation started on 5<sup>th</sup> October to seek views on the proposal to align the current scheme with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit for new applicants from April 2017.

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Change explained that aligning the schemes would assist with reducing confusion for customers and would reduce the cost of the scheme to the Council in respect of new claimants. She thanked the Benefits Manager for helping her understand the complex schemes.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to the proposed changes to the scheme.**

### **OS.43 Report on the Worcestershire Partnership Plan**

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Housing Services Manager on the Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan that had been developed by the Strategic Housing Partnership and was currently out to a 10 week consultation.

**Recommend to Cabinet:**

- 1. The draft Partnership Plan be published for consultation until the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.**
- 2. Wyre Forest District Council signs up to the Worcestershire Memorandum of Understanding.**

Councillor M J Hart left the meeting at 7.04pm and returned at 7.06pm

### **OS.44 Alternative Temporary Accommodation Provision**

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Housing Services Manager which detailed a proposal to deliver alternative temporary accommodation provision for households who are in housing need or homeless within a Council owned empty property.

The Strategic Housing Services Manager led Members through the report and highlighted the sources of capital for the project, which included £50,000 from the Council's Evergreen Investment Fund.

The Members welcomed the proposal and agreed that the scheme would enable the Council to control the quality of emergency accommodation within the District.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The provision of alternative temporary accommodation at 2-3 New Street, Stourport, be approved.**

**OS.45 Wyre Forest District Local Plan Review: Revised Local Development Scheme (Project Plan 2016 - 2019)**

The Committee considered a report from the Interim Planning Policy Manager which set out the key proposed changes to the Council's current Local Development Scheme (June 2016).

The Director of Economic Prosperity and Place presented the report and advised that the revised Project Plan would provide a realistic programme on which to focus the Council's objectives for development planning over the next three year period.

The Chairman of the Local Plans Review Panel, Councillor F M Oborski MBE, advised that the report had been fully scrutinised and endorsed by the Local Plans Review Panel at their meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The proposed Revised Local Development Scheme 2016-19 (November 2016) as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be adopted.**

**OS.46 Feedback from Cabinet**

**Agreed: The content of the Cabinet decision list following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016 be noted.**

**OS.47 Work Programme**

The Committee considered the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year. The Chairman advised Officers that the scheduled meeting dates could be moved, with the agreement of the Committee, if required to accommodate any items which fall out of the usual cycle of meetings. Members were reminded to submit any suggestions for future scrutiny items to the Chairman.

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

**OS.48 Press Involvement**

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

**OS.49 Exempt Information**

**Decision: Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in paragraphs 2, 6 and 7 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

**OS.50 Industrial Units Investment Business Case**

The Committee received an exempt report from the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration - North Worcestershire, which detailed a proposal

for the Council to purchase new industrial units.

Members welcomed the proposal which was in line with the Council's recently adopted Strategic Asset Management Plan and Enterprise and Business Growth Strategy.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:**

**The proposal to purchase land, at the site identified in the exempt report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and subsequent construction of industrial units be approved, subject to the production of a satisfactory full business case.**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.33pm.