

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 6TH JULY 2017 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), P Dyke, J A Hart, K Henderson, N Martin, T L Onslow, S J Walker, H S Williams, S J Williams and R Wilson.

Observers

Councillors: I Hardiman, N Knowles and J A Shaw.

OS.13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: M Rayner (Vice-Chairman), J R Desmond and D Little.

OS.14 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor J A Hart was appointed as a substitute for Councillor J R Desmond.
Councillor N Martin was appointed as a substitute for Councillor M Rayner.
Councillor T L Onslow was appointed as a substitute for Councillor D Little.

OS.15 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor P Dyke declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in exempt agenda item 15 – Residential Unit Investment Business Case, and intended to rely on the general dispensation relating to outside bodies which was granted to all Members for a period of 4 years in September 2016.

Councillor T L Onslow declared an Other Disclosable Interest (ODI) in agenda item 8 – Housing Enforcement Policy, as she was a private landlord.

Councillor J A Hart declared an ODI in agenda item 8 – Housing Enforcement Policy, as he was a private landlord.

OS.16 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2017 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.17 Kidderminster Town Centre Business Improvement District

The Committee received a report from the Town Centres Manager which asked the Committee to consider a proposal for a Business Improvement District (BID) for Kidderminster Town Centre.

The Town Centres Manager led Members in detail through the report. He advised that a BID is a defined area in a town where a partnership is formed between the private and public sector for the improvement of that particular area. He added that improvements to the defined area included new business support, town marketing, promotions and events, safety and security, cleaning and maintenance. It was stressed that the BID services agreed would be funded by an annual levy on business rates and would be in addition to those existing services already provided by the local authority.

Members commended the proposal and supported a suggestion that the boundary be potentially widened to include a large retail store in Park Lane and the businesses in the Churchfields area. A Member of the Town Council for Kidderminster stated that he would like the Town Council to be involved in the scheme which would have a positive impact on the Town and may consider financial support for the BID.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

The findings of the initial feasibility study are sufficient to proceed to stage 2 of the BID Development process.

OS.18 Strategic Facilities & Asset Management Plan (including Wyre Forest House Tenancy Management & Marketing Strategy)

The Committee received a report from the Facilities & Asset Manager which set out the proposed Strategic Facilities & Asset Management Plan (SF&) 2017-20, which included the Wyre Forest House Tenancy Management & Marketing Plan.

Members welcomed the plans and were assured that the Council's operational buildings and site portfolio were being efficiently and effectively managed.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

The Strategic Facilities & Asset Management Plan, as presented in the report, be adopted.

OS.19 Establishing a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC)

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place on the progress made in establishing a LATC. Members were reminded that following a report to Cabinet in June 2016, the Council had agreed to set up a Capital Portfolio Fund as part of the 2017/18 budget. The Fund would enable up to £25m to be invested in revenue generating assets, subject to the Council being satisfied that the business cases were financially viable.

The Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place, led the Committee through the report and outlined the key issues associated with the scheme. In relation to Governance, Members were advised that the Company would be established as a company limited by shares with the Council as the sole shareholder. He stressed the importance of the Council being able to clearly distinguish the different roles, responsibilities and interests of those sitting on the Board of the Company as

opposed to the roles, responsibilities and interests of Members or Officers to the Council, as from time to time there may be conflicts of interest which arise between being a Director of a company and making a Council decision which related to the company. In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that there would be no remuneration for Council Officers or Members who were appointed as Directors of the Board.

Members welcomed the update and fully supported the initiative which was seen as a vehicle for profit and was in the best interests of the residents of Wyre Forest.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

The work continues to establish a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) for the Council with the Council as sole shareholder on the basis of the principles set out in the report.

OS.20 Housing Enforcement Policy Update

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Strategic Growth on the updating of the Housing Enforcement Policy following the introduction of enhanced enforcement measures to tackle 'Rogue Landlords' in accordance with the Housing and Planning Act 2016.

Councillors T L Onslow and J A Hart declared their ODIs at this point (7.19pm).

The Head of Strategic Growth led Members through the report and advised that Local Authority delegated Officers would now have the ability to issue civil financial penalties and extend the rent repayment order criteria. She added that the Worcestershire Housing Partnership Plan 2017 recognised that the private rented sector had the highest proportion of homes that did not meet a decent standard and that one in five homes presented a risk to health.

In response to concerns raised by Members relating to the capacity within the current Private Sector Housing Team, the Head of Strategic Growth confirmed that the legislation set out that any civil penalty recovered by the Council must be used for the Private Sector Housing service area. A bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government Migration fund for a post that would be dedicated solely to Wyre Forest to tackle rogue landlords is currently under consideration.

Members welcomed the policy which would potentially improve the standard of homes currently available in the private rented sector.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

The Housing Enforcement Policy 2017 as set out in appendix 1 of the report, be adopted.

OS.21 Treasury Management Review Panel

The Chairman advised Members that the Treasury Management Review Panel

would be formed again for the 2017-2018 municipal year. The first training session and meeting of the Panel was scheduled to take place on Monday 4th September 2017.

Agreed: The Principal Committee and Member Services Officer to request nominations for the Panel from Members.

OS.22 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet decision list following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 14th June 2017 be noted.

OS.23 Work Programme

The Committee considered the work programme for the current municipal year. The Chairman advised that the review into affordable housing within the District was in the process of being set up and asked Members to submit any further ideas for to her by way of a scrutiny proposal form.

Agreed: The work programme be noted.

OS.24 Press Involvement

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

OS.25 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.

Councillor N Martin left the meeting at this point, (7.31pm).

OS.26 Residential Unit Investment Business Case

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Strategic Growth which presented a business case for a proposal for the Council to purchase four, two bedroom flats for private rent.

Members were in favour of the proposal which would generate income for the Council, and met an identified demand for this type of accommodation within the local housing market.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:

The purchase of four units of accommodation as detailed in the exempt report be approved.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.39pm.