

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 1ST NOVEMBER 2018 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: H E Dyke (Chairman), M Rayner (Vice-Chairman), N Harris, K Henderson, N Knowles, D Little, S Miah, S J Walker, H S Williams and S J Williams.

Observers

Councillors: F M Oborski MBE, J D Smith and R J Vale.

OS.50 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

OS.51 Appointment of Substitutes

No substitutes were appointed.

OS.52 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.53 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on the 4th October 2018 and the minutes of the special meeting held on 25th October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.54 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 1st July to 30th October 2018.

The Business Improvement Officer presented the report and appendices which included detailed updates on the performance against the Council's purposes of 'People' and 'Business'. Members were advised that an exception report had not been included for this period as there were no overdue actions or significant issues to report. There was however a new report which detailed the progress of the Council's capital projects.

The Committee considered each page of the report in turn. Members discussed the Depot 2020 project and a further update was requested in relation to the

commencement of work on site and confirmation of the technical advice given regarding the use of solar panels. The Chairman asked the Cabinet Member for Operational Services to arrange for a full response to be circulated to Members of the Committee.

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

OS.55 Recommendations from the PACT Review Panel - Draft Action Plan

The Committee received a report from the Community Safety & Partnerships Officer which set out a draft action plan for improvements to the PACT scheme in Wyre Forest.

The Community Safety & Partnerships Officer advised Members that the action plan had been drafted in conjunction with Inspector Jake Wright from West Mercia Police. She said that any changes to the scheme in Wyre Forest could be determined locally by the Police and relevant Partners.

The Committee discussed the plan. Members felt that there should be a firm commitment from the Police that either a PC or PCSO would attend each meeting, and the proposal to review the plan in 12 months time was agreed. The Community Safety & Partnerships Officer agreed to amend the plan with the points raised and said that a report on the effectiveness of the action plan would be brought back to the Committee in November 2019.

Agreed: The draft action plan, as amended, be approved and implemented by West Mercia Police and Wyre Forest District Council.

OS.56 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2018-19

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

The Corporate Director: Resources led Members through the report and outlined the key issues. She advised that this was the second of the 3 statutory reports which would be presented to the Committee in the current municipal year. She said that the report had been fully scrutinised by the Members of the Treasury Management Review Panel at their meeting on 29th October 2018.

The Corporate Director: Resources was pleased to advise that there were no issues to report and all the treasury management activities adhered to the Council's approved low risk strategy. She added that the new Capital Portfolio Fund Prudential Indicators and Ratios had been included in the report for information and was not a statutory requirement. Members were advised that the performance of the Property Portfolio fund would be reported separately in the future.

The Chairman of the Treasury Management Review Panel, Councillor F Oborski MBE, commended the recommendations from the Panel to the Committee for

approval. She thanked the Members of the Review Panel and the Corporate Director: Resources and her team for all their hard work.

Upon a show of hands the recommendation was agreed. Councillor N Knowles voted against the proposal and asked for his vote to be recorded as such as he disagrees with the authority investing in property outside of the Wyre Forest District.

Agreed: Recommend to Council that:

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

OS.57 Housing Assistance Policy

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Strategic Growth which sought to agree the policy that would determine how the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding from central government would be spent. In 2018/19 the Council received £1.192m of capital funding via the Better Care Fund (BCF) to deliver its DFG programme and related services.

The Head of Strategic Growth led Members through the report and outlined the amendments to the policy which would support the better utilisation of the funding. She advised that there was a proposal to allocate a small amount of the overall budget to pilot funding for discretionary DFGs without having a means test, the discretionary grants would be up to £5,000, and the pilot would be reviewed after a year.

The Committee supported the policy and were encouraged by the way the grants and services had been delivered.

Members welcomed the support given to households to enable people to remain living independently in their homes.

Agreed: Recommendation to Cabinet:

1.1 The Housing Assistance Policy 2018 be approved.

1.2 Delegated authority be given to Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, in consultation with the Corporate Director: Resources and Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing to agree the split of funding and eligibility criteria on an annual basis or as may otherwise be required.

Councillor S Walker left the meeting at this point, (7.05pm).

OS.58 Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2019/20

The Committee considered a report from Revenues, Benefits & 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.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services Manager led Members in detail through the report. She said that the public consultation had taken place from 23rd July to 28th September 2018. There had been a total of 90 responses received.

Councillor S Walker returned to the meeting at this point, (7.16pm).

The Committee endorsed the proposed changes which would reduce the need to increase administration costs when Universal Credit was rolled out in the district.

Members welcomed the support which was available to people who may find themselves in difficulty as the changes in the system took place.

Agreed: Recommendation to Cabinet:

The following points are incorporated into the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1st April 2019:

- 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.**
- b) The proposed changes outlined in paragraph 2.11 of the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be implemented.**

OS.59 Work Programme

The Committee considered the work programme for the current municipal year. The Chairman advised that the Highways Maintenance Review Panel had concluded their work and the findings and recommendations would be presented to the December meeting of the Committee. Members were advised that the review into the civil enforcement issues would commence in December. She asked any Members who would like to part in the review to notify the Principal Committee and Member Services Officer.

Agreed: The work programme be noted.

OS.60 Press Involvement

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

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.28pm.