

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 6TH DECEMBER 2018 (6PM)

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**Present:**

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

**Observers**

Councillor: C Rogers.

**OS.61 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Rayner (Vice-Chairman).

**OS.62 Appointment of Substitutes**

Councillor N Martin was a substitute for Councillor M Rayner.

**OS.63 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**OS.64 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**OS.65 Recommendations from the Highways Maintenance Review Panel**

The Committee received a report from the Highways Maintenance Review Panel which provided an overview of the issues the Panel had considered. The report set out its conclusions and recommendations for the Committee's consideration. The Chairman led Members through the report and the recommendations, assisted by the Head of Operational Services.

The Committee was advised that the Panel had been established to undertake an in-depth review of the service standards for Highway Maintenance, in response to residents' enquiries and to aid joined-up working with town and parish councils. It was noted that the public generally lacked awareness over which services were the responsibility of the County Council and which were provided by the District Council.

The Committee was invited to discuss the report and suggest amendments to the recommendations.

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

Discussion ensued and Members expressed concern over the continued lack of response by Worcester County Council to matters on which the Highways Maintenance Review Panel had sought further clarification.

Issues of resources, regular maintenance, seasonal demand, public perception and identification of areas of responsibility were discussed.

The Head of Operational Services drew Members attention to the issue of residents clearing snow and ice from paths outside their properties and the concern that they could open themselves up to litigation by the Council or a member of the public if someone were to fall on the cleared area and make a claim. He clarified that it was not the case and that the County Council had also confirmed this.

Concern was expressed that while the experience of County Council liaison officer responses to requests and service provision in some areas of Wyre Forest were reported to be effective, this was not reflected consistently throughout the District. It was suggested that reinstatement of the Highways Partnership Forum could alleviate this discrepancy.

Councillor Oborski requested that the criteria for the provision of County Council grit bins be clarified. Members also expressed concern about the drain maintenance programme, whether or not it existed and if so, its current status.

It was suggested that in the event of inclement weather, it was not just snow and ice that caused problems. If fallen leaves were not picked up, these became wet and a danger to the public. The Head of Operational Services said that while the small district sweepers cleared some of these away, he would take that concern forward.

Each recommendation within the report was considered individually by the Committee. Amendments and additions as agreed were made.

#### **Agreed:**

- **Head of Operational Services to identify where improvements can be made to the quality of work carried out by Wyre Forest District Council and continue to look at opportunities for additional income generation.**
- **Investigate that Worcestershire County Council reinstate the Highways Partnership Forum.**
- **Highways Liaison Engineer for Wyre Forest, Paul Green, to be invited to attend a Members Forum to discuss his role, job description and the process for Councillors to contact him.**
- **Members to be encouraged to liaise with County Councillor colleagues to improve communication and knowledge about local issues and understanding of the reporting systems for Worcestershire County Council.**
- **Enquire whether a Worcestershire County Council pro-active drain maintenance programme exists for Wyre Forest and if it does not already, recommend that pro-active drain maintenance be utilised to avoid issues**

during inclement weather.

- **Communicate to members of the public, through a variety of publicity means, to encourage them, and local shop owners, to keep their local area clear of snow and ice taking steps to allay the perception that they could be liable should someone fall on an area that has been cleared. Provide the public with a clear definition of Wyre Forest District Council's Highway Maintenance responsibilities and the areas covered by other organisations including the work carried out by WFDC on behalf of Worcestershire County Council.**
- **Use the Wyre Forest District Council website to signpost the gritting routes on the Worcestershire County Council website making clear that this is a WCC responsibility using social media posts to support this information.**
- **Request that access areas to sheltered accommodation be added to the gritting routes.**

#### **OS.66 Recommendations from Affordable Housing Review Panel**

The Committee received the recommendations from the Affordable Housing Review Panel which had been reconvened to consider Local Authority Delivery Models to tackle housing need.

Councillor Knowles led Members through the recommendation briefly outlining the background and scope of the Panel's considerations. He said that case studies of other councils' initiatives in trying to meet the affordable housing needs development had been presented to the Panel. He expressed appreciation to officers and members involved in the Panel.

The Committee acknowledged the reasons for recommending reconvening the Panel, given within the report.

**Agreed: The Affordable Housing Review Panel be reconvened post May 2019 to further consider the Council's approach to housing delivery.**

#### **OS.67 Feedback from Cabinet**

**Agreed: The content of the Cabinet decision list following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018 be noted.**

#### **OS.68 Work Programme**

The Chairman advised that a progress update on the Climate Change Action Plan and Health Action Plan recommendations provided by the Principal Health & Sustainability Officer, in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October, had been circulated to Members.

The Committee noted that some items scheduled to be included on the Agenda for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, according to the work programme and forward plan had been withdrawn. The Chairman advised that she

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was not aware of the reasons for this. Concern was expressed by Members about the potential delay caused. It was noted that there were no items scheduled for January 2019.

The Chairman asked that enquiries be made about the reason the items scheduled to have been included in the work programme on this agenda had been withdrawn.

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

#### **OS.69 Press Involvement**

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

There being no further items for discussion, the meeting ended at 6.51pm.