

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER 2019 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), S J Chambers (Vice-Chairman), N J Desmond, C E E Edginton-White, S Griffiths, S Miah, T L Onslow, M Rayner, S E N Rook and D R Sheppard.

Observers

Councillors: G W Ballinger and F M Oborski MBE.

OS.23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Totty.

OS.24 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor S Miah was a substitute for Councillor A Totty.

OS.25 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.26 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2019 and the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 30th July 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.27 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 1 from 1st April to 30th June 2019.

The Principal HR Advisor presented the report and appendices which included a detailed report of performance against the Council's purposes of 'Enabling' and a detailed report on the progress of the Capital Projects. Members were advised that as to be expected for quarter 1, there were no overdue actions and therefore no exception report had been included on this occasion.

The Committee considered each page of the report and appendices in turn. In response to a Member question regarding CORPRISK07 – Not able to maintain a skilled and motivated workforce; in relation to retention issues of HGV drivers, the

Principal HR Advisor said that there was a national shortage of HGV drivers and the Council was actively working with the existing workforce to train up loaders to become drivers.

Agreed: The progress in performance for quarter 1 be noted.

OS.28 Annual Report on Treasury Management Service and Actual Prudential Indicators 2018-19

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director: Resources which provided a review of the treasury management activities for 2018-19, in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code). It also includes for the first time reporting on the non-treasury prudential indicators introduced under MHCLG Guidance issued in February 2018.

The Committee also considered recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel from its meeting on 2nd September 2019.

The Corporate Director: Resources presented the report and gave a summary of the main points. She advised Members that this was the first of three statutory reports which would be presented to the Committee during the municipal year. She added that the Council's Treasury Management Consultants, Link Asset Services, had provided a comprehensive Member training session on 2nd September, which was followed by a detailed scrutiny of the report by the Treasury Management Review Panel.

The Chairman of the Treasury Management Review Panel, Councillor N Desmond, said that there were still spaces left on the Review Panel if any other Members were interested in joining the Panel.

Agreed: Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Council to:

- 1.1 Approve the actual 2018-19 prudential and treasury indicators in the report.;**
- 1.2 Approve the actual 2018-19 non-treasury prudential indicators for Capital Portfolio Fund property acquisitions;**
- 1.3 Note the annual treasury management report for 2018-19, including information on the non-treasury prudential indicators for Capital Portfolio Fund acquisitions.**

OS.29 Worcestershire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2022

The Committee considered a report from the Head of Strategic Growth which sought agreement that the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 -2022 is publically consulted on in advance of adoption.

Agenda Item No. 4

The Head of Strategic Growth led Members through the report and advised that the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) which came into force on 3rd April 2018 and the new Homelessness Code of Guidance developed by Government to assist Local Authorities to implement the Act have placed further requirements on authorities' strategic response to preventing homelessness. She added that the Act strengthens statutory duties to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants, including those who do not have priority need or may be considered intentionally homeless.

The Head of Strategic Growth tabled a briefing paper which illustrated the differences in homelessness pre and post the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. In particular the paper considered the number of homeless decisions made before and after the acts introduction which provided an illustration of service volumes and changes therein. The paper also compared service volumes in Wyre Forest to other councils within the County.

A lengthy discussion ensued. Members welcomed the Strategy and were assured that it had been amended to take into consideration the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 and the requirement by the Ministry of Housing, Local Government and Communities (MHCLG) to update the Council's current strategy by the end of 2019.

The Committee unanimously supported the recommendations and was pleased that local volunteer groups that support homeless people within the District will have the opportunity to take part in the consultation exercise.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Strategic Growth agreed to circulate a list of the County wide homeless / rough sleeper projects for 2019-20, which would include the amount of funding and resource for Wyre Forest, to Members for their information.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet that:

- 1. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2022 is publically consulted on in advance of being adopted AND;**
- 2. To recommend to Cabinet that they delegate to the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing, to agree the finalised strategy following any changes arising as a consequence of the consultation and that the final strategy be adopted from 31 December 2019.**

OS.30 Kidderminster Business Improvement District (BID) – Forward Funding

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place which set out a proposal to provide forward funding to the Kidderminster BID in advance of the initial collection of the additional business rates in 2020/21.

The Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place led Members through the report. He advised Members that over the last two years the District Council had

Agenda Item No. 4

supported businesses in Kidderminster Town Centre to undertake a ballot on whether to establish a BID. He added that a ballot was held in July 2018 which was unsuccessful, however the Businesses decided to amend the BID proposal, and a further BID ballot was held in May 2019 which was successful.

The Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity & Place said that the Council would be the body responsible for collecting the BID levy as part of its Business Rates collection.

The Committee discussed the report and in response to a Member question, the Corporate Director: Resources confirmed that the forward funding would come from general cash reserves. Members fully supported the proposal which would enable the continued progress to set up the BID Company and to appoint a BID Manager. The Committee agreed that the proposal supported the Council's corporate priority for supporting economic regeneration within the District.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet that the proposed forward funding by way of a Loan Agreement should proceed.

OS.31 North Worcestershire Economic Growth Strategy 2019-2024

The Committee considered a report from the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration which provided a summary of the North Worcestershire Economic Growth Strategy 2019-2024 and outlines its four pillars of growth, strategic priorities and supporting projects and interventions.

The Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration led Members in detail through the document.

Members welcomed the strategy and acknowledged that it provided stronger evidence of the combined strengths of the three North Worcestershire districts to generate economic growth, and was an important evidence base document for potential investments from the UK shared Prosperity Fund.

There was unanimous support for the proposal. When making the recommendation the Committee noted that the Vibrant Economy Index (VEI) score for health, Wellbeing & Happiness in Wyre Forest was the lowest in North Worcestershire and below the GB average and made reference to the consultation paper on the proposed changes to the management structure of the Community Well-being and Environment Directorate.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet that the strategy be adopted.

OS.32 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet action list, following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 16th July 2019 and the meeting of the Cabinet Sub-Committee held on 31st July 2019 be noted.

OS.33 Work Programme

Agreed: As there are no items to be considered at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday 3rd October 2019, and therefore to ensure that officer resource and member time is used most efficiently and not wasted, the Chairman in consultation with the Committee members has decided to cancel the meeting.

OS.34 Press Involvement

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

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.45pm.