

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER 2019 (6PM)

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**Present:**

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

**Observers**

Councillor: H E Dyke.

**OS.35 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**OS.36 Appointment of Substitutes**

No substitutes were appointed.

**OS.37 Declarations of Interests by Members**

No declarations of interest were made.

**OS.38 Minutes**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**OS.39 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 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

The Business Improvement Officer presented the report and appendices which included an exception report detailing those actions that were overdue or cancelled, a detailed report of performance against the Council's purpose of 'Businesses', a business tracker report and an update on the progress of the 'People' purpose.

The Committee considered each page of the report and appendices in turn. In response to a Member question relating to WFF 19/20 59 – Apprenticeships Programme (Year 8), the Chairman said that following a request at full Council, he had received some additional information relating to the number of Apprentices working across the authority. He said that he would arrange for it to be circulated to Members of the Committee for their information.

Councillor M Rayner entered the meeting at this point, (6.05pm).

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

**OS.40 To consider whether to progress with establishing a local lottery for Wyre Forest**

The Committee received a report from the Corporate Director: Community Well Being and Environment to consider whether to progress with establishing a local lottery for Wyre Forest.

The Commercial Business Manager presented the report and advised that the external lottery management company, Gatherwell, were the leading operators in this field and had experience in running over 60 other local authority lotteries.

The Committee received a power point presentation from a representative from Gatherwell which outlined who the company were, what they do and explained how the lottery works. Members welcomed the presentation and were assured by the safeguards in place to mitigate the risk to problem gamblers.

A lengthy discussion ensued and in response to a Member question, the Commercial Business Manager confirmed that he had spoken to other nearby local authorities and they were pleased with the results of their lotteries so far. Members acknowledged the benefits of establishing a lottery to support local charities and organisations across the District. Several Members expressed their support for retaining the Community Leadership Fund (CLF) in addition to the proposed lottery as each individual Councillor had the discretion on what organisations or one-off community projects to support.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet:**

**To progress a WFDC lottery subject to:-**

- 1. The lottery should not be a precursor to the CLF being removed and recommend to Cabinet that support for the lottery does not mean the removal of the CLF.**
- 2. The formal details and parameters of the scheme should come back to scrutiny for further consideration before then going back to Cabinet for a decision and, therefore, there should be no delegation in respect of these matters agreed in the report going to Cabinet at its next meeting.**
- 3. There should be a cross party, politically balanced panel established to oversee the smooth running of the lottery and to decide which charities could be supported.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7.05pm and resumed at 7.10pm.

**OS.41 Capital Portfolio Fund – Quarterly Fund Report**

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director: Economic

## Agenda Item No. 4

Prosperity and Place which provided Members with an update on the performance of the Council's Capital Portfolio Fund for the June 2019 Quarter period.

The Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place presented the report and reminded Members that at its meeting in July 2019, Council adopted the Asset Management Strategy (AMS) 2019-22. He explained that the document sits alongside the Capital Portfolio Fund Strategy as a means by which the Council can monitor the performance of the properties acquired using the Capital Portfolio Fund.

The Committee received a high level overall summary from the representatives of Jones Valerio. Members were advised that the authority had recently requested Bruton Knowles to provide portfolio valuation advice and appointed BNP Paribas as their Property Managers. Jones Valerio explained that the next report would include additional detail from the Property Manager and the valuer.

**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.**

The Committee discussed the confidential information provided in the Jones Valerio June Quarterly Performance Report set out in appendix 2 of the exempt report.

**Agreed: The performance of the Capital Portfolio Fund be noted.**

The Committee agreed to rescind the decision to exclude the press and public. The remainder of the meeting was held in the open session.

### OS.42

#### **Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2019-20**

The Committee considered 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 Members of the Treasury Management Review Panel at their meeting on 4th November 2019.

The Corporate Director: Resources reminded Members that the next Treasury Management training session for Members was scheduled to take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020.

In conclusion, the Corporate Director: Resources was pleased to advise that there were no breaches to report and all the treasury management activities were in full compliance with the Council's approved strategy.

**Agreed: Recommend to Council to:**

**Approve the Treasury Management Mid-year Review and updated Prudential Indicators & Ratios.**

**OS.43 Conversion of a property in Stourport on Severn**

The Committee received a report from the Head of Strategic Growth which presented the business case for converting a property in Stourport on Severn into temporary accommodation, to be run by the Council as an alternative to using private sector Bed and Breakfast (B&B) facilities particularly for families.

The Head of Strategic Growth presented the report and advised that at present the property is poorly maintained. She explained that it would require refurbishment to bring it up to current required standard including fire separation between the flat and the shop beneath. She added that the work will be put out to tender if approval is given and it is proposed that the works are funded through a reallocation of the Evergreen Fund previously committed to a new build project at Comberton Place which is no longer deliverable.

The Committee welcomed the financial aspect of the proposal which represents an opportunity for the Council to reduce its B&B costs going forward and generate additional revenue. In addition, Members acknowledged the importance of the authority being able to control the standard of the temporary accommodation and supporting people whilst they are going through difficult times by accommodating them within their local area, enabling them to remain close to friends and family.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet that:**

**The proposal to refurbish 11b Raven Street, Stourport on Severn into temporary accommodation be agreed.**

**OS.44 Social Housing Update**

The Committee received a report from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place which provided an update on the delivery of social housing as requested by Council in May 2019.

The Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place presented the report. He said there was no simple solution open to the Council to meet the objective in the motion to enable the Council to build social housing on land already in public ownership. He added that the District Council's Local Plan was the primary document the Council relies on to deliver all forms of housing across the district for a minimum of fifteen years into the future.

He added that, whilst the Council can hold up to 199 units of housing without the need for an active Housing Revenue Account (HRA), it does not have the necessary capital receipts to be able to support the financial viability of a housing delivery model.

In conclusion he said that the Council will continue to identify funding sources and initiatives to enable it to enter the housing market and will report on these separately

when a suitable initiative is identified.

Councillor N Desmond left the meeting at this point, (8.48pm).

The Committee welcomed the update, and notwithstanding their disappointment; acknowledged the Council's situation regarding options for delivery of social housing within the District and the importance of having an adopted Local Plan.

**Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet that:**

- 1. The Council's situation regarding options for delivery of social housing be noted.**
- 2. The Cabinet have due regard for the recommendations from the Corporate Director: Economic Prosperity and Place and keep the Social Housing delivery under regular review.**

**OS.45 Feedback from Cabinet**

**Agreed: The content of the Cabinet action list, following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 18th September 2019 be noted.**

**OS.46 Work Programme**

The Committee reviewed the work programme for the current municipal year. The Chairman advised Members that he had been notified of an additional item for the December 2019 meeting; Construction of Temporary Car Park at Crown House – Allocation of Evergreen Investment Fund.

**Agreed: The work programme, as amended, be noted.**

**OS.47 Press Involvement**

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

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.55pm.