

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY 2020 (6PM)

Present:

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

Observers

Councillors: B S Dawes, H E Dyke, I Hardiman, P Harrison, F M Oborski MBE and C Rogers.

OS.60 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Edginton-White.

OS.61 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor P W M Young was a substitute for Councillor C Edginton-White.

OS.62 Declarations of Interests by Members

Councillor T L Onslow declared an Other Disclosable Interest (ODI) in agenda item 7 – Annual Review of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership 2019/20, as she is the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, and the Police and Crime Commissioner provide Grant Funding to the Community Safety Partnership.

Having previously welcomed everyone to the meeting, the Chairman advised that in terms of the public participation in agenda item 6 - Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2016-2036), the meeting would take the following format:

- Having dealt with agenda items 4 and 5, the Spatial Planning Manager will present the report.
- The five public speakers that had registered to speak would be invited in turn to address the committee.
- As part of their three minute presentation, each public speaker would be entitled to ask one question and one supplementary question.

The Chairman reminded all speakers, public or otherwise to make their comments relevant to the agenda item. He added that agenda item 7 - Annual Review of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership 2019/20 had been deferred to the March meeting of the Committee.

OS.63 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.64 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 3 from 1st October to 31st December 2019.

The Business Improvement Officer presented the report and appendices which included a detailed report of performance against the Council's purpose of 'Place', an overview of activity at Bewdley Museum and a report on the Capital Projects. Members were advised that as there were no overdue actions or significant issues to highlight, an exception report had not been included on this occasion.

The Committee considered each page of the report and appendices in turn. In response to a Member query regarding the Wyre Forest Leisure Centre (LE032) measure, the Business Improvement Officer explained there were no details included as the Leisure Centre measure is a cross cutting measure for the Place purpose. The full information for the Leisure Centre measure would sit within the report for the purpose that the measure primarily sits within which is the purpose of 'People'.

Agreed: The progress in performance for quarter 3 be noted.

OS.65 Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2016-2036)

The Committee received a report from the Spatial Planning Manager which summarised the progress of the preparation of a local plan for the period 2016-2036.

The Spatial Planning Manager presented the report and advised Members that Since 2015, Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) has been working towards the preparation of a Local Plan for the period 2016 – 2036. She explained that the Local Plan set out the policies and plans to guide future development within Wyre Forest District up to 2036. It would be the statutory document against which individual planning applications were determined. The Local Plan therefore has a key role in shaping the future of the district.

She further explained that it was a legal requirement for every local authority in England to produce a Local Plan for its area. WFDCs existing adopted plan was out of date in certain aspects and the Council now needed to ensure that it achieved a 'sound' Local Plan to replace it in accordance with the Government's planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), (as set out in paragraph 12.4 of the report).

The Spatial Planning Manager outlined the main risks in failing to progress a Local Plan for the Wyre Forest District in compliance with laws, regulations and guidance which included; Direct interventions by Government into the District Council's Local Plan making; Inability to steer, promote or restrict development across its

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administrative area and; Potential damage to the Council's image and reputation if a development plan was not adopted in an appropriate timeframe.

In conclusion, she said that Officers had carefully considered the consultation responses received, and having done so, they were satisfied that there were no obstacles to the submission of the Local Plan as approved by Cabinet on 16th July 2019. She said that the relevant requirements had been complied with and that the Plan was ready for independent examination by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

The Chairman invited the five registered speakers to address the Committee.

Paul Mellor – Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council Representative

Paul Mellor spoke in relation to Policies AM 36.10 and 36.11 regarding car parking in Blakedown. He said detailed objections were reproduced in Appendix D, but in summary the Parish Council had obtained legal advice from Counsel at Landmark Chambers, professional planning advice, and transport advice which was that the Submission Plan should not pass scrutiny, and outlined the reason why. He said there was no need for any further train station car parking within Blakedown that could not already be met by the car park allocation at Station Yard. "Exceptional Circumstances" required by NPPF have not been demonstrated to remove the Station Drive site from the Green Belt

Claire Wood – Resident of Lynwood Drive, Blakedown

Claire Wood advised that her family would be directly impacted by both elements of the amendment to the local plan proposed at Blakedown station. She said that in her opinion she did not think any resident of Blakedown would dispute that current traffic levels and parking around the station, particularly at peak times required addressing, however residents did not recognise the need for Blakedown to be responsible for fixing Kidderminster traffic problems. She spoke about the safety aspects of the proposals including, but not restricted to road safety at the level crossing and surrounding area, and the inadequacy of the local road network to cope with the additional traffic.

Mike Pitt – Resident of Mill Close, Blakedown

Mike Pitt advised that the development would be on green belt land and the reason for this seemed to be entirely unjustified as per the NPPF and government guidelines. This would also jeopardise the area for local wildlife. He said the plan to build 50 houses in the area was far in excess of the needs of Blakedown and Wyre Forest Planners had instigated this simply to fund the extra car park development in Station Yard.

Roger Shade – Resident of Blakedown

Roger Shade spoke as a concerned resident of Blakedown. He advised that he was also a Parish Councillor involved in developing the Neighbourhood plan for Churchill and Blakedown. He said that an essential part of the Neighbourhood Plan was preserving the rural nature of the village 'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'. The plan makes a change to the village boundary and he

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questioned the validity of this proposed change. There was absolutely no evidence of exceptional and urgent need for 50 houses in Blakedown. The allocation had purely been made to finance the car park; which in itself would not constitute sufficient exceptional circumstances that would need to justify removing the green belt designation.

Sue Fowler – Resident of Blakedown

Sue Fowler echoed the comments from the Parish Council representative that the current proposals in the Submission Plan affecting Blakedown are not justified and in breach of the NPPF and Green Belt Provisions. She advised that you could see from the contents of the large number of consultation responses from Blakedown residents and from their presence here today, the level of concern in the village. She said that there was no response from the Council to all the submissions; no discussion; no answers; no changes, which leaves Blakedown residents seriously questioning the point of the consultation exercise.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their participation.

The Chairman of the Local Plans Review Panel, Councillor P Harrison, advised that the Local Plans Review Panel had met several times and had ploughed through large numbers of maps and documents. This was no where near the quantity that the Spatial Planning Manager and her team had gone through; all the submissions to the consultations have been considered in great detail and would be presented to the Planning Inspector in due course. He added that whilst none of the Panel was entirely happy with the areas incorporated in the Plan, the Panel had done the best it could and hoped that ultimately the matter would be resolved to the satisfaction of most people. The recommendation from the Panel was that the Plan be noted.

A robust discussion ensued. Having fully considered the report and the public participation, Members agreed that whilst as individuals, there were parts of the plan that were liked or not liked; the importance of the Council having an up to date Local Plan to resist hostile planning applications within the District was acknowledged.

Councillor N Desmond expressed concern over the standard methodology used for calculating housing need. He said that as a long standing Member of the authority he understood the need to have a coherent and updated Local Plan and understood that there was a need to have some strategic release of the Green Belt. However, he and his Conservative colleagues had always said that there should not be any more houses on the green belt than is absolutely necessary. In that context, he said that Wyre Forest had decided to use the 2016 based household projections which gave a housing need figure of 276 dwellings per annum; the 2014 based figures gave a housing need figure of 248 dwellings.

Councillor Desmond moved an amendment to the proposed recommendations as set out in the report.

We don't believe the methodology of the housing numbers is sound because the updated NPPF and PPG now requires housing needs assessments to use the 2014-based household projections to set the baseline for the standard method calculation and not the 2016-based household projections and therefore the

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additional 644 this would yield in the green belt is not justified and we recommend to Cabinet that they go out to consultation in respect of this part of the plan.

The proposal was seconded and upon a show of hands, the amendment was defeated.

A vote on the substantive recommendations was taken and agreed.

Agreed: Upon a show of hands the majority of the Committee agreed the recommendation and to note the progress in the preparation of:

a) The proposed Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2016-2036) and Policies Map (together with the associated evidence base, including the Sustainability Appraisal) for the purpose of its submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the PCPA 2004) (as shown in Appendix 1); and

b) The Table of Minor Modifications to the Wyre Forest District Local Plan (2016-2036) and Policies Map (as shown in Appendix 2);

c) The submission documents prepared pursuant to Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (the Local Planning Regulations) (see Appendix 3);

d) The ‘Statements of Common Ground’ with third parties such as agencies and adjoining Councils (as shown in Appendix 5); and

e) The technical study ‘Traffic Demand in the Hagley Area (A456 Corridor)’ (in Appendix 4) as a background paper.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend the documentation set out in 8.1 a – d, of the report to Cabinet for their approval and that the paper 8.1e is noted.

OS.66 Treasury Management Strategy 2020-21

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director: Resources which provided Members with background information on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Prudential Code).

The Corporate Director: Resources presented the report and gave a summary of the main points. She advised Members that this was the last of the three statutory reports which would be presented to the Committee during the municipal year. She stressed the importance of the report as it set the Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2020-21 to 2029-30, and was part of the overall suite of reports that would be presented to Council on 26th February 2020.

She added that the Council’s Treasury Management Advisors, Link Asset Services, had provided a comprehensive Member training session on 3rd February, which was followed by a detailed scrutiny of the report by the Treasury Management Review Panel. The Corporate Director: Resources said that the training was very well

attended and thanked Members for their input.

The Corporate Director: Resources reminded Members that Treasury Management was all about the management of risk in relation to cash flows and capital expenditure, and the authority had statutory guidance that it had to comply with. She was very pleased to advise that there were no breaches to report to the Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Director: Resources and her team for their hard work.

Agreed: Recommend to Council to:

1.1 Approve the restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2020-21 to 2029-30 included in Appendix 3. These will be revised for the February 2020 Council meeting, as per paragraph 7.2 of the report, following any changes to the Capital Programme brought about as part of the budget process.

1.2 Approve the updated Treasury Management and Investment Policy and Strategy Statements for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 (the associated Prudential Indicators are included in Appendix 3 and the detailed criteria is included in Section 10 and Appendix 5).

1.3 Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement that sets out the Council's policy on MRP included in Appendix 1.

1.4 Approve the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator included in Appendix 3.

1.5 Notes that the separate, but intrinsically linked, Capital Strategy 2020-30 to be approved separately by Council, sets out the policy statement covering non-treasury investments including the related suite of prudential indicators.

OS.67 Feedback from Cabinet

Agreed: The content of the Cabinet decision list, following consideration of the recommendations from its meeting on 17th December 2019, be noted.

OS.68 Work Programme

The Committee reviewed the work programme for the current municipal year. The Chairman advised that the work programme would be amended to reflect the deferral of agenda item 7 to the March meeting.

Agreed: The work programme be noted.

OS.69 Press Involvement

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

OS.70 Procurement Strategy and Business Plan for Brinton Park, National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Project

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The Committee considered a report from the Community Development Manager which updated Members on the Procurement Strategy and Business Plan for the Brinton Park NLHF project.

The Community Development Manager led Members through the report in detail. She explained that Brinton Park was a key open space in Kidderminster which supported leisure, health and wellbeing, and tourism across the district. Members were advised that the area was formerly part of Sutton Common prior to 1882 and was now a public park which was laid out in 1886 and given to the people of Kidderminster in 1887. She further explained that the NLHF project would bring an unparalleled level of investment into the park in addition to reconnecting local people to its heritage.

The Community Development Manager further explained that the project had passed the Round 1 assessment in December 2018 which enabled it to progress with the final Round 2 application.

She added that if a successful Parks for People application was awarded in July 2020, the procurement of services would need to commence without delay in order to meet the project timelines.

Councillor N Desmond left the meeting at 7.26pm.

The Committee reviewed the Procurement Strategy and Business Plan and acknowledged the huge amount of partnership working and hard work undertaken by Officers on the project so far. Members were excited by the proposals for the regeneration of the park and there was unanimous support by the Committee for the recommendation to Cabinet.

Agreed: Recommend to Cabinet that:

The Procurement Strategy and Business Plan are adopted to meet the timeline for the project subject to a successful R2 application. The council will be prepared to procure services without delay in summer 2020.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.47pm.