

Open

Special Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda

To be held remotely
6pm
Thursday, 3rd September 2020



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Members of Committee:

Chairman: Councillor M J Hart
Vice-Chairman: Councillor S J Chambers

Councillor N J Desmond
Councillor S Griffiths
Councillor T L Onslow
Councillor S E N Rook

Councillor C Edginton-White
Councillor S Miah
Councillor M Rayner
Councillor D R Sheppard

Would Members please note that, to ensure continuity in scrutiny, substitutes should only be appointed for the Scrutiny Committee in exceptional circumstances.

Information for Members of the Public:

Part I of the Agenda includes items for discussion in public. You have the right to inspect copies of Minutes and reports on this Agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

Part II of the Agenda (if applicable) deals with items of "Exempt Information" for which it is anticipated that the public may be excluded from the meeting and neither reports nor background papers are open to public inspection.

1. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting is open to the public except for any exempt/confidential items. These items are normally discussed at the end of the meeting. Where a meeting is held remotely, "open" means available for live or subsequent viewing.
2. Members of the public will be able to hear and see the meetings by a live stream on the Council's website:
<https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/streaming.aspx>
3. This meeting is being held remotely online and will be recorded for play back. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. All streamed footage is the copyright of Wyre Forest District Council.

Declaration of Interests by Members – interests of members in contracts and other matters

Declarations of Interest are a standard item on every Council and Committee agenda and each Member must provide a full record of their interests in the Public Register.

In addition, alongside the Register of Interest, the Members Code of Conduct ("the Code") requires the Declaration of Interests at meetings. Members have to decide first whether or not they have a disclosable interest in the matter under discussion.

Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's constitution for full details.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) / Other Disclosable Interest (ODI)

DPI's and ODI's are interests defined in the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the District.

If you have a DPI (as defined in the Code) in a matter being considered at a meeting of the Council (as defined in the Code), the Council's Standing Orders require you to leave the room where the meeting is held, for the duration of any discussion or voting on that matter.

If you have an ODI (as defined in the Code) you will need to consider whether you need to leave the room during the consideration of the matter.

Co-opted Members

Scrutiny Committees may wish to appoint Co-Opted Members to sit on their committee in order to add value to the scrutiny process. To appoint a Co-Opted Member, a Committee must first agree to appoint either a specific person or to approach a relevant organisation to request that they put forward a suitable representative (e.g. the local Police Authority). Co-Optees are non voting by default but Committees can decide to appoint voting rights to a Co-Optee. The Co-Option of the Member will last no longer than the remainder of the municipal year.

Scrutiny Committees can at any meeting agree to terminate the Co-Option of a Co-Opted Member with immediate effect. Where an organisation is appointed to put forward a Co-Opted Member, they are able to send a substitute in exceptional circumstances, provided that they notify Democratic Services in advance. Co-Opted Members must sign up to the Members Code of Conduct before attending their first meeting, failure to sign will mean that they are unable to participate. This also applies to substitute Co-Opted Members, who will need to allow sufficient time before a meeting in order to sign the Code of Conduct.

The following will apply:

- i) The total number of voting co-opted members on any Scrutiny Committee will not exceed 25% at any one time.
- ii) The total number of voting Co-opted Members on any Review Panel will not be limited.
- iii) Those Co-opted Members with voting rights will exercise their rights in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in the constitution.

For Further information:

If you have any queries about this Agenda or require any details of background papers, further documents or information, you should contact Louisa Bright, Principal Committee and Member Services Officer, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF. Telephone: 01562 732763 or email louisa.bright@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

Wyre Forest District Council
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Thursday, 3rd September 2020

To be held remotely

Part 1

Open to the press and public

Agenda item	Subject	Page Number
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Appointment of Substitute Members To receive the name of any Councillor who is to act as a substitute, together with the name of the Councillor for whom he/she is acting.	
3.	Declarations of Interests by Members In accordance with the Code of Conduct, to invite Members to declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's) and / or Other Disclosable Interests (ODI's) in the following agenda items and indicate the action that they will be taking when the item is considered. Please see the Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Section 14 of the Council's Constitution for full details.	
4.	Consideration of the flooding motion from Council – Evidence Gathering from voluntary partners, affected residents and businesses. To receive written reports from local residents, and verbal reports from: Councillor Edginton-White - Bewdley Town Council Community Flood Volunteer Group Ruth Lemiech - Wribbenhall Residents Flood Group Richard Perrin - Bewdley Civic Society	5
5.	Consideration of the flooding motion from Council – Final Report and Recommendations To consider the draft report to Council. The report will be amended to reflect any comments from members of the Committee following the final evidence gathering session.	7

Feedback from Residents

I Kirk, Bewdley Resident

I am a resident in Lax Lane Bewdley and was a woken by movement outside of my house very early on the 3rd, to awaken properly later that morn to find the river had come up the Lax Lane a considerable distance, as my property is opposite the old red cross centre, I would say approx. 3/4 of the way up from the river, the water had stopped about 20 ft from the centre, ongoing out to see what had happened, a mobile pump had been brought in the pump the flood water back into the main river. When I asked the person who looked as if they was in charge about what had happened to cause the over flow of water, I was told that a 2 metre surge had come down Dowels Brook and caused the river to rise and catch them out !!, which I think is a load of guff. When I had chance to enter the car park at the end of Lax Lane Gardeners Meadow where myself and a lot of other residents had parked over night to see the damage caused by said flood, water had entered the car and filled the foot wells of the car, as pretty much everybody else that had parked there, the person wondering around looking official basically advised us that it was down to our insurance to sort out, and nothing to do with them, when one of the people there took this advice they were informed there and then that their car is a right off end of story, it begs the question why should I or anybody else have to foot the bill for damage done to their vehicle !!

When I E-mailed the flood agency got a bog standard reply not really saying much but not really informing me how I could go about even trying to get some sort of compensation, just that my message had been forwarded blah blah blah.

I was told on the morning of the flood into Lax Lane, that a surge of 2 metres from Dowels brook had caused the overflow of the low wall, at the junction of Lax Lane and Severn side south, catching out of the flood people, even though Bewdley was expecting high water no barrier boards had been put into place at the junction of Severn side south and Lax Lane. It would be interesting to know if any of the people up Dowels brook had flood damage to their properties as all of them are very close to the brook, and a 2 metre raise in the brook's water level would certainly have flooded all the properties from the mill to the Severn. As few weeks after the main flood had gone down we walked up Dowels brook, and it did not look as if a 2 metre raise in level had happened.

C Clouston, Kidderminster Resident

Had Bewdley been dredged so boats could navigate from Stourport, would the river have come over the defences I think it would have held, if the river was dredged then this would boost tourism, boaters would visit the town and stay overnight boosting the town, pubs and restaurants also they could access towns like Tenbury, Cloebury Mortimer and Ludlow by bus, the SVR and West Midlands Safari park some of these can be accessed from Kidderminster but Kiddy is not a pretty Worcestershire town.

Agenda Item No. 4

It could be paid for from tourism, water companies, councils and government projects grants.

A lot of people love Bewdley a "friends of Bewdley" type of organisation that could raise funds to look after the town and assist towards projects.

This is a draft of the Overview and Scrutiny committee's report to Council, which will need to be completed in light of the final evidence-taking session on 3 September and amended following any comments from members of the Committee at that meeting.

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

**COUNCIL
23RD SEPTEMBER 2020**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Final Report and Recommendations**

Consideration of the Flooding Motion from Council

Council agreed a motion at its meeting in February that requested the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate issues relating to the floods in February and March. The motion is set out in the briefing paper of 11 June.

In May, Council agreed an extension to the deadline, to September 2020, for the Committee to report back about the flooding issues, and any earlier relevant information from the Environment Agency, which was provided in an interim report to the July 2020 meeting of Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met 4 times and spent xxx hrs considering this matter. The Committee considered a briefing paper from the Chief Executive at its meeting on 11 June on how the Committee may wish to approach the task that it had been set. A special meeting of the Committee was held on 25 June to gather evidence from the Environment Agency. At the meeting on 2 July members received reports from Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and a presentation from Severn Trent. At its meeting on 3 September the Committee had a further evidence gathering session with members of the public and businesses.

The evidence gathering sessions have given an opportunity for partners to set the scene and to give their evidence and for members to scrutinise and ask questions. The Committee has been diligent and expeditious in its work. The review into this matter has been a reminder of the devastation and real issues residents and businesses in Bewdley, Stourport-on-Severn and Wolverley had to endure across a number of weeks in February/March. The Committee recognises that there are still some households and businesses that have not been able to return to their premises. It is regrettably the case that repairing premises after flood damage can take considerable time and this demonstrates why every reasonable effort to prevent flooding should be taken.

The Committee thanks the partner agencies, volunteers, members of the public and Council officers for taking part in this review. The written and oral reports received have been very open, honest and candid.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Weather patterns continue to show ever more extreme impacts, very probably a consequence of global warming. The risk of future flooding in Wyre Forest from higher and more concentrated levels of rainfall will remain: the issue is how the risk might be limited. Ultimately, flood defences operate only to a particular height and therefore there can be no guarantee that they will not be overtopped or that water will not find its way around them. Difficult choices may have to be made. For example, measures to manage river flows in different ways need to be considered, such as use of agricultural flood plains to “store” water and reduce the peak flow through communities along the river.

The Committee commends the multi-agency approach in dealing with the emergency as a result of the flooding caused by Storms Ciara and Dennis in February 2020. Public agencies, voluntary organisations and volunteers all responded in assisting residents and businesses affected by flooding; this included the deployment of flood defence barriers, evacuating residents from their homes, welfare checks on those residents who had chosen to remain in their properties, pumping out flooded properties, responding to highway drainage issues and providing financial support for those affected in the form of a Community Recovery Grant, council tax and business rate relief. On behalf of local residents and businesses, the Committee pays tribute to all of them: many worked long and hard hours and, for those “on the front line”, this was often in difficult weather conditions and sometimes in situations where individuals were placed at some personal risk.

As part of the evidence gathering, it became clear that having all key agencies in one location during the response had proved to be invaluable to the efforts. A ‘Bronze’ cell established in Bewdley Town Centre by the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and the Worcestershire Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) had worked very well as it provided a place where the emergency services and local authority could co-locate. The Bronze commander (fire service) could then direct activity on the ground and would report back to the TCG at regular intervals.

As can be seen in the Environment Agency’s detailed report (page 35 of the agenda for 25 June), the Committee has been informed that the Agency is considering the case for a permanent flood scheme for Beale’s Corner, Bewdley. The Environment Agency is aiming to complete the initial review by the end of the summer.

The Committee very much welcomes the Government announcement that there will be £5.2 billion of money for flood protection available nationally over a 6-year programme. Whilst the announcement did not specifically mention Bewdley, it is important to ensure that a case be made for any available resources to come to the Wyre Forest area.

The work being done by the River Severn Partnership, which is led by Shropshire Council and the Environment Agency, offers the possibility of further strategic interventions that might mitigate future flooding events along the river, to the benefit of communities from Shrewsbury downstream to the Severn Estuary. The District Council and Worcestershire County Council are involved in the partnership. The initial award of Government funding to support this work is welcome.

An area of concern raised was the delay in the initial deployment of barriers along Severnside South in Bewdley. As there was a clear indication of adverse weather conditions, which had led to the deployment of barriers on Severnside North, earlier deployment on Severnside South could have saved a number of properties from flooding. The Committee recognises that the cause was extreme local rainfall, which also caused flooding in Tenbury, rather than the usual pattern of rainfall in the headwaters in Wales causing flooding some days later.

Recommends to Council:

- a) Following the initial review by the Environment Agency in relation to a permanent flood scheme for Beale's Corner, Bewdley, a letter be sent to the Environment Agency indicating strong support for permanent flood defences in that area;
- b) submissions be made to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and other relevant authorities to support the case for Government funding to alleviate flooding in the Wyre Forest area, both for specific flood defence schemes in the district and for water management interventions being developed by the River Severn Partnership;
- c) The Environment Agency be asked to review its barrier deployment procedure for Bewdley in light of the experience in February, to take account of the possibility of extreme local rainfall events.

Appendix 1 - Background Papers

11 June 2020 - Briefing paper from the Chief Executive

http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55848_20200611_o_and_s_agenda.pdf

Evidence Gathering: 25 June 2020 – Report from the Environment Agency

http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55870_20200625_special_o_and_s_agenda.pdf

Evidence Gathering: 2 July 2020 – Reports from Worcestershire County Council and West Mercia Police

http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55896_20200702_o_and_s_agenda.pdf

Evidence Gathering: 2 July 2020 – Report from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55898_20200702_o_and_s_report.pdf

Evidence Gathering: 2 July 2020 – Report and presentation from Severn Trent

http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55943_20200702_o_and_s_report.pdf

http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55944_20200702_o_and_s_report.pdf

15 July 2020 – Interim report to Council

http://www.wyreforest.gov.uk/council/docs/doc55938_20200715_council_agenda.pdf

Evidence Gathering: 3 September 2020 – Feedback from members of the public

ADD IN LINK

Government funding programme announcement

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-billion-pound-investment-as-government-unveils-new-long-term-plan-to-tackle-flooding>

River Severn Partnership

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s23516/18%20November%20Cabinet%20Report%20-%20River%20Severn%20Partnership%20-Final.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/river-severn-partnership-secures-over-40m-boost-for-flood-defence>