

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2022 (6PM)

Present:

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), S E N Rook (Vice-Chairman), A Coleman, N J Desmond, P Dyke, C Edginton-White, A L L'Huillier, S Miah, T L Onslow, D Ross and D R Sheppard.

Observers

Councillors: G W Ballinger, R H Coleman, H E Dyke, F M Oborski MBE, M Rayner, J W R Thomas and P W M Young.

Observed remotely: Councillors J F Byng, I Hardiman and C Rogers.

OS.77 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

OS.78 Appointment of Substitutes

No substitutes were appointed.

OS.79 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.80 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on the 2 December 2021 and the minutes of the meeting of the Sub-committee held on the 20 December 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.81 How are we doing? Performance Update

The Committee considered a report from the HR & Organisational Development Manager which updated members on the performance of the Council for quarter 3 from 1 October to 31 December 2021.

The HR & Organisational Development Manager presented the report and appendices which included a report that detailed the progress against Wyre Forest Forward (WFF) actions that are not directly associated with a Corporate Plan Priority; progress reports against the Corporate Plan Priorities of a 'safe, clean, and green living environment' and 'supporting a successful local economy'; a capital projects report; and an exception report for all WFF and risk actions.

The Committee considered and fully scrutinised each page of the report and appendices in turn. The HR & Organisational Development Manager, Chief Executive and Head of Community & Environment Services, were able to provide members with verbal responses to their questions. A written response to any points where further clarification was sought would be circulated to members after the meeting.

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

OS.82 Treasury Management Strategy 2022-23

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Finance Officer which provided members with background information on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Prudential Code) including the 2021 revision. The Committee also considered the recommendations from the Treasury Management Review Panel (TMRP) from its meeting on 31 January 2022.

The Chief Finance Officer presented the report and outlined the key issues. She advised that this was the third and final statutory report 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 TMRP.

The Chairman of the TMRP, Councillor S Miah, said that members had received a fantastic training session from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors, Link Asset Services, and formally moved the recommendations for approval.

Agreed: The Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommends to Council to:

- 1.1 Approve the restated Prudential Indicators and Limits for the financial years 2022-23 to 2031-32 included in Appendix 3. These will be revised for the February 2022 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 2022 to 31st March 2023 (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 2022-32 to be approved separately by Council, sets out the policy statement covering non-treasury investments including the related suite of prudential indicators.**

1.6 Notes the implications of the revised Codes as detailed in section 3.1. the new Codes apply with immediate effect, in particular that an authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. Implementation of the new reporting requirements is deferred until the 2023-24 financial year.

OS.83 Car parking charges 2022-23: Consideration of Call in Request

The Committee considered the call in request signed by the three members of the Liberal Democrat group.

The Chief Executive presented the report which provided the Committee with relevant facts, figures and information on the wider context and background to the decision.

Members were reminded that the system of car parking charges and permits was the subject of significant changes that took effect in April 2020. The new regime that was implemented at that time had been the subject of a detailed report and extensive scrutiny by the Committee in December 2019. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the proposed approach, which was then agreed by the Cabinet later that month.

The Chairman invited Councillor F Oborski MBE to address the Committee and outline the reasons for the call in.

A robust discussion ensued. Several members spoke in support of the call in. It was acknowledged that car parking was an emotive issues, however it was felt that the proposed 50% increase in the cost of a full season ticket price was unjustifiable, particularly as many people were facing a cost of living crisis. Another member raised serious concerns about the impact on residents' parking for those living on the outskirts of Kidderminster town centre.

Several members spoke against the call in. A member spoke about the lack of on-street parking in Bewdley and said that parking issues were wide and varied across the district. Members felt that a one-year freeze on current car parking charges would not address these issues. It was acknowledged that the authority had an agreed strategy for car parking charges, expectations of which formed part of the Council's ability to balance its budget.

The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Operational Services, Chief Executive, Head of Community & Environment Services and Head of Resources were able to provide members with verbal responses to their questions and provide clarification on issues raised.

A member proposed that the Committee support the Cabinet decision that had already been taken, which was seconded. An amendment was moved and second to the effect that the Cabinet revert their decision and increase the charges in line with inflation, and that a cross party working group be set up to look at this issue. Upon a show of hands, a vote on the amendment was taken and lost.

A vote on the substantive motion was taken and agreed.

Agreed: The Committee support the Cabinet decision that has already been taken in respect of car parking charges for 2022-23.

OS.84 Work Programme

The Committee reviewed the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year. The Chairman advised that if there were no items to consider in April, the meeting would be cancelled.

Agreed: The work programme be noted.

OS.85 Press Involvement

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

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.20pm.