



**WYRE FOREST  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

# Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Report of: Councillor G W Ballinger  
Date: 17<sup>th</sup> May 2006  
**OPEN**

## Finance and Corporate Affairs Annual Report 2005 – 2006

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides a comprehensive update on work undertaken by the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel during the 2005/2006 municipal year.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Panel has met five times during the 2005/2006 municipal year.
- 2.2 The Panel agreed its Work Programme and topics for future scrutiny with regard to the Council's Community Strategy, Corporate Plan and Key Commitments at its first meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

### **3. Scrutiny Review Topics And Work Areas**

- 3.1 At the first meeting in June, the Panel invited the Director of the West Mercia Police Authority to reply to Members' comments and questions, which had not been addressed in a letter that had been sent to the Panel following the Police Authority Consultation over its Budget.
- 3.2 At the same meeting, the Panel also agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at the future Funding of the Neighbourhood Wardens scheme. A recommendation was made from the Panel to Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2005 requesting that the amount of annual funding that the Council request from Right to Buy proceeds be £100,000. The Group had considered three sources of additional funding, namely, Parish Precepts, the Local Area Agreement and the funds from the Right to Buy scheme. Until the Group has more information regarding the Local Area Agreement and the housing transfer receipts, the Group will be unable to progress further. The exercise will be continued in the new municipal year when more information is available.

- 3.3 In April 2005, the Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel agreed to set up a Budget Review Group. The main purpose of the Group was to contribute to the Council's budget process by scrutinising Council activities with reference to the Base Budget, in particular the cost of specific service areas, any growth pressures or opportunities for efficiencies, and to agree designating services a high, medium, low or non-priority.
- 3.4 The Group met every two weeks throughout the 2005-2006 municipal year and in December 2005, they made recommendations to the Cabinet giving priorities to certain budget headings. The Cabinet considered these recommendations in determining the Council's Finance Strategy 2006 - 2009.
- 3.5 The Group, in January 2006, carried out a detailed scrutiny of the Cabinet's budget proposals and made recommendations thereon.
- 3.6 At its meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2005, the Panel looked at Employee Pension Contribution rates. At this same meeting, the Panel set up a Concessionary Travel Task and Finish Group to investigate moving to a National Concessionary Travel Scheme and to a countywide scheme from April 2006. The Group was tasked with identifying resources to expand the new scheme beyond the statutory minimum. The Group made recommendations to the Panel on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2005 and both Cabinet and Council agreed these recommendations and the new scheme was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 I would like to thank Members of the Panel for their contributions and assistance in the various Scrutiny exercises, without whose attendance at our meetings and active involvement, the Panel would not have been the success it is. I would also like to thank, on behalf of the Panel, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs for his active support during the year. I would also like to thank those officers who attended the meetings and/or the Task and Finish Groups.
- 4.2 The Budget Review Group was the main focus of the year and one of the successes of the Group was the provision of an additional post in the Committee Section. The Budget Review Group gave all Panel Members an opportunity to take part in reviewing the budget throughout the course of the year and in total, there were fifteen meetings. This clearly demonstrates the commitment and dedication of the Panel Members.

**5. List of Topics Covered at Finance and Corporate Affairs Policy and Scrutiny Panel Meetings**

**20<sup>th</sup> June 2005**

- West Mercia Police Authority Budget
- Budget Review Recommendations on Committee Section Administration

**9<sup>th</sup> August 2005**

- Council Pension Scheme

**25<sup>th</sup> October 2005**

- Concessionary Travel Recommendations

**14<sup>th</sup> December 2005**

- Neighbourhood Wardens Recommendations
- Income Service Options
- Noise Act 1996
- Financial Strategy Process 2006 – 2009

**31<sup>st</sup> January 2006**

- Scrutiny of Cabinet's Budget and Policy Framework Strategy