

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

THURSDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2024 (COMMENCED AT 6.02PM)

Present:

Councillors: N Martin (Chairman), F M Oborski MBE (Vice-Chairman), G Connolly, N J Desmond, H E Dyke, P Dyke, K Gale, P Harrison, D Little, M McDonnell, C Rogers and D Russell.

Observers

Councillors: I Hardiman, D Ross and A Sutton.

OS.10 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: V Caulfield and N Gale.

OS.11 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor P Dyke was a substitute for Councillor V Caulfield.
Councillor K Gale was a substitute for Councillor N Gale.

OS.12 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

OS.13 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OS.14 Budget and Performance Monitoring First Quarter 2024-25

The Committee considered a draft of a Cabinet report from the Head of Resources and s151 Officer, which briefed members on the Council's financial and other performance at the end of Quarter 1 ending 30th June 2024 and presented the emerging budget pressures and known variances that are likely to have an impact on the outturn position for the 2024-25 financial year.

The Head of Resources and s151 Officer presented the report. The Committee fully scrutinised the report and members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The Head of Resources and s151 Officer, the Head of Strategic Growth, the Head of Community and Environment were able to provide members with verbal responses to their questions and comments.

Recommendation: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the information in the report and recommend to Cabinet to NOTE:

- 1.1 The projected budget variations, virements and comments within the report and appendices 1 to 5.**
- 1.2 The performance against measures and actions as set out in the report and appendix 6.**

and recommend to Cabinet to APPROVE:

- 1.3 An amendment to the in-year Capital Programme of £50,000 in respect of expenditure on the accessible toilets in Brinton Park; fully funded by external grant from the MHCLG Changes Places toilets fund.**
- 1.4 Amendment to the in-year Capital Programme to increase the existing UKSPF capital allocation by £619,920 in respect of expenditure fully funded by external Shared Prosperity Fund grant, of which £547,710 will be directly allocated to the Future High Street Creative Hub project (The Old Court) as approved by Council in May 2024.**

OS.15 Empty Property Strategy 2024-29

The Committee considered a draft of a Cabinet report from the Head of Strategic Growth, which provided a consultant's report on empty homes, as instructed by Cabinet, and a proposed empty property strategy in response to that report and other factors.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer (Housing & Water Management) presented the report, the Committee fully scrutinised the report and members were invited to ask questions to which the Head of Strategic Growth was able to provide verbal responses.

Councillor M McDonnell left the meeting at 6.55pm.

Councillor M McDonnell returned to the meeting at 6.57pm.

Councillor D Little left the meeting at 7.06pm.

Recommendation: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the information in the report and recommend to Cabinet to:

- 2.1 ADOPT the Wyre Forest Empty Property Strategy 2024-29 AND**
- 2.2 NOTE the Act on Empty Homes Wyre Forest Report July 2024.**
- 2.3 CONSIDER increasing the available staffing resource by 1.5 FTE to cover empty homes functions within the Private Sector Housing Team and Legal Team to enable us to bring more empty homes back into use.**

- 2.4 WRITE to the local MP to raise with Central Government the number of Empty Homes in the country, if brought back into use, would go a long way to achieving the government's target on new homes.**
- 2.5 EXPLORE collaboration across Worcestershire with regard to Empty Homes, and consider opportunities to pool resources.**

Councillor M McDonnell left the meeting at 7.15pm.

OS.16 Temporary Accommodation Policy

The Committee considered a draft of a Cabinet report from the Head of Strategic Growth, which outlined the Council's approach to temporary accommodation placements and the procurement of temporary accommodation and to seek approval for the policy.

Councillors D Ross and P Dyke left the meeting at 7.17pm.

The Housing Advice Team Leader presented the report, which the Committee fully scrutinised. The Head of Strategic Growth and the Housing Advice Team Leader were able to provide members with verbal responses to their questions and comments.

Councillor P Dyke returned to the meeting at 7.21pm.

Recommendation: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the information in the report and recommend to Cabinet to:

APPROVE the Temporary Accommodation Placement and Procurement Policy.

OS.17 Development Brief (SA.S6) Supplementary Planning Document

The Committee considered a draft of a Cabinet report from the Head of Strategic Growth, which provided design principles and planning guidance to developers that should enable the creation of a desirable and sustainable development and that supports the Council's aspirations whilst not limiting the creativity of developers. The design principles are underpinned by the National Planning Policy Framework and the Wyre Forest Local Plan (2016-2036).

The Head of Strategic Growth presented the report and the Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions but, there were none.

Recommendation: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the information in the report and recommend to Cabinet to:

- 2.1 APPROVE the draft Development Brief SPD AND**
- 2.2 AGREE to a 4-week consultation on the SPD to take place from the 16 September 2024 until 14 October 2024**

OS.18 Treasury Management Review Panel

The Chairman requested nominations from members to form the Treasury Management Review Panel, noting that the dates of the Panel's meetings and Training sessions will be as shown in the agenda sheet.

Councillor F Oborski had nominated herself and Councillor S Miah, who was willing to accept.

Councillors N Desmond and C Rogers were willing to nominate themselves to stand as members.

Councillor H Dyke, Group Leader of the Independent and Green Parties advised that she would confirm nominations to the ESO/Committee Section the next day.

Councillor F Oborski was nominated to stand as Chair of the Panel by Councillor N Martin, was seconded by Councillor N Desmond, and the Committee agreed. Councillor Oborski was willing to accept.

Agreed: Councillor F Oborski was appointed as Chairman of the Treasury Management Review Panel for the current municipal year and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee accepted the nominations for Treasury Management Review Panel membership.

OS.19 Potential topics for the scrutiny review

The Chair asked if members had any potential topics for the scrutiny review to feed back to the Corporate Policy and Performance Officer but, there were none at the present time.

Councillor F Oborski suggested that, following the lessons learned at the Governance Framework training, this item to be raised at the next Group Leaders meeting, to bring back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

OS.20 Work Programme

The published Work Programme 2024-25 for the municipal year was reviewed by the committee, and the items for the October, November and December meetings were noted.

OS.21 Press Involvement

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

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 7.33pm.

The meeting is available for viewing on the Council's website:
<https://wyreforestdc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>