

# **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**19TH JULY 2017, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones (Chairman), C. J. Spencer (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, M. T. Buxton, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, R. L. Dent, M. Glass, J. M. L. A. Griffiths, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Laight, K.J. May, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, S. P. Shannon, M. A. Sherrey, C. B. Taylor, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson, L. J. Turner, K. J. Plank, M. J. A. Webb, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

### 27\17 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Allen-Jones, L. C. R. Mallett and S. R. Peters.

### 28\17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor B. T. Cooper declared an Other Disclosable Interest in item 12 – Notice of Motion relating to Hospital Car Parking Charges and stated he would leave the room whilst the matter was discussed.

Councillor M. A. Sherrey declared a Pecuniary Disclosable Interest in item 12 – Emergency Notice of Motion relating to the Consultation by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner on the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Governance arrangements. Councillor Sherrey stated she would leave the room whilst the matter was discussed.

Councillor C. A. Hotham and Councillor C. B. Taylor declared an Other Disclosable Interest in item 12 – Emergency Notice of Motion relating to the Consultation by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner on the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service Governance arrangements.

### 29\17 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21st June 2017 were submitted. The Chairman drew attention to the slightly amended set of Minutes which had been circulated separately to Members and which was on the Council website. It was noted that Councillor C. J. Spencer should be shown as the Vice Chairman and not Councillor M. Glass.

In relation to Minute 15/17 Councillor Denaro stated that as requested he had invited the local M. P. to attend a future meeting of the Council.

**RESOLVED** that subject to the designation of Councillor C. J. Spencer as Vice-Chairman of the Council, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21st June 2017 be approved.

30\17

**TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman referred to the following:

- The Bromsgrove Food Festival held on 25th June in the High Street which had been a great success and was very well attended;
- The Fun Run in Sanders Park on 15th July organised by the Bromsgrove and Redditch Welcomes Refugees which had been a wonderful event which it was hoped would take place annually;
- Certificates of Achievement had been presented to Bromsgrove Sporting Football Club and to Alvechurch Football Club to mark the very successful seasons for both Clubs.

Councillor M. Thompson welcomed Councillor J. M. L. A. Griffiths to the Council meeting following her recent illness. Councillor Thompson also expressed thanks for the good wishes of Members following his daughter's recent accident.

31\17

**TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader had no announcements.

32\17

**COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no public comments, questions or petitions on this occasion.

33\17

**APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES 2017/18**

The Leader stated that following the previous meeting of the Council, the Leaders of the Independent Alliance and the Labour Group had now reached agreement in respect of the four previously unallocated places referred to in the report. Details of the nominations had been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services.

The Labour Group to take the extra places on the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Licensing Committee and the Independent Alliance to take the extra places on the Planning Committee and the Electoral matters Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that for the ensuing Municipal Year, the Committees set out in the table in Appendix 1 of the report (amended as indicated above) be appointed and that the representation of the different political groups on the Council be as set out in that amended table until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the next review of political representation under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, whichever is the earlier; and
- (b) that Members be appointed to the Committees and as Substitute Members in accordance with the nominations made by Group Leaders and as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

34\17

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET**

**Financial Outturn 2016/17 and Reserves**

The recommendations from Cabinet in respect of the Financial Outturn 2016/17 and Reserves was proposed by Councillor B. T. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Cooper referred to the revenue underspend of £671k which comprised both savings and additional income generated. It was proposed to return £238k to balances bringing these to £4.314m. Councillor Cooper also referred to the sum of £899k proposed to be transferred to create new reserves to be used to support the Council's priorities such as economic regeneration and the implementation of housing schemes across the District.

Councillor Cooper felt that officers were to be commended for delivering the surplus with no reduction of services. In the forthcoming years the situation may be different particularly given the future loss of government funding. This included the potential reduction in the New Homes Bonus and the requirement to make payments to Central Government.

Councillor Cooper stated that he was aware that concerns had been expressed by Members regarding budget forecasting. Whilst improvements in processes had been made there was still a need for a further review of these together with strategic purposes and potentially changes may be required. Senior officers were already considering how this could be addressed.

During the debate a number of issues were highlighted including:

- Serious concern was expressed regarding the significant level of underspend of £1.137m and in particular the fact that this was not forecast at the end of Quarter 3;

- Concerns that this was an indication that there was a potential lack of fiscal control and of sufficient information to enable Members to make properly informed decisions;
- The reduction in the opportunity for Members to question figures prior to the final outturn position becoming available;
- The impact on the Efficiency Plan which had been compiled to show how savings would be made;
- The process by which the proposed specific reserves such as for economic regeneration had been determined and how these would be used;
- Decisions which had been made previously on issues such as increases in the level of Council Tax and Departmental restructures may not have been necessary given the levels of savings now revealed;
- A similar position had occurred over a number of years and had not been sufficiently addressed, this had also been raised by the Council's auditors;

Councillor Denaro agreed that the figures required close examination to understand the levels of savings and income generated and why this had not been accurately forecast. When budgets were being prepared for future years clearly the savings would need to be taken into account.

Councillor Denaro felt that it was encouraging that despite the very difficult financial position officers had been able to achieve the level of savings indicated. There would be reports coming to Cabinet and Council in the near future relating to proposals for use of reserves in respect of appropriate projects to support the Council's priorities.

Some Members felt that the work undertaken by officers in achieving savings should be acknowledged.

Whilst recognising the work undertaken by officers, Councillor Cooper stated that he agreed with many of the points raised in the debate. As Finance Portfolio Holder he would be working closely with officers in order to review and further improve the Council's budget processes.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the outturn financial position on Revenue and Capital and the transfer to balances of £238k as detailed in the report be noted;
- (b) that the movements of £549k in existing reserves as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, which reflects the approval required for April 2016 – March 2017 be approved;
- (c) that the addition of new reserves of £899k as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, which reflects the approval required for April 2016 – March 2017 be approved.

## **Planning Policy and Conservation Shared Service Business Case**

As it was likely that discussions on this item would involve the exclusion of the public from the meeting it was agreed that it be deferred to the end of the agenda.

35\17 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 12TH JULY 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th July 2017 were received for information.

36\17 **REPORT FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOWN CENTRES AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

As Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships, Councillor K. J. May referred to her report and gave a presentation on key challenges and future priorities for Economic Development within Bromsgrove.

The presentation included the strategic context to the position of the District and recent investments such as progress on the Town Centre regeneration, the new Railway station and new business investment. It also covered key opportunities and challenges including the improvement of other centres within the District, infrastructure issues and the affordability of housing.

The presentation stressed that there was an opportunity through partnership working for Bromsgrove to be sustainable and prosperous and to play a major role in driving the success of Worcestershire and the West Midlands Region. The economic agenda should drive future housing requirements and infrastructure planning.

During discussion on the report and presentation Members highlighted a number of items:

- The potential loss of EU grant funding for businesses following “Brexit”;
- The Council is not meeting the priorities set out on page 21;
- Many of the jobs created are low paid retail jobs and people born in Bromsgrove can’t afford to live here, use food banks etc.;
- Traffic issues are created by people leaving the District to work elsewhere;
- Affordable housing is a huge issue – in respect of the recent Cofton Hackett Development only 5% of properties are affordable;
- The need for economic development to support our communities through Business rate retention. This will be a major struggle and

the need for a robust Economic Development strategy is paramount ;

- Areas missing from the report include Wythall and Aston Fields;
- Need for a western distributor road to relieve the A38;
- Lack of employment land available to create good quality jobs and the lack of infrastructure to support;
- The likely pressure to assist with meeting housing requirements of other Authorities;
- The danger of creating dormitory towns and villages;

Councillor May noted the points raised by Members and agreed that the issues needed to be addressed. However it was re-iterated that there was an opportunity through the Economic Theme Group and partners to greatly enhance the Economic prospects of the district as a whole and to ensure improvements for residents and businesses. Councillor May requested that Members support the work being undertaken in various forums.

37\17

### **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

#### **Question submitted by Councillor M. Thompson**

“Following the catastrophe surrounding the Marlbrook Tip and the illegal tipping on the Rose and Crown car park, is the Leader aware of the significant amount of burying of large amounts of waste from builders on the Norton Farm development and, if he is not, will he do something about it?”

The Leader responded that he was not aware of any problems on the site and neither was the Planning Case Officer. Waste matters such as this were a matter for the County Council and the Environment Agency in respect of any potential groundwater contamination. The Leader therefore invited Councillor Thompson to report to these bodies with any accompanying evidence.

#### **Question submitted by Councillor M. T. Buxton**

“In the light of Volvo announcing it will not be producing diesel or petrol only cars from 2019 and France announcing it will ban petrol and diesel cars from 2040 will this Council now start installing electric chargers to encourage clean vehicles, especially with the air quality issues and ever increasing congestion around the town?”

The Leader responded that Bromsgrove District Plan Policy 16 supported the use of low emission vehicles including electric cars through encouraging the provision of charging points in new developments. There would also be consideration of inclusion of charging points within the car park review.

38\17

## **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service**

Members considered an additional notice of motion submitted by Councillor M. Thompson:

“The Council is requested to resolve the need for an Extraordinary Meeting to agree a response to the consultation on the proposed changes to the governance arrangements for the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services.”

The motion was proposed by Councillor M. Thompson and seconded by Councillor P. M. McDonald.

Councillor Thompson referred to the consultation from the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner on proposals to change the Governance arrangements for the Herford and Worcester and the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services. Comments had been requested by 11th September 2017.

Councillor G. N. Denaro commented that the Council was not being asked to respond as a Statutory Consultee and that this would have been an agenda item if this were the case. Members were being offered the opportunity to “have their say” and he felt it was possible that an agreed position could be reached. Whilst Councillor Denaro did not support a Special Council Meeting to consider a response he proposed a process whereby Group Leaders could meet to formulate their views.

As an amendment it was proposed by Councillor G. N. Denaro and seconded by Councillor K. J. May

That the Council resolves to agree that a cross party group, comprising the three Group Leaders, meet to formulate a response to the proposed changes to the Governance arrangements for the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services, to be submitted during the consultation process and that the agreed response be reported to Cabinet on 6th September.

Councillor Thompson indicated he was in support of the amendment and on being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

### **Hospital Car Parking Charges**

Members considered the following notice of motion submitted by Councillor P. M. McDonald:

This Council calls upon all local hospitals to stop charging for parking, that in reality is financially punishing people for receiving treatment or visiting loved ones”.

The motion was proposed by Councillor P. M. McDonald and seconded by Councillor M. Thompson.

In moving the motion Councillor McDonald referred to the punitive costs of parking at local hospitals and the financial hardship this could bring on those receiving treatment or visiting friends and family. Councillor McDonald felt that free parking should be introduced.

During the debate other Members queried whether a cap on charges could be introduced. Some Members felt that the income raised from car parking was utilised to fund patient care and to remove this source of funding would be detrimental to the hospital budgets. Reference was made to existing concessionary schemes which reduced the cost of parking for those using the facilities over a period of time.

Members felt that whilst they did not have sufficient information at present to make a decision, it would be appropriate to consider the matter further as it was an issue which had an impact on local residents.

It was therefore

**RESOLVED** that consideration of the issue of charges made for hospital car parking be deferred and be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for further investigation.

39\17

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**RESOLVED**

That under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item of business the subject of the following minutes on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of "Exempt information" as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, the relevant part being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so.

<u>Minute No</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>
40/17	4

40\17

**PLANNING POLICY AND CONSERVATION SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE**

The recommendations from Cabinet were proposed by Councillor C. B. Taylor and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

In proposing the recommendations for a Planning Policy Team Shared Service between Bromsgrove DC and Redditch BC, Councillor Taylor referred to the wide variety of work undertaken by the Planning Policy Team and the Conservation Officer. The arrangements proposed within



the Business Case would help to deliver additional resilience for the team and a better service to residents. Whilst there were financial savings within the Business Case, this was not the driving force behind the proposals. Approval of the Business Case would allow for the formalisation of the present management arrangements. The proposals had been considered by the Shared Services Board and by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Councillor Taylor outlined how the officers would deal with any conflict of interest which may arise between the Authorities at certain times, with separate Teams being formed to deal with those issues. It was also stressed that the arrangements would be reviewed after twelve months.

During the debate Members raised a number of areas from the Business Case:

- Whilst the service would be hosted by Bromsgrove DC whether the officers would be located in Bromsgrove;
- Whether it was best practice to have a single manager;
- Whether the proposals would deliver a good deal for Bromsgrove DC
- The need to be able to demonstrate through an Audit trail any savings made.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) that the Shared Service Business Case for Planning Policy including Conservation advice be approved (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report);
- (2) that the new Planning Policy Service be charged to both Councils on the percentage share as defined by the 2016/17 budget allocations:
  - (a) Bromsgrove 60%
  - (b) Redditch 40%  
(with 2(a) and 2(b) to be reviewed in 12 months' time after the introduction of the shared service)
  - (c) the financial split for the Conservation element is proposed as 75% Bromsgrove and 25% Redditch to reflect the greater number of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas within the administrative area of Bromsgrove
- (3) that the service be hosted by Bromsgrove District Council due to the larger geographical area, complexity of planning issues and the higher number of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

**Committees Political Balance 2017/18**

The meeting closed at 8.20 p.m.

Chairman