

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE CABINET

Wednesday, 10th November 2004 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors D. C. Norton (Executive Leader), Mrs. M. M. T. Taylor (Deputy Executive Leader), B. L. Fuller C.B.E., Q.F.S.M., Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, R. Hollingworth and P. J. Whittaker.

Observers: Councillors A. N. Blagg and G. H. R. Hulett.

105/04 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 27th October 2004 were submitted.

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Meeting be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

106/04 **ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

(1) **SCRUTINY REPORT – TAXI RANKS**

The Cabinet considered the decision of the Housing and Planning Policy Scrutiny Committee to refer back the Scrutiny Task Group Report on Taxi Ranks to the Cabinet to indicate that the recommendation regarding the need to improve taxi rank signs and road markings was a priority and therefore should be approved and implemented as a matter of urgency. The Scrutiny Committee had also requested the Cabinet to consider making funding available in the future which could be used to implement Scrutiny Committee recommendations that were approved by the Cabinet. Councillor A. N. Blagg, Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee addressed the Cabinet in support of the recommendations. During the discussion Members indicated that Scrutiny Committees/Task Groups should be made aware of financial implications at the time that issues were scrutinised. It was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Highways Partnership Unit be approached regarding the possibility of funding the road markings;
- (b) that subject to the outcome of (a) above, the Scrutiny Committee's requests be considered as part of the budget preparation process, and in relation to other priorities and demands.

(2) **ARTS CENTRE FUNDING**

It was noted that although the decision made by the Cabinet on 27th October 2004 regarding the funding of the Arts Centre had been "called in" for scrutiny by the Health and Leisure Scrutiny Committee, the Committee had decided at its special meeting held on 9th November 2004 not to refer the decision back to the Cabinet, and therefore the Cabinet decision set out in Minute No. 104/04 had now come into force. Members expressed concern about how the call-in process had been dealt with but were informed that the Head of Administrative Services was satisfied that proper procedures had been followed.

(NOTE: Councillors Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, R. Hollingworth and D. C. Norton declared a personal interest in this item as members of the Arts Centre Operating Trust).

107/04

WIND ENERGY CONFERENCE

Councillor G. H. R. Hulett reported that he had recently attended a Wind Energy Conference in his capacity as a Member of the Planning Committee in order to obtain an insight in to wind energy turbines and any related issues for the District. Although he had initially viewed wind energy turbines as a blot on the landscape, he was now in favour of them as an energy source and would not be minded to object to these being sited within the District. It was noted that as yet, there had not been any applications to site wind energy turbines within the region. Councillor Hulett responded to Members' comments and questions.

108/04

DRAFT JOINT MUNICIPAL WASTE STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the outcome of consultation on and resultant changes to the draft Joint Municipal Waste Strategy prepared by all authorities within Herefordshire and Worcestershire, together with recommendations from the Joint Members Waste Forum regarding a delivery plan for the Joint Strategy and for recycling tonnages to be combined. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the updated Joint Municipal Waste Strategy containing amendments as summarised in Appendix A to the report be supported;
- (b) that whilst supporting this Strategy, the Council would like to record that it is keen to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of this service by moving towards a co-mingled fortnightly kerbside collection of dry recyclables using wheeled bins;
- (c) that officers are therefore asked to seek ways of working in partnership with the County Council and the Waste Officers Forum to achieve this objective, including looking into the feasibility and possibility of the introduction of a locally based automated material reclamation facility;
- (d) that the recycling delivery plan be supported working in conjunction with the County Council;
- (e) that for the purposes of meeting the PFI waste disposal contract, Bromsgrove recycling tonnages may be used by the County Council to count towards overall countywide recycling figures.

109/04

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES – PROPOSED EXTENSION OF OFFICERS' DELEGATED POWERS

Consideration was given to a proposal to extend the delegation of powers to the Heads of Environmental Health and Legal Services in order to expedite legal proceedings as quickly as possible. Members expressed some concerns about the proposed delegations in circumstances which may pose a high financial or other risk to the Council. It was therefore

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Standards Committee be requested to agree:
 - (i) that with the exception of cases where the taking of legal proceedings against companies or individuals may pose a serious risk or other risk to the Council should they fail, that the Heads of Environmental Health and Legal Services, or in their absence their nominated deputies, be granted delegated powers to institute legal proceedings for contraventions of legislation for which Environmental Health staff are responsible for enforcing on behalf of the Council;
 - (ii) that in circumstances where the taking of legal proceedings may pose a high financial or other risk to the Council should they fail and which could require the employment of experienced Counsel, the decision to take legal proceedings be delegated to the Chief Executive and Corporate Director (Resources) as well as the Heads of Environmental Health and Legal Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health;

- (b) that subsequent to (a) above, the Enforcement Policy for Environmental Services be appropriately amended to reflect the changes to delegated powers.

110/04 **DRAFT STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

Consideration was given to the Council's draft Statement of Licensing Policy which had been amended to take account of comments received during a formal process of consultation. It was

RECOMMENDED: that the draft Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.

111/04 **GAMBLING BILL**

Consideration was given to a report on new responsibilities which would fall to local authorities as a result of the Gambling Bill. It was

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

112/04 **DEVELOPMENT OF THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to key issues relating to the provision of affordable housing in the District which it was proposed to feed in to a consultation process on the development of the next Regional Housing Strategy. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the issues set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved for submission to the West Midlands Regional Assembly for consideration in the development of the West Midlands Regional Strategy 2005, together with the additional comments made by the Head of Strategic Housing at the meeting;
- (b) that in view of the proximity of the deadline for submissions, the Cabinet's decision on this matter be not subject to the Council's call-in procedure.

113/04 **HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND USE OF ODPM FUNDING UNDER THE HOMELESSNESS (IN NEED OF ACCOMMODATION) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2002**

The Cabinet considered a report which presented the outcome of the evaluation of the Council's Homelessness Strategy carried out by the ODPM, together with an update on the demand for homeless or potentially homeless applicants and a proposal to use projected underspend of ODPM grant for new schemes. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the results of the evaluation of the Council's Homelessness Strategy be noted;
- (b) that the update on the homelessness review work of 2003 as detailed in section 4 of the report be noted;
- (c) that the update on the progress of the homelessness preventative and support schemes funded through ODPM grant as set out in section 5 of the report be noted;
- (d) that the projected underspend in the ODPM Homelessness Grant allocation be utilised in accordance with the Homelessness Steering Group recommendation for the provision of two 10-week parent support education courses;
- (e) that the Homelessness Steering Group be authorised to allocate any further under spend in the grant allocation in support of existing or new schemes.

114/04 **EQUALITIES PROGRAMME**

Having considered a report on the need to develop the Council's Equalities Policy into an all-embracing programme of Equalities, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a Member be given portfolio responsibility for Equalities and be appointed to the Equalities Working Party;
- (b) that the development of an all-inclusive programme of Equalities in line with the Local Government Standard to use as a framework for the development of the Council as a quality service provider and preferred employer be endorsed and supported.

115/04

GRANT APPLICATIONS

Having considered the respective merits of each grant application, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the All & Sundry Theatre Company be awarded a grant of £200
- (b) that Celebrating English Song at Tardebigge be awarded a grant of £100
- (c) that Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings be awarded a grant of £2,850
- (d) that in view of the level of balances, no action be taken with regard to the application from Bromsgrove and District Sports Council.

116/04

CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES

Consideration was given to proposed corporate objectives to incorporate in the Council's Corporate Plan. It was reported that in order to establish the Council's three year Budget Strategy, it was essential that under each of these objectives, Members highlighted the priorities for the Council over the next three years. Members referred to a proposed list of priorities which they had identified for 2005/06. It was noted that some of these would be constant for subsequent years, whereas others would not. It was also emphasised that these priorities were not weighted and that the list would need to be refined following further consideration of the available budget as to what items were to be included or to be deferred to a later year. It was

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the following Corporate Plan objectives be approved:
 - To provide a clean, safe and attractive environment.
 - To develop and implement an effective local government framework.
 - To develop a caring, socially aware society.
 - To develop and sustain a strong and expanding economy.
 - To provide sustainable cultural and leisure opportunities.
 - To be an efficient and effective Council.
- (b) that the list of corporate priorities for 2005/06 as set out in Appendix '1' hereto be approved, subject to further refinement as indicated above;

RESOLVED:

- (a) that officers be requested to prepare the Capital and Revenue budgets for 2005/06 in line with the agreed objectives;
- (b) that officers build the corporate objectives and priorities into the Corporate Plan for 2005/08;
- (c) that the new corporate objectives and priorities be communicated to all staff, stakeholders and partners.

117/04

SPORTS SERVICES – DOLPHIN CENTRE ROOF REPAIRS AND PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL LIFT

The Cabinet considered a proposal to replace the metal cladding around the top of the Dolphin Centre at the same time as roof repairs were carried out in order to benefit from economies of scale. It was also proposed to bring forward the installation of a second lift at the Centre so that this could be undertaken as part of the current refurbishment works and thereby avoid a further closure of the pool at a later date. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that approval be given to the repair of the roofs at the Dolphin Centre at a cost of £33,915 to be met from within the allocation for this work in the Capital Programme for 2004/05;
- (b) that approval be given to the replacement of the metal cladding around the top of the building at a cost of £7,500 to be met from within the allocation for the roof repairs to the Centre in the Capital Programme for 2004/05;

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that a sum of £35,000 be brought forward from the Capital Programme for 2005/06 to enable a second lift to be installed by the building contractors during the current refurbishment works at the Dolphin Centre;
- (b) that an exception be made to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to enable a further extension to be made to the contract with J. and S. Seddon to cover the above works.

118/04

WASELEY HILLS HIGH SCHOOL – COMMUNITY USE

Consideration was given to a proposal to make a grant to Waseley Hills High School in return for improved community access to the School's cultural and sporting facilities. It was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that approval be given to the payment of a capital grant of £25,000 to Waseley Hills High School to enable the School to install lighting and sound equipment in its Studio theatre with the express purpose of improving community access to the School's facilities;
- (b) that the Director of Leisure Services be authorised to complete the negotiations with the School in respect of the agreement set out in the Appendix to the report.

119/04

CHRISTMAS PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

Having considered a report on the issue of Christmas parking, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that free parking be available in the Council's car parks on the two weekends prior to Christmas (11th – 12th December and 18th – 19th December 2004);
- (b) that notices be displayed requesting people to be mindful of the needs of others and not to block parking spaces all day, and that local traders also be approached with a view to displaying such notices.

120/04

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – SECOND QUARTER 2004/05

Consideration was given to information in relation to the Council's performance during the second quarter of 2004/05 and reference was made for the need for meaningful local indicators. It was

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

121/04

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT – GRANT FUNDING FOR FLATS OVER SHOPS

(The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item as a matter of urgency as a decision was required thereon before the next meeting of the Executive Cabinet).

The Head of Strategic Housing referred to affordable housing for rent schemes previously approved by the Cabinet for grant funding from the Strategic and Enabling Housing Capital Programme (Minute No. 29/04 refers). The level of grant required for one of the schemes, which related to flats over shops in Bromsgrove, had reduced following negotiations between the Registered Social Landlord involved and the freeholder of the shop premises.

It was proposed to re-allocate the balance of the original budget to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust to enable it to purchase up to two former Council flats in Bromsgrove which would be let to support the Council's homelessness strategy.

Having considered the matter, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that approval be given to the allocation of a capital subsidy of £65,000 to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust for the provision of 4 flats above shops in Bromsgrove on the basis of a 15 year lease;
- (b) that the remaining £55,000 from the original budget of £120,000 be re-allocated to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust to assist the purchase of up to two additional flats for use as short-term homeless accommodation.

The Meeting closed at 8.07 p.m.

Chairman

THE CORPORATE PLAN

THE SIX OBJECTIVES WITH THE PRIORITIES FOR 2005/06

1. TO PROVIDE A CLEAN, SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Within the context of this objective the Council's priorities will be to continue to improve community safety through CCTV, better footpath lighting and the use of ASBO's.

To develop and publish service standards related to the local environment, including street cleansing, grass cutting and grounds maintenance, against which performance can be measured.

Continued investment in the development of the refuse collection and recycling service.

To take measures against fly posting, chewing gum and dog fouling.

Improving the environment through AGENDA 21, e.g., energy saving and monitoring air and noise pollution.

2. TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Priorities associated with this objective will be the protection of the Green Belt, the redevelopment of the Town Centre and the development and improvement of the District's rural communities, protection and maintenance of the built environment and enforcement policies.

3. TO DEVELOP A CARING, SOCIALLY AWARE SOCIETY

Priorities within this objective will be to support the elderly and the vulnerable and will include such items as Lifeline, concessionary fares, the development of a Housing Improvement Agency, prevention/intervention for children and other sections of the community. Issues associated with rural communities and their access to services including Rural Rides and affordable housing. Also included are CAB, Shopmobility and facilities for youth.

4. TO DEVELOP AND SUSTAIN A STRONG AND EXPANDING ECONOMY

Priorities include the continued development of the technology park, small businesses development and the development of business skills, attracting inward investment and sustaining and growing the economic impact of visitors to the District in the maintenance of the Market and good car parking.

5. TO PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE CULTURE AND LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

Priorities include ensuring that there is a suitable mix of cultural and leisure facilities and opportunities that are accessible to all sections of the community including arts, heritage and sports facilities and opportunities, play areas, parks and open spaces and opportunities and facilities for young people. The specifics would include the Artrix, the Dolphin Centre, Woodrush and Haybridge High Schools, the Bromsgrove Festival, the Bandstand, the Spadesbourne Suite and football pitches.

6. TO BE AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE COUNCIL

The Council is committed to supporting the work of the LSP and will seek to improve services through partnerships where possible.

Will promote equality of opportunity and access to lifelong learning for all.

Will seek to invest in employee and Member training and development to ensure we become a learning organisation.

Will satisfy all mandatory requirements and services we are committed to.

Will seek to improve customer services through IT and electronic services.

Will ensure that the Council raises its performance in line with the Recovery Plan on a continual basis to enable the Council to become a top performing Council over the coming years.