

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE CABINET

Wednesday, 18th January 2006 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Miss D. H. Campbell J.P., Mrs. M. A. Sherrey J.P., Mrs C. J. Spencer, Mrs. M. M. T. Taylor and P. J. Whittaker.

OBSERVERS: Councillors Mrs. K. M. Gall and N. Psirides J.P.

148/05 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED: that Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths be elected Chairman for the meeting.

149/05 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R. Hollingworth (Executive Leader).

150/05 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 10th January 2006 were submitted.

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

151/05 **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Development Framework Working Group held on 12th December 2005 were submitted.

RESOLVED: that the Minutes be noted.

152/05 **TENDERS COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Tenders Committee held on 15th December 2005 and 4th January 2006 were submitted.

RESOLVED: that the Minutes be noted.

153/05 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Cabinet received a presentation from the Corporate Director (Resources) and the Head of Financial Services on a review of the Medium Term Financial Plan which included the work done so far with regard to the preparation of the Revenue Budget for 2006/07 and the following two years, and the next steps to be taken. Officers had been identifying savings and budget pressures, however, a significant amount of work remained to be done in these areas. Particular attention was drawn to the underlying assumptions that had been made and the relatively poor financial settlement the Council had received in comparison with other district councils within the County. It was noted that the final settlement would not be known until later in the month. The Corporate Director reiterated advice he had previously given with regard to the minimum level of working balances that the Council should maintain. It was felt that the Budget for 2007/08 would be particularly difficult and would necessitate a major review of services.

The presentation also referred to the position with regard to the Capital Budget and indicated that the value of bids for Capital expenditure was far exceeding the level of resources allocated for expenditure which would require some difficult decisions to be made.

It was proposed that a copy of the presentation be circulated immediately to all Members of the Council and that a draft budget book would be despatched soon after. It was also proposed to hold a Budget Scrutiny Forum on 7th February 2006 to which all Members would be invited to attend. Attention was drawn to suggested issues for scrutiny. It was

RESOLVED: that the contents of the presentation and proposed next steps be noted.

154/05

AUDIT COMMISSION PROGRESS ASSESSMENT OF THE COUNCIL

Consideration was given to a report on the Progress Assessment of the Council recently issued by the Audit Commission which was generally regarded as a fair and encouraging reflection and recognised that the direction of travel was positive. Particular attention was drawn to seven areas for improvement which had been identified by the Audit Commission and to the proposed actions to address these. It was felt that the pace of change had improved significantly and that the Council was now operating at the maximum sustainable level. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Progress Assessment as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted;
- (b) that the progress now being made as set out in 4.1 to 4.3 of the report be noted;
- (c) that the presentation given by the Chief Executive at the December meeting of the Government Monitoring Board which identified seven key recommendations from the Progress Assessment and proposed actions to respond to these during 2006, as detailed in 4.4 and Appendix 2, be noted;
- (d) that the overview of the Recovery Plan reported to the December meeting of the Government Monitoring Board, as detailed in 4.6 and Appendix 3, be noted;
- (e) that it be noted that the local television coverage on the day the Progress Assessment was released was inaccurate as the Council does not have a star rating;
- (f) that the emerging arrangements for corporate inspection during 2006 be noted;
- (g) that the problems with sending the Progress Assessment to all Members and the future arrangements for reporting inspection reports to Members as set out in the report be noted;
- (h) that the background information, including the Council's press release, the Audit Commission's press release and the Council response to the draft Progress Assessment that was sent to the Audit Commission, as set out in Appendices 4, 5 and 6 respectively, be noted.

155/05

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report on a proposed Risk Management Strategy which included the development of a programme of actions to raise the awareness of risk management within the Council both at Member level and at all levels of management, which would include a number of training events. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the proposed Risk Management Strategy, together with the terms of reference of the Risk Management Steering Group and for Risk Officers as now submitted, be approved;
- (b) that Councillor R. Hollingworth be nominated as the Member "champion" for Risk Management.

156/05 **BENEFITS OVERPAYMENT POLICY**

Consideration was given to a new policy in relation to the recovery of overpaid Housing and Council Tax Benefits which would formalise current guidelines used by the Council's Revenues and Benefits Section. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED: that the policy relating to the recovery of overpaid Housing and Council Tax Benefits as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved and adopted by the Council.

(NOTE: Councillors Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths and Mrs. M. A. Sherrey declared their respective personal interests in this matter due to particular family members being in receipt of benefits).

157/05 **RESOLUTION OF ICT ISSUES**

The Cabinet considered a report on the need to release funds to meet the costs of actions taken to resolve urgent ICT issues which had arisen during the latter part of 2005. Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED: that the sum of £34,041 be released from Capital Reserves to pay for the solution to ICT issues that were resolved in October 2005.

158/05 **DELEGATION FOR CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS**

Having considered a report on a proposal to delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Environment Services to grant permits for charitable collections, it was

RESOLVED: that the Standards Committee be requested to recommend that the Scheme of Delegation be amended to give delegated authority to the Head of Planning and Environment Services to grant permits for Street Collections and House-to-House Collections.

159/05 **LOCAL ALLOCATION CRITERIA AND RURAL LETTINGS POLICY FOR RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES**

Consideration was given to a report which detailed the responses received from Parish Councils on the draft criteria and allocations policy for the letting of rural affordable housing developed under 'Exception Site' policy which had been previously approved by the Cabinet for consultation. It was felt that the responses did not justify any changes to be made to the draft policy. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED: that the Allocation Criteria and Rural Lettings Policy for Affordable Housing developed under 'Exception Sites' as set out at Appendix 1 to the report be approved and adopted.

160/05 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

RESOLVED: that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, 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 likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below:-

Minute No.
161/05

Paragraph
7, 8 and 9

161/05

PURCHASE OF GRAFFITI REMOVAL SYSTEM

Following consideration of the report it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a purpose equipped second hand vehicle be purchased for the removal of graffiti in the sum of £25,000 from the company referred to in the report, subject to appropriate checks by the Council's Transport Manager;
- (b) that an exception be made to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to facilitate the course of action set out above;
- (c) that annual revenue provision be made for the operation and maintenance of the vehicle;

RECOMMENDED: that provision be made for the cost of the purchase of the vehicle to be met from savings within the approved Capital Programme for 2005/06 arising from underspend on refuse vehicles.

The Meeting closed at 7.54 p.m.

Chairman