

# **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE CABINET**

Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2006 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs. M. M. T. Taylor (Deputy Executive Leader), Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., B. L. Fuller C.B.E. Q.F.S.M., Mrs. M. A. Sherrey, Mrs. C. J. Spencer and P. J. Whittaker.

Observers: Councillors Miss D. H. Campbell J.P., J. T. Duddy and D. C. Norton.

32/06

### **CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Mrs. M. M. T. Taylor was appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

33/06

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Hollingworth (Executive Leader) and Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths.

34/06

### **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E. to her first meeting of the Cabinet as Portfolio Holder for Planning.

35/06

### **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2006 were submitted.

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the Meeting be approved and confirmed as a correct record, subject to the amendment of the resolution to Minute No. 25/06 (Constitution of the Appeals Panel) to state that the one stage process be reviewed in twelve months time.

36/06

### **ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

#### **(a) Report of the Scrutiny Task Group on Consultants**

The Cabinet considered recommendations made by the Scrutiny Steering Board regarding the use of consultants based on a report of the Task Group set up to scrutinise this matter. The Cabinet acknowledged the work done by the Task Group but were mindful of comments made by the Acting Chief Executive with regard to an ongoing review of Financial Regulations which was due to be reported to the next meeting of the Cabinet. It was therefore

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the recommendations of the Scrutiny Steering Board be noted;
- (b) that the recommendations be considered as part of the review of Financial Regulations.

#### **(b) Report of the Scrutiny Task Group on Passport to Leisure**

The Cabinet considered recommendations made by the Scrutiny Steering Board regarding a proposed Passport to Leisure Scheme based on a report of the Task Group set up to scrutinise this matter. The Cabinet expressed a number of concerns including the proposal to run the Scheme for two years to test its viability and true costing, that the Task Group report had not been signed by the Head of Financial Services, and that elements of the report seemed to be based a 'wish list'. It was therefore

**RESOLVED:** that in view of the concerns referred to above, the report be referred back to the Scrutiny Task Group for further consideration.

37/06

#### **EQUALITY SCHEME**

The Cabinet considered a report on a proposed all-embracing Equalities Scheme for 2006 – 2009 which set out the Council's commitment to equality and diversity in service delivery and employment covering race, disability, gender, sexuality, religion/belief and age. The Scheme would be subject to extensive consultation. During the discussion it was acknowledged that equality and diversity was a key issue for the Council and needed to be embedded across the organisation. It was noted that all Members had been invited to attend training events to raise their awareness and understanding. Members and the Acting Chief Executive also paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Legal Services Manger and Equalities Assistant in producing the Scheme. It was

**RESOLVED:** that the Scheme be approved and that the Legal Services Manager be authorised to make all necessary changes to the Scheme as a result of the consultation exercise and any subsequent legislative changes.

38/06

#### **LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

Having considered an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance and Statement of Assurance for 2005/06, it was

**RESOLVED:** that the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance and Statement of Assurance for 2005/06 be approved.

39/06

#### **INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ASSESSMENT AND THE STAFF SURVEY**

Having considered a report on the outcome of a staff survey carried out earlier in the year, together with a summary of the Investors in People (IIP) assessment for 2006 and an action plan to address issues and concerns which had been raised, it was

**RESOLVED:** that the contents of the staff survey, IIP assessment and action plan as set out in Appendices A to C of the report be noted.

40/06

#### **GATEWAY REFUGE**

The Cabinet considered a report on the closure of the Gateway Refuge which set out alternative options regarding the future use of the two dwellings which provided emergency temporary accommodation for persons suffering domestic violence and the future service provision for such clients. Option 5 (b) was recommended whereby the accommodation would be conveyed to a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) for a peppercorn sum and the RSL would fund the conversion of the accommodation into self-contained temporary dwellings and manage the dwellings. Following discussion, it was

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the temporary arrangements being put in hand by Supporting People as a consequence of the closure of the Gateway Refuge for the provision of services to persons suffering domestic violence be noted;
- (b) that having considered the various options relating to the future use of the two dwellings currently comprising the Gateway Refuge, approval be given to the transfer of the Gateway Refuge dwellings to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) as set out in Option 5 (b) of the report, subject to the inclusion of the following provisions in the conveyance:

- (i) a 'claw back' condition to ensure that in the event of the Council giving future permission for BDHT to dispose of the properties, the Council would be refunded the difference between the conveyance price and open market value at the time of disposal, to be discounted by the outstanding debt incurred by BDHT on the funding borrowed to convert the properties into self-contained flats;
  - (ii) a condition that 60% of any surplus or saving made by BDHT's refurbishment costs against estimated costs would be made as a capital payment to the Council;
- (c) that the Strategic Housing Manager be authorised in agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to conclude the negotiations in relation to the conveyance of the properties to BDHT.

41/06

**STRATEGIC HOUSING INSPECTION ACTION PLAN**

The Cabinet considered an Action Plan to address the key recommendations and other weaknesses identified in a recent Audit Commission report following its inspection of the Council's Strategic Housing Service. Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED:** that the contents of the Strategic Housing Inspection Action Plan be noted and approved, including the arrangements to ensure that progress is regularly monitored and reported on a corporate basis.

42/06

**REVIEW OF SERVICE BUSINESS PLANNING PROCESS**

Consideration was given to a report which presented a revised template for Service Business Plans, together with a timetable for the business planning process. The Acting Chief Executive advised that there would be some further minor changes to the template. Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED:** that the proposed business planning process be endorsed.

43/06

**INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

Having considered a report on the proposed way forward with regard to the future membership of the Independent Remuneration Panel, it was

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the four current members of the Independent Remuneration Panel be re-appointed to serve on the Panel until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008, and that subsequently two of these members be re-appointed for a further period of two years until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010;
- (b) that new members be appointed to the Panel for a period of four years;
- (c) that new members be appointed to the Panel as and when required following public advertisement;
- (d) that the Leader, Deputy Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and Organisational Development be given delegated authority to appoint new members to the Panel following interview;
- (e) that the Bromsgrove Local Strategic Partnership be invited to nominate a representative to serve on the Panel;
- (f) that the annual allowance paid to Panel members be increased to £350 with effect from the 2007/08 financial year and that this allowance be increased annually thereafter in line with the rate of inflation.

44/06

**IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Cabinet considered a report which presented a proposed Improvement Plan for the Council for the period July 2006 to June 2007 to replace the existing Recovery Plan. The report drew particular attention to the position with regard to Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and the need to increase capacity in certain areas within the organisation to ensure that the Improvement Plan could be delivered. In response to a suggestion from a Member, the Acting Chief Executive undertook to explore the feasibility of applying for Capacity Building Funds. Following discussion, it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that the proposed Improvement Plan be endorsed;
- (b) that the position with regard to the CPA and the potential outcome be noted;
- (c) that the Council be requested to release £350,000 from reserves in order to increase the capacity of the Council to deliver the Improvement Plan; and
- (d) that the additional resource requirements be included within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

45/06

**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 items of business the subject of the following minutes on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below:-

<u>Minute No.</u>	<u>Paragraphs</u>
46/06	1
47/06	7, 8 and 9

46/06

**IMPROVEMENT PLAN - ADDENDUM**

Further to Minute No. 44/06 above, the Cabinet considered an addendum to the report on the Improvement Plan which provided more details on the proposed changes to the structure within Planning and Environment Services in order to ensure improved performance, together with proposals with regard to a mentor for the Acting Chief Executive. During the discussion reference was made to the need to expedite the process for dealing with refusals for planning applications under powers delegated to officers, whereupon it was

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the proposals as set out in the addendum be endorsed;
- (b) that a meeting of the Planning Policy Working Group be held as soon as possible to review the process for dealing with planning application refusals.

47/06

**SPATIAL PROJECT**

Consideration was given to a report on proposals for taking forward the Spatial Project following a thorough review by the Spatial Project Advisory Group. Thanks were expressed to officers for their efforts in supporting the work of the Advisory Group and to Councillor B. L. Fuller for his contribution as Chairman of the Group who was also asked to convey thanks to the other Members of the Group for their efforts.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that further to Minute No. 203/05 of the Executive Cabinet, the Council proceed with the purchase of the Spatial Project tailored by the Company referred to in the report, and that in this regard, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, together with the Head of e-Government and Customer Services be authorised to examine and finalise the contract details;

EXECUTIVE CABINET  
2<sup>nd</sup> August 2006

- (b) that the Project be overseen by an “in-house” Project Manager, and that the Acting Chief Executive be authorised to submit a report to the Council to seek approval for the release of the necessary funding to meet the costs involved;
- (c) that a Project Management Board be established, to be chaired by the Acting Chief Executive and comprising all Heads of Service, the “in-house” Project Manager, the Company’s Project Manager and a Senior Systems Supervisor;
- (d) that in order to offset some of the costs of the Land Charges element of the Project, a proposed increase to Land Charges fees be investigated;
- (e) that confirmation be sought from the Company of their verbal agreement to extend the limitations of liability from five years to the total length of the contract.

The Meeting closed at 7.50 p.m.

Chairman