

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE CABINET

Wednesday, 1st November 2006 at 6.00 p.m.

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

Observers: Councillors Miss D. H. Campbell and N. Psirides J. P.
Councillor Mrs. J. A. Pearce (Wychavon District Council)

86/06 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 4th October 2006 were submitted.

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

87/06 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising.

88/06 **SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 3rd October 2006 were submitted.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board also referred to the concerns expressed by the Cabinet at its previous meeting in relation to the number of Task Groups. She advised that, at its meeting on 31st October 2006, the Board had agreed to suspend the Passport to Leisure Task Group pending the outcome of the Dolphin Centre phase 2 refurbishment project. A maximum of five Task Groups could be in existence at any one time and at present there were four.

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Meeting be noted.

89/06 **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 item of business the subject of the following minute on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, the relevant paragraph of that part, being as set out below:-

Minute No.
90/06

Paragraph
7

90/06

PRIVATE SECTOR LEASING SCHEME PILOT

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board referred to concerns expressed by the Board at its meeting on 31st October 2006 in relation to the report on a proposed pilot Private Sector Leasing Scheme.

During the ensuing discussion on the report, Cabinet Members also expressed concerns about the proposals. Although there was support in principle for a Private Sector Leasing Scheme, it was felt that the pilot proposals did not represent value for money for the Council and that the associated risks would outweigh the benefits. It was therefore

RESOLVED: that the report be not approved.

91/06

REVENUES AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICE PROPOSAL

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board referred to comments expressed by the Board at its meeting on 31st October 2006 in relation to the report which presented a detailed Business Case on a proposal for the formation of a Shared Service for the provision of Revenues and Benefits services in Worcestershire. Having expressed concerns about the financial implications, the Board had agreed that if the Council was minded to support the proposal, this should be subject to a caveat whereby the Council could reserve the right to withdraw if all six district councils did not give approval.

During the ensuing discussion on the report, Cabinet Members expressed a number of concerns about the proposal, particularly with regard to the financial implications, the risks involved in a project of such magnitude, the fear that the Spatial Project could be compromised, that it was untimely, that the significant efforts made to improve the capacity and performance of the Revenues and Benefits Section could be undermined and potentially lead to a worse rather than better service for the people of Bromsgrove, that the whole basis of the proposal was dependent on the success of the Worcestershire Hub which at the moment was inconsistent across the County, and the impact on the Council's Revenues and Benefits staff. There was also particular concern about the governance proposals. The Acting Chief Executive responded to Members' comments and concerns, however, the Cabinet still felt that there were a lot of unanswered questions. It was therefore

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a Cabinet Advisory Group be established to explore the proposal further, particularly with a view to looking into the concerns and unanswered questions which have been raised;

- (b) that the Group comprise the following:
- Leader of the Council
 - Acting Chief Executive
 - Head of Financial Services
 - Head of E-Government & Customer Services
 - Interim Revenues Service Manager
 - Trade Union representative
 - Opposition representative
 - Councillor G. N. Denaro

- (c) that before the next meeting of the Council the Acting Chief Executive communicate with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council to explore the possibility of any local alternative proposals;

RECOMMENDED: that the Council consider the views and recommendations of the Cabinet Advisory Group before making a final decision on the matter at its meeting on 14th November 2006.

92/06

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance Management Board held on 20th October 2006 were submitted. As the Chairman of the Board was not present, Members were asked to raise any queries with him direct.

The Leader drew attention to the performance indicators for September 2006. These would be considered by Cabinet Members in due course.

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Meeting be noted and the recommendations be approved.

93/06

AFFORDABLE HOUSING – SCHEME DELIVERY AND HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Cabinet considered a report which provided an overview of housing needs in the District, affordable housing schemes delivered during 2005/06, schemes planned or in the pipeline for 2006/07 and options for the use of unallocated budgets. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the housing needs of the District summarised in section 4 of the report be noted;
- (b) that the joint working through the South Housing Market Area Partnership be supported in principle;
- (c) that the additional units of affordable housing delivered during 2005/6, as detailed in section 7 of the report, be noted;
- (d) that the affordable housing schemes that are planned and in the pipeline for delivery during 2006/7 and 2007/8, as detailed in section 8 of the report be noted;

- (e) that the bids approved and submitted to the Housing Corporation to support the development of affordable housing in the District, as detailed in sections 9 and 10 of the report, be noted;
- (f) that the projects recommended under columns (c) and (d) of the table set out in section 11 of the report be approved;

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the additional housing funding available for allocation in 2006/07 programme be noted and the projects recommended under columns (c) and (d) of the table set out in section 12 of the report be approved for inclusion in the revised capital budget for 2006/7;
- (b) that for the purpose of clarity, it be confirmed that any capital receipts ring fenced from the sale of the Council's Low Cost units can be re-invested in both fixed equity and shared ownership type low cost housing schemes;
- (c) that approval of schemes utilising the remaining un-allocated housing capital budgets be delegated to the Strategic Housing Manager in agreement with the Portfolio Holders for Finance and for Strategic Housing and that any unallocated funding remaining be carried forward into 2007/8 if appropriate schemes are not forthcoming.

(Note: Councillor Mrs. C. J. Spencer declared a personal interest in this item as Member of the Bromsgrove District Housing Trust Board).

94/06

NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ADAPTATIONS

The Cabinet considered a report which presented a draft Code of Practice for the adaptation of homes for people with disabilities. The Code sought to shape the future delivery of adaptations across the County. Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Code of Practice be adopted by the Council;
- (b) that in the event of the consideration of the Code of Practice by a partner organisation leading to any significant change in the document, the Strategic Housing Manager be authorised in agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environment to approve the revised document.

95/06

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

The Cabinet considered a report on proposals for additional preventative measures to reduce the numbers of homeless people in temporary accommodation in order to meet the target set by the Government. The proposals included the use of funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) towards the cost of a new post of Homelessness Prevention Officer, a Rent Deposit Scheme for persons over 25 and a Homelessness Prevention Spend to Save Scheme.

During the discussion the Strategic Housing Manager clarified that match funding for the DCLG funding was expected but not mandatory. Members expressed concern that the DCLG funding was only guaranteed for two years and felt that at this stage the Council could only commit a contribution to the new post for this period of time. It was suggested that if the bids for match funding were not successful in the forthcoming budget process, consideration could be given to demonstrating match funding in kind on the basis of homelessness related work undertaken by officers. It was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Council's Allocations Policy be reviewed and a report be made to a future meeting of the Executive Cabinet in respect of any alterations identified to ensure that the policy gives the right messages regarding accessing social housing;
- (b) that the Council work in partnership with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) to jointly develop a new post of Homelessness Prevention Officer and that the additional DCLG funding of £15,000 per annum for 2006/7 and 2007/8 be allocated to the provision of this service; that BDHT be informed that the Council will only support funding for this post for a fixed two year contract; and that a review be carried out of how homelessness preventative and advice services are provided and funded in future years.
- (c) that the provision of a Rent Deposit/Rent in Advance/Bond Scheme for persons over 25 be piloted from January to April 2007 funded from within existing budgets;
- (d) that the provision of a Homelessness Prevention Fund 'Spend To Save Scheme' be piloted from January to April 2007 from within existing budgets;
- (e) that £10,000 per annum be considered within the Council's annual budgeting process for the provision of a Rent Deposit/Rent in Advance/Bond Scheme to be put into full operation from 1st April 2007;
- (f) that £5,000 per annum be considered within the Council's annual budgeting process for the provision of a Homelessness Prevention Fund 'Spend To Save Scheme' to be put into full operation from 1st April 2007.

(Note: Councillor Mrs. C. J. Spencer declared a personal interest in this item as Member of the Bromsgrove District Housing Trust Board).

96/06

TEMPORARY STREET CLOSURE APPLICATIONS/EVENTS IN BROMSGROVE HIGH STREET

Consideration was given to a report on proposals to change the Council's procedures in relation to dealing with applications for Temporary Street Closure Orders and events in Bromsgrove High Street. The proposals had arisen due to the drain on the Council's Health and Safety resources under the current arrangements which could not be sustained and in order to minimise potential liability.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that in future the Council provide guidance to event organisers on the need to undertake or obtain risk assessments, to take out public liability insurance and to have properly trained marshalls;
- (b) that the Council continue to provide marshalling services to event organisers at an agreed price;
- (c) that the Council's policies in relation to these matters and guidance to event organisers be amended as appropriate.

97/06

CLIMATE CHANGE

Consideration was give to a report which sought to raise awareness of the issue of climate change and proposed that the Council become a signatory to the Worcestershire Climate Change Pledge and to the Nottingham Declaration. Although Members welcomed the proposals, it was felt that there could be potential financial implications over time. The Corporate Director (Services) indicated that in supporting the proposals the Council could attract funding of around £15,000 from DEFRA which could be used to meet initial costs.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Council become a signatory to the Worcestershire Climate Change Pledge;
- (b) that the Council become a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration;
- (c) that a review be carried out of how to make best use of the potential DEFRA funding.

98/06

GREEN WASTE COLLECTION

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

The Portfolio Holder for Street Scene and Recycling reported on a proposal to suspend the green waste collection for a temporary period during winter months in the current financial year and in future years. Past experience had shown that the tonnage of waste collected during such months reduced considerably compared to other times of the year. The environmental impact of collection during the winter period, particularly with regard to fuel costs, outweighed the environmental benefit of recycling the green waste. Members were informed that operatives would be relocated to other work areas and that the residual waste and dry recycling collection service would continue to operate on the current alternative week basis.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the collection of green waste be suspended for the period 1st January 2007 to 31st March 2007;
- (b) that, in future years, the green waste collection service be suspended from the end of November until the end of March, and that the precise finish and start dates will depend upon the service ending on a Friday and commencing on a Tuesday.

99/06

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>
100/06	7
101/06	8

100/06

PAYMENT TO HAGLEY PARISH COUNCIL FOR PLAY EQUIPMENT

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

Following consideration of the report, it was

RESOLVED: that approval that be given to the payment of an additional £40,000 to Hagley Parish Council in respect of the play facilities at Hagley to be met from Section 106 monies;

RECOMMENDED: that the Council amend the Capital Programme for 2006/2007 accordingly.

101/06

REMOVAL OF SPOIL HEAPS AT ST CHAD'S PARK

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

Following consideration of the report, it was

RESOLVED: that approval be given to the virement of £15,000 from an underspend in the Community Safety capital budget in order to finance the completion of the Liveability scheme at St Chad's Park.

102/06

MR. A. R. BURTON

The Leader referred to the forthcoming departure of Mr. A. R. Burton, Head of Legal and Democratic Services. On behalf of the Cabinet he expressed thanks to Mr. Burton for all his efforts and contribution to the Cabinet and the Council and wished him well in his future career.

The Meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.

Chairman