

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY BOARD

TUESDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors D. L. Pardoe (Chairman), C. B. Taylor (Vice-Chairman),
A. N. Blagg, R. J. Deeming, C. R. Scurrall and C. J. Tidmarsh

Observers: Councillors S. R. Colella and M. J. A. Webb

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr. G. Revans, Mrs. A. Heighway, Mr. M. Carr
and Ms. A. Scarce

16/10 **APOLOGIES**

No apologies for absence were received.

17/10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were received.

18/10 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 13th July 2010 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

19/10 **CABINET RESPONSE - IMPROVING RESIDENTS' SATISFACTION TASK GROUP (TASK GROUP CHAIRMAN: COUNCILLOR S. R. COLELLA)**

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion and Engagement, the Chairman asked Councillor S. R. Colella, as Chairman of the Improving Residents' Satisfaction Task Group, to feedback to Members the Cabinet response to the Task Group Report. Councillor Colella informed Members that the report had been well received by Cabinet and that all the recommendations had been approved. Timescales had been incorporated into the Cabinet Response and the recommendations would now be included within the Scrutiny Board's Quarterly Recommendation Tracker, to monitor implementation.

Members' attention was drawn to Recommendation 2 which related to the Place Survey. Officers explained that this had now been abolished and therefore no longer applicable, but alternative arrangements, possibly on a more local level, would be put in place and Members would be updated in due course. A further update had been received in respect of Recommendation 7

(Aim for Excellence); the new Head of Customer Services was now in post and would be aiming to complete an internal assessment, which was the first step towards achieving accreditation, by March 2011.

Members requested that they receive copies of the newsletters referred to at Recommendation 4(a) (regular newsletters) as part of the Recommendation Tracker report. Officers clarified that the aim was to provide parish councils with updated information to cascade down to residents, which would be an alternative, more effective and cost effective means of communication. Members asked what, if any, financial implications would arise following implementation of Recommendation 4(b) (web design and use of plain English). Officers confirmed that no significant financial implications had been envisaged as this work would be encompassed within the Council's aim for Excellence with Customer Service as detailed at Recommendation 7 (Aim for Excellence).

20/10 **THE FUTURE OF BROMSGROVE URBAN AND RURAL TRANSPORT (BURT)**

The Board considered the briefing paper in respect of the Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport (BURT) provided by the Head of Community Services. The briefing paper provided a response to Members' questions following submission of an Overview and Scrutiny Proposal from Councillor C. R. Scurrall at the meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 13th July 2010.

The age profile data provided was queried and found to be inaccurate. The Head of Community Services would review this and report back to the next meeting. The lack of continuity of services was noted as evidence in the summary of journeys and take up data provided in the briefing paper, which showed that service provision was variable around the district. This was due to the limited capacity through running one bus across the whole District. The relationship with Redditch Borough Council's (RBC) services through a service and maintenance agreement was noted, as it provided critical support to BURT when it was off the road. It was noted that a closer working relationship between BURT and RBC services may be possible to further improve continuity of service provision and value for money.

The Board discussed the following issues in detail:

- The Service Level Agreement with the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS)
- Take up of the service
- The purchase of the vehicle and maintenance costs
- Feedback from users (which had been very positive particularly from the Disabled Users Group)
- Future budget bid
- Promotion/advertising of the service

The Head of Community Services advised Members that as the service had now been in operation for 12 months she would be undertaking a full evaluation/review, to ensure that the service was still required, meeting its full

potential and offered value for money. She also informed Members that she was now holding regular meetings with the WRVS in order to obtain clearer up to date information on the service and appropriate customer feedback. The evaluation/review would cover the inclusion of the more rural parts of the district, any scope for expansion of the service, cost constraints and the service and maintenance agreement with RBC, particularly in view of the shared services agenda. After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that a more detailed background report on the service, including clarification of the service user data be provided to the meeting of the Scrutiny Board to be held on 26th October 2010.

21/10 **TRAVEL CONCESSIONS - VERBAL UPDATE FROM HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

The Board agreed to take Minute Nos. 21/10 and 22/10 as one item.

22/10 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PROPOSAL - USE OF BUS PASSES (SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR C. R. SCURRELL)**

The Head of Community Services provided a brief verbal update on the new arrangements for concessionary fares. The Council was not yet aware of the full implications, although it had been guaranteed that Worcestershire County Council (WCC) would fund travel concessions. This funding would cover the national scheme, which covered fares from 09.30 to 23.00 hrs on week days and all day on weekends and bank holidays.

The Head of Community Services explained that the Head of Highways and Transport Infrastructure (WCC) had provided district councils with detailed information as to what steps councils would need to take if they wished to continue to fund the pre 9.30 a.m. service, which was available in Bromsgrove District. This included information on areas which would need to be considered, such as the type of contracts to be used with the bus contractors and to whom these concessions should be made available to.

Members discussed the merits of the pre 9.30 a.m. scheme and the cost of maintaining it. The Head of Community Services advised that currently the cost of the scheme was between £55,810 and £55,876 per annum and that concessionary passes were available to males and females aged 60 and over.

It was noted that in other local authority areas concessionary passes were not funded pre 9.30 a.m. as it was recognised as a commuter period when the buses were busy with people travelling to work. In view of this and in view of the additional costs, Members of the Board felt that they would be unable to support pre 9.30 a.m. concessionary travel in the district. After further discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet not support pre 9.30 a.m. concessionary bus travel.

RESOLVED that due to lack of support by the Board for pre 9.30 a.m. concessionary bus travel, no further action be taken with regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Proposal Form completed in respect of concessionary travel.

23/10 **SCRUTINY BOARD QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

The Board considered the Quarterly Recommendation Tracker and the Portfolio Holder for Community Services was pleased to advise Members that all recommendations which had been agreed by Cabinet in respect of the two Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Investigations has been completed. The Portfolio Holder for Community Services drew Members attention to the following:

- On-street recycling – a trial scheme would shortly be run from Sanders Park.
- The contractors used for the recycling of aluminium cans and the cost to the Council. The Portfolio Holder invited Councillor C. B. Taylor to attend the next Portfolio Holder's meeting, as he had a particular interest and knowledge of this area.
- NVQ Training – all staff had now completed the training, which was well received. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that new staff members would also be offered the training. A presentation of certificates would take place at the Depot in October and the Portfolio Holder undertook to invite Members to attend.
- Co-mingled Sorting Plant visit – a further visit would be arranged for those Members who had not yet seen the new plant.
- Eco-schools programme – Members asked whether Bromsgrove School was or could be included within this programme. The Head of Environmental Services agreed to investigate and report back to the Board in due course.
- Availability of the recycling service – the Portfolio Holder advised Members that the service had recently been offered to a further 2,500 households and it was envisaged that it would be available to 99% of residents within the next few months. He confirmed that press releases had been provided to the local papers, but had been disappointed that the article had only appeared in one local paper (and not on the front page as had been hoped) and had not been included in the local paper's website.
- The vehicle management system – this was also being looked at with Worcestershire County Council. The Head of Environmental Services explained that software was available, although very expensive, which would assist with this and WCC were exploring the option of all districts using the same system as this would be more cost effective.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Recommendations 1 and 2 from the Hot Food Takeaways Investigation (24th November 2009) be referred back to the new Head of Planning and Regeneration for further consideration;

- (b) that Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 from the Refuse and Recycling VMF Scrutiny Investigation (25th November 2008) be removed as completed items from the Scrutiny Board Recommendation Tracker; and
- (c) that Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 11, 14 and 15 of the Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Investigation (4th March 2008) be removed as completed items from the Scrutiny Board Recommendation Tracker.

24/10 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PROPOSAL - PLANNING ENFORCEMENT (SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR C. R. SCURRELL)**

The Board considered an Overview and Scrutiny Proposal put forward by Councillor C. R. Scurrrell which related to Planning Enforcement. Officers advised the Board that a review of the Council's Planning Policy was a topic which was already included within the Joint Overview and Scrutiny (JOSB) Work Programme and that it may therefore be appropriate for Planning Enforcement to be considered as part of that investigation. Members of the Scrutiny Board were also Members of JOSB and would therefore still be able to contribute to the investigation.

RESOLVED that Planning Enforcement be considered within the review of the Council's Planning Policy to be undertaken by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board.

25/10 **COUNTYWIDE JOINT FLOODING TASK GROUP - UPDATE**

The Board considered the briefing paper provided by officers in respect of the Joint County and District Flooding Scrutiny Task Group. Members were informed that Worcestershire County Council were co-ordinating this programme of work, which would take approximately 5 years to complete. The Chairman advised Members that part of the ongoing work was the mapping of Flood Risk Assessments for all wards, by Wyre Forest. It was not clear at this stage whether the Flood Risk Assessments had been completed. Members noted that Flood Risk Assessment mapping was a complex exercise but commented that it was an important exercise to identify areas at risk in future. The Executive Director for Leisure, Environment and Community Services agreed to investigate this further and report back in due course.

26/10 **VERBAL UPDATE ON THE CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERLY MEETING WITH THE LEADER**

The Chairman advised Members that a meeting had been held between the Chairmen of the Overview Board, Scrutiny Board, Audit Board and Performance Management Board. The following items had been discussed at this meeting:

- Work Programmes
- Task groups
- Recommendation Tracking
- The MUGA Inquiry
- Attendance at meetings

- Current vacancies on all Boards

27/10 **QUESTIONS FOR WITNESSES ATTENDING MEETING ON 26TH OCTOBER 2010**

Officers advised Members that the following topics would be discussed at the meeting of the Scrutiny Board to be held on 26th October 2010:

- Street Trading Consent Policy – 6 month review
- Sports Provision – first of two scheduled meetings

The relevant Heads of Services would be invited to attend the meeting and Members were asked to provide the Scrutiny Officer with any questions they would like to put forward to officers as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.

Chairman