



**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW BOARD**

**TUESDAY 1ST JUNE 2010, AT 6.00 P.M.**

**COMMITTEE ROOM, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE**

MEMBERS: Councillors Mrs. M. Bunker, S. R. Colella, Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, D. L. Pardoe, Mrs. C. J. Spencer, L. J. Turner and Vacancy

**AGENDA**

1. Election of Chairman
2. Election of Vice Chairman
3. To receive apologies for absence
4. Declarations of Interest and whipping arrangements
5. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Board held on 27th April 2010 (Pages 1 - 6)
6. PPG17 Out-Turn - Briefing Paper (Pages 7 - 36)  
(12 month update as requested by Members at Overview Board meeting on 2nd June 2009– Head of Leisure and Cultural Services to attend meeting)
7. Worcestershire Older Peoples' Strategy  
(for discussion and consideration of key questions and evidence – no papers)
8. Garden Waste Services - Future Developments  
(for discussion and consideration of key questions and evidence – no papers)
9. Community Involvement In Local Democracy Task Group Draft Report (Task Group Chairman: Councillor L. J. Turner) (Pages 37 - 106)

10. Anti-social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group Review (Pages 107 - 114)
11. Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1st June to 30th September 2010 (for information only) (Pages 115 - 126)
12. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman considers to be of so urgent a nature it cannot wait until the next meeting.

K. DICKS  
Chief Executive

The Council House  
Burcot Lane  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B60 1AA

21st May 2010

## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW BOARD

TUESDAY, 27TH APRIL 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors S. R. Colella (Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, D. L. Pardoe, Mrs. C. J. Spencer and L. J. Turner

Observers: Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.

Officers: Mr. J. Staniland, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. M. Carr and Ms. A. Scarce

68/09 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

69/09 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were received.

70/09 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Overview Board held on 30th March 2010 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

71/09 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PROPOSAL - RAILWAY STATION DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The Chairman thanked the Executive Director for Planning and Regeneration, Regulation and Housing Services (PRRH) and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration for attending the meeting and gave a brief outline of the original Overview and Scrutiny proposal which had been brought before the Overview Board at its meeting on 30th March 2010. The Board was informed that the representatives from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and Network Rail had declined to attend the Overview Board meeting as they felt it not appropriate at this time.

The Executive Director for PRRH explained that this was a new project to him and he had only attended one meeting which had taken place at Network Rail headquarters. The Executive Director for PRRH advised that he was unable to comment on why the representatives from WCC and Network Rail had chosen not to attend the Overview Board meeting. The Executive Director for PRRH confirmed that the proposal was to move the Bromsgrove Railway Station to the former oil terminal and goods yard and this site was currently

leased by Network Rail to a company called D B Shenkner and Network Rail were working with them with a view to buying out the lease.

The works had currently been costed out at £12.5million. It was possible that those costs could be reduced by the time a detailed scheme had been produced. However, the only funds currently available were £5million from WCC via the regional funding allocation and £2million from London Midland. There was a shortfall therefore of £5.5m. Network Rail were currently investigating the possibility of getting Bromsgrove Railway Station re-prioritised, which would assist with this gap, and at the potential of phasing the associated car park, or alternative commercial funding arrangements for the operation of the car park. The Executive Director of PRRH confirmed that WCC and Network Rail were working towards narrowing the funding gap.

Members then discussed with the Executive Director for PRRH the following issues:

- Electrification of the track and the need for these to be done.
- Lengthening of the platform, the size of the ticket office and car parking facilities.
- The adverse affect of a phased car parking scheme, on the surrounding area.
- The negative effect of the uncertainty of this project on the local community's views of the Council, although the decisions made were outside of the Council's control.
- The long term effect on the regeneration of the Town Centre – the Executive Director PRRH confirmed that this point had been stressed at the relevant meetings.
- The limited information available to the Council.
- The need for planning permission by Network Rail.

The Portfolio Holder added further background information and confirmed that five weeks ago she had attended the Integrated Transport Forum at WCC at which time was told that the funding was available and that by December 2010 work would be starting, only to be informed two weeks later that £5million had been withdrawn from the funding. It was not clear who had withdrawn this funding.

The Railway Station project had been ongoing since 2000 and was no further forward, which was a great concern. The view was expressed that the residents of Bromsgrove should be aware that the Council was very concerned about the situation and it was being proactive. Resident parking within the area would potentially cause a huge problem and it was confirmed that this would be looked at if the Railway Station goes ahead, Members felt that car parking was already an issue and that this should be addressed immediately. The Executive Director for PRRH said that he would take Members concerns back to the relevant Head of Service.

The Board requested that a number of questions be put to the representatives from WCC and Network Rail, together with a further request for their attendance at a future Overview Board meeting.

Suggested questions:

1. What is the outline budget for the railway station development?
2. What options are being considered for resolving the funding gap to finance the railway station development?
3. What other options are being considered if it is not possible to finance the current plans for development?
4. What are the plans for consultation on the development, who is to be consulted and what are the timescales for consultation?
5. What consideration has been given to the increased need for car parking in the local neighbourhood? Would extra capacity meet the increased need for car parking?

The Executive Director for PHHR confirmed that he would contact the representatives from WCC and Network Rail. The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services asked that it be stressed to them that this was a very important issue for Bromsgrove residents and was causing some concern and Members were very keen to be able to communicate with residents as to what the situation was.

Members discussed a "hopper bus" scheme which had been previously raised and asked whether this was to be taken up, as it could be useful to ease the street parking issue. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration advised that she would take this up with the Integrated Transport Forum at the next meeting and report back to the Overview Board.

**RESOLVED** that the Scrutiny Officer provide the Executive Director PRRH with the formal questions to put to the WCC and Network Rail representatives and any response be passed to Members of the Board as soon as it is received.

72/09

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY TASK GROUP**  
**(TASK GROUP CHAIRMAN: COUNCILLOR L. J. TURNER)**

The Chairman of the Community Involvement in Local Democracy Task Group advised the Board that the draft recommendations for the Task Group had now been agreed and the final report would be brought to the Overview Board meeting on 1st June 2010. It would then be presented to the Cabinet meeting to be held on 30th June 2010. The Chairman of the Task Group would be on annual leave on 30th June 2010 and asked the Chairman of the Overview Board to present the report on his behalf, together with the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services.

The Chairman of the Task Group advised that the draft recommendations had been presented to both the Equality and Diversity Forum and Corporate Management Team (CMT) meeting. CMT had discussed both the feasibility of the recommendations and the financial implications of them.

The areas covered by the recommendations were then discussed in detail by the Board. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that they had tried to choose recommendations that were both strategic and flexible, but specific enough to

produce tangible outcomes, which would help to improve the community engagement in the democratic process and have a positive affect on some of the National Indicators within the Place Survey. The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services advised that already, requests for information on the Task Group had been received from other authorities and it would be possible to identify from these some capacity for working in partnership with these districts or at County level.

The Board complimented the Chairman of the Task Group on the wide ranging areas that had been covered by the Task Group.

73/09 **VERBAL UPDATE ON THE CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERLY MEETING WITH THE LEADER**

The Chairman advised that the reason for the Chairman's quarterly meeting with the Leader was to maintain a regular update between the Boards and the Cabinet in order to make the Overview and Scrutiny process more effective. The following issues had been discussed:

- The attendance of portfolio holders at task group and Board meetings. It was confirmed that since this meeting had taken place, portfolio holders had attended meetings.
- A better definition and understanding of the respective roles of both the Overview and Scrutiny Boards.
- Pressure on officer time, particularly in respect of attendance at task group meetings. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that this should be addressed as part of the planning of the new Work Programme. The Corporate Management Team had already been approached in respect of topics and suitable dates for investigation, for inclusion in the Work Programmes and planning.
- The need to build upon a strategic approach to work planning and plan over a longer period, to consider fewer items, and to focus on "high value" investigations with a clearer purpose. The inclusion of terms of reference for each topic would be essential in focusing the Boards.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The Chairman reminded Members that if there was any particular item they wished to be raised at future meetings with the Leader, the Scrutiny Officer should be contact in the first instance to ensure that these were passed on.

74/09 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 28th April to 31st August 2010. Members gave consideration to the following items:

- Item 3 Economic Development Strategy – the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services confirmed that this would be brought before Cabinet on 28th April 2010.
- Item 8 Garden Waste Service (Future Development) – Members were concerned about further changes to the Garden Waste Service and

agreed that it would be appropriate for them to receive a report on the future developments at the next Board meeting.

- Item 16 Victoria Ground (Expressions of interest) – the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services provided Members with background information on complications which had arisen on this issue in respect of restrictions under the covenant.
- Item 19 Benefit Take-Up Strategy – the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services assured Members that although the Benefit Take-Up Strategy had been delayed, it would not affect the actual take-up or payment of benefits.
- Item 23 Arts and Events Strategy 2010/11 to 2013/14 – Members were advised that the draft Arts and Events Strategy had been brought to the Scrutiny Board meeting on 23rd March 2010.

**RSOLVED** that Officers ask the Head of Environmental Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder to provide a report and attend the Overview Board meeting on 1st June 2010, on the Garden Waste Service Future Development.

75/09 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Work Programme was considered by the Board and the Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the following items would be included in the agenda for the Board meeting on 1st June 2010:

- Civil Parking Enforcement – Members felt in view of the issues discussed earlier in the meeting in respect of the Railway Station, it was important that a report on Civil Parking Enforcement was brought to the Board meeting on 1st June 2010. Members also requested that the Head of Service and the relevant officer from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) be invited to attend.
- The Worcestershire Older Peoples' Strategy – Members were informed that the Director for Policy, Performance and Partnerships, together with a representative from Worcestershire County Council, would attend the Board meeting on 1st June 2010 to present this item. The Scrutiny Officer asked Members to give consideration to relevant questions they would like to be considered.
- Bromsgrove Planning and Licensing Policies – the Scrutiny Officer confirmed that he would contact the relevant Head of Services in order to ascertain a date when it would be appropriate to consider these items.
- Procurement – this item would be carried over for consideration on the 2010/11 Work Programme.

The Board was advised that the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Meeting held on 15th June 2010 would be used as a Work Programme planning exercise for the Joint Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Boards in order to plan more effectively for the forthcoming municipal year. If Members had any items

which they wished to put forward for the Work Programmes then these should be sent to the Scrutiny Officer as soon as possible. Members were also reminded that prior to this meeting a short training session would take place.

**RESOLVED** that the Work Programme be amended with the changes outlined above.

The meeting closed at 7.40 p.m.

Chairman



## Briefing Paper for Overview Board Meeting 1st June 2010

### PPG17 Responses/Actions

#### 3.6 Parks and Gardens - Recommended Actions

- Sanders Park Management Plan completed early 2010 in line for Green Flag Assessment – St Chads Park Management Plan currently being rolled out.
  - Additional capital sums secured to improve the Pavillion roof and toilets.
  - New catering contract agreed with substantial increase in income generation from site.
  - Improved flexible working arrangements with static grounds maintenance staff on site at Sanders supporting operational
  
- Work undertaken in the following areas
  - Worked with and supported WCC on Waseley Hills bid for playbuilder funded project for Bromsgrove
  - Worked with Worcestershire Wildlife trust and volunteers in creating and enhancing Lickey End Park natural area with creation of wildlife habitat area.
  - Further work required in this area following completion of St Chads and Sanders plans
  
- Works undertaken
  - Events programme expanded
  - High 5 event increase
  - Additional facilities and pitches for use by sports development
  - Volunteer events within parks carried out – planting, litter picking
  - BMX event with community safety – coaches from British Cycling club
  - DABID funding Feb 2009 – installation of 2 MUGAs August 2009
  - Funded through Health improvement fund – outdoor gym equipment in St Chads

#### 3.7 Amenity Green Space (AGS) recommended actions

- Minimum guidelines produced for adoption of POS and AGS to set a minimum standard of provision acceptable to BDC and in line with our PPG17 report.
  - Amenity/Play value
  - Sustainability
  - Tree Inspections and associated work
  - Grounds risk inspections
  
- Developed a more flexible approach, deploying fixed resources to support operational gangs
  - Current review of grounds maintenance team by the Environment.

- No action currently taken in this area – slow progress with discussion with developer for very small POS based on 106 agreement some years ago

### **3.8 Provision for Children and young people – Recommended actions**

- Review drafted based on PPG17 report. Currently methodology has been adopted and implemented at:
  - Lickey End
  - Sanders Park
  - Charford
  - Swanslength
  - Wythall Park
  - Callowbrook Park
  - St Chads Park
- As part of draft review this work is currently on-going and report will be taken to Cabinet in due course - a small removal budget was agreed 2009/10 budget round to commence some pieces of this work
- When final draft produced we will consult with Corporate Policy team to address final consultation and engagement
- As part of the removal of the overlapping sites this has been and is being investigated and plotted
- BDC's Play Action Plan will be based on review of Worcestershire Play Strategy and completed. BDC Play Strategy will be developed in line with BDC priorities and business plans

### **3.9 Outdoor Sports Facilities – recommended Actions**

- New sports pitch facilities to be provided at Barnsley Hall and enhancements of existing pitch and facilities
- Full provision enhancements of sport pitches scheduled

#### **Charford**

2 pitch/facility refurbishments including full vertidrain drainage systems – completion by Sept 2010 in readiness for the new season

#### **Lickey End**

Construction a new junior sized pitch and refurbishing the existing mini soccer pitch – completion by Sept 2010 in readiness for new season

#### **Braces Lane**

refurbishing football pitch, extending the car park provision and constructing new changing facilities. Pitch and car park complete by Sept 2010 – Changing rooms scheduled for completion during the season

#### **Aston Fields Rec Ground**

Construction of a new junior football pitch – completion for Season 2011/12

#### **St Chads, Rubery**

Refurbishment of the football pitch with full piped drainage system – completion by Season 2011/12

### **Barnsley Hall Football Pitches**

Construction including drainage for 3 new junior and 1 mini soccer pitch, construction of new changing facilities for 4 teams, provision of new car park for 50 vehicles (inc DDA) – completion by Season 2011/12

- New changing provision on Braces Lane and Barnsley Hall
- More junior pitches provided at Barnsley Hall (3), Lickey End (1) and Aston Fields (1)

### **3.10 Allotments – Recommended Actions**

- Roundhill works undertaken, Watt Close project did not receive financial support – Development of Perryfields acquired for rental by allotments department for community use at Sidemore (0.42 acres). Following the completion of phased housing a further 1.2 acres will be made available
- Development possibility in Rubery identified (previous Callowbrook Swift site) – Work will continue to review possibilities in these areas
- Completed
- Policy implemented
- Two allotment societies identified and currently being developed will be ready to go live 2010
- CDRP have been given the task of tackling non-dwelling crime (due to increased number of tenants reports) the allotment department will be tackling this issue 2010 and will produce an information/guidance pack to communicate best practice
- Re-profiled existing budgets to address quality issues – A quarterly inspection programme for sites has been developed and will be trialled out throughout the forthcoming season

### **3.10 Cemeteries and Churchyards – recommended actions**

- Full extension on hold due financial implication – interim project plan prepared – design brief scheduled and funding secured – to be actioned by Environmental Team
- Processes have been developed and improved and now Environmental team to develop further
- Not actioned – re-profiled for 2010/11

Appendix 1 – Original Cabinet Report 3rd June 2009

Appendix 2 – Supporting documentation for Cabinet Report 3rd June 2009

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**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL****CABINET****3<sup>rd</sup> June 2009****Preferred Planning Guidance (PPG)17 – Outturn Report**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Cllr Roger Smith
Responsible Head of Service (deputy)	John Godwin
Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The following report sets out the operational implications of the PPG17 assessment of Bromsgrove in relation to the delivery of services within the Parks and Open Spaces section. Further more the report seeks members agreement to establish a set of key principles for the planning, implementation, funding and delivery of the services reviewed (current & future) under PPG17.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1.1 Approve the recommended action relating to section 3.6 Parks and Gardens.
- 2.1.2 Approve the recommended action relating to section 3.7 Amenity Green Spaces.
- 2.1.3 Approve the recommended action relating to section 3.8 Provision for children and young people.
- 2.1.4 Note the comments under the recommended action relating to section 3.9 Outdoor sports facilities.
- 2.1.5 Approve the recommended action relating to section 3.10 Allotments.
- 2.1.6 Approve the recommended action relating to section 3.11 Cemeteries and Churchyards.
- 2.1.7 Approve the recommended action relating to section 3.12 Civic Space.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As Members will be aware following the PPG17 report to the Local Development Frame (LDF) Working Party on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2009, the planning system stresses that a strong evidence base is needed to support the production of development plan documents, such as the Core Strategy.

The Council has therefore commissioned a study on open space sport and recreation which has informed the draft core strategy specifically Core Policy 11: Open Space and Recreation. The study has been carried out by PMP Consultants on behalf of both the Planning and Environment Services and the Street Scene and Community Services.

- 3.2 The Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17) states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, like supporting an urban renaissance, rural renewal, promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well being and promoting more sustainable development. To achieve this, local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreation facilities and by referring to this information, to set locally derived standards for the area. This study is therefore undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and the guiding principles in its companion guide: Assessing needs and opportunities. The assessment is an essential part of the evidence base which underpins the core strategy, however the document does not only relate to the Council's planning functions it also impacts on the current operation of services with in the Parks and Open Spaces and any future service enhancements/expansions plans. Some of the first core strategies to be developed were found to be unsound as they didn't have a fully compliant PPG17 assessment to justify policies on open space.
- 3.3 The study covers 10 types of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Bromsgrove. They are:
- 1) *Parks and gardens* – areas that provide informal recreation and community events such as Sander's Park
  - 2) *Natural and semi-natural green spaces* – areas for wildlife conservation, biodiversity environmental education and awareness, such as Sycamore Drive Local Nature Area
  - 3) *Amenity green space* - green spaces providing informal activities close to home or work, children's play and enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas. Example includes the amenity green space on Barnsley Hall Road.
  - 4) *Provision for children* - areas for play and social interaction involving children under 12, such as Barnt Green Parish Council Park play area.
  - 5) *Provision for young people* – areas for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 or above, such as Stoke Prior Parish Playing Field Basketball Court
  - 6) *Outdoor sports facilities* – formal sports facilities like tennis courts and playing fields (including school playing fields). Example includes Wythall Park Bowling Green.
  - 7) *Allotments* – such as Hewell Road allotments

- 8) *Cemeteries & churchyards* - place for burial and quiet contemplation, such as St. Laurence Parish Church
- 9) *Green corridors* – areas for walking, cycling, horse-riding, leisure, travel or wildlife migration such as towpaths along canals, rights of way
- 10) *Civic spaces* – places for community events and setting for civic buildings, these are hard surfaced areas usually located within town centre. Example includes Wythall War Memorial.

3.4 A full explanation of the methodology of the study and the steps it followed can be found with in Appendix 1 – The LDF Working Party Report of the 16<sup>th</sup> March 09 in sections 3.6 to 3.13. Within the same report the author then went on to highlight the following key areas/priorities for consideration:

- 1) Parks & Gardens – section 3.14 to 3.15
- 2) Natural and semi-natural green spaces – section 3.16 to 3.17
- 3) Amenity green space – section 3.18 to 3.19
- 4) Provision for children & young people – section 3.20 to 3.22
- 5) Outdoor sports facilities – *section 3.23 to 3.24*
- 6) Allotments – section 3.24 to 3.26
- 7) Cemeteries & churchyards – section 3.27 to 3.28
- 8) Civic Spaces – section 3.29 to 3.30
- 9) Green Corridors – section 3.31 to 3.32

Members should also be aware that the consultation process used was reviewed by the Council's Corporate Communication and Policy team to ensure it complied with BDC requirements and was statistically robust.

3.5 For the purpose of this report the Council's Street Scene & Community department who are responsible for the current operation of the services will focus on the following areas. Any area not covered in the following sections are considered to be strategic planning issues and will be addressed through the relevant strategies for the department:

The initial comments are taken for the LDF report dated 18<sup>th</sup> March 09 and the recommended actions are to be agreed with Members and actioned by the Street Scene & Community department. They out line the key principles for the planning, implementation, future funding bids and delivery of the services reviewed (current & future) under PPG17.

In cases where the recommended action states that a review is undertaken to establish future service changes over normal management practices officers will produce subsequent issue specific reports for Member approval.

### 3.6 ***Parks and Gardens***

Applying the quantity standard shows that there is a current shortfall of 0.21 hectares which will increase to 2.86 hectares in 2026. As, the overall

shortfall is relatively small combined with the difficulties of providing formal parks and gardens it is suggested that new provision is unlikely to be required. Applying the walk time standard shows that the majority of residents in Bromsgrove East, North East, North and West are outside the catchment area, whereas the application of drive time standard shows that all residents can reach a park. The quality standard shows that cleanliness and maintenance are most important.

To meet the future shortfall, it is important to protect parks from development and consider the designation of pocket parks within settlements outside the catchment of a park such as Hagley. To improve the accessibility, a network of 'green linkages' as sustainable transport links is recommended.

***Recommended Actions:***

- Review the street cleansing, ground maintenance and repairs & renewal arrangements at Sanders Park & St Chad's Park and develop improvement/management plans at each site to ensure that they meet resident expectations.
- Work in partnership with other organisations who manage/operate parks and/or recreational open spaces to assist in the enhancement of "pocket parks" in areas outside the catchment areas of BDC parks for example Bromsgrove West (Hagley).
- Continue to increase the role the Council's Arts & Events, Sports Development and Community Safety Teams play in the delivery of activities with in Parks and Open Spaces. Exploit external funding opportunities in these areas to maximise the usage and the benefit to the community for example informal exercise opportunities such as trim trails/outdoor circuit training.

**3.7 Amenity green space (AGS)**

Apart from Bromsgrove East and North East, the provision of other areas is insufficient to meet current and future demand. For example, settlements like Hagley which fall outside the catchments of a park and amenity space will need increased provision if possible. Accessibility is important in maximising usage. 61% of residents would expect to walk to amenity green spaces. This reflects that people considered amenity green space as local resources. The quality of sites is average and assessments reveal that a number of sites are in need of significant improvement such as Long Meadows Road AGS and Sharps Close AGS. Local consultation shows that only high quality and functional sites are valued.

To address quantity deficiencies, development of the amenity spaces into a network of green corridors and increased provision in smaller villages are recommended. It is also reminded that settlements with over 500 residents would require local access to amenity green space.



### ***Recommended Actions:***

- Produce an adoption procedure of areas of AGS that sets minimum standards of provision that area acceptable to BDC and ensure that all areas that are due to be adopted or proposed for adoption by developers are vetted against the criteria.
- Review the ongoing street cleansing, ground maintenance and repairs & renewal arrangements for AGS's to ensure that they are perceived as being high quality by residents.
- Review the current issues around insufficient provision and investigate the potential to increase provision where appropriate by potential change of use/increased access opportunities. Provision in the Hagley area is highlighted as a specific requirement in the report, however this situation will be eased when the adoption of 2 areas of AGS are completed in due course.

### **3.8 *Provision for children and young people***

Although current provision for children is sufficient and overlapping catchments can be found, application of the quantity standard indicates that there will be a shortfall of 0.26 hectares by 2026. In terms of quality, cleanliness and maintenance is considered as the most important factor. Almost half of the respondents of the household survey considered the quality of facilities to be good.

Apart from Bromsgrove Central, provision for young people is insufficient to meet current and future needs. Similar to provision for children, priority of provision should be given to areas without open space that can play the offsetting role, such as Hagley and Clent parishes. For quality, safety and security is considered very important. Many existing sites were criticised for their range of facilities and lack of innovative and exciting play equipment.

To help reduce deficiencies, re-structuring sites serving overlapping catchments and re-profiling sites serving indistinct catchments are recommended. For areas identified as devoid in provision, provision for new facilities should be sought.

### ***Recommended Actions:***

- Undertake a review of the play provision for children & young people and adopt a methodology where investment is made into larger AGS's/recreation ground to create multi age provision in one location, with a targeted objective of increasing young peoples and/or risk play provision as a priority.
- In areas where there are small poor quality play facilities or indistinct catchments adopt a methodology of removal of the equipment and returning the area to AGS. To support this work the Council's strategic planning team will review the planning application process to ensure that any proposed removals do not contradict any planning approval that

have been granted. This process will though need to be supported by a local area consultation process were required and investment in higher quality facilities within the catchment area and be subject to the Council's annual budget cycle or the attraction of external funding sources.

- In areas where AGS;s have been inappropriately located as aprt of existing developments consider the sale of the land to generate capital receipts to reinvest in poor quality play facilities and/or expand existing provision with in the catchment area. This recommendation will be subject to the catchment area meeting the applicable local standard.
- Review over lapping sites and ensure that any potential changes to provision consider this factor including producing a removal, enhancement or re profiling list of current play provision.
- Investigate working in partnership with other organisations who manage/operate parks and/or recreational open spaces to increase the quality and accessibility of provision in areas that currently have insufficient provision when measured against the agreed standards.
- Review the street cleansing, ground maintenance and repairs & renewal arrangements for play provision with in areas where there are perceived quality issues and develop improvement plans to address these issues.
- Work with other organisations and children & young people to ensure that they feel safe when accessing these services and where required provide additional support in such areas to off set access, innovation & risk implications.
- Review & Update the Bromsgrove Play Action Plan to reflect the above reviews.

With in the report specific areas were identified as requiring new or reprofiled provision. Please see officers initial comments in relation to the matter based on recent investment that has been provided via BDC, BIG Lottery and DCSF:

- Bromsgrove West, (Hagley & Clent) – These areas will be reviewed with in the district wide review and built into future planning considerations.
- Bromsgrove North, (Beacon & Hillside) - These areas will be reviewed with in the district wide review and built into future planning considerations. Officers are however concerned that comments relating to the Beacon ward may be misleading due to its close proximity to St Chad's Park (Waseley) and would consider any future development (in this area) is best made with in existing local provision.
- Bromsgrove North East, (Wythall South & Hollywood & Majors Green) – Due to the recent investment & improvements that has been undertaken in the Drakes Cross and Walkers Heath ward and Hollywood & Majors Green ward (Bromsgrove North East), this area will require closer scrutiny when reviewed to ensure the effective use of resources. However officer do accept that there is a lack of teenage provision in these areas.

- Bromsgrove Central, (Marlbrook & St Johns) – These areas will be reviewed with in the district wide review and built into future planning considerations. The St Johns requirements will also need to be considered by the Town Centre redevelopment group with a specific focus given to the proposed enhancement to the recreation ground.
- Bromsgrove East, (Tardebigge & Alvechurch) - These areas will be reviewed with in the district wide review and built into future planning considerations. However since the report was commissioned the Council has attracted external funding for a redeveloped junior play area in Alvechurch. This will need to be factored into the review, as will the recent purchase of the former MHP land by developers within Tardebigge.

### 3.9 **Outdoor sports facilities**

Apart from Bromsgrove East, existing provision is insufficient to meet future needs which will result in 19.59 hectares of shortfall by 2026. Applying the accessibility standard, all residents are found to have access to at least one outdoor sports facilities. Cleanliness and maintenance are considered the most important determinant of quality. The householder survey shows that 40% of respondents considered the quality of sports facilities as average and 30% considered that as poor.

Due to the quantitative and qualitative deficiencies, the protection and quality improvement of all outdoor sports facilities are recommended. Improving the accessibility to school-based STP facilities is also considered necessary to help meeting the local needs. It is also recommended that all sites should meet the National Governing Body criteria.

#### **Recommended Actions:**

- This area of work is considered within a future report relating Sport Hub provision. However the key message of the assessment were:
  - consideration needs to be given to protecting existing provision either with in BDC's control or that of other providers,
  - enhancing our own provision to address qualitative implications of current provision & facilities, with a specific reference to pitch drainage.
  - A lack of changing provision on some sites.
  - Increasing/decreasing provision (pitch layouts) to meet the local needs identified such as more junior pitches.
  - Increased access to school based provision/pitches.
- Specific areas that were identified as having an under provision were Bromsgrove North East and Bromsgrove West. Although Bromsgrove West should benefit from the playing pitch works that are currently being undertaken close to the Hagley area with in Dudley MBC.

### 3.10 Allotments

There is currently a shortfall of 1.41 hectares and the deficiencies will increase to 3.35 hectares by 2026. Only Bromsgrove Central and West have sufficient provision to meet the current and future needs. Walking to allotments is preferred and applying the standard shows that no residents in Bromsgrove North East have access to an allotment. For Bromsgrove East, North and West, the majority of residents are outside the recommended accessibility catchment. Site visits suggest the quality of allotment is good overall. Security and safety is considered as the most important quality determinant.

Whilst protection of allotments is recommended, provision in areas of deficiencies is recommended. For areas currently without allotments, provision is recommended if evaluation of demand shows such needs.

#### ***Recommended Actions:***

- Implement an expansion plan for existing allotment sites to reinstate all available plots, for example expansion to Watt Close and Round Hill allotments sites.
- Where applicable utilise existing BDC land and work in partnership with other organisations to develop provision in areas where access is limited or not available. Specific areas mentioned in the report were Hagley, Rubery, Wythall & East Bromsgrove.
- Review the current booking arrangements and restrict residents to a maximum of 1 sixteenth of an acre plots per household for new tenants. For existing tenants give notice that after Oct 2010 the Council will no longer continue with multiple plot allocations over one eighth of an acre.
- Members to agree a policy that Bromsgrove allotment plots are to be leased to Bromsgrove residents only as from Oct 2010.
- Develop a process for the creation of allotment societies to over see the quality of on site provision and agree a model for future service delivery in such circumstances.
- Create a set of guidance notes with CDRP partners for allotment holders to identify best practice with regard to managing on site security and safety concerns. As part of this process undertake a review of all sites with the Police Crime Risk Manager to identify any issues for consideration by the Council or tenants.
- Create an inspection & planned preventive maintenance programme to address quality issues identified and ensure a suitable budget is available through the re profiling of existing budgets or the business planning cycle.

### 3.11 Cemeteries and Churchyard

PPG17 Annex states “As churchyards can only exist where there is a church, the only form of provision standard which will be required is a qualitative one”, whereas for cemeteries “every individual cemetery has a

finite capacity and therefore there is a steady need for more of them". The council's cemeteries and churchyards officer indicates that there is sufficient burial capacity for the foreseeable future#. There is no definitive national or local accessibility standards available and hence no realistic requirement to set catchments. Because very few people identified cemeteries and churchyards as their favourite open space, there was too few response to set a sound quality standard. But among the responses received, cleanliness, maintenance and perceived safety were considered most important.

The lack of standards means it is inappropriate to state areas of deficiency. Apart from protecting the current cemeteries and churchyard, the Council should ensure there is continued and sustainable land provision for cemeteries. In areas of limited open space provision, enhancement to accessibility and quality of cemeteries and churchyards should be prioritised.

# - Please note that this comment relates to the space available at the North Bromsgrove Cemetery, however this space is current unusable and no development plan is in place to over see the creation of additional capacity.

***Recommended Actions:***

- Produce a design specification for the for the expansion of the North Bromsgrove Cemetery, secure a budget bids for the works required and undertake a procurement exercise in order to ensure that the above mentioned capacity is available by April 2011.
- Review the ongoing grounds maintenance and repairs & renewal arrangements for cemeteries to ensure that they are perceived as being high quality by residents.
- Under take a plotting exercise to establish current capacity with in church yards and to identify the future requirements that will be placed upon the Council with regard to adoption of closed church yards.

### *3.12 Civic space*

PPG17 suggests that it is not realistic to set a quantity and accessibility standards for civic spaces due to their specialist nature. Residents highlighted that cleanliness, maintenance and perceived safety are the most important quality determinants. Infrastructure (such as bins and seats) should also be provided.

It is recommended that new development should take into account the demand for new civic spaces from local residents. Creating green linkages to neighbourhoods will improve accessibility.

Recommended Action:

- Review the ongoing, street cleansing, grounds maintenance and repairs & renewal arrangements for Civic Spaces to ensure that they are perceived as being high quality by residents.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications contained within this report as the resource implications required relate to officer time and/or the reallocation/re profiling of existing budgets.
- 4.2 In cases where service specific reports require additional financial support, subsequent reports will be provided to members (as highlighted in section 3.5) or budget bids will be produced in line with the business planning process/MTFP requirements.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications contained within this report, any future legal implications arising within the reviews recommended will be addressed on a case by case basis.

#### **6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 The purpose of this report is to identify the steps required to address issues raised by the PPG17 assessment. Although in principle a planning requirement, due to the nature of the assessment and the high levels of consultation & inspection that are used to produce the final document, the report does allow front line services to review the qualitative & accessibility standards of current service delivery against a robust framework.
- 6.2 As such the recommendations are designed to enhance the level of service provision and make services increasingly more accessible to local residents.
- 6.3 The actions and reviews that have been identified will contribute to:
  - The Council's vision by increasing residents satisfaction (become proud) with where they live and by providing service that are on the road to excellence.
  - The values of the Council by increasing partnership working where required to improve residents quality of life, allow greater equality of access to services and respond to the Customer first agenda by using resident feedback to shape service improvements.
  - The improvements made will also directly contribute to C03 and the specific priority of sense of community as shown in section 15.3 to 15.8 (p293) of the PPG17 assessment.
- 6.4 The PPG17 Assessment report in section 15.12 to 15.15 also highlights the contributions Green Spaces, Sport & Recreational facilities make to the

regional & local documents and the Worcestershire LAA & its specific objectives.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

- Inability to influence the identified requirements due to unavailable spaces, budget constraints, capacity implications and ineffective partnerships in areas where BDC does not have sufficient land available.
- Poor publicity or reputational damage with in areas where in sufficient supply is identified.
- Reputation impact in cases where land is reallocated for different use or operational policies are revised and impact on current users.

7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Inability to influence the identified requirements:
  - *Additional requirements for open space built into future development planning documents*
  - *Maximisation of section 106 agreements and a prioritised approach to future budget submissions based on local need.*
  - *Medium term response plans produced to balance the delivery of existing services with the need to enhance service on a prioritisation basis.*
- Poor Publicity or reputational damage (location based):
  - *Communications plan developed to respond to local concerns and agreed responses based on reviews undertaken prepared.*
  - *Staff briefings to be held where required to ensure effective communications with residents.*
- Reputational impact on residents/users.
  - *All decisions to be publicised in advance and consultation undertaken where required. Where required alternative provision provider or alternative services recommended.*
  - *Ward Members and staff briefed in situations where local provision or the delivery of services will impact on specific groups or individuals and agreed response prepared.*
  - *Communications plan prepared on specific issues as and when required to control the flow of information and ensure suitable notification is given.*

7.3 Currently the risk identified in the bullet point in 7.1 are not addressed by any risk register and will be added to the SS&C risk register for 2009.

**8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Please see section 6 & 7 of this report as they identify all issues and actions required relating to customers.

**9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no specific Equality & Diversity implications contained with in this report, any future implications with in the reviews recommend will be considered, impact assessed & addressed on a case by case basis.

**10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no specific VFM implications contained with in this report, however the recommended action will lead to a more coordinated approach to services delivery/provision, a rationalisation a the built play environment, enhanced partnership working, higher customer satisfaction with the services provided (quality of life) and a more effective use of resources in future years.

**11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues - None
Personnel Implications - None
Governance/Performance Management - None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – None
Policy – Yes, this relates to the suggest operational policy change highlighted around fixed play, allotments, partnership working & AMG's.
Environmental – None but bio diversity implications will be considered in relation to future changes of use and open space enhancement.

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	YES
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Chief Executive	YES
Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects	NO
Executive Director - Services	YES
Assistant Chief Executive	NO
Head of Service	YES
Head of Financial Services	YES
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	NO
Head of Organisational Development & HR	NO
Corporate Procurement Team	NO

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

'All Wards

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: PPG17 Assessment of Bromsgrove District Council

Appendix 2: Bromsgrove Ward Map and Area guide.

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Local Needs Survey (A copy has been placed in members room or available electronically from the strategic planning team).

**CONTACT OFFICER**

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**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL****Local Development Framework Working Party****16<sup>th</sup> March 2009****PPG 17 Open Space Sport and Recreation Study**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jill Dyer
Responsible Head of Service	Dave Hammond
Non Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report summarises the findings of the Open Space, Recreation and Sports Needs Study carried out to inform both the LDF and in particular the Core Strategy and also help the Street Scene and Community services formulate long term strategies for open space, sport and recreation needs across the district.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That Members note the conclusions of the study, the implications for Bromsgrove and its influence on the Draft Core Strategy.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The planning system stresses that a strong evidence base is needed to support the production of development plan documents, such as the Core Strategy. The Council has therefore commissioned a study on open space sport and recreation which has informed the draft core strategy specifically Core Policy 11: Open Space and Recreation. The study has been carried out by PMP Consultants on behalf of both the Planning and Environment Services and the Street Scene and Community Services.
- 3.2 The Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17) states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, like supporting an urban renaissance, rural renewal, promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well being and promoting more sustainable development. To achieve this, local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreation facilities and by referring to this information, to set locally derived standards for the area. This study is therefore undertaken in accordance with PPG17 and the guiding principles in its companion guide: Assessing needs and

opportunities. The assessment is an essential part of the evidence base which underpins the core strategy, some of the first core strategies to be developed were found to be unsound as they didn't have a fully compliant PPG17 assessment to justify policies on open space.

- 3.3 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands (Jan 08) highlights that the region looks forward to improving people's quality of life, having successful rural renaissance, being recognised for its high quality natural and built environment, having an efficient network of integrated transport facilities and services in the most sustainable way. In accordance with PPG17, Policy QE4 Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces of the RSS also states that local authorities should undertake assessments of local need and audits of provision to ensure there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality urban greenspace in the district. The open space study can contribute to meet these aspirations and requirements. Also, the findings could be used to influence the regional recreation provision, which will be looked at in the RSS Phase 3 revision.
- 3.4 The study covers 10 types of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Bromsgrove. They are:
- 1) *Parks and gardens* – areas that provide informal recreation and community events such as Sander's Park
  - 2) *Natural and semi-natural green spaces* – areas for wildlife conservation, biodiversity environmental education and awareness, such as Sycamore Drive Local Nature Area
  - 3) *Amenity green space* - green spaces providing informal activities close to home or work, children's play and enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas. Example includes the amenity green space on Barnsley Hall Road.
  - 4) *Provision for children* - areas for play and social interaction involving children under 12, such as Barnt Green Parish Council Park play area.
  - 5) *Provision for young people* – areas for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 or above, such as Stoke Prior Parish Playing Field Basketball Court
  - 6) *Outdoor sports facilities* – formal sports facilities like tennis courts and playing fields (including school playing fields). Example includes Wythall Park Bowling Green.
  - 7) *Allotments* – such as Hewell Road allotments
  - 8) *Cemeteries & churchyards* - place for burial and quiet contemplation, such as St. Laurence Parish Church
  - 9) *Green corridors* – areas for walking, cycling, horse-riding, leisure, travel or wildlife migration such as towpaths along canals, rights of way
  - 10) *Civic spaces* – places for community events and setting for civic buildings, these are hard surfaced areas usually located within town centre. Example includes Wythall War Memorial.

3.5 This study follows the PPG17 Companion Guide five-step process for local assessment and step 1 and 2 were undertaken simultaneously.

3.6 Step 1: Identifying needs

A series of local consultations were carried out across Bromsgrove. These include the *Household Survey* by which 5000 questionnaires to a geographically representative sample were sent to households across the District. The questionnaire provides an opportunity for residents to comment on the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing open space provision as well as identifying their aspirations for future provision. 481 postal surveys were returned, providing a statistically sound sample. Other consultations include *neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions* which was held in five locations, *internet survey for children and young people* where 314 responses were received, *external agencies questionnaire*, *internal council officers consultation* with 16 responses received, *parish council and elected members questionnaires*, *sports clubs survey* and *user group workshops* such as allotment users and older residents. The results of the survey have been used to inform the various elements of the study more feedback from the surveys can be seen in appendix G of the study (due to the lengthy nature of the PPG17 assessment a copy has been placed in the members room and not reproduced full on this summary report)

3.7 Step 2: Auditing local provision

PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space, sport and recreation facilities, irrespective of ownership and the extent of public access as all forms of provision can contribute to meeting local needs. 305 sites were identified during the audit and they were all classified by their primary purpose into one of the ten typologies listed above. Sites were assessed against accessibility, quality and wider benefits.

3.8 Step 3 and 4: Setting and apply provision standards

PPG17 recommends that local authorities use information gained from the assessment of needs and opportunities (stage 1) to set locally derived standards.

3.9 *Quantity Standard:* the quantity standard is used to define the amount of each of the various open space types the district should be providing in different locations. At first, the current standard was measured against the existing population. Then by referring to the projected population growth up to 2026 and the level of satisfaction displayed in the household survey and other consultations listed in step 1, the recommended quantity standard is set. For example, if the satisfaction level is above 50%, the recommended standard will remain the same as the current standard. However, if the satisfaction level falls in between 40% to 49%, a 2% increase in the current standard will be suggested for the standard. Similarly, a 5% and 10% increase in the recommended standard will apply if the satisfaction level falls between 30% to 39% and 20% to 29% respectively. The percentage

increases have been derived from best practice of the consultants who have completed more than 60 similar studies for other organisations.

- 3.10 *Accessibility standard*: the aim of the accessibility standards is to identify how accessible sites are and how far people willing to travel to access open space. From the findings of the household survey and other consultations listed in step 1, the most popular expected travel mode and maximum travel time are recommended as the accessibility standard. This standard is then applied across the district to identify areas where the accessibility to open space needs to be improved.
- 3.11 *Quality standards*: in order to assess the quality, all sites were visited and assessed by the consultant. Each site was scored against four areas: cleanliness and maintenance, security and safety, vegetation, and ancillary accommodation. A weighting system is then applied to these scores to reflect the most important element of each site. Once this analysis has been done it is possible to see where quality can be improved.
- 3.12 Step 5: Drafting policies – recommendations and strategic priorities  
The application of local standards enables the identification of deficiencies in terms of accessibility, quality and quantity and also enables analysis of the spatial distribution of unmet need.
- 3.13 As open space, sport and recreation facilities make a major contribution to the quality of life, the main role of the planning system is therefore to ensure that these facilities are sufficient, in the right place, of high quality and well maintained. The following summarises the main findings and their implications to the Local Development Frameworks

#### Priorities for the Local Development Frameworks

- 3.14 *Parks and Gardens*  
Applying the quantity standard shows that there is a current shortfall of 0.21 hectares which will increase to 2.86 hectares in 2026. As, the overall shortfall is relatively small combined with the difficulties of providing formal parks and gardens it is suggested that new provision is unlikely to be required. Applying the walk time standard shows that the majority of residents in Bromsgrove East, North East, North and West are outside the catchment area, whereas the application of drive time standard shows that all residents can reach a park. The quality standard shows that cleanliness and maintenance are most important.
- 3.15 To meet the future shortfall, it is important to protect parks from development and consider the designation of pocket parks within settlements outside the catchment of a park such as Hagley. To improve the accessibility, a network of 'green linkages' as sustainable transport links is recommended.

- 3.16 *Natural and Semi Natural Open Space (NSN)*

Quantitatively, the current provision is insufficient to meet the needs of residents and the shortfall by 2026 is expected to reach 5.38 hectares. However, by its very nature, natural open space is difficult to create. For accessibility, all areas, particularly Bromsgrove East and North East have accessibility deficiencies. The quality of this typology is regarded as average and vegetation is regarded as the most important factor. For example, Newton Road NSN and Falcony Centre NSN are identified in need for improvement. It is also mentioned that consideration should be given to biodiversity conservation and promotion should opportunities arise.

- 3.17 Given the already existed provision shortfall, it is important to protect sites from development. Qualitatively, apart from enhancing the recreation values of the sites, opportunities for wildlife and habitats enhancement should be sought. Lastly, to meet demand effectively, maximising access to these sites should be a priority. Provision in Bromsgrove North East and in Stoke Prior is recommended.

*Amenity green space (AGS)*

- 3.18 Apart from Bromsgrove East and North East, the provision of other areas is insufficient to meet current and future demand. For example, settlements like Hagley which fall outside the catchments of a park and amenity space will need increased provision if possible. Accessibility is important in maximising usage. 61% of residents would expect to walk to amenity green spaces. This reflects that people considered amenity green space as local resources. The quality of sites is average and assessments reveal that a number of sites are in need of significant improvement such as Long Meadows Road AGS and Sharps Close AGS. Local consultation shows that only high quality and functional sites are valued.

- 3.19 To address quantity deficiencies, development of the amenity spaces into a network of green corridors and increased provision in smaller villages are recommended. It is also reminded that settlements with over 500 residents would require local access to amenity green space.

*Provision for children and young people*

- 3.20 Although current provision for children is sufficient and overlapping catchments can be found, application of the quantity standard indicates that there will be a shortfall of 0.26 hectares by 2026. In terms of quality, cleanliness and maintenance is considered as the most important factor. Almost half of the respondents of the household survey considered the quality of facilities to be good.

- 3.21 Apart from Bromsgrove Central, provision for young people is insufficient to meet current and future needs. Similar to provision for children, priority of provision should be given to areas without open space that can play the offsetting role, such as Hagley and Clent parishes. For quality, safety and security is considered very important. Many existing sites were criticised for their range of facilities and lack of innovative and exciting play equipment.

3.22 To help reduce deficiencies, re-structuring sites serving overlapping catchments and re-profiling sites serving indistinct catchments are recommended. For areas identified as devoid in provision, provision for new facilities should be sought.

#### *Outdoor sports facilities*

3.23 Apart from Bromsgrove East, existing provision is insufficient to meet future needs which will result in 19.59 hectares of shortfall by 2026. Applying the accessibility standard, all residents are found to have access to at least one outdoor sports facilities. Cleanliness and maintenance are considered the most important determinant of quality. The householder survey shows that 40% of respondents considered the quality of sports facilities as average and 30% considered that as poor.

3.24 Due to the quantitative and qualitative deficiencies, the protection and quality improvement of all outdoor sports facilities are recommended. Improving the accessibility to school-based STP facilities is also considered necessary to help meeting the local needs. It is also recommended that all sites should meet the National Governing Body criteria.

#### *Allotments*

3.25 There is currently a shortfall of 1.41 hectares and the deficiencies will increase to 3.35 hectares by 2026. Only Bromsgrove Central and West have sufficient provision to meet the current and future needs. Walking to allotments is preferred and applying the standard shows that no residents in Bromsgrove North East have access to an allotment. For Bromsgrove East, North and West, the majority of residents are outside the recommended accessibility catchment. Site visits suggest the quality of allotment is good overall. Security and safety is considered as the most important quality determinant.

3.26 Whilst protection of allotments is recommended, provision in areas of deficiencies is recommended. For areas currently without allotments, provision is recommended if evaluation of demand shows such needs.

#### *Cemeteries and churchyard*

3.27 PPG17 Annex states "As churchyards can only exist where there is a church, the only form of provision standard which will be required is a qualitative one", whereas for cemeteries "every individual cemetery has a finite capacity and therefore there is a steady need for more of them". The council's cemeteries and churchyards officer indicates that there is sufficient burial capacity for the foreseeable future. There is no definitive national or local accessibility standards available and hence no realistic requirement to set catchments. Because very few people identified cemeteries and churchyards as their favourite open space, there was too few response to set a sound quality standard. But among the responses received, cleanliness, maintenance and perceived safety were considered most important.



3.28 The lack of standards means it is inappropriate to state areas of deficiency. Apart from protecting the current cemeteries and churchyard, the Council should ensure there is continued and sustainable land provision for cemeteries. In areas of limited open space provision, enhancement to accessibility and quality of cemeteries and churchyards should be prioritised.

*Civic space*

3.29 PPG17 suggests that it is not realistic to set a quantity and accessibility standards for civic spaces due to their specialist nature. Residents highlighted that cleanliness, maintenance and perceived safety are the most important quality determinants. Infrastructure (such as bins and seats) should also be provided.

3.30 It is recommended that new development should take into account the demand for new civic spaces from local residents. Creating green linkages to neighbourhoods will improve accessibility.

*Green corridors*

3.31 The Annex A of PPG17 states that “the need for Green Corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport... This means that there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard”. Vegetation is considered as the most important contributing factor to quality. There is no accessibility standard available.

3.32 The lack of standards means it is inappropriate to identify areas of deficiency. But the aim of provision should be to provide opportunities for informal recreation, alternate means of transport and resources for wildlife. Protection and enhancement of the existing network (including the Public Rights of Way network) through the creation of additional linkages can help alleviating other open space deficiencies.

3.33 The recommended quantity, quality and accessibility standards in the study are summarised as follow:

Typology	Quantity standard (per 1000 population)		Quality standard (most important feature)	Accessibility standard
	Current	Proposed		
Parks and gardens	0.26ha	0.26ha	Cleanliness and maintenance	Urban: 15 min walk Rural: 15 min drive
Natural and semi-natural green spaces	0.43ha	0.44ha	Vegetation	15 min walk
Amenity green space	0.40ha	0.42ha	Cleanliness and maintenance	10 min walk
Provision for children	0.027ha	0.027ha	Cleanliness and maintenance	10 min walk
Provision for young people	0.026ha	0.03ha	Security and safety	15 min walk

Typology	Quantity standard (per 1000 population)		Quality standard (most important feature)	Accessibility standard
	Current	Proposed		
Outdoor sports facilities	1.64ha	1.67ha (0.81ha for community pitches)	Cleanliness and maintenance	<i>Grass pitches</i> - 10 min walk <i>Tennis/Bowling</i> - 15 min drive/ public transport <i>Synthetic pitches/Golf</i> - 20 min drive/ public transport
Allotments	0.17ha	0.19ha	Security and safety	15 min walk
Cemeteries and churchyards	Sufficient burial capacity for foreseeable future		Insufficient response for standard setting	No realistic requirement as locations not dependant on population's location
Civic spaces	Not realistic to set due to its specialist nature		Cleanliness and maintenance	No realistic requirement as provision will not be appropriate in every environment
Green corridors	No sensible way to set as its provision arises from the need to promote sustainable form of transport		Vegetation	No requirement.

### Conclusion

3.34 To sum up, the open space, sport and recreation facilities should be protected from development and only facilities serving overlapped catchments could be developed. But this must result in improvement in accessibility to and quality of the nearby site. An improvement in the green corridors network will improve the health of residents, address nearby deficiencies and promote sustainable transport. Also, apart from the recreational value, the biodiversity value of sites should be enhanced. To do so, planning contributions from developers must be maximised.

3.35 It is important to note that if the housing numbers proposed in RSS change (i.e. more than 2100 houses from 2006 to 2026), then the quantity standard recommended in the study may need revising.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The study was commissioned by Planning and Environment Services and Street Scene and Community services, from within existing budgets

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Under PPS12, the examination of a development plan document will involve the legal compliance check and an assessment against three tests of soundness: 1) justified; 2) effective; 3) consistent with national policy. This PPG17 study is done in accordance with the principles stated in PPG17

Companion Guide as well as policy QE4 of RSS. This study therefore will assist the Core Strategy in passing the soundness test in examination.

## 6. **COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

<b>Council Objective (CO)</b>	Regeneration	<b>Council Priority (CP)</b>	1. Town centre 2. Housing
<b>Impacts</b>			
Sufficient open space provision will make a place more attractive and hence assist in regeneration.			

<b>Council Objective (CO)</b>	Improvement	<b>Council Priority (CP)</b>	
<b>Impacts</b>			
No impact			

<b>Council Objective (CO)</b>	Sense of Community and Well Being	<b>Council Priority (CP)</b>	4. Sense of community
<b>Impacts</b>			
Local standards on the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities will meet the needs and aspirations of local residents and will therefore enhance the sense of community and well being.			

<b>Council Objective (CO)</b>	Environment	<b>Council Priority (CP)</b>	5. Clean streets and climate change
<b>Impacts</b>			
Facilities such as waste bins and recycling bins in open space, sport and recreation facilities will encourage people to recycle and put rubbish in waste bins. This will contribute to clean streets and recycling. Improving the green linkages will encourage using sustainable transport and reduce emissions that contribute to climate change.			

## 7. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

The soundness of the Core Strategy is challenged in the future

7.2 The risks will be managed as follows:

Risk Register: Planning and Environment

Key Objective Ref No: 6

Key Objective: Effective, efficient, and legally compliant Strategic planning Service

## **8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Incorporating the local standards recommended in the study, which was the result of extensive consultation with customers, will ensure customers' needs and aspirations in the district are met.

## **9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 As stated in paragraph 3.6, a series of consultations were carried out at the needs identification stage. The household survey, neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions and internet surveys for children and young people, for example, would have included residents from all backgrounds. Also, this study will form part of the evidence base to inform the Core Strategy and consultation will be carried out with all sections of the community as the plan progresses.

## **10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 This study was jointly commissioned by Planning and Environment Services and Street scene and Community, thereby using resources efficiently by spreading the costs between Services and carrying out a study of relevance to both Services.

## **11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues	None
Personnel Implications	None
Governance/Performance Management	None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998	None
Policy	The study will support the core strategy. The core strategy forms an essential part of the LDF and the policies contained within the core strategy will shape future development.
Environmental	The study will support the core strategy. Core strategy will contain policies in relation to the

	environment.
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## 12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director - Partnerships & Projects	No
Assistant Chief Executive	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

## 13. WARDS AFFECTED

All wards.

## 14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Local Needs Survey ( A copy has been placed in members room or available electronically from the strategic planning team)

## CONTACT OFFICER

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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### **OVERVIEW BOARD**

1st June 2010

#### **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY TASK GROUP**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillors: R. D. Smith and G. N. Denaro
Relevant Head of Service	Mrs. C. Felton – Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Task Group Chairman	Councillor L. Turner
Non-Key Decision	

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 To consider the findings and recommendations contained within the attached report relating to the overview investigation undertaken by the Community Involvement in Local Democracy Task Group.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are requested to:
- (a) consider and approve the attached report and the recommendations contained within it; and
  - (b) submit the attached report to the Cabinet for approval of the report recommendations.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At the Meeting of the Overview Board on 3rd November 2009, it was decided a Task Group would be established to consider ways to improve community involvement in the democratic process and preparations for Democracy Year 2010-2011 and that Councillor L. Turner would be appointed as Chairman.
- 3.2 The full terms of reference were approved by the Overview Board at its meeting held on 2nd February 2010 when membership of the Task Group was also agreed. The full terms of reference are attached at **Appendix A**.
- 3.3 The 'draft' recommendations were presented to the Corporate Management Team meeting on 20th April 2010 requesting feedback on the feasibility and financial implications of the 'draft' recommendations to the Scrutiny Officer. The 'draft' recommendations were also presented to the Equality and Diversity Forum meeting on 15th April 2010 for comment.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

4.1 Overview and scrutiny is a key part of the Council's democratic decision making process and enabled non-executive Members of the Council to put forward recommendations for policy development, policy review and service improvement.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Financial and resource implications of the recommendations are detailed in the Executive Summary of the report (pages 6 – 13).

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no legal implications relating to this report.

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Overview and Scrutiny recommendations that are agreed by the Cabinet and/or full Council will become Cabinet Decisions and Council policy.

**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

8.1 This report links to the Council's Objectives of Improvement and One Community.

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

9.1 The risk of not implementing the recommendations contained within the attached overview report is that this Council does not continue to improve the services for residents and in particular, customer service standards.

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 If the recommendations were approved and implemented, residents living in Bromsgrove District would benefit from improved customer service, which would have an emphasis on customer satisfaction.

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no implications directly relating to this report for the Council's Equalities and Diversity Policies.



**OVERVIEW BOARD**

1st June 2010

**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

12.1 There are no value for money implications directly relating to this report.

**13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

13.1 None

**14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 None for the purpose of this report.

**15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 None for the purpose of this report.

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

16.1 None for the purpose of this report.

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

17.1 None for the purpose of this report.

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

18.1 None for the purpose of this report.

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

19.1 Not relevant to this report.

**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	No
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural,	No

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW BOARD**

**1st June 2010**

Environmental and Community Services	
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	No
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards

**22. APPENDICES**

Appendix A    Terms of Reference for the Task Group  
Appendix B    Community Involvement in Local Democracy Task Group Report

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EXERCISE SCOPING CHECKLIST**

This form is to assist Members to scope the overview and scrutiny exercise in a focused way and to identify the key issues it wishes to investigate.

▪ Topic: **Community Involvement in the Democratic Process**

▪ Specific subject areas to be investigated:

To consider ways to improve community involvement in the democratic process and preparations for Democracy Year 2010 – 2011.

▪ Possible key outcomes:

(i.e. please state what Members hope to achieve through this investigation):

To make recommendations to improve community involvement in the democratic process in Bromsgrove District and recommendations for the organisation of Democracy Year 2010 – 2011.

▪ Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO\***

▪ Which officers should be invited to give evidence?

(Please state name of officer and/or job title)

Tony Beirne - Executive Director Services  
Hugh Bennett - Assistant Chief Executive  
Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services  
Sue Moulde – Elections Manager

▪ Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO\***

If so, who and from which organisations?

- What key documents/data/reports will be required?

Report – Preparations for Democracy Year (Cabinet 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2009, LG 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 2010).

- Is it anticipated that any site visits will be required? **YES/NO \***  
If so, where should members visit?

- Should a period of public consultation form part of the exercise? **YES/NO\***  
If so, on what should the public be consulted?

(Please Note: A separate press release requesting general comments/suggestions from the public will be issued in the normal way at the beginning of the investigation.)

- Have other authorities carried out similar overview and scrutiny exercises? **YES/NO\***  
If so, which authorities?

- Will the investigation cross the District boundary? **YES/NO\***  
If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate? **YES/NO\***  
If yes, please state which authorities:

Possibly Redditch Borough Council

- Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group/Board whilst the Overview and Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? **YES/NO \***  
If so, who and from which organisations?

- What do you anticipate the timetable will be for the Overview and Scrutiny exercise?



# Overview Board **Community Involvement in Local Democracy** DRAFT REPORT 0.5

**APRIL 2010**  
**OVERVIEW BOARD**  
Supporting Officer: Michael Carr



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)



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## **FOREWORD**

Local councils are at the forefront of the drive to reconnect people with democratic decision-making. This democratic renewal is about restoring trust and confidence in government and the democratic process and its starting point is the citizen. The district council elections will take place on 5th May 2011 and we need to engage local people in the democratic life of the community, listening to people and asking them to get involved, including taking on their responsibility as citizens to turn out and vote.

It is at the local level that people can most easily get involved and where they can have a personal stake in civic life. It is at the local level where democracy has the potential to be the most tangible and where local citizens can make a difference to the community in which they live. The relationship between local citizens and local governance is a key part of the well being of local communities, where local people can get involved and take personal responsibility for making communities work.

From the city states of ancient Greece to 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain democracy is a powerful concept and has the potential to unlock the forces of combined endeavour. Democracy is about rights but it is also about responsibilities and citizens playing an active role in their community.

“Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the state as well: even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well informed on general politics – this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say he has no business here at all. We Athenians, in our own persons, take our decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussions: for we do not think there is an incompatibility between words and deeds”.

*Pericles' Funeral Oration*<sup>1</sup>.

Democracy is not passive but requires active engagement by citizens and this was as true in the polis of ancient Greece as it is now and I believe that we can strive to emulate those virtues in the conduct of the civic life here in the district of Bromsgrove today.

**Councillor Les Turner**  
***Chairman of the Community Involvement in Local Democracy Task Group***

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Bromsgrove District Council's Overview Board set up a Task Group to investigate ways to promote public engagement in the democratic process. It has considered the legal and constitutional framework through which people can participate in democracy through elections and the ways in which people can participate as citizens both by voting in elections and by getting involved in the local decision making process.

It has considered the new duty to promote democracy and the ways in which the council might enhance the promotion of the democratic process. This includes proposals to run events stalls to promote democracy in public forums in town centres, in supermarkets and at community events and improving the publication of statutory public meetings.

### **Recommendation One**

#### ***An Invitation to Attend***

That the publication of meeting times and venues of the council, the cabinet, overview and scrutiny and other statutory public meetings be enhanced, with an invitation for the public to attend, including a regular slot publicising meetings in the Together Bromsgrove magazine.

### **Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

### **Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

It has considered the statutory requirements for Councillor Calls for Action and put forward proposals for how this might be able to work as something that might actually be a useful tool for elected councillors in raising issues on behalf of their constituents.

### **Recommendation Two**

#### ***Councillor Calls for Action***

That the Council adopt a procedure for dealing with Councillor Calls for Action to work in concert with the procedures for Councillor Casework Enquiries and providing recourse to Overview and Scrutiny.

### **Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

### **Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

The Task Group considered the ways in which the council promotes democracy and recommended taking the message to vote and get involved out to people in the community.

<p><b><u>Recommendation Three</u></b> <b><i>Promoting Democracy</i></b> That events stalls be more widely used to promote democracy, to get registered to vote and get involved, including a stall to be set up in the Bromsgrove high street market, in supermarkets and community events.</p>
<p><b><u>Financial Implications</u></b>  No financial implications are envisaged.</p>
<p><b><u>Resource Implications</u></b>  There may be resource implications arising if staff are required to spend extra time manning events stalls, especially if at weekends.</p>

The Task Group has looked at the profile of local democracy on the council's website and considered how the content might be enhanced to make it more informative and engaging. Recommendations include a review of the Council's democracy web pages, the use of consultation portals to engage the public in decision making and the inclusion of a web page aimed specifically at young people.

<p><b><u>Recommendation Four</u></b> <b><i>Cyber Democracy</i></b> That the local democracy pages of the Council website be reviewed to improve the content and to add summary information on how local democracy works in Bromsgrove and how people can get involved, with a special webpage site for the Democracy Year Campaign.</p>
<p><b><u>Financial Implications</u></b>  No financial implications are envisaged.</p>
<p><b><u>Resource Implications</u></b>  No significant resource implications are envisaged.</p>

**Recommendation Five**

***Consultation Portals***

That the Council's website use consultation portals to gauge opinion on topics of local interest and local decisions and a means to engage and consult the public in the local democratic decision making process.

**Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

**Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

**Recommendation Six**

***Young Citizens Webpage***

That a Young Citizen page be included on the Council internet site specifically aimed at young people, with fun and exciting content, explaining the democratic process and how to get involved.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

Officer time will be required to draft the content.

The Task Group has considered how the council handles public petitions, based on both the experience of petitions presented to Bromsgrove in the last year and the new Government Guidance and statutory requirements now coming into force. In addition to the petitions scheme, the Task Group is recommending that the council publish guidance for the public so that people will know the process and what to expect when they present a petition to the Council.

**Recommendation Seven**

***Public Petitions***

That the Council adopt a petitions scheme, procedure and guidance to set out how petitions and e petitions will be dealt with and the arrangements for receiving petitions.

**Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

**Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

The Task Group has considered ways in which the council might be able to support local schools in delivering the objectives of the national curriculum for Citizenship.

**Recommendation Eight**

***Citizenship***

That the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services be asked to liaise with Bromsgrove secondary schools to co-ordinate with the Citizenship curriculum being followed in the respective schools to find ways in which the district Council can support the curriculum.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

There will be some resource implications required to liaise with Bromsgrove secondary schools and to support undertaken as agreed by the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services.

It considered ways in which the Council might be able to support the development of the school councils in Bromsgrove secondary schools and to improve students understanding of how democratic processes work and in particular, how local councils operate.

**Recommendation Nine**

***Schools Councils***

That the Council work in partnership with Bromsgrove secondary schools to facilitate the Schools Councils' constitutional arrangements and arrangements for making recommendations to the appropriate local decision making bodies.

**Financial Implications**

Optional extra additional funding required is estimated at £5,000: £2,000 working budget p.a. to support training (annual residential) and £2,000 p.a. for the events. This is *extra* – additional budget, not core or vital to the administration of Schools Council's themselves.

**Resource Implications**

A small amount of resources in officer time is anticipated, depending on the level of support officered.

These suggested resource allocations are *extra*, not core to the basic implementation of the recommendation or vital to the administration of Schools Council's themselves.

The Task Group heard about the U Decide participatory budgeting project which has successfully engaged with young people in making decisions about locally funded projects and is recommending running further events of this kind.

**Draft Recommendation Ten**

***U Decide***

That the Council investigate the possibility of running a further U Decide or similar event in 2011 to involve young people in making decisions on local projects.

**Financial Implications**

The U Decide scheme 2010 required £50,000 grants from Worcestershire County Council's FLOSS. A further event would require a similar successful bid.

**Resource Implications**

There would be significant resource implications required to support any future event, comparable to the resources dedicated to the 2010 events.

Task Group is commending a "Democracy Year Campaign" to spearhead the promotion of democracy and link together all the events and activities under a banner that the public can easily identify with and identify the council with. If successful, it is hoped that this will galvanise a positive interest from all sections of the local community and involve a range of community partners, including the college, secondary schools, local arts organisations and the parish councils.

**Recommendation Eleven**

***A Democracy Year Campaign***

That there be a Democracy Year Campaign to link together all the events for democracy year under the banner of promoting and involving people in local democracy.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

Officer time and commitment will be required to co-ordinate and participate in the Democracy Year Campaign.

To lead this campaign, the Task Group is recommending a Democracy Champion.

**Recommendation Twelve**

***A Democracy Champion***

That a Member of the Council be nominated Democracy Champion for one year to champion local democracy.

**Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

**Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

To visibly link together the Democracy Year Campaign events under a common banner the Task Group is recommending a Democracy Year emblem to be used in all campaign publicity.

**Recommendation Thirteen**

***Democracy Campaign Emblem***

That there be an emblem designed for the Democracy Year Campaign to be used as a part of a democracy year campaign and used on all communications for Democracy Year.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

Officer time will be required to design the emblem.

To co-ordinate the Democracy Year Campaign the Task Group is recommending a Democracy Year Campaign Steering Group. This should include the key council and community partners necessary to co-ordinate the events and make sure that all of the events fit together as a single campaign and are programmed appropriately throughout the year.



**Recommendation Fourteen**

***Democracy Year Campaign Steering Group***

That there be convened a Democracy Year Campaign steering group, to meet at least 4 times a year during 2010-2011, to co-ordinate the Democracy Year Campaign events and activities.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

Officer time will be required to convene and attend the steering group meetings.

The Task Group has proposed that the Democracy Year Campaign include a programmed series of events organised in co-operation with local community organisations and partners. It is envisaged that this will include incorporating the Democracy Year Campaign into events already within the Council and community events programmes, as well events to promote democracy and local democracy through the arts, films, street theatre, music etc.

**Recommendation Fifteen**

***Celebrating Democracy***

That Democracy Year include programmed events to concord with other relevant events in the Council events programme, including International Women's Day 2011, including a celebration of women's suffrage and the history of women's suffrage and Black History Month 2010 celebrating the history and achievements of the black civil rights movement in the USA, South Africa, the British Commonwealth and other parts of the world.

**Financial Implications**

On advice from Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, an extra £3000 will be required.

**Resource Implications**

Officer time may be required to co-ordinate and participate in the events.

The Task Group is recommending that the parishes are all formally invited to get involved in the Democracy Year Campaign and that local democratic arrangements are promoted at community events in the parishes not just in the town centres and it is hoped that the parish councils will play an enthusiastic and key role in the Democracy Year Campaign.

**Recommendation Sixteen**

***The Parish Perspective***

That the Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion and Engagement write to the Parish Councils to invite them to join in the Democracy Year Campaign in partnership with the district Council.

**Financial Implications**

No financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

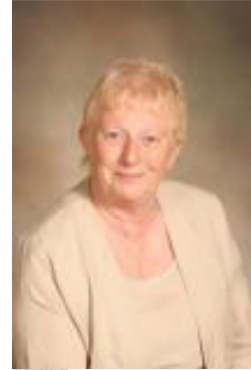
The council is being urged to take up the mantle of community leader to champion democracy and civic engagement and people and organisations throughout the community are asked to be active participants in this democratic and civic renewal.

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**MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP**



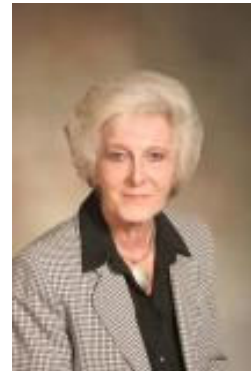
Cllr Les Turner (Chairman)



Cllr Mrs June Griffiths



Cllr Mrs Jean Luck



Cllr Helen Jones



Cllr David McGrath

Cllr Mrs Caroline Spencer

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TASK GROUP**

### **Aim**

To consider ways to improve community involvement in the democratic process and preparations for Democracy Year 2010 – 2011.

### **Objectives**

1. To review the information provided to the local community on how local governance works and what councils and councillors do,
2. To review the ways in which the Council and its community partners facilitate more active civic participation and community involvement in the democratic process,
3. To review the ways in which the Council promotes local democracy, the role of councillor, how to become a councillor and the activities of elected members to the general public,
4. To review the arrangements for Democracy Year 2010-2011.

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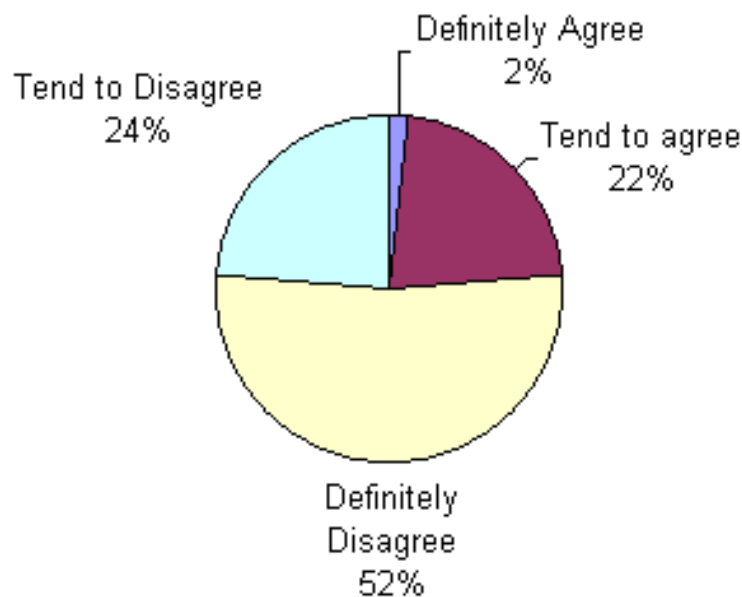
## INTRODUCTION

As from April 2009 councils have a 'duty to inform, consult and involve' citizens in decision making. This means providing greater opportunities for local people to get involved and influence the decisions that affect them and it is an opportunity for the council to reinvigorate local democracy and improve the ways in which we involve local citizens.

Most people in Bromsgrove do not feel that they can influence decisions locally and the trend in both national and local elections is for voter turnout to fall. We believe that the council needs to challenge this perception and reverse the apathy and disengagement with the democratic system and we have put forward some proposals for how we can start.

### Bromsgrove's Performance

The Place Survey\* asked the residents of Bromsgrove "Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?". 76% disagree that they can influence decisions and only 24% agreed that they can have influence<sup>2</sup>.



Compared to other local authority areas in England, Bromsgrove performs just below the average for the West Midlands (28% "agree") and is about average for its nearest statistical neighbours (other demographically similar local authorities).

Bromsgrove's performance against this national indicator has fallen since the 2006-7 survey, when 31% of residents agreed that they could influence local decisions.

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\* The Place Survey is the new biennial statutory survey that all lower and upper tier local authorities in England are required to carry out.

Despite this, 27% of local residents said that they want greater involvement in local decision making and 65% said that they want more involvement on certain issues.

Turnout in local elections is low. The last elections to Bromsgrove District Council were on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2007; the overall turnout was 37.36%. The overall turnout for the Bromsgrove District in the County Council elections on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009 was 37.82%<sup>3</sup>.

It is difficult to pinpoint who is most likely to vote and which groups are least engaged in the democratic process as there is a lack of data for local elections, since voting is strictly confidential.

We have looked what the Council is doing to engage local citizens in the democratic process and has put forward proposals to drive forward a campaign to enthuse and involve people. We particularly want the council to engage with young people and to make sure that the process is accessible and inclusive, but we have highlighted the council's role as community leader to reach out and engage the whole community in local democracy.

#### How We Involved the Public

Overview and scrutiny is itself part of the democratic process, so we wanted to make sure that the public were given an opportunity to contribute to our investigation. We publicised a questionnaire to allow citizens of Bromsgrove the chance to feed back their views. This was publicised in a press release published in the local newspapers and on the council's website. We sent out posters, flyers and questionnaires in public spaces including the customer service centre and Council House and have reviewed the responses.

A Stakeholder Forum was also held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2010 to allow key community partners and stakeholders to participate and this was attended by a range of different community organisations and local citizens.

We have received evidence from a wide range of different stakeholders, including elected councillors, council officers, parish councillors, and members of the public. We interviewed Cllr Geoff Denaro, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Resources and Cllr Roger Smith, Portfolio Holder for One Community (including Community Engagement) and ask for their views.

A full list of witnesses to the Task Group investigation is given at Appendix 1.

This report sets out 16 recommendations, as well as a series of ***suggestions highlighted in italics***, which it is hoped will be taken up by the people and organisations we have spoken to in the spirit of a positive campaign to promote civic pride and participation throughout the Bromsgrove district.

# 1 The Democratic Process

- 1.1. Democracy is a big concept and is open to many different interpretations; but we have focused on the democratic process as it relates to voting and participation and representation in the local council decisions making process. This includes electing Members of Parliament (MPs) and local councillors, representation through elected councillors and public involvement with the local democratic decision making process.

## Local Government Modernisation

- 1.2. The Local Government Act 2000 changed the way in which local councils in England and Wales are governed by introducing new constitutional models for political decision making, requiring local councils to have an executive to make the key decisions and Council meetings to approve the policy and budgetary framework. Bromsgrove District Council has the Leader and Cabinet model, which broadly mirrors the same arrangements as the UK Parliament and Cabinet. Council constitutions are also required to provide for overview and scrutiny committees to review policy and to hold the executive to account, which are broadly similar in function to House of Commons select committees and standing committees.

## Bromsgrove District Council

- 1.3. In Bromsgrove there are 39 councillors, between 1 and 3 elected to each of 23 constituencies throughout the district. The full Council meets to decide the policy and budgetary framework and make appointments to committees. It elects a Leader and Cabinet to make executive decisions and a variety of advisory, regulatory and scrutiny committees.
- 1.4. We believe that local democracy in Bromsgrove is underpinned by clear and effective processes and a high calibre cadre of professional officers consistently applying core values of objectivity, integrity and impartiality in supporting both elected Members of the Council and the general public in the democratic process.
- 1.5. We have reviewed some of the ways in which local democracy is supported at the democratic interface and interviewed democratic services officers involved in administering the democratic process. We have considered the experiences of engaging with local democratic processes both from the perspective of elected councillors and also from the perspective of members of the public.
- 1.6. We have considered the ways in which the public can access information about the local democratic process; who their elected representatives are, where and when meetings are held, what the Council and the various committees are responsible for, how it relates to them and how they can get involved. We have interviewed the Electoral Services Manager to consider the ways in which local

residents are informed about how to register to vote, how and when to vote and how accessible the process is to all sections of the community.

### The Electoral Service

- 1.7. We interviewed Mrs Sue Mould, Electoral Services Manager who told us about the Electoral Service and some of the projects that are currently being delivered\*. The Electoral Service is responsible for organising all elections in Bromsgrove (European, national, County, District and parish levels). It compiles and publishes the Register of Electors and deals with related matters such as monthly applications to be included on the register or to vote by post. It also deals with boundary and community governance reviews and electoral arrangements and promotes participation in the democratic processes<sup>♥</sup>.
- 1.8. There are 4 full time staff in the Electoral Services team and the council employs 25 people within Bromsgrove as canvassers to contact households to encourage them to register to vote. A Worcester Electoral Administrator Group joint working partnership meets once a month to plan a co-ordinated approach and pick up on best practice.

### Councillors and Committees

- 1.9. Once elected, councillors represent their constituents at full Council and on a variety of council committees. They also act as an advocate for local citizens in dealing with local issues in their ward. It is important to ensure that councillors can fulfil their role as democratic representatives and that the process is transparent and accountable to local citizens.
- 1.10. For the most part, local citizens views are represented through elected councillors. There are also some opportunities for direct public participation. People can submit petitions, submit proposals to overview and scrutiny Boards, speak at Planning Committee and Licensing Committee meetings or get involved in one of the councils public consultation forums.

### The Public Are Welcome to Attend

- 1.11. The democratic process should be open and transparent and committees where elected councillors deliberate are open to the public to attend. We have considered the conduct of committee meetings from the perspective of members of the public attending and have noted the improvements currently being rolled out by committee services to make committee meetings more accessible.

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\*Performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) were introduced following the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA) Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers are assessed against these standards. REF The Electoral Commission, Performance Standards for Electoral Registration Officers in Great Britain July 2008 and Performance Standards for Returning Officers in Great Britain [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/performance-standards](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/performance-standards).

<sup>♥</sup> From Summer 2009 Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council electoral services departments joined forces to create a combined team which now delivers these services across both authorities.



- 1.12. To people outside the council, the Council House can seem like a private members club rather than a democratic forum. Hitherto, a member of the public attending uninvited to a statutory committee meeting could be forgiven for thinking that the meetings were private and not open to the public.
- 1.13. We note the improvements being made to the signage to meetings during our investigation; this will make it easier for the general public to find a meeting and feel confident that they are allowed to attend uninvited. **We suggest that all statutory public meetings should have a sign on the door of the committee with the committee name on it and the sub-text “the public are welcome to attend”.**
- 1.14. Given the typically low turnout at many of the meetings of the council, **we suggest that committee services make a record of the number of people attending in the public gallery of meetings and set targets for steadily improving attendance.** We are recommending that the meeting times and venues for statutory public meetings be much more widely advertised including a regular slot publicising meetings in the council’s Together Bromsgrove magazine.

<p><b><u>Recommendation One</u></b>  <b><i>An Invitation to Attend</i></b>          That the publication of meeting times and venues of the council, the cabinet, overview and scrutiny and other statutory public meetings be enhanced, with an invitation for the public to attend, including a regular slot publicising meetings in the Together Bromsgrove magazine.</p>
<p><b><u>Financial Implications</u></b></p> <p>No financial implications are envisaged.</p>
<p><b><u>Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>No significant resource implications are envisaged.</p>

- 1.15. In case there are occasional changes to the expected meeting schedule, it may be a good idea to include a brief statement advising people to check the council web pages or telephone to confirm.

Modern Government

- 1.16. We interviewed Mr Andy Stephens, Committee Services Officer at Bromsgrove District Council and reviewed the systems used to administer the publication of reports and decision making. Bromsgrove District Council uses a software application called Modern.Gov to publicise all of the statutory public meetings on the council’s website and to publish all of the associated reports, minutes and decisions of councillors committees. Modern.Gov also facilitates the publication Calendar of Council meetings online. This ensures that members of the public

have access to information for the political decision making process; when and where the meetings are and the information being considered at the meeting.

- 1.17. It is also possible for people to subscribe to updates for agendas and minutes published, through registration over the internet on the Democracy pages of the website. We observed, however, that this facility is not immediately obvious to anyone who was not aware that they could do this or how to register, as the website does not explain this.

### The Forward Plan

- 1.18. The Local Government Act 2000 regulations require local authorities in England and Wales to publish a Forward Plan of all the Key Decisions\* that are proposed to be taken by the local authority in advance. It is published on a monthly basis covering a four month period.
- 1.19. The purpose of the Forward Plan is to make sure that that members of the public and Members of the Council can find out about Key Decisions being taken. We think that it is important that the existence of the Forward Plan is made more widely known so that people will know where to find out about decisions being made.

### Councillor Casework Enquiries

- 1.20. The ward councillor represents the interests of all of his constituents and can flag up issues of local concern in their constituency. Ward councillors can do this by contacting the relevant council departments, by raising the issue with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder, by raising the issue with the relevant council committee, by submitting a motion to full Council or by submitting a proposal to one of the overview and scrutiny boards. In most cases, issues are raised in first instance with the relevant department as a Councillor Casework Enquiry to get a local neighbourhood issue resolved or to find out information on behalf of residents.
- 1.21. We have noted that Councillor Casework Enquiries are usually dealt with efficiently and effectively. However, we believe that they should be dealt with according to the same high standards of traceability and responsiveness that have been demonstrated through the Customer First process. This would mean that Councillor Casework Enquiries would deliver reliable feedback timescales through elected Councillors and ensure that ongoing enquiries do not get lost in the system. It would also help to ensure that ongoing Councillor Casework Enquiries retain their casework history, which may be useful in uncovering underlying issues and persistent problems.
- 1.22. In fact the Council's Customer First Manual suggests that enquiries from elected Members should already be dealt with through the Customer First procedures.

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\*Key Decisions are executive decisions which are significant either in terms of expenditure or their impact on the community.

On page 8 it asks “Who are our Customers?” and answers “Everyone we come into contact with – e.g. public, staff, Members, contractors”. On page 9 under “Roles and responsibilities within the Customer Feedback System” it states that one of the roles of Customer Champions is to “assign an officer to investigate a complaint/comment/suggestion/Member/MP enquiry” and “ensure that complaints/compliments/comments and Member/MP enquiries are acknowledged by the relevant service area within 3 working days”<sup>4</sup>.

### Councillor Calls for Action

- 1.23. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Police and Justice Act 2006 together brought in new powers for ward councillors to help them tackle local problems on behalf of their constituents through “Councillor Calls for Action”.
- 1.24. Councillor Calls for Action (CCfA) are intended to provide elected ward Councillors with the enhanced ability to call for debate and discussion a topic of neighbourhood concern. The CCfA powers are designed to sit alongside existing mechanisms already at councillors’ disposal to resolve local issues.
- 1.25. Generally speaking, CCfA becomes relevant when a councillor has exhausted all other steps to resolve an issue in his or her ward. Ultimately unresolved pressing neighbourhood issues are referred to a meeting of a council’s overview and scrutiny committee to investigate.
- 1.26. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Guidance on Councillor Call for Action<sup>5</sup> gives examples of why a ward Councillor might use CCfA including:
  - sustained poor performance at a local school
  - poor maintenance of a park, leading to increased anti-social behaviour
  - a series of complaints about refuse collection services.
- 1.27. It is up to local councils to specify how CCfA will work in their authority and we have considered the approaches taken by a variety of different councils including Redditch Borough Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council and Bournemouth Borough Council. Members also received training on Councillor Calls for Action provided in association with the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV) at the University of Birmingham.
- 1.28. The CCfA process must allow for local ward issues to be investigated, but according to the guidance, only arrive at an overview and scrutiny committee when all other attempts at resolution have been tried. For this reason, we envisage that all CCfAs will begin as a Councillor Casework Enquiry and that casework enquiries are the beginning of the CCfA process.
- 1.29. At the moment there is no published procedure or guidance for how a CCfA would be handled in Bromsgrove, or how one might be submitted. We recommend that the council adopt a procedure that will empower ward councillors and be a useful tool in responding to issues in their neighbourhoods.

- 1.30. ***In order to make sure that the CCfA process is both workable and efficient, we suggest that the process should link up the process for Councillor Casework Enquiries with the ability to refer issues to overview and scrutiny as an enhanced tool for elected Members to champion issues of local concern within their ward.***

**Recommendation Two**  
**Councillor Calls for Action**

That the Council adopt a procedure for dealing with Councillor Calls for Action to work in concert with the procedures for Councillor Casework Enquiries and providing recourse to Overview and Scrutiny.

**Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

**Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

- 1.31. CCfA needs to be integrated in to the council's Modern Councillor training programme. ***We suggest that, in addition, the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services be asked to publish guidance for elected Members, officers and the public to make sure that everyone is aware of how the scheme works and that issues can be dealt with under CCfA quickly and effectively. The Councils website should also be updated.***

## 2 One Community

- 2.1. We believe that local democracy should be open to all sections of the community and create a strong sense of civic participation and engagement. We have considered how the council reaches out to engage the whole community and removes barriers to participation.

### Democracy and Equalities

- 2.2. We have considered various dimensions of equalities and accessibility of the democratic process in Bromsgrove. We have spoken to members of the Bromsgrove District Council Equality and Diversity Forum and we have interviewed Fiona Scott, Equalities Officer at Bromsgrove District Council, to ask about ways in which the Council might improve accessibility of democracy to all sections of the community.
- 2.3. We would like to acknowledge the work already being undertaken to outreach into the community. We heard that the Electoral Services Manager has attended the Bromsgrove Equalities Forum to speak about encouraging people to register to vote and that member organisations have also been contacted individually. Electoral Services provide information on voting and registering to vote in all main alternative formats.
- 2.4. The Equalities Officer told us that there are different levels of awareness in different sections of the community. It may be useful to conduct some further research to find out more information on what groups are more and less engaged. Packs of information and registration forms are taken to residential homes, along with information on postal voting. Visits are made if there are requests by particular groups and venues such as polish clubs and other social centres are targeted to let them know when elections are happening.
- 2.5. We considered how the council might be able to improve accessibility to the democratic process to all sections of the community, including those who are least engaged or suffer barriers to participation. We have made suggestions, where possible, to improve accessibility to the process, although we recognise that there are limitations on local innovations due to the fact that the entire electoral process is prescribed by statute<sup>6</sup>.

### Access to Polling Stations

- 2.6. We considered the accessibility of polling stations in the district. All polling stations in Bromsgrove meet the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) standards. We heard that Electoral Services carry out an annual survey of polling stations. An access audit was carried out by SCOPE in 2007 and recommendations from this have been mainly implemented where it was possible to do so<sup>7</sup>. Anyone can also choose to vote through a postal vote or by proxy.

- 2.7. Polling stations are well signposted and car parking spaces for disabled people are provided at every station. Maps showing the polling station location are now printed in 12 point size font on the polling card. In exceptional circumstances the presiding officer at polling stations provides assistance in an appropriate manner in order to allow someone to vote while retaining the principle of the secret ballot.
- 2.8. We asked the Equalities Officer at Bromsgrove District Council her views on the accessibility at polling stations. She said that there are sensory (visually impaired, hearing impaired) barriers and mobility (e.g. wheelchair users) which need to be considered. We discussed the possibility of introducing simple picture signs at polling stations and suggest that this would be worth considering, after it has been tested out on focus groups to make sure that it is useful and effective. We heard that, where English is not a voters first language, language barriers are being tackled by providing a list of languages and asking voters to indicate which one and then taking their phone number and getting a translator to call them later, but there is currently no way of explaining this process to them.

#### Access to Committees

- 2.9. Council committee meetings are open to anyone to attend at any time\* but can be a bit confusing to people who are not used to attending. This is especially the case when people suffer from severe visual impairment, or other disabilities which prevent people from understanding written material.
- 2.10. We believe that more could be done to encourage members of the public in general to feel welcome to attend statutory public meetings and we noted the improvements that are currently being made through the Customer First improvement programme and action plan. These will help all sections of the community to feel more able and more welcome to participate.
- 2.11. ***We suggest that a short review be carried out as part of the Customer First improvement programme, to consider the format and conduct of meetings to introduce a standard to ensure it is easily accessible to visually impaired members of the public and anyone attending who is not familiar with the proceedings. The standard should include the chairman of the committee audibly introducing all members of the committee and other participants and providing extra feedback to explain what's happening.***
- 2.12. To improve accessibility to the general democratic process, the council offers, on request, all committee papers in the main accessible formats, specifically large print, Braille, audio tape or CD. It may also provide foreign language interpretation or British Sign Language interpretation if needed, upon request. This should be clearly stated on agenda papers and on the Democracy pages of the council website.

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\*Except when certain exempt items are being discussed.

- 2.13. In exceptional cases, where there is a need, we believe the council should consider introducing a policy of providing transport to meetings, where people have severe mobility problems. This should be by application to and at the discretion of the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services.

#### Different But Equal

- 2.14. Everyone in the community has a right to participate equally in the democratic process, but some people find it harder to participate than others. We believe the council needs to consider, wherever feasible, to do what it can to remove obstacles to participation.
- 2.15. We have consulted the Bromsgrove Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) for their views on our draft recommendations and to investigate the variety of engagement of accessibility issues that exist from different sections of the community. **We suggest that all of the organisations affiliated to the EDF are invited to get involved in the Democracy Year Campaign.**
- 2.16. We have considered the variety of different possible impediments to participation in the democratic process. In particular we have considered:
- Mobility impairment
  - Visual impairment
  - Hearing impairment
  - Dual sensory impairment
  - Mental health issues and mental impairment
  - Language barriers and literacy

#### Mobility impairment

- 2.17. Polling stations meet DDA (The Disability Discrimination Act) standards. Porta cabins, where used as polling stations, are now at a lower height than they used to be, which provides much better access for those with mobility impairments. Sometimes the doorway of the portable building is not wide enough for users of mobility scooters or electric wheelchairs to get in.

#### Visual Impairment

- 2.18. The term 'visual impairment' refers to people with irretrievable sight loss and this simple definition covers a wide spectrum of different impairments. It includes "blind" people and people with complete loss of eyesight, but it does not include those whose sight problems can be corrected by spectacles or contact lenses. There are between one and a half and two million visually impaired people in the UK<sup>8</sup>.
- 2.19. At the moment, an application to register to vote can be produced in large print or Braille on demand and the voter's packs at the Customer Service Centre have all the forms in a number of languages, in large print and in Braille. A template with tactile features numbered 1 – 15 to line up against the ballot paper is part of the

presiding officer's pack at polling stations to assist visually impaired people upon request. **We suggest that prospective candidates and elected MPs and councillors also need to consider how to provide their own information in accessible formats.**

- 2.20. Committee documents can be provided in alternative formats upon request and we heard that the Equalities team are currently looking into ways of improving the format of documents so that they can be accessed on computer through the use of specialist computer software (Browsealoud, Screenreader and Thunder) which read the contents of a document out loud.
- 2.21. Best practice includes avoiding the use of bullet points and automatic paragraph numbering and avoiding the use of block capitals, italics, under-lining, flashing text, moving borders or images and tables to present information, as these formats create difficulties for some visually impaired people.
- 2.22. **We have observed that some committee papers, e mail and web based communications do use small fonts, which can be an unnecessary barrier to a large number of visually impaired people and we suggest that the use of 12 font or above be considered as a standard on all council communications.**
- 2.23. We explored the possibility of introducing extra tactile information such as embossed logos on the postal vote, polling card or on the ballot paper but found this was not possible as electoral documentation formats are prescribed by law<sup>9</sup>.
- 2.24. We have heard from Ms Stephanie Sergeant, a blind service user. She was asked what, if any, impediments she is aware of for visually impaired people. She told us that the electoral registration form can be difficult to complete as she is only aware of being able to do this through a hard copy format in print. She said that peoples' awareness of the need to register could be improved by putting out an advert in the Talking Newspaper<sup>10</sup>.
- 2.25. She said that voting can be challenging as this is in print and there is a need to provide embossed writing or a tactile way to identify what is written. She said that she usually votes by postal ballot but that she still needs someone to read this out to her. It would be ideal to have this available in audio.
- 2.26. We have considered the idea of audio links available on the website. Stephanie Sergeant said that this would be "very accessible to blind people". Sight Concern in Worcester can provide more information on how the council can improve and test out improvements for blind people. **We suggest that the Democracy pages of the council website be updated with audio and video links to explain particular processes. This should improve accessibility and make the site more interesting for everybody.**



## Hearing Impairment

- 2.27. In Bromsgrove there are approximately 200 people with significant hearing impairment, including people with sight impairment as well. General population figures for Bromsgrove from the 2001 Census show over 12,000 as having some degree of hearing loss.
- 2.28. There is an easy to read pictorial voting booklet which is provided in the presiding officer's pack at polling stations which can be used to guide voters if necessary. People can also contact the Electoral Services team through the use of a text phone. The publication of reports and information over the internet also goes a long way to removing barriers to information for people with hearing impediments.
- 2.29. We have heard that the public attending committee meetings in the council chamber have sometimes complained that they cannot hear the proceedings properly. There is an induction hearing loop system installed in the council chamber to provide hearing assistance to hearing aid users, although people have sometimes complained that this "isn't working properly".

## Mental Health

- 2.30. A new national campaign has been launched under the umbrella term of "Rethink" which includes "Rethink Politics" which is designed to increase the engagement of people with mental illness in the political process<sup>11</sup>. The Bromsgrove Partnership has set up a sub group of the Health and Wellbeing Theme Group to look at the rethink campaign and it is proposed that one local event will be organised in Bromsgrove this year.
- 2.31. "Mental impairment" includes a very wide range of issues, each of which has a wide spectrum from very mild to very severe, including dementia, autism and learning disability. Further detailed research would be needed to identify issues that affect such a wide range of impairments and propose possible improvements.
- 2.32. ***We have heard that evidence has been considered by the Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services department of the council relating to learning difficulties, including dyslexia and the possibilities of introducing simple aids such as the provision of pastel coloured plastic transparencies to place over a ballot paper to assist with reading the names printed. If this is cost effective and feasible, we suggest that this be introduced as soon as possible.***
- 2.33. There is also an easy to read pictorial voting booklet provided in the presiding officer's pack at polling stations, which can be used to assist voters in what to do and should be very useful for a range of people (with and without impairments) to help convey the information about voting in a simple, friendly, easy to understand way.

### Migrant Workers

- 2.34. Many people come to live and work in the UK from other countries and some are entitled to vote in different elections in the UK, depending on their nationality. Commonwealth citizens and citizens of the Republic of Ireland are entitled to vote in UK General Elections and local elections\*. European Union citizens are eligible to vote in European Union parliamentary elections and local elections but not General Elections<sup>12</sup>.
- 2.35. There are no reliable figures as to how many migrant workers are living in the district, but the number of National Insurance numbers issued provides an indication. More than 41% of the National Insurance number allocations in 2008/09 were to people from Poland<sup>13</sup>. The Worcestershire County Economic Assessment 2009/2010 provides data for Bromsgrove over the years 2002/03 to 2008/09 and level peaked at just 200 people in Bromsgrove in 2006/07.

### Language Barriers

- 2.36. There is new Interpreting Service, due to open on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 and this will be available to polling stations for emergency immediate foreign language interpretation. All presiding officers are required to have a mobile phone with them at polling stations and so they will be able to access this service as and when required. **We suggest that this service be extended to assistance for residents to access their Councillors for non political meetings or discussions.**

### Democracy for All

- 2.37. We believe that the council needs to actively engage the whole community, reaching out to people who don't participate and involving those who alienated from civic life. Local democracy needs to feel open and transparent and we need to build the relationship with the community through elected councillors and democratic engagement.
- 2.38. This includes all sections of the community; young people and older people, parish communities, ethnic minorities: The council is the community leader in bringing everyone together in constructive democratic participation and dialogue, building civic pride and a sense of One Community. We believe that local democracy and the elected councillor are the foundation for building that relationship.

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\*Qualifying Commonwealth citizens are Commonwealth citizens resident in the UK who are entitled to register to vote provided that they also fulfil the age requirement for registration and are not subject to any other legal incapacity.

### 3 The Duty to Promote Democracy

- 3.1. Councils need to actively promote a better understanding of how local democracy works. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 places a duty on local authorities to promote understanding among local people of the opportunities that exist for members of the public to get involved in and influence the decisions made by local councils and other local public bodies. Section 1 of the Act places a duty on principal local authorities\* (including district councils) to promote understanding of their functions and their democratic arrangements. This includes opportunities for people to participate by:
- standing and serving as a councillor;
  - voting to elect representatives;
  - making representations to councillors and other directly elected representatives, including by submitting petitions;
  - taking part in consultations, formal forums, panels and public meetings, including attending the public parts of council meetings;
  - taking on a civic role such as school governor or independent custody visitor<sup>14</sup>.
- 3.2. The Act also places a duty on principal local authorities to promote understanding among local people of other public bodies that relate to the authority's area; what these bodies do and their democratic arrangements. These are public bodies or persons that have a strong local presence, making decisions that are directly relevant to local people in the local authority's area and including the county council, parish councils and parish council meetings, police authorities, health bodies, schools and further education colleges and transport authorities<sup>♥</sup>.
- 3.3. We have put forward recommendations to improve the promotion of democracy and local democracy in Bromsgrove. These include a Democracy Year Campaign starting in June 2010 to lead up to next district elections in 2011 and beyond and proposals to improve peoples knowledge on how to get involved to increase voter turn out, developing the ward councillor role, raising the profile of elected councillors to the public, promoting a better understanding of what councillors do to help people find out more about becoming a councillor.

#### Be a Councillor

- 3.4. In the United Kingdom, all local authorities are governed by elected councillors<sup>▲</sup>. Councillors may or may not be affiliated to a political party, but once elected are meant to represent all their constituents and not just those who voted for them.

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\*"Principal local authority" means; (a) a county or district council in England; (b) a London borough council; (c) the Common Council of the City of London in its capacity as a local authority; (d) a county or county borough council in Wales.

♥ The Act places a duty on principal local authorities to promote understanding of "connected authorities" including health bodies; police bodies; fire and rescue authorities; waste bodies; schools and FE colleges; national park and broads authorities; transport authorities; economic prosperity boards and combined authorities; probation services; parish councils and meetings; for a county council in a two-tier area, a district council; for a district council in a two-tier area, a county council (ref The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, Part 1: Democracy and Involvement).

▲ This includes: Unitary authorities, County councils, District councils Parish Councils, town and community councils.

- 3.5. Councillors can come from many different walks of life and may have many different skills and aptitudes. Whilst we recognise that a good councillor can represent constituents from any background, we think it is generally desirable that there should be a mix of different people, which helps to represent the different people in the local community. Some types of people, such as young people, may be less likely to come forward and be elected councillors and there can be barriers that make it more difficult for some people to become councillors.
- 3.6. ***We believe that we need to let everyone in the community know that they could consider standing as a local councillor and we suggest that a special “open day” event be held during the Democracy Year Campaign to enable people to come and find out more about it. We also suggest the provision of more information on the council website to explain what a councillor does and how to seek election.***
- 3.7. The 2007 Local Elections in the UK saw the age limit for councillors fall to 18, and we suggest that that younger people from age 18 should now be encouraged to stand to encourage a younger generation of councillors to come forward.
- 3.8. ***For more information on becoming a local councillor see [www.beacouncillor.org.uk](http://www.beacouncillor.org.uk)***

#### Promoting Voting

- 3.9. The council needs to encourage more people to turn out and vote. The council already uses events stalls occasionally in the run up to elections, to provide information to people on registering to vote. We have heard from Redditch Borough Council about their experiments in setting up stalls in supermarkets, in order to catch the attention of as many people as possible. We are recommending that the council roll out more events stalls to promote the democratic process, including voter registration, in conjunction with the Democracy Year Campaign. These should be held in civic spaces and forums where there are lot of people, including in the town centre market place, in supermarkets and at parish fairs and events.



### **Recommendation Three**

#### ***Promoting Democracy***

That events stalls be more widely used to promote democracy, to get registered to vote and get involved, including a stall to be set up in the Bromsgrove high street market, in supermarkets and community events.

#### **Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

#### **Resource Implications**

There may be resource implications arising if staff are required to spend extra time manning events stalls, especially if at weekends.

- 3.10. ***We noted that councillors are also able to give out electoral registration forms and postal vote applications forms and we suggest that all councillors receive training on all aspects of voting and registration, including proxy voting, postal voting.***

#### **Communicating Democracy**

- 3.11. The way that citizens see the council and their local representatives is often shaped by the local media. Informing residents about how local democracy works can be a matter of getting the right messages across through the local newspapers, newsletters and community internet sites. We need to make sure that the media is a place where people can be properly informed with positive messages about how local democracy works.
- 3.12. A lot of the coverage that local councils get in local news media is corporately orientated and excludes the political/democratic face of elected representatives, especially when compared to national government, which is almost exclusively politically led in the media. Very often council services are “fronted” by officers not elected community leaders. So residents might be forgiven for not knowing who their elected representatives in office are and ultimately, who to hold to account for the services they provide. This poses a problem for democratic accountability.

#### **Together Bromsgrove**

- 3.13. The council has its own publication; the Together Bromsgrove magazine that delivers news and original features to residents, direct from Bromsgrove District Council. Every household in the Bromsgrove district is



sent the magazine up to three times a year and it covers the council's key priorities, activities and messages for residents. We have looked at editions of Together Bromsgrove to see how local democracy and democratic representatives are profiled in the magazine. We have also looked at other council's magazines to see how it compares.

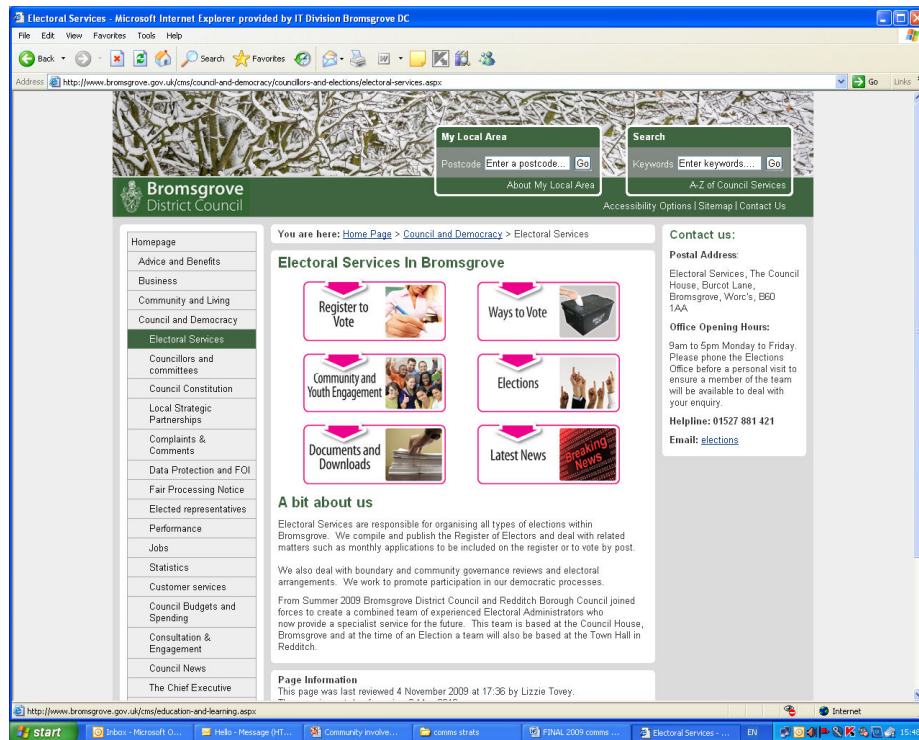
- 3.14. Redditch Borough Council has a magazine called Redditch Matters, similar to the Together Bromsgrove publication. We noticed that compared to most other council magazines Together Bromsgrove does not feature elected Members or say much about the democratic process. Where the magazine features council services it is usually fronted by a council officer. In other council's magazines we noticed that there will be profiles of elected Members, including typically a Leaders column and comments from portfolio holders responsible for the services being profiled. We believe this helps people connect with the councillors representing them and who are responsible for the services the council provides.
- 3.15. Parish councils usually also have their own local newsletters, which they publish and distribute themselves. We suggest that the possibility of including parish council newsletters with the distribution of the Together Bromsgrove be investigated, provided that this can be achieved with minimal extra cost.

#### Read All About It

- 3.16. We have interviewed Mr Peter John, Publisher at the Stourbridge division of the Newsquest publishing group, which includes the Bromsgrove Advertiser. Mr John said that the philosophy of Newsquest is no longer that of a "newspaper company" but a "media company" and that newspaper distribution is falling whilst alternative media on the web is growing. Channels for news messages are no longer just what is being published in the newspaper but also what is published on the web.
- 3.17. We commend the council's communications team for the work they have done to improve the image of Bromsgrove District Council in the public media. We believe that the roles and responsibilities of elected portfolio holders and other representatives needs to be given a higher profile in the local media and through the communications strategy, so that people know who is responsible for the services the council provides.
- 3.18. We also need to make sure we are getting the message across to the whole community. Traditional print media remains very important and certain sections of the population are likely to read it, but 16-25 year olds often do not read newspapers. This age group do however explore internet and social networking sites and we need to improve the profile of our local democracy over the web and other media.

## Cyber Democracy

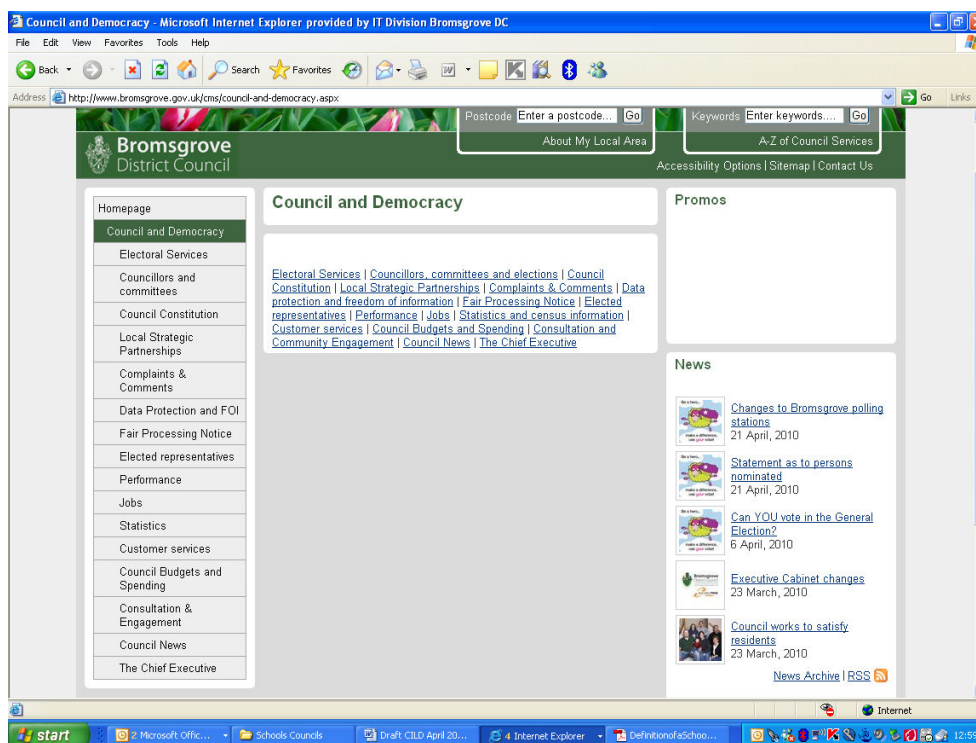
- 3.19. One of the main media for communications is now the internet and we have reviewed the council's democracy pages of the website to see how democracy is presented and how accessible and interesting it is. In addition to the expanding home internet usage, there is public access to the internet in libraries and some village halls, which makes the internet a powerful tool for reaching a wide cross section of people and especially younger people.



[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/electoral-services.aspx](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/electoral-services.aspx)

- 3.20. We have looked at the profile of local democracy on the council's website in comparison with other councils and considered how the content might be enhanced to make it more informative and attractive. We have noted the new Electoral Services pages of the website which feature clear visual messages and development with easy access buttons and more visual information.
- 3.21. We believe that the local democracy pages could be improved with images and a brief description of what local democracy in Bromsgrove is. Some of the links may not be intelligible to someone unfamiliar with the council operations and may include links that are seemingly irrelevant to local democracy such as "Fair Processing Notice", "Complaints and Comments" and "Jobs".





[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/cms/council-and-democracy.aspx](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/cms/council-and-democracy.aspx)

- 3.22. We are recommending that a review of the Council's democracy web pages be carried out to improve the content on how local democracy works, make it easier to navigate and use some exciting images, audio and video content rather than just text. We suggest that there should be a high profile link to the Democracy Year Campaign on the home page and the democracy pages. **We also suggest that the web address [www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/democracy](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/democracy) be used to link directly to the democracy web page.**

**Recommendation Four**  
**Cyber Democracy**

That the local democracy pages of the Council website be reviewed to improve the content and to add summary information on how local democracy works in Bromsgrove and how people can get involved, with a special webpage site for the Democracy Year Campaign.

**Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

**Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.



- 3.22. We believe the council web pages on democracy could be enhanced to make them more attractive and engaging. Content should be upgraded to include a description of the political decision making arrangements, to encourage the public to attend Council and committee meetings, explain how to present a petition, information on Councillor Calls for Action, Councillor Casework Enquiries and how to make proposals to overview and scrutiny committees. We are also recommending the use of the website to engage and consult on particular issues using consultation portals.

**Recommendation Five**

**Consultation Portals**

That the Council's website use consultation portals to gauge opinion on topics of local interest and local decisions and a means to engage and consult the public in the local democratic decision making process.

**Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

**Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

- 3.23. ***We suggest that short "You Tube" style video links be included on the council website to make it more fun and interactive. These could include elected councillors talking about their roles, young people and other local citizens talking about community issues.***

- 3.24. In addition, we suggest that the Democracy pages on the council website should be given a higher profile and advertised more widely, including through the Together Bromsgrove magazine and on the front sheet of published agendas. This will help people to link to the information on the website and find out more about how local Democracy in Bromsgrove works.

Young Citizens Webpage

- 3.25. To reach young people we need to get the message across in different ways, such as via the internet (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Bebo social networking internet sites), or through subscribed text phone messages. It also needs to be managed by someone who can "speak their language" and run in a way that engages and interests young people. Bromsgrove District Council already uses Facebook and Twitter internet based social networking sites, although this needs to be further developed.
- 3.26. We also recommend that the Democracy pages of the council's web site include a page specifically aimed at young people. This should include lots of interesting and exciting content on issues that are relevant to young people and

communicating with young people in a way that they respond to. It should include links to the school councils, the Youth Cabinet and the UK Youth Parliament, as well as consultation with young people on particular topics using internet consultation portals. The success of such a page will depend upon how interesting and relevant it is to young people and if possible, it would be good to involve young people in the design and content of these pages.

**Recommendation Six**

**Young Citizens Webpage**

That a Young Citizen page be included on the Council internet site specifically aimed at young people, with fun and exciting content, explaining the democratic process and how to get involved.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

Officer time will be required to draft the content.

Councillor Blogs

- 3.27. Many citizens do not know who their local ward representatives are. This is important because the ability of councillors to represent their constituents is dependent upon the relationship a councillor has with his constituents. ***We have considered the profile of elected representatives on the council website and we suggest that this be enhanced to provide “personalised” profiles of who councillors are and what responsibilities they have providing details of how to contact them, any special responsibilities they may have, what committees they serve on. It should also provide a short personal statement from each councillor.***
- 3.28. We discussed the idea of Members setting up their own internet blogs to communicate with residents. This seems to be a good idea, however, the council may not be able to directly host this as it may be considered too “political” and it may be difficult for the council to be held responsible for content. The council website may however be able to feature links to external sites blogged by councillors themselves and we suggest that this be investigated.

The Art of Democracy

- 3.29. Arts media can be an exciting and engaging way to promote local democracy, and especially to young people. We have considered some of the ways the council and its community partners might communicate the importance of democracy through the arts, particularly for events linked to the Democracy Year Campaign. This might include street theatre events, cinema, music and it is

envisaged that arts events could involve young people and other citizens in the events as well as promoting civic engagement in an entertaining way. The Arts present a different and powerful way through which the council can engage with residents.

- 3.30. We interviewed Mr Huw Moseley, the Arts Development and Special Events Officer at Bromsgrove District Council and Mr Andy Woods, Director of Artrix to ask them how arts and events might be linked to the promotion of democracy. The Artrix is a community arts centre which runs in partnership with the council. On occasion, particular events run by the council are hosted at the Artrix and the Artrix also has good linkages with other community groups such as the North East Worcestershire (NEW) Collage and schools, which can help the council engage with the community.
- 3.31. ***We suggest that the list of arts events for 2010-2011 be checked to identify events which might link to the Democracy Year Campaign. Young people at North East Worcestershire (NEW) Collage, schools and other young peoples groups could be involved in projects to promote democracy. One idea is to involve young people in making short films clips. The best of these could be shown before the main films showing at the Artrix and showcased on the council internet site.***
- 3.32. We also envisage that the Democracy Year Campaign will involve street theatre events, music events and engage other art forms in partnership with the Artrix, NEW College, local schools and other community groups.

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## 4 Community Involvement in Local Democracy

- 4.1. Local councils have a duty to involve residents in decision making and we have considered the ways in which the council and its community partners can encourage community engagement, civic participation and community involvement in local democracy.
- 4.2. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places duties “to inform, consult and involve” local people in local decision making process. This means providing greater opportunities for local people to get involved and influence the decisions that affect them. The duty to involve is an opportunity to reinvigorate local democracy and improve the quality of both decision making and the services that local people receive.
- 4.3. According to the Act, involving people means making sure that citizens and local representatives are:
  - provided with information about the exercise of a function,
  - consulted about the exercise of the function, or
  - involved in another way<sup>15</sup>.

### Opening Up Democracy

- 4.4. Engaging citizens through the local democratic process where decisions are being made is one of the ways we need to involve local people. We believe that the council needs to open up the democratic process by encouraging local people to attend meetings and where possible, to play a role as active citizens in the decision making process.
- 4.5. In Bromsgrove, citizens can already address the Planning Committee and the Licensing Committee if they wish to make their views known on particular planning and licensing applications. They can also submit a petition to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board, where the lead petitioners have been able to address members of the board. In addition, members of the public can participate (by invitation or application) in overview and scrutiny meetings to give evidence on a particular topic, or to make a topic proposal.
- 4.6. ***We believe there is scope to do more; through existing procedures, through greater efforts to engage and involve, especially at full Council, Cabinet and in overview and scrutiny committees. In particular, we suggest that the council consider introducing procedures to allow members of the public to submit questions at full Council and Cabinet to portfolio holders and to present public petitions.***

## Petitions

- 4.7. Bromsgrove District Council already allows members of the public to submit petitions for consideration by elected councillors. New legislation means that this will soon become a requirement for all local authorities and for the first time councils will be required to respond to petitions and tell local people what action is going to be taken to address their concerns.
- 4.8. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 has introduced a requirement for councils to receive petitions and e-petitions. During our investigation the Government Guidance "Listening to communities: Statutory guidance on the duty to respond to petitions" was published and councils are now required to introduce a petitions scheme before 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Councils are also required, from 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010 to introduce an e-petitions facility.
- 4.9. We have considered the arrangements currently in place for dealing with petitions. To date 3 petitions have been received. On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010 the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board received 2 petitions, one on the demolition of the market hall and another on the fair trade campaign. This enabled the board to try out provisional procedures for dealing with petitions. The procedure that was followed afforded the petition spokesmen the chance to present the case to the committee and reflected the function of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board as an investigatory review body independent of the Cabinet.
- 4.10. We have noted that the very act of receiving petitions seems to raise expectations on the part of some local campaigners that their cause will change council policy, but inevitably this will not always be the case. The way in which the council dealt with the petitions did however demonstrate the willingness of the council to engage with local groups in the democratic process and considered their views in an objective and fair way. We suggest that the council could help to manage expectations and improve access by publishing clear guidance and procedures.
- 4.11. We believe that the process followed on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010 was successful in dealing with the petitions properly and fairly and that this same or similar process should be used to regulate the way petitions are dealt with in the future.

### **Recommendation Seven**

#### **Public Petitions**

That the Council adopt a petitions scheme, procedure and guidance to set out how petitions and e petitions will be dealt with and the arrangements for receiving petitions.

#### **Financial Implications**

No financial implications are envisaged.

#### **Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

- 4.12. We are suggesting that the department use the Modern.Gov software system to manage the electronic petitions scheme on the council website at minimal extra cost. We suggest that the e petitions submitted online include a postcode field to ensure that “signatures” are only counted from verifiable addresses.
- 4.13. We are recommending that the council publish guidance for members of the public along with the scheme on the council website and available upon request. We noted that petitions received by the JOSB have been presented in formats that can make it difficult to verify the number of signatures and do not always provide personal signatures. We suggest that a standard petitions form be included with the petitions scheme to provide people with a standard template.
- 4.14. Local authorities are permitted to impose thresholds of up to 5% of the population to trigger a debate at full Council. We suggest that the petition scheme require somewhat less than this (eg between 1000 – 2000 signatures) to make it feasible for petitioners to get enough signatures, especially where it concerns large areas with small populations. On average, at least one petition a year might reasonably be expected. ***We suggest that the scheme is reviewed after 12 months to make sure that there are a balanced number of petitions reaching full council for debate.***

#### **The Parish Perspective**

- 4.15. A parish council is a type of local authority found in England and the most local tier of local government. They are elected bodies and have variable tax raising powers. Parish councils are responsible for areas known as civil parishes. There are approximately 8,500 councils in England and there are 20 parish councils in the Bromsgrove district, based around the local villages<sup>16</sup>.
- 4.16. We made sure that parish councils were involved our investigation and all parish councils in the district were asked for their views. We also interviewed Mr. John Cypher, Chairman of Alvechurch Parish Council and Mrs Sue Baxter, Chairman

of Wythall Parish Council. A clear message that came across was that parish councils want to be involved in promoting and engaging with citizens on local democracy. In fact, we need to consider promotion of democracy across all 3 levels of local government: county, district and parish. We also need to improve peoples understanding of the different functions and responsibilities of each of these.

- 4.17. Parish councils can be useful partners in promoting democracy as they have close links with the grass roots in local communities and with local community activists and volunteers and have a strong sense of civic participation.
- 4.18. There is a need to encourage more people to stand for election as parish councillors. Very often parish councillors stand unopposed and this can mean, effectively, that local citizens have no choice about who represents them at parish level and this could undermine the democratic legitimacy of parish councils. ***We suggest that parish councils be invited to be fully involved in programmes to promote local democracy and information about parish councils needs to be embellished on the council website.***
- 4.19. ***To find out more about parish councils see [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk). Bromsgrove district parish councils are listed on the Democracy pages of the council's website.***



## 5 Young People

- 5.1. We believe that the council needs to engage and involve young people in the democratic process and in decisions that affect young people and encourage them to play an active role as citizens and in the civic life of their community. Not all young people will engage in the same way or through the same social networks so it is use a wide variety of different approaches.
- 5.2. Young people are often disengaged from the mainstream political process. In a study carried out by the Electoral Commission only 56% of those aged between 17 and 24 were registered to vote<sup>17</sup>. MORI estimates that just 39% of young people (aged 18-24) registered to vote in the 2001 General Election voted and just 37% at the 2005 general election<sup>18</sup>.

### Happy 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

- 5.3. Most young people do not view local politics as important to them. Research for the Local Government Association by Ipsos MORI shows that just a quarter of 11-16 year olds believe that their local councillor is the best person to approach in order to change something in their community and when asked who they respect most outside their family, only 1% chose politicians. The same percentage number chose their dog!<sup>19</sup>.
- 5.4. In the past becoming eligible to vote was a sign of coming of age, but in modern times it has lost this significance. **We suggest that all residents should be sent a birthday card from the council on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, congratulating them that they are now eligible to vote and telling them how to register.**

### Sending the Councillor Back to School

- 5.5. We need to promote engagement and understanding of the mainstream democratic process and this means engaging young people where they meet and communicating in a way they relate to. We need to promote the democratic process in schools and colleges, through community groups and through social forums where young people congregate, both in the real world and online.
- 5.6. Research for the Local Government Association by Ipsos MORI shows that just one in three 11-16 year olds have ever met a councillor or MP, and states that those who have 'are more likely to express feelings of political engagement and interest<sup>20</sup>. **We suggest that the council investigate the possibility of arranging presentations on local democracy to Citizenship classes from council officers and elected Members of the Council.**
- 5.7. **For more information about this, see the guides published on the LGA Local Democracy Campaign website: [www.localdemocracy.lga.gov.uk](http://www.localdemocracy.lga.gov.uk)**

## The National Curriculum

- 5.8. We have heard from Clare Baylis, Citizenship Advisor Worcestershire County Council and considered the National Curriculum Citizenship key stages 3 and 4, specifically areas of the curriculum which support the development of local democracy projects and partnerships with schools. Education for citizenship aims to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in public life. Citizenship encourages them to take an interest in topical and controversial issues and engage in discussion and debate. Pupils learn about their rights, responsibilities, duties and freedoms and about laws, justice and democracy. They learn to take part in decision making and different forms of action and they should be encouraged to play an active role in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and wider society as active local citizens.
- 5.9. The National Curriculum for Citizenship is taught through different approaches in different schools but in all cases aims to provide young people with an understanding of the key concepts and institutional processes that can underpin democratic participation. The concepts explored at KS3 and KS4 are:
- Participating actively in different kinds of decision-making and voting in order to influence public life.
  - Considering how democracy, justice, diversity, toleration, respect and freedom are valued by people with different beliefs, backgrounds and traditions within a changing democratic society.
  - Understanding and exploring the roles of citizens and parliament in holding government and those in power to account.
  - Exploring different kinds of rights and obligations and how these affect both individuals and communities.
  - Understanding that individuals, organisations and governments have responsibilities to ensure that rights are balanced, supported and protected.
  - Investigating ways in which rights can compete and conflict, and understanding that hard decisions have to be made to try to balance these<sup>21</sup>.
- 5.10. The National Curriculum for Citizenship explores the key features of parliamentary democracy and local government in the UK, including voting and elections and the actions citizens can take in the democratic and electoral processes to influence decisions locally, nationally and beyond. The curriculum should provide opportunities for pupils to participate in both school-based and community-based citizenship activities and work with a range of community partners. It is a way that we can foster a greater understanding of and participation in the democratic process, including a better understanding of local councils.
- 5.11. We have considered ways in which the promotion of local democracy might be able to support and concord with the objectives of the national curriculum for Citizenship and is recommending that the Head of Legal, Equalities and

Democratic Services be asked to liaise with Bromsgrove secondary schools to find ways in which the district council can support the Citizenship curriculum.

**Recommendation Eight**

**Citizenship**

That the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services be asked to liaise with Bromsgrove secondary schools to co-ordinate with the Citizenship curriculum being followed in the respective schools to find ways in which the district Council can support the curriculum.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

There will be some resource implications required to liaise with Bromsgrove secondary schools and to support undertaken as agreed by the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services.

**School Councils**

- 5.12. We have considered the role of school councils, which are run throughout the UK, including Bromsgrove schools. A school council is group of students who are elected to represent the views of all pupils and to improve their school. There is no uniform approach to how they are run and practice varies from school to school and includes all kinds of school based groups run by students, including student forums and youth parliaments.
- 5.13. Typical arrangements are that each year, every class will elect 2 representatives to be members of the school council. The school council will then meet to elect officers such as Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and other elected portfolios.
- 5.14. A typical school council will hold school council meetings, usually with a teacher present, to discuss and sort out issues and problems in their school or local neighbourhood. These may include the quality of school dinners, pupil behaviour or ideas for fundraising events. Members of the school council may be given responsibility for carrying out the ideas that have been agreed, such as planning discos, writing newspaper articles, or meeting with catering staff, or can make recommendations to the head teacher.
- 5.15. A good school council is one that represents the views of all students and gets things done. We have not attempted to review the effectiveness of school councils in Bromsgrove, but we suggest that these are some things that make a school council effective:



- Regular meetings
- A council that is not too big
- Clear constitutional arrangements
- Class/Form councils that meet regularly
- Good communication between representatives and their class
- Training for school council members
- Smaller groups (subcommittees) working on specific events or issues
- A bank account or budget
- Annual evaluations<sup>22</sup>.

5.16. **More information on school councils is available from School Councils UK at [www.schoolcouncils.org](http://www.schoolcouncils.org)**

#### Redditch Student Council

- 5.17. We received evidence on the Redditch Student Council from Mr Steve Skinner, Democratic Services Manager at Redditch Borough Council. Redditch Borough Council established a Student Council in 1996 and has played a supporting role to the participating schools in their area since 1996. Their arrangements for supporting the Student Council are currently under review.
- 5.18. Redditch Student Council was set up as a body independent of both the participating schools and the partner local authorities, comprising of 28 elected student councillors, from 6 local high schools. Each councillor has a 2 year term of office. The initiative has been delivered in partnership with Worcestershire County Council, who had been successful in winning substantial FLOSS (Funding Lots of Super Stuff) donations\*. Within Redditch Borough Council's committee team, one designated committee person coordinated the Student Council's work and the County Council have taken over responsibility for both the elections and for student support.
- 5.19. Student councillors are elected by their peers within each school, and Student Council meetings have also been arranged to take place in the borough's Council Chamber, which introduces the young people involved to the physical setting and protocols of council meetings. Activities also took place at Youth House, assisted by the Worcestershire County Council Youth Team.
- 5.20. We believe that school councils provide a great opportunity to engage young people into the democratic process in line with the national curriculum on Citizenship. They can also help to give young people a better understanding of the mainstream democracy nationally and locally, depending on how well they mirror parliaments and councils. We suggest that Bromsgrove school councils should make sure that their constitutional and procedural arrangements teach students about how councils and parliaments work by running in a similar way.

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\* FLOSS is aimed at giving 13 to 19-year-olds the chance to provide their local area with activities and projects their peers will benefit from. The final decision as to where the money will be allocated will be made by the FLOSS Management Group, which comprises of 12 young people from around Worcestershire.

- 5.21. ***We suggest that Bromsgrove District Council, in partnership with the schools and the county council, work with the school councils to improve their operation and to reinforce the education of the structure and process of council institutions.*** We suggest that the council work in partnership with Bromsgrove secondary schools and Worcestershire County Council to support Bromsgrove school councils along similar lines to the support offered by Redditch Borough Council to their Student Council. There is a need to engage with schools on this and to improve planning and co-ordination. The timing of School Council elections need to be thought out carefully because of school commitments, especially for older pupils preparing for exams.

#### **Recommendation Nine**

##### ***Schools Councils***

That the Council work in partnership with Bromsgrove secondary schools to facilitate the Schools Councils' constitutional arrangements and arrangements for making recommendations to the appropriate local decision making bodies.

##### **Financial Implications**

Optional extra additional funding required is estimated at £5,000: £2,000 working budget p.a. to support training (annual residential) and £2,000 p.a. for the events. This is *extra* – additional budget, not core or vital to the administration of Schools Council's themselves.

##### **Resource Implications**

A small amount of resources in officer time is anticipated, depending on the level of support officered.

These suggested resource allocations are *extra*, not core to the basic implementation of the recommendation or vital to the administration of Schools Council's themselves.

- 5.22. The council can support the schools councils to help them run in a way that is reflective of local government councils and to more effectively represent young people and help students learn about local democracy. The council could also assist in advising on constitutional processes.
- 5.23. ***If possible we suggest the council should invite school councils to meet in the council chamber, as they have done in Redditch, to introduce the young people to the formal setting of council meetings. Student representatives could also be invited to the council to meet Cabinet portfolio holders and other Members of the Council to learn about their roles. This could include meeting the Chairman, the Leader of the Council Members of the Cabinet and this could be reported back to the School Council and help to develop the roles students elected with similar responsibilities at the school councils.***

- 5.24. The council may also be able to support school councils by assisting with the provision of clear statements and school publicity to make sure all students in the school understand what a school council is, how it represents them and how they can get involved.
- 5.25. ***We suggest that it would also be a good find ways to extend the influence of school councils on projects in their local neighbourhood.*** The County, District and Parish councils in cooperation with the schools could offer school councils some tangible choices about projects in their local areas and consult them on local choices affecting young people in their neighbourhood through a democratic process. These could be projects connected to local parks or environmental projects, engaging with young people in a neighbourhood, intergenerational projects or local events. This could be through fostering community links with local community partners, including the parish councils and other local organisations. The more influence the school council can be seen to have the more credible it will be to young people.

#### The Worcester Youth Cabinet

- 5.26. The Worcestershire Youth Cabinet is a group of young people elected by young people to represent their views. The county is separated into 6 districts; Worcester City, Wychavon, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Wyre Forest and Malvern Hills. Each district votes for candidates to represent them. Elected representatives have access to decision makers and authorities at all levels of society and government.
- 5.27. Cabinet members attend meetings and public forums to discuss the concerns and issues of young constituents. The issues considered by the Worcester Youth Cabinet can vary greatly from the accessibility of public transport and facilities to young people's rights and opinions. The Worcester Youth Cabinet works alongside the 3 Worcestershire Members of the UK Youth Parliament, who are automatically co-opted onto the Youth Cabinet. The Worcestershire Youth Cabinet campaigning objectives are published in the Worcester Youth Manifesto<sup>23</sup>.
- 5.28. ***For more information on the Worcestershire Youth Cabinet see [www.ycworcs.org.uk](http://www.ycworcs.org.uk)***

#### The UK Youth Parliament

- 5.29. The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) has 600 elected Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) aged 11-18. MYPs are elected in annual youth elections throughout the UK. Any young person aged 11-18 can stand or vote. In the past two years one million young people have voted in UK Youth Parliament elections.
- 5.30. MYPs are involved in nation-wide projects to ensure that the voices of Worcestershire's Young People can be heard at the highest levels of government



and organise events and projects, run campaigns and influence decision makers on the issues which matter most to young people. All MYPs meet once a year at the UK Youth Parliament Annual Sitting.

- 5.31. Run by young people for young people, UKYP gives young people between the age of 11 and 18 a voice, which is heard and listened to by local and national government, providers of services for young people and other agencies that have an interest in the views and needs of young people.
- 5.32. **For more information on UKYP see [www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk](http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk)**
- 5.33. **We suggest that, in addition to school councils, the Bromsgrove Worcestershire Youth Cabinet Members and the local UK Youth Parliament representatives also need to be involved in events for the Democracy Year Campaign. They could, along with other young people, be asked for their views on the review of the democracy pages of the council website, particularly our proposal for pages especially aimed at young people.**

#### U Decide

- 5.34. We interviewed Rebecca Dunne, Senior Corporate Policy and Performance Officer who told us about projects currently running to engage young people in the democratic process, including a local democracy magazine aimed at young people, which will be sent out to every 6<sup>th</sup> form in the District (16-17 year olds), young peoples focus groups and questionnaires and the U Decide project. “U Decide”, or participatory budgeting, is a way of giving local people the power to spend some public money to benefit their communities. This means they can share some of the responsibility for what happens where they live, and make some real changes.
- 5.35. U Decide provided young people in Bromsgrove District to get funding for projects for young people designed by young people, and decided how money will be spent. Young people aged 7-13 and 13-19 (or up to 25 for young people with disabilities) were able to apply and applications from schools, community and voluntary groups were also encouraged.
- 5.36. The scheme made grants from Worcestershire County Council’s FLOSS scheme available to young people across Bromsgrove District. £50,000 was made available to distribute; £10,000 for 7 to 13 year olds and £40,000 for 13 to 19 year olds. Grants of up to £5,000 were available for each individual group of 13 to 19 year olds and up to £1,250 for 7 to 13 year olds. A group of young assessors drew up a short list of project applications and these were taken forward to U Decide events at the end of March, where more young people voted on which should receive funding.



- 5.37. We believe that it is important that the council open up different routes of engagement, especially for young people. Projects like the U Decide event can engage with young people that may otherwise not engage through other mainstream projects such as schools councils.

**Draft Recommendation Ten**

***U Decide***

That the Council investigate the possibility of running a further U Decide or similar event in 2011 to involve young people in making decisions on local projects.

**Financial Implications**

The U Decide scheme 2010 required £50,000 grants from Worcestershire County Council's FLOSS. A further event would require a similar successful bid.

**Resource Implications**

There would be significant resource implications required to support any future event, comparable to the resources dedicated to the 2010 events.

- 5.38. We would like to see the council engage young people in democracy through a spectrum of different community organisations and networks, including through schools, the Trunk, the Scouts and Girl Guides and youth clubs.

**The Trunk**

- 5.39. "The Trunk is a community recourse centre based in Charford that delivers a wide variety of community support and recourses across neighbourhoods through the Bromsgrove District". Debbie Roberts, Managing Director, Empowering People in Communities [EPIC]
- 5.40. Activities at the Trunk are another good way of engaging with young people. Club Youth at the Trunk has a youth committee which elects young people to certain roles, for example, to represent them on the EPIC Advisory Team. We suggest that the council seek to involve young people at the Trunk in local democracy projects and the Local Democracy Year Campaign.
- 5.41. **To find out more about the Trunk and EPIC see [www.epic-se.co.uk](http://www.epic-se.co.uk)**

**Scouting for Democracy**

- 5.42. The Scout Association has launched a campaign to encourage young people to vote. This year around 10,000 scouts will be old enough to vote for the first time in the General Election and the association set up a website to encourage them and others to do so. The Scout Association's Active Citizen website explains why politics matters to young people, alongside advice on registering and volunteering and includes a forum for politicians to take part in online discussions



with young voters. The association is also sending information by post to 50,000 members in an attempt to boost turnout.

5.43. "In scouting we believe it is extremely important for young people to engage in democracy. Every vote counts..... We not only want our young members to see why they should vote but how politics impacts on the causes and concerns that they have." Wayne Bulpitt, The Scout Association's UK Chief Commissioner<sup>24</sup>.

5.44. **To find out more see [www.activecitizens.net](http://www.activecitizens.net)**

5.45. ***We suggest that the Scouts and Girl Guides be invited to participate in Local Democracy Year Campaign events.***

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## 6 A Local Democracy Campaign

- 6.1. We would like to see an assertive campaign to promote local democracy in the run up to the local elections in 2011 and beyond, which engages the whole community and invites a spectrum of different community organisations to participate, including the college, the schools, parish councils and other community organisations. The Democracy Year Campaign should link together all the events for the promotion of democracy under a common banner that the public can identify with.

### **Recommendation Eleven**

#### ***A Democracy Year Campaign***

That there be a Democracy Year Campaign to link together all the events for democracy year under the banner of promoting and involving people in local democracy.

#### **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

#### **Resource Implications**

Officer time and commitment will be required to co-ordinate and participate in the Democracy Year Campaign.

- 6.2. The Democracy Year Campaign should involve a range of different events and activities, including a programmed series of visits to secondary schools, Democracy Open Days for people to find out more about standing as a councillor, street theatre events, local democracy market stalls and stalls at parish events.
- 6.3. ***To find out about the Local Government Association's Local Democracy Campaign see [www.localdemocracy.lga.gov.uk](http://www.localdemocracy.lga.gov.uk)***

#### **A Champion for Democracy**

- 6.4. So that a Democracy Year Campaign can be taken forward both within the council and within the community we are recommending that an elected councillor be nominated a Democracy Champion for the period of the Democracy Year Campaign. This should be high profile, led from the council and yet totally non-party political. ***We suggest this role could be carried out by the Chairman of the Council. We also suggest that this role should continue in future years after the Democracy Year Campaign.***

<p><b><u>Recommendation Twelve</u></b>  <b><i>A Democracy Champion</i></b>          That a Member of the Council be nominated Democracy Champion for one year to champion local democracy.</p>
<p><b><u>Financial Implications</u></b></p> <p>No financial implications are envisaged.</p>
<p><b><u>Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>No significant resource implications are envisaged.</p>

A Democracy Campaign Banner

- 6.5. The Democracy Year Campaign should visibly link together all of the events to promote democracy under a common banner that can easily be identified by the public, so we are recommending a Democracy Year Campaign emblem to be used on all banners and publicity for the Democracy Year Campaign. This could be designed by young people, or at any rate, with young people in mind.



<p><b><u>Recommendation Thirteen</u></b>  <b><i>Democracy Campaign Emblem</i></b>          That there be an emblem designed for the Democracy Year Campaign to be used as a part of a democracy year campaign and used on all communications for Democracy Year.</p>
<p><b><u>Financial Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no direct financial implications arising.</p>
<p><b><u>Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>Officer time will be required to design the emblem.</p>

Democracy Year Campaign Steering Group

- 6.6. In order to take forward the Democracy Year Campaign events to promote local democracy we are recommending a Democracy Year Campaign Steering Group. This should include the key council and community partners necessary to co-ordinate the events and make sure that all of the events fit together as a single campaign and are programmed appropriately throughout the year.

**Recommendation Fourteen**

***Democracy Year Campaign Steering Group***

That there be convened a Democracy Year Campaign steering group, to meet at least 4 times a year during 2010-2011, to co-ordinate the Democracy Year Campaign events and activities.

**Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

Officer time will be required to convene and attend the steering group meetings.

- 6.7. It is suggested that the Democracy Year Campaign Steering Group will have cross party representation and include the relevant portfolio holders, the Democracy Champion, representatives from the relevant council departments, and external partners, including representatives from the County Council, parish councils, the Artrix and NEW College and local schools.
- 6.8. ***We suggest that the Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion and Engagement write to external partners including NEW College, Bromsgrove High Schools and the Artrix to invite them to nominate suitable representatives to participate in a Democracy Year Campaign Steering Group to co-ordinate events for Democracy Year 2010-2011.***

**Democracy Year Events**

- 6.9. We are proposing that the Democracy Year Campaign include a programmed series of events organised in co-operation with local community organisations and partners. It is envisaged that this will include incorporating the Democracy Year Campaign into events already within the Council and community events programmes, as well as a series of events to promote democracy and local democracy through the arts, films, street theatre, music etc.

### **Recommendation Fifteen**

#### ***Celebrating Democracy***

That Democracy Year include programmed events to concord with other relevant events in the Council events programme, including International Women's Day 2011, including a celebration of women's suffrage and the history of women's suffrage and Black History Month 2010 celebrating the history and achievements of the black civil rights movement in the USA, South Africa, the British Commonwealth and other parts of the world.

#### **Financial Implications**

On advice from Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, an extra £3000 will be required.

#### **Resource Implications**

Officer time may be required to co-ordinate and participate in the events.

- 6.10. It is envisaged that key note speakers be invited to speak on democracy at Democracy Year events including on International Women's Day and Black History Month.

#### **Young Question Time**

- 6.11. The Democracy Year Campaign could include a Question Time event for young people either in the schools or hosted by the District Council or other local venue, based along the same concept at the BBC TV programme. The Question Time panel could include members of the Schools Councils, elected Members of Bromsgrove District Council and the County Council, as well as other panellists of interest to young people, including young people themselves.

#### **Parish Participation**

- 6.12. We have engaged with parish councils both through the County Association of Local Councils and through speaking to parish councillors to ask for their views on how to improve community involvement in local democracy. We believe that parish councils should be key partners promote local democracy. So we are suggesting that the parishes are all formally invited to get involved in the Democracy Year Campaign and that local democratic arrangements are promoted at community events in the parishes not just in the town centres. It is hoped that the parish councils will play an enthusiastic and key role in the Democracy Year Campaign and that in turn this will help to improve the understanding of the role of the parishes and to encourage more people to stand for election at parish level.

**Recommendation Sixteen**

***The Parish Perspective***

That the Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion and Engagement write to the Parish Councils to invite them to join in the Democracy Year Campaign in partnership with the district Council.

**Financial Implications**

No financial implications arising.

**Resource Implications**

No significant resource implications are envisaged.

Get Involved!

- 6.13. ***The council can provide the community leadership for a Democracy Year Campaign and to engage people in local democracy, but its success will depend upon people and organisations throughout the community getting involved and taking joint ownership in the civic life of their community.***
- 6.14. Democracy is not something that is done to us, it is something that we have to do and we hope that what we have started here will be able to gather momentum to galvanise people throughout the District to get involved and play their part as active citizens in the local community.

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DRAFT

## WITNESSES

### Internal Witnesses

#### *Councillors:*

Cllr Geoff Denaro, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Resources  
Cllr Roger Smith Portfolio Holder for One Community (Including Community Engagement).

#### *Officers:*

Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council  
Ms Susan Mould – Electoral Services Manager Electoral Shared Services for Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council  
Mr. Andy Stephens - Committee Services Officer, Bromsgrove District Council.

### External Witnesses and Partner Agencies

Ms. Clare Baylis, Teacher Adviser for PSHE/Citizenship  
Mrs Sue Baxter - Chairman of Wythall Parish Council  
Mr. John Cypher - Chairman of Alvechurch Parish Council  
Kim Joy Edmunds – Deafblind Services Co-ordinator, Sensory Impairment Team, Worcestershire County Council  
Patricia Hacket, Chair of the Equality and Diversity Forum  
Mr. Peter John - Newsquest  
Huw Mosely, Arts Development and Special Events Officer  
Debbie Roberts, Managing Director, Empowering People in Communities  
Mr Steve Skinner, Democratic Services, Manager and Deputy Returning Officer / Deputy Electoral Registration Officer) at Redditch Borough Council.  
Manager, Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils  
Helen Young – Community Support Services Manager, Sense, West Midlands.  
Mr Andy Woods, Director of Artrix.

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- <sup>13</sup> Information compiled and submitted by Fiona Scott - Equality Officer, Bromsgrove District Council with contributions from Sue Mould – Electoral Services Manager, Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils, Kim Joy Edmunds – Deafblind Services Co-ordinator, Sensory Impairment Team, Worcestershire County Council Helen Young – Community Support Services Manager, Sense, West Midlands.
- <sup>14</sup> The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, Part 1: Democracy and Involvement, the Office of Public Sector Information 2009.
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**EQUALITY**  
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FOR LOCAL  
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ACHIEVING

**Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services**

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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### **OVERVIEW BOARD**

1st June 2010

#### **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND ALCOHOL FREE ZONES TASK GROUP - REVIEW**

Relevant Portfolio Holder *	Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths
Relevant Head of Service *	Head of Street Scene and Community
Chairman of Task Group	Councillor C. B. Taylor
Non-Key Decision	
<i>* as at the date of publication of the Task Group report</i>	

#### 1. **SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 During 2008, Members requested an overview and scrutiny investigation to be taken in respect of a task and finish exercise on anti-social behaviour and alcohol free zones within the District. This report updates the Board on the progress against the approved recommendations.

#### 2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the update report be noted.

#### 3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Steering Board (being the predecessor to the current Overview Board / Scrutiny Board arrangements) established the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group in April 2008, and Councillor C. B. Taylor was appointed Chairman.

- 3.2 The Task Group's terms of reference, compiled by the Task Group itself at its first meeting in June 2008, were approved by the subsequent Board meeting in July 2008. In brief, the Task Group's assignment was to investigate the following:-

"To examine the causes of anti-social behaviour in 11 - 17 year olds, taking into account the Council policies, and the public perception and definition of this problem; also, to examine the use and effectiveness of Alcohol Free Zones looking into the impact on crime, public disorder, enforcement levels and the general effect of drinking in public places."

- 3.3 Membership of the Task Group, as agreed at the Board meeting in April 2008, originally included the following Members:- Councillors Mrs. M. Bunker, Ms. H. J. Jones, Mrs. C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor and C. J. Tidmarsh. Councillors Miss D. H. Campbell JP and D. L. Pardoe were also appointed to the Task Group following the Board meeting in July 2008.

**OVERVIEW BOARD**

**1st June 2010**

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- 3.4 Members may recall that the first full meeting of the Task Group took place on 10th July 2008 with the intention of completing its Scrutiny Report with recommendations by November 2008. However, with both the size and scope of the subject matter to be considered, together with the August/summer holiday coinciding with the initial meetings of the Task Group, it was reported to the November 2008 Overview Board that the final report and recommendations would be delayed until January 2009. The Overview Board approved the Scrutiny Report on 3rd February 2009 and, on 4th March 2009, the report was considered by the Cabinet.
- 3.5 At the Cabinet meeting, both the Chairman of the Task Group, and the relevant Portfolio Holder (which, at the time, was Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths) presented the report. The Leader acknowledged the work which had been undertaken by the Task Group. It was reported at the meeting by the Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects that, in respect of Recommendation 4 (CCTV) in the report, a response from West Mercia Constabulary had been received since the publication of the Scrutiny Report and that, unfortunately, no funding would be available for additional lighting / CCTV cameras.
- 3.6 Following consideration of the Scrutiny Report, the Cabinet's decision was recorded as follows:-
- (a) *that approval be given to Recommendation 1, that the District Council work with its partner agencies to enhance lines of communication to inform the local media of events and good news stories with a view to encouraging more good publicity about young people, and thereby reduce the negative judgements placed on younger people in general;*
  - (b) *that approval be given to Recommendation 2, that whilst both the increased number of Police Community Support Officers and the enhanced powers granted of the District Council's Neighbourhood Wardens are to be welcomed, the North Worcestershire Division of the West Mercia Constabulary be urged to present a more visible presence in both the local community and at public events in order to maintain a low level of anti-social behaviour within the District;*
  - (c) *that Recommendation 3 be not approved due to the fact that since the recommendation had been agreed by the Task Group, the Council had agreed that Fixed Penalty Notices be ranked as a medium term priority and therefore funding was not included as part of the Medium Term Financial plan;*
  - (d) *that in relation to Recommendation 4, officers be tasked to carry out a review of the lighting around CCTV to identify if there are any issues and report back to Cabinet.*

Review / update

**3.7 Recommendation 1:**

**Enhance lines of communication with partners (High Priority)**

*It is recommended that the District Council work with its partner agencies to enhance lines of communication to inform the local media of events and good news stories with a view to encouraging more good publicity about young people, and thereby reduce the negative judgements placed on younger people in general.*

The Community Safety Team and Neighbourhood Wardens work closely with many partner agencies, including West Mercia Constabulary, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership and Trading Standards, together with other groups throughout the district. The Council itself has numerous links with schools and sports groups with a specific focus on activities, events and education for young people, all of which are promoted to encourage attendance, with press releases issued by the Communications Team to enhance the positive publicity.

**3.8 Recommendation 2:**

**Visible policing within the local community (Medium / High Priority)**

*It is recommended that, whilst both the increased number of Police Community Support Officers and the enhanced powers granted of the District Council's Neighbourhood Wardens are to be welcomed, the North Worcestershire Division of the West Mercia Constabulary be urged to present a more visible presence in both the local community and at public events in order to maintain a low level of anti-social behaviour within the District.*

There were 530 reported incidents of anti-social behaviour during April 2008 to March 2009 whilst during the same period for 2009 / 2010 there were 370 - a reduction of approximately 30%. Furthermore, there has been a 17% reduction of reported anti-social behaviour incidents in Charford during March 2010, together with a 15% reduction of incidents in the first four months of the year as a whole.

Whilst the Council has minimal direct input into the allocation of police resources, the figures appear to demonstrate that the West Mercia Constabulary are dealing with anti-social behaviour in an effective manner and managing the problems associated with it. Anti-social behaviour probably cannot be eradicated completely so reductions in the number of reported incidents are a positive indication that the issue is being tackled effectively.

**OVERVIEW BOARD**

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3.9 **Recommendation 3:**

**Tackling anti-social behaviour by way of Fixed Penalty Notices** (*Medium / High Priority*)

*It is recommended that, given the support shown by residents for fixed penalty notices as a means of tackling anti-social behaviour and drinking in an 'alcohol free zone', the Council investigate the feasibility of introducing Penalty Notices for such disorder.*

As this was not approved by the Cabinet, no action has been taken in respect of this recommendation. However, the police representatives did state at the time of the Task Group's scrutiny investigation that powers already exist to deal with young (underage) persons consuming alcohol whether in an area covered by a Designated Public Places Order [DPPO] ('alcohol free zone') or not.

3.10 **Recommendation 4:**

**Maximise use and effectiveness of CCTV** (*Low / Medium Priority*)

*It is recommended that, where lighting around the Council's CCTV cameras is negligible or non-existent, especially within designated 'alcohol free zones', the Council investigate enhancing visibility by either introducing additional lighting and / or additional CCTV cameras and, if this should be feasible, whether funding may also be available from the police.*

Shortly after the Task Group published its report, a response was received from West Mercia Constabulary to say that "unfortunately, no funding would be available for additional lighting / CCTV cameras." However, a planned upgrade to many of the CCTV cameras was underway during the early part of 2009 which modernised the camera system and improved the quality fed back to the CCTV Control Room.

Furthermore, whilst the Task Group identified the existing DPPOs within the district and were able to consider their effectiveness, the West Mercia Constabulary do not appear to actively support the creation of new ones; for example:

<u>Date of Licensing Committee</u>	<u>Location of DPPO applied for</u>	<u>Police view</u>
21st July 2008	Charford Recreation Ground	Not supported
21st July 2008	Compass Way, Breme Park, Bromsgrove	Not supported
30th November 2009	Cofton Hackett	Not supported



## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### **OVERVIEW BOARD**

1st June 2010

<u>Date of Licensing Committee</u>	<u>Location of DPPO applied for</u>	<u>Police view</u>
11th January 2010	Humphrey Avenue, Charford	Not supported
24th May 2010	Bromsgrove Railway Station	Not supported

At the meeting of the Licensing Committee on 18th May 2009, a procedure for the consideration of applications and requests for DPPOs was approved which, amongst other things, sought to ensure the attendance of a representative from West Mercia Constabulary at future meetings when such issues were dealt with.

The decision of the Licensing Committee on 24th May 2010 will be reported at the meeting of the Board. It is interesting to note however that the views of West Mercia Constabulary conflict with those of the British Transport Police who were also consulted on the application for a DPPO, indicating that there appears to be a difference of opinion as to the effectiveness of such a designation. West Mercia Constabulary have explained in the past that they have alternative powers by which they can prevent the consumption of alcohol in a public place and, if the reduction in anti-social behaviour referred to in 3.8 above can be used as an indication, it would appear that their methods are proving effective.

#### 4. **KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The key issues are identified in the previous section of the report.

#### 5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### 6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

#### 7. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no direct policy implications arising from this report.

#### 8. **COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

8.1 One Community

## **OVERVIEW BOARD**

1st June 2010

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### **9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

9.1 There are no issues in respect of risk management or health and safety arising from this report.

### **10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 It is anticipated that the residents within the district will benefit from the improving situation in respect of anti-social behaviour, and the continuing improvements and maintenance to the CCTV system.

### **11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no direct equalities and diversity implications arising from this report.

### **12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

12.1 There are no issues in respect of value for money, procurement and / or asset management arising from this report.

### **13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

13.1 There are no issues in respect of climate change, carbon implications and / or biodiversity arising from this report.

### **14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

### **15. GOVERNANCE / PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 There are no direct governance / performance management implications arising from this report.

### **16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

16.1 The Community Safety Team and the neighbourhood wardens continually work in partnership with the West Mercia Constabulary and other agencies to reduce anti-social behaviour within the District. Furthermore, Members should note that the Council has a duty to consider how its actions and decisions play a part in crime and disorder.

**OVERVIEW BOARD**

**1st June 2010**

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

17.1 There are no direct health inequalities implications arising from this report.

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

18.1 There is no simple solution to the prevention of anti-social behaviour. However, by working in partnership with the West Mercia Constabulary and other related agencies, the problem can be tackled and, as the figures illustrate in section 3. of this report, cases of anti-social behaviour appear to be falling.

18.2 In general, West Mercia Constabulary do not appear to support applications for DPPOs ('Alcohol Free Zones') stating that other powers are available for them to take action against persons consuming alcohol in public places. As noted in section 3. above, two recent requests for DPPO's were refused on the basis of the lack of support for them by West Mercia Constabulary. However, the conflicting views of West Mercia Constabulary and the British Transport Police in respect of the application for a DPPO at Bromsgrove Railway Station indicate that there appears to be a difference of opinion as to the effectiveness of such a designation. The decision of the Licensing Committee will be reported at the meeting of the Board.

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

19.1 The Community Safety Team maintain links with West Mercia Constabulary, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership, Trading Standards and many community groups and agencies in the normal course of their activities.

**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	No
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	No
Executive Director - Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	No
Executive Director - Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	No

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW BOARD**

1st June 2010

Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	No
Head of Resources	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

21. **WARDS AFFECTED**

21.1 All wards

22. **APPENDICES**

22.1 None

23. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

23.1 None

24. **KEY**

CCTV - Closed Circuit Television (surveillance camera)  
DPPO - Designated Public Places Order

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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## FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

1 JUNE TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2010

This Forward Plan lists the **Key Decisions** which it is proposed to take during the period 1 June to 30 September 2010. **Key Decisions** are executive decisions which must be taken or delegated by the Council's Cabinet and relate to matters which fall within the Council's agreed Budget and Policy Framework.

**Key Decisions** are those executive decisions which are likely to:

- (i) result in the Council incurring expenditure, foregoing income or the making of savings in excess of £50,000 or which are otherwise significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (ii) be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the district;

**Key Decisions** will include:

1. A decision which would result in any expenditure or saving by way of a reduction in expenditure of £50,000 provided the expenditure or saving is specifically approved in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
2. A virement of any amount exceeding £50,000 provided it is within any virement limits approved by the Council;
3. Any proposal to dispose of any Council asset with a value of £50,000 or more or which is otherwise considered significant by the Corporate Property Officer;
4. Any proposal to cease to provide a Council service (other than a temporary cessation of service of not more than 6 months).
5. Any proposal which would discriminate for or against any minority group.

**Further details of each Key Decision are appended to the Forward Plan.** To assist with internal forward planning, this Plan also lists other non-key decisions which the Cabinet is expected to make during the specified four month period. The Forward Plan is updated and published on the Council's website on a monthly basis.

## CABINET MEMBERSHIP

Councillor R. Hollingworth	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy, Performance, Partnerships and Economic Development
Councillor G. N. Denaro	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Resources (including Customer Services, Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services and Human Resources)
Councillor M. J. A. Webb	Portfolio Holder for Community Services (including Leisure, Cultural Services, Environmental Services and Crime and Disorder/CCTV)
Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration
Councillor Dr. D. W. P. Booth	Portfolio Holder for Business Transformation with special responsibility for the Town Centre Regeneration
Councillor P. J. Whittaker	Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services and Strategic Housing
Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey	Portfolio Holder for Older People, the Young and Vulnerable People
Councillor R. D. Smith	Portfolio Holder for Community Cohesion and Engagement

## CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATIONS

For **Key Decisions** the summary document appended to the Forward Plan sets out details of any proposed consultation process. Any person/organisation not listed who would like to be consulted or who wishes to make representations on the proposed decision are encouraged to get in touch with the relevant report author as soon as possible before the proposed date of the decision. Contact details are provided.

Alternatively you may write to The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA or email: [k.firth@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:k.firth@bromsgrove.gov.uk)

Item No.	Decision Taker & Expected Date of Decision	Original Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Decision	Type of Decision (Key or Non-Key)	Lead Councillor/ Portfolio Holder	Comments
1	Cabinet 2 June 2010	<b>Cabinet 7 April 2010</b>	Access Policy for Trans-People (Sports & Leisure Services & Facilities)	<b>Key</b>	Councillor M. J. A. Webb	Delayed to allow for outcome of consultation process
2	Cabinet 2 June 2010	<b>Cabinet 7 April 2010</b>	Artrix – Incorporation of Operating Trust	Non-Key	Councillor M. J. A. Webb	Delayed by Members for further consideration
3	Cabinet 2 June 2010	<b>Cabinet 3 February 2010</b>	Bromsgrove Memorial/Tribute	Non-Key	Councillor G. N Denaro	Delayed by officers and Members for further consideration
4	Cabinet 2 June 2010		Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) at Swanslength Open Space ( <i>this report is subject to further public consultation on 27 May 2010</i> )	Non-Key	Councillor M. J. A. Webb	
5	Cabinet 2 June 2010		Performance Monitoring – April 2010	Non-Key	Councillor R. Hollingworth	
6	Cabinet 2 June 2010	<b>Cabinet 28 April 2010</b>	Victoria Ground Lease ( <i>this report will contain exempt information and be considered in private session</i> )	Non-Key	Councillor M. J. A. Webb	Delayed by officers for further consideration
7	Cabinet 2 June 2010		Worcestershire Partnership Terms of Engagement	Non-Key	Councillor R. Hollingworth	
8	Cabinet 30 June 2010		Council Annual Report 2009/10	Non-Key*	Councillor R. Hollingworth	* Cabinet will make recommendations to the full Council that evening

9	Cabinet 30 June 2010		Statement of Accounts	Non-Key*	Councillor G. N. Denaro	* Cabinet will make recommendations to the full Council that evening
10	Cabinet 30 June 2010	<b>Cabinet 3 March 2009</b>	Benefit Take-Up Strategy	Non-Key	Councillor G. N. Denaro	Delayed by officers for consultation with Equalities & Diversity Forum
11	Cabinet 30 June 2010	<b>Cabinet 4 November 2009</b>	Community Engagement Strategy Review	Non-Key	Councillor R. D. Smith	Deferred to take account of new business plans
12	Cabinet 30 June 2010	<b>Cabinet 28 April 2010</b>	Community Involvement in the Democratic Process – Overview Board/Task Group report	Non-Key	Councillors G. N. Denaro & R. D. Smith	Delayed by officers for further consultations
13	Cabinet 30 June 2010	<b>Cabinet 2 June 2010</b>	Improving Residents Satisfaction - Scrutiny Board/Task Group Report	Non-Key	Councillor R. D. Smith	Delayed for further consideration by Task Group
14	Cabinet 30 June 2010		Improvement Plan 2010/11	Non-Key	Councillor R. Hollingworth	
15	Cabinet 30 June 2010		Performance Monitoring – May 2010	Non-Key	Councillor R. Hollingworth	
16	Cabinet 4 August 2010	<b>Cabinet 2 December 2009</b>	Arts and Events Strategy 2010/11 to 2013/14	<b>Key</b>	Councillor R. D. Smith	Delayed by officers for further consideration
17	Cabinet 4 August 2010	<b>Cabinet 2 June 2010</b>	Garden Waste Service – Future Development	<b>Key</b>	Councillor M. J. A. Webb	Delayed by Members for further financial information
18	Cabinet 4 August 2010		Artrix/Right of Way – Blue Light Centre	Non-Key	Councillor G. N. Denaro	
19	Cabinet 4 August 2010		Building Control Fees	Non-Key	Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.	



20	Cabinet 4 August 2010		Finance & Performance Monitoring Report - Quarter 1 2010/11	Non-Key	Councillor R. Hollingworth	
21	Cabinet 4 August 2010		Improvement Plan Exception Report – Quarter 1 2010/11	Non-Key	Councillor R. Hollingworth	
22	Cabinet 1 September 2010		Improvement Plan Exception Report – July 2010	Non-Key	Councillor R. Hollingworth	
23	Cabinet 1 September 2010		Performance Monitoring – July 2010	Non-Key	Councillor R. Hollingworth	

NOTE: There will be no Cabinet meetings in July 2010

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**KEY DECISION**

Proposed to be made by  
the Cabinet on  
**2 June 2010**

<p><b>LEAD MEMBER/ PORTFOLIO HOLDER</b></p> <p>Councillor Geoff Denaro</p>	<p><b>ITEM</b></p> <p>SPORTS AND LEISURE – SERVICES AND FACILITIES – ACCESS FOR TRANS-PEOPLE</p>	<p><b>WARDS AFFECTED</b></p> <p>All wards</p>
<p><b>DOCUMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE DECISION TAKER</b></p> <p>Sports and Leisure – Services and Facilities – Access for Trans-People – Policy</p> <p><b>REPORT AUTHOR</b></p> <p>Fiona Scott, Equality Officer Telephone 01527 881719</p>	<p><b>SUMMARY</b></p> <p>This report explains the background to the consultation on and introduction of a policy in relation to Sports and Leisure Services and Facilities – Access for Trans-people. There is currently no policy for employees or other people who provide sports and leisure services on behalf of the District Council on the issues that arise when dealing with individuals who are going through a transition process and may have privacy needs or may present inappropriately causing concern to other service users. This policy will explain the best ways of dealing with these situations and this will help staff by providing an agreed framework to which they can refer should the need arise. The draft policy has been compiled with the assistance of specialist knowledge from the Gender Trust and has been subject to wide consultation in the District up to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.</p>	<p><b>REASONS FOR BEING ON THE FORWARD PLAN</b></p> <p>The introduction of this policy affects all wards in the District and all members of the public who use Sports and Leisure Services and Facilities provided by the District Council.</p>

<p><b>CONSULTATION DETAILS</b></p> <p><b>Stakeholders</b> Trans-people in the Bromsgrove District and trans – people visiting the District.</p> <p>All other members of the community who use the Sports and Leisure Services and Facilities provided by the Council or through partners are also affected. The Policy promotes understanding of differences and the reasons for the Council's policy.</p>	<p><b>Method of Consultation</b></p> <p>The Draft Policy and Consultation Comments form have been on the Council's website since 12<sup>th</sup> November. There was a press release in the previous week which announced the consultation period and the drop in sessions at the Customer Service Centre. These drop in sessions are for the public and staff to talk to a specialist adviser on this subject and give feedback for the consultation exercise. Training sessions have been provided for elected members, Equality Champions. The information has been circulated for comment to Senior and Corporate Management Teams and Trade Unions. Further information has been made available on the Council's Intranet and the documents have been widely circulated throughout community contacts and organisations.</p>	<p><b>Consultation period or dates</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> November to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010</p>
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**DECISION TO BE MADE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH**  
N/A

**KEY DECISION**

Proposed to be made by the Cabinet  
on 4 August 2010

<b>LEAD MEMBER/PORTFOLIO HOLDER</b>	<b>ITEM</b>	<b>WARDS AFFECTED</b>
Cllr Roger Smith	Arts and Events Strategy 2010 – 2013	All Wards
<b>DOCUMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE DECISION TAKER</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>REASONS FOR BEING ON THE FORWARD PLAN</b>
<p>Report of the Deputy Head of Street Scene and Community</p> <p><b>REPORT AUTHOR –</b> Huw Moseley Arts Development and Special Events Officer 01527 881381</p>	<p>The Arts and Events Strategy will outline the future delivery of Arts and Events through out the District, defining partnerships, identifying future priority areas for both investment and development, and will be supported by a comprehensive action plan detailing key future projects and areas of delivery. The Arts and Events strategy will include identification of significant partnerships and define key objectives linked to Worcestershire Arts Partnership. The Arts and Events Strategy will be a key document in guiding the districts investment in Arts and Events, and Bromsgrove Arts Alive! Arts Forum will be a key partner in delivering the strategy. Artrix assisting to shape the vision of the residents.</p>	<p>Significant effect on the future delivery of Arts and Events across the district.</p>

<b>CONSULTATION DETAILS</b>		
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Method of Consultation</b>	<b>Consultation Period or Dates</b>
<p>Worcestershire Arts Partnership</p> <p>Bromsgrove Arts Alive – Arts Forum</p> <p>Artrix – Bromsgrove Arts Centre</p> <p>Youth Service, Children’s Services, Worcestershire CC</p> <p>Celebratory Events and Sponsorship Group</p> <p>Community Safety</p> <p>Arts Practitioners</p> <p>Chair persons of Community Events</p>	<p>Draft document including Action Plan provided for comments to all Stakeholders. Draft document amended accordingly. Format of consultation will be through questionnaires, group meetings and key partner meetings.</p>	<p>1<sup>st</sup> August through to 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009.</p>

**DECISIONS TO BE MADE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH**

N/A

**KEY DECISION**

Proposed to be made by  
the Cabinet on  
**4 August 2010**

<p><b>LEAD MEMBER/ PORTFOLIO HOLDER</b></p> <p>Mike Webb</p>	<p><b>ITEM</b></p> <p>GARDEN WASTE SERVICE REPORT</p>	<p><b>WARDS AFFECTED</b></p> <p>All wards affected</p>
<p><b>DOCUMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE DECISION TAKER</b></p> <p>Garden Waste Service report and any attached appendices</p> <p><b>REPORT AUTHOR</b></p> <p>Guy Revans Head of Environmental Services 01527 881703</p>	<p><b>SUMMARY</b></p> <p>The report requires members to make decision on financial, strategic and operational matter that will directly affect the future of the garden waste service. Decisions need to be made over the cost of the service for future years; development of customer payment methods; customer identification methods to allow accurate recording and control of customers and non customers; bin sizes; communicating to our customers year on year; development of a trading account for the service; budget for ongoing brown bin provision; move to rear end loaders and use of a new composting facility. Some of the issues will have a substantial financial impact on the service, both in set up and operational costs however will enhance the experience of the customer however it will enable the service to be managed effectively.</p>	<p><b>REASONS FOR BEING ON THE FORWARD PLAN</b></p> <p>The areas outlined in the summary will have a direct affect on the future of the garden waste service, its ability to generate income and to operate as a commercial operation.</p> <p>As at 1st April 2010 15,169 households have applied for this service and these customers are spread across all wards within the district.</p>

<b>CONSULTATION DETAILS</b>	<b>Method of Consultation</b>	<b>Consultation period or dates</b>
<b>Stakeholders</b> NA		

**DECISION TO BE MADE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH**  
Redditch Borough Council