

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**TUESDAY, 15TH JUNE 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors A. N. Blagg, Mrs. M. Bunker, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, D. L. Pardoe, C. R. Scurrill, C. B. Taylor, C. J. Tidmarsh and L. J. Turner

Officers: Mr. H. Bennett, Mrs. A. Heighway, Mrs. S. Sellers, Mr. C. Santoriello-Smith, Mr. M. Carr and Ms. A. Scarce

1/10 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor S. R. Colella be elected Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

2/10 **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED** that Councillor D. L. Pardoe be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

3/10 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs. C. J. Spencer.

4/10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor Mrs. Griffiths declared a personal interest in item 6 on the agenda; Petitions – Alvechurch Multi-Usage Games Area, as she had been a Member of the Cabinet at the time the decision was taken to install the MUGA and was a Ward Councillor for Alvechurch.

5/10 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 9th March 2010 were submitted.

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

6/10 **PETITIONS - ALVECHURCH MULTI-USAGE GAMES AREA (MUGA)**

The Board was presented with three petitions on the Multi-Usage Games Area (MUGA) at Swans Length, Alvechurch. The Chairman explained that one role of the Board was to receive petitions, to determine whether to hold an inquiry and to make recommendations to the Cabinet. He outlined the process for receiving petitions, whereby the petition organiser for each petition is allowed

up to 5 minutes to present their petition.

The first petition was presented by Mrs. Sarah Morgan. The petition was entitled "I, the below, wish the MUGA, at Swans Length Alvechurch, be dismantled and removed". Mrs. Morgan explained that the petition was requesting removal of the MUGA facility and outlined the reasons for this. These included the anti-social behaviour reported to take place in and around the MUGA. The petition contained 90 signatures.

The second petition was presented by Mr. Alex Cooke. The petition was entitled "I sign this digital petition to register my support for saving the Alvechurch MUGA". Mr. Cooke explained that the petition was against demolition and removal of the MUGA facility and outlined the reasons for this. These included that the MUGA was a valued and much used resource for children and families in the area. The petition contained 108 signatures.

The third petition was presented by Miss Emily Wightman. The petition was entitled "Join if you want to keep the MUGA in Alvechurch". Miss Wightman explained that the petition was against demolition and removal of the MUGA facility and outlined the reasons for this. These included that the MUGA was a facility valued by children and young people in the neighbourhood. The petition contained 103 signatures.

The Chairman thanked the petition organisers for presenting their petitions and asked the Head of Community Services to comment. The Board were advised that there had been an increase in reported anti-social behaviour and complaints from residents who lived in the proximity of the MUGA. Public engagement on the issue through a local resident focus group had been carried out to consider the issues and at a meeting of the resident focus group it had been decided that the removal of the MUGA was an option that the group would like the local authority to consider. The matter had been presented to Cabinet on 2nd June 2010, as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report. In the meantime, the petitions on the MUGA had been submitted and the Cabinet had referred consideration of the issue to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board, in accordance with the Council Constitution.

It was moved that an inquiry be carried out by the Board to consider the matter in detail and to interview key witnesses.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that an inquiry be held into the future of the MUGA facility at Swans Length, Alvechurch and the matter be considered at an extra meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board on 22nd July 2010; that key witnesses be invited to this meeting, and the Head of Community Services be asked to provide the key evidence identified in a written report;
- (b) that the terms of reference for the inquiry be:  
"Aim:  
To investigate the perceived crime and disorder issues and the future options for the Multi Use Games Area facility at Swans Length, Alvechurch.

*Objectives:*

1. To investigate the crime and disorder issues around the MUGA
  2. To consider the value of the MUGA to local residents
  3. To identify the possible options and associated costs and benefits for the MUGA.”
- (c) that the following key witnesses be interviewed during the enquiries, together with any possible expert advisor on anti-social behaviour (e.g. from the County Council):
- The relevant Portfolio Holder
  - The Head of Service
  - West Mercia Police
  - Ward Councillors
  - The Chairman of Alvechurch Parish Council
  - Bromsgrove District Council CCTV Manager
  - Alvechurch Youth Club,
  - Any Residents Associations
  - Any Neighbourhood Watch organisation in the neighbourhood
  - Young people in the neighbourhood.
- (d) that a site visit be carried out to inspect the MUGA and that this be organised by the Scrutiny Officer;
- (e) that the following key information be provided by the Community Services Department:
- anti social behaviour data for the neighbourhood before and after installation of the MUGA,
  - the cost of installation, the cost of removal, the cost of putting the MUGA into storage and
  - the evidence for the need of the MUGA facility when it was installed.
- (f) that the following be identified as key questions to put to witnesses, together with any further questions that Members may wish to submit to the Scrutiny Officer:
- Q What work has been done elsewhere to deal with similar anti social behaviour problems around other MUGA facilities?
  - Q What options have been explored for alteration of the structure, layout and seating of the MUGA facility to deter anti-social behaviour?
  - Q What alternatives to removal of the MUGA have been identified?
  - Q Is there any way to assess the usage of the MUGA by children and families in the area?
  - Q Are the anti-social problems seasonal, i.e. higher at particular times of year?
  - Q Are there any options for surveillance of the MUGA to deter anti-social behaviour (e.g. police, CCTV, local residents etc).
  - Q Is there any data to compare anti-social behaviour at the Alvechurch MUGA with other MUGA facilities?
  - Q Is there any data to show the incidents of anti-social behaviour reported?
  - Q Where do people reportedly misusing the MUGA and consuming alcohol on the site buy the alcohol? Is there a local off licence where alcohol might be being obtained and is this being

investigated to see if they are selling alcohol to underage customers who are misusing the MUGA?

7/10     **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLANNING**

Members of the Board received a report of the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services which outlined the process and rationale for Overview and Scrutiny Work Planning for 2010/11 and were asked to consider and identify the priority issues for Overview and Scrutiny for 2010/11.

The Scrutiny Officer gave a short presentation to outline the process for identification and allocation of topics. The potential topics for investigation by the Boards had been identified in the Quarterly meetings with the Leader, proposals by Members of the Council, consultation with the Corporate Management Team, and consultation with the Bromsgrove Partnership (LSP). Members had also been invited to submit topic proposals in advance of the meeting and one topic proposal had been received from Councillor L. J. Turner entitled "Local Food". A list of potential topics had been drawn up and Members were asked to propose any further topics and to identify the top priority topics and refer these to the relevant Boards for inclusion in their work programmes.

Members of the Board considered the proposal from Councillor Turner. The proposal on "Local Food" was:

- "To investigate the availability of locally sourced foods in local shops, supermarkets, restaurants, and in schools and elderly care homes, day centres etc.
- To actively promote local food.
- To ascertain the viability of encouraging additional Local Food/Farmers Markets in District Wards other than Bromsgrove Town.
- Reduction of carbon footprint in the local food economy".

Members of the Board considered the allocation of topics to each Board and each Member nominated up to 8 high priority topics. These were collated and it was

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the proposal on "Local Food" be designated a high priority topic and referred to the Overview Board for inclusion in its Work Programme; and
- (b) that the Scrutiny Officer, in consultation with the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Boards, be asked to schedule the topics prioritised around the remaining meetings of the Boards for 2010/11.

8/10     **VERBAL UPDATE ON THE WORCESTERSHIRE HUB JOINT SCRUTINY TASK GROUP (COUNCILLOR C. B. TAYLOR)**

Councillor C. B. Taylor provided the Board with an update on the progress of the Worcestershire Hub Joint Scrutiny Task Group. He reported that there were some concerns about the planning and direction of the investigation.

**RESOLVED** that the Chairman of the Worcestershire Hub Joint Scrutiny Task Group be invited, by Councillor Taylor, to a future meeting of the Board.

The meeting closed at 7.46 p.m.

Chairman