

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 18TH APRIL 2012 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Chairman), R. J. Laight (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, Mrs. J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, Ms. M. T. Buxton, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, Dr. B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, Mrs. R. L. Dent, S. J. Dudley, K. A. Grant-Pearce, Miss P. A. Harrison, R. Hollingworth, Mrs. H. J. Jones, P. Lammas, B. Lewis F.CMI, L. C. R. Mallett, Mrs. C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, C. R. Scurrrell, Mrs. E. M. Shannon, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP, Mrs. C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor, C. J. Tidmarsh, L. J. Turner, M. J. A. Webb, P. J. Whittaker and C. J. K. Wilson

115/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP and J. A. Ruck.

116/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

117/11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

118/11 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, THE CIVIC HEAD OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Civic Head referred to the following events:

- (a) St George's Day Celebrations in Bromsgrove High Street on 21st April 2012;
- (b) Civic Dinner Dance Service at Kings Norton Golf Club on 27th April 2012;
- (c) Visit by HRH The Duke of Kent to Bromsgrove on 15 May 2012.

119/11 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

- (a) The Leader informed Members that he had asked officers to review the number of Council meetings held as compared to some other authorities it held almost twice as many.

- (b) The Leader referred to his concerns about the Audit Board including the lack of a work plan. He had asked officers to review the Board and if it did not work he would propose that it be closed down and merged with Overview and Scrutiny.

120/11 **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 7TH MARCH AND 4TH APRIL 2012**

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 7th March and 4th April 2012 were received.

Arising from queries raised by Councillor P. M. McDonald with regard to Council funding of the Artrix and representation on its Boards, the Leader responded that no set of accounts had yet been received which showed the Artrix to be in profit, that if it did make a profit then the funding would be cut and that ex-councillors would be removed from the Boards in May.

121/11 **CONSTITUTION CHANGES**

With reference to Minute No. 112/11 (Constitution Changes), Members considered a report of the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services on further proposed changes to the Council's Constitution with regard to Part 20 – Code of Practice – Planning Services in respect of site visits and the process for managing Motions on Notice.

Having been moved by Councillor M. A. Bullivant and seconded by Councillor M. J. A. Webb, it was

RESOLVED that approval be given to the proposed amendments to the Constitution in relation to the following issues as referred to in the appendices to the report:

- (a) Code of Practice – Planning Services;
- (b) Council Procedure Rules (Motions on Notice).

122/11 **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Three questions on notice were taken in the order received.

1. Question submitted by Councillor C. J. Bloore

“Can the Leader tell us what steps the Council is taking to tackle the expected increase in the number of residents in Bromsgrove needing to be placed in temporary accommodation?”

The Leader referred the question to Councillor C. B Taylor as the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Taylor replied that the Council's Strategic Housing Officers were working with registered social providers to ascertain the impact of changes in entitlement to local housing allowance, the implementation

of the welfare reform legislation and potential homelessness. A multi-agency steering group had been set up to review the implications, identify key issues and map any future impact. The Council was aware that 135 households were affected by reductions in entitlement to local housing allowance within the private sector. In addition, the changes particularly for those under 35, had meant that the private sector was no longer accessible to many single people. Therefore BDHT was anticipating an increase in homeless approaches from those who would normally access the private sector but who were no longer able to do so. In respect of the change in under-occupational housing benefit entitlement for social housing tenants, BDHT had identified approximately 220 tenants who would no longer be entitled to full housing benefit. All other partner registered providers were aware of the benefit changes and were working towards achieving an understanding of the numbers affected. Officers would be in a strong position to report on the full implications by the summer. The under-occupation and benefit cap changes would not take effect until April 2013 and the Council was working towards being in a strong position to mitigate the impact of this.

Councillor Bloore asked a supplementary question as to whether the Portfolio Holder shared the actions and concerns of the Redditch Conservative and Labour Groups who had written to the Secretary of State to urge changes to the benefits legislation to give people the option of whether they would rather have their benefit paid direct to them or for it continue to be paid direct to their landlord.

Councillor Taylor replied that he had no knowledge of this letter and so was unable to give a comment.

2. Question submitted by Councillor S. P. Shannon

"From a report recently reported to this Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board "Statement of Principles regarding Affordable Housing Provision"

In light of pending introduction of a 'bedroom tax' for Bromsgrove residents receiving housing benefit and also the abolition of lifetime tenancies for residents living in affordable housing. Will this Council be removing from its statement of principles the condition that 100% of affordable housing should be built to the Lifetime Homes Design Criteria 5th July 2010 (revised)?

Councillor C. B. Taylor as the relevant Portfolio Holder responded that the draft Core Strategy consultation was underway and that page 43 would answer the question. In response to a further comment from Councillor S. P. Shannon, he undertook to provide him with a copy of the draft Core Strategy document.

3. Question submitted by Councillor P. M. McDonald

“Would the Chairman please inform me how much revenue has been lost to the public purse regarding the excess tipping carried out at the Marlbrook Tip?”

The Chairman referred this to the Leader to respond.

The Leader responded that he assumed the “public purse” meant landfill tax. He had no intention of wasting time to find out how much it was and that the question sounded like an accusation of fraud. If Councillor McDonald believed this, then with officers’ approval, he was happy for him to have all the documents that had been submitted to work it out for himself and take it to the police.

Councillor McDonald asked a supplementary question that if the Leader believed it was fraud because of the excess of over a million tonnes why had he not gone to the police?

The Leader responded that he never said that he believed there was fraud, what he had said was he did not know whether there was and he had no intentions of working it out. He had said that it sounded like the councillor opposite was making an accusation of fraud. He had offered to give Councillor McDonald the data so he could work it out, if that was what he believed, and that he should go to the police himself.

123/11 MOTION - AUSTIN ROAD

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor S. P. Shannon.

“Propose that this authority takes action to hasten the adoption process in relation to Austin Road, a road constructed by the Council but has never been incorporated into the recognised highways system.”

The motion was moved by Councillor S. P. Shannon and seconded by Councillor Mrs. E. M. Shannon.

Following debate, on a requisition under Council Procedure Rule 17.5 the following details of voting on the motion were recorded.

For the motion: Councillors C. J. Bloore, Ms. M. T. Buxton, L. C. R. Mallett, Mrs. C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, Mrs. E. M. Shannon, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon and C. J. K. Wilson (10);

Against the motion: Councillors Mrs. J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, Dr. B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, Mrs. R. L. Dent, S. J. Dudley, K. A. Grant-Pierce, Miss P. A. Harrison, R. Hollingworth, Mrs. H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, B. Lewis, C. R. Scurrall, Mrs. M. A. Sherrey, Mrs. C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor, C. J. Tidmarsh, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (24);

Abstentions: Councillors Mrs. S. J. Baxter and L. J. Turner (2)

Accordingly, the Chairman declared the motion to be LOST.

The meeting closed at 6.40 p.m.

Chairman