

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 6TH MARCH 2013 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, M. A. Bullivant, C. B. Taylor and M. J. A. Webb

Officers: Ms. S. Hanley, Ms. T. Kristunas, Mr. G. Revans, Ms. S. Morgan, Mrs. S. Sellers, Ms. C. John and Ms. R. Cole.

117/12 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

118/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

119/12 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th February 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

120/12 **SHARED SERVICES BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 10th January 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

121/12 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 25th February 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

122/12 **HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT**

The Cabinet considered the requirement to present a "further report" to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) under the Home Energy

Conservation Act 1995 (HECA). The proposed “further report” was set out in Appendix 1 to the report of the Head of Environmental Services.

It was noted that the HECA report specifically committed the Authority to undertake its obligations in relation to domestic home energy efficiency, to tackle fuel security, combat fuel poverty and to contribute to the mitigation of carbon emissions locally. The report detailed progress made so far and confirmed that the Council would participate in and utilise the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation as its main delivery mechanism for HECA aims.

It was further noted that DECC guidance requested Authorities to set “ambitious targets” to improve home energy efficiency. Whilst the Council was committed to acting on issues relating to energy and had agreed strategies in place to address these issues, the current report specifically did not set targets in view of the unknown additional resource implications. Targets would be established when there was a clear idea of how the Green Deal would be delivered.

It was stated that a further report including details of the Green Deal would be submitted to the Cabinet in June 2013.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the HECA further report contained at Appendix 1 to the report of the Head of Environmental Services be approved for submission to DECC and for publication on the Council’s website; and
- (b) That the current position in relation to the Green Deal be noted.

123/12 **FLOODING MITIGATION MEASURES**

Members considered a report on proposed works to mitigate flooding across the District. The majority of the work involved the replacement of existing vertical trash screens with a screen of an alternative design to include an angled grille which would help to prevent excess debris building up and blocking culverts. There was a clear relationship between the presence of the vertical grilles and instances of flooding problems. The cost of dealing with instances of blockages in an attempt to prevent flooding was significant in relation to emergency call outs and clearly there was great concern from residents who in some cases had been attempting to deal with the problems themselves.

It was reported that 10 sites around the District had been identified to date as requiring replacement grilles together with an additional new site adjacent to St. Chad’s Recreation Ground, Rubery where currently no grille was in place. In addition the survey work across the District was not yet complete and there was a likelihood of further sites being identified. There was therefore a proposal for contingency funding to cover the costs of replacement grilles at an additional 5 sites.

It was confirmed that in areas where there were private landowners or joint or multiple ownership, joint arrangements for funding would be sought with

riparian owners. At 2 sites in Catshill, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust was meeting the cost of replacing grilles within its ownership.

Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Capital Programme 2013/14 be increased by £37,400 to meet the costs in relation to the provision of 11 grilles and associated works in the locations listed in the report and that the funding be met from balances; and
- (b) that the Capital programme 2013/14 be increased by £17,000 to meet the costs in relation to the provision of 5 further grilles and associated works, on a contingency basis and that the funding be met from balances.

124/12 **FINANCE MONITORING 2012/2013 Q3**

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council's financial position for the period April to December 2013 together with a number of budget amendments.

Members commented on the good work undertaken by officers in the current economic circumstances to reach a position of a projected overspend of £135,000 at this stage. It was anticipated that savings would be made within the final quarter of the financial year and that this figure would be reduced.

It was noted that it had not been possible to complete a number of capital schemes during the current financial year and that officers were requesting that the capital funding be carried forward to the following year's capital programme.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED that the current financial position in respect of revenue and capital, as detailed in the report, be noted.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that £30,000 from the ICT revenue budget be approved for capital expenditure for the purchase of new computer equipment;
- (b) that capital funding totalling £45,000 be reallocated to the project at Barnsley Hall as set out in section 3.1.3 of the report;
- (c) that £32,000 of Section 106 funding from Holy Cross Lodge, Clent be carried forward into 2013/2014;
- (d) that the remaining £49,600 of Section 106 funding for the scheme at Heath Close, Stoke Heath be carried forward into 2013/2014;
- (e) that £15,000 capital funding in respect of repairs and maintenance of bridges be carried forward into 2013/2014;
- (f) that £200,000 capital funding in respect of affordable housing development be carried forward to 2013/2014;
- (g) that £25,000 in respect of toilets in Bromsgrove Cemetery be carried forward to 2013/2014; and

- (h) that £10,000 in respect of Members' ICT facilities be carried forward to 2013/2014.

125/12 **WRITE OFF OF DEBTS 2012/2013 Q3**

The Cabinet considered a report on the actions taken by officers with respect to the write off of debts during the first three quarters of 2012/2013, including the profile and level of outstanding debt.

Members raised queries on the level of the Non Domestic Rates write offs and officers confirmed that all steps were taken to recover the sums owed before moving to write off the debt.

In addition there was discussion on the need to review the levels of bad debt provision in respect of Housing Benefit and Council Tax.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) that the bad debt provision in respect of Housing Benefit be reduced by £200,000 and the bad debt provision in respect of Council Tax be increased by £200,000.

126/12 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Cabinet considered a report on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2012/13 to 2013/14. It was noted that approval of the Strategy Statement was required under the Local Government Act 2003.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy and Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix 1 be approved;
- (b) that the Authorised Limit for borrowing at £7,500,000 if required be approved;
- (c) that the maximum level of investment to be held within each organisation (i.e. bank or building society) be set as detailed at £3,000,000 subject to market conditions;
- (d) that an unlimited level for investment in Debt Management Account Deposit Facility be approved; and
- (e) that the Treasury Management Policy as set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

RESOLVED that it be noted that the Audit Board will undertake additional scrutiny of the Strategy during 2013/12 to ensure the Council's investments are being managed in a risk controlled environment.

127/12 **WELFARE REFORMS POLICY**

Members considered a report on proposed operational arrangements for the delivery of the Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans service. The principal

of this service (to be re titled Essential Living Fund) being delivered by the District Council rather than Worcestershire County Council had previously been agreed by this Authority. Funding for this purpose would be transferred from the County Council.

The Cabinet felt that the District Council would be better able to respond to local needs but that there would need to be a review of the new arrangements when they were in operation so any necessary amendments could be made in a timely manner.

RESOLVED that the details of the operation of the proposed Essential Living Fund, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

The meeting closed at 6.55 p.m.

Chairman