

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 3RD APRIL 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 and C. B. Taylor

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. D. Poole, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mr. D. Allen, Ms. H. Mole, Ms. A. Glennie and Ms. R. Cole

128/12 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. J. A. Webb.

129/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

130/12 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6th March 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

131/12 **WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 21st February 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

132/12 **AUDIT BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Board held on 14th March 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

133/12 **DISCHARGING THE HOMELESSNESS DUTY IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR POLICY**

The Cabinet considered a report which referred to the power under the Localism Act 2011, previously adopted by the Authority, to discharge the main

homelessness duty by making an offer of private rented accommodation. The main purpose of the report was to enable Members to consider a detailed policy to allow for the implementation of this decision.

Members were reminded that the option of utilising the private sector by way of offering private rented accommodation, with a minimum twelve month assured shorthold tenancy to those persons presenting as homeless would enable this Authority to accommodate people more easily. Whilst the Authority would continue to have the option of placing households in social housing, the use of suitable private rented accommodation would assist with minimising the use of temporary accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast.

The Strategic Housing Manager and the Strategic Housing and Enabling Officer referred to the amended draft policy which had been developed in consultation with partners and stakeholders. Paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of the section "Selecting Households for Properties" had been amended to give officers sufficient flexibility in allocating properties which had been adapted and therefore met the needs of a particular household, or where there was housing debt.

Members noted that officers would need to continue to work closely to develop links with local private Landlords to encourage a supply of suitable and affordable properties with the required minimum twelve month tenancies. In addition officers would be undertaking inspections of the prospective properties to ensure they were suitable in terms of condition and location and complied with all relevant legislation. The policy proposed that all properties be equipped with carbon monoxide alarms to be funded by this Authority.

It was recognised that properties would also need to be assessed to ensure they were affordable. Support in relation to debt and finance management would be available to prospective tenants to minimise the possibility of economic difficulties arising.

It was noted that whilst the majority of properties to be offered would be within the Bromsgrove District, there would be some households with strong connections to neighbouring areas such as Birmingham or Halesowen and therefore in some cases it would be more appropriate to offer accommodation in these locations.

Members recognised that in the current economic climate and in view of the impact of recent and forthcoming changes in Welfare legislation, there was a need for new approaches to be developed in order to address any potential increase in homelessness and were supportive of the new policy. It was noted it was intended to review the policy after a period of twelve months.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Policy to Discharge the Homelessness Duty into the Private Rented Sector attached as an appendix to the report be approved; and
- (b) that the policy be reviewed after a period of twelve months.

134/12 **AMENDMENT TO FEES AND CHARGES FOR BURCOT HOSTEL**

The Cabinet considered a report on a proposed revised set of fees and charges in relation to Burcot Hostel for 2013/2014. This was required as the fees and charges included in the previous report had been based on an incorrect figure.

RESOLVED that the revised fees and charges in relation to Burcot Hostel as set out in the report be approved.

135/12 **PRESENTATION ON TRANSFORMATION WORK AND SYSTEMS THINKING**

The Head of Business Transformation and the Transformation Manager gave a brief presentation on Systems Thinking and reminded Cabinet of the approach which had been taken to improving services.

It was stressed that the approach supported the review of services as a whole rather than specific functions. Systems thinking would be the basis for all future service reviews and improvements to the Council's services. It was vital to understand what Customers required from the service and to gain understanding of how the service works at present and to redesign changes based on this knowledge.

It was felt that it was very important that Members had a fuller understanding of Systems Thinking and the processes involved in Transformation of services. Portfolio Holders in particular had an important role to play and some Members had already participated in practical sessions and attended update sessions.

There was discussion on how Members could become engaged with the process and it was felt that a range of opportunities would be appropriate as some Members would want to become more involved than others.

In particular it was felt that it would be useful if Members could see how the approach was working in practice and perhaps work through some real life scenarios and processes.

Arising from the discussion the Head of Business Transformation undertook to develop a programme to include a range of opportunities to enable Members to become more aware of and involved in Systems Thinking and Transformation. It was recognised it was important for the Political Group Leaders to take the issue back to their Groups and to encourage Member discussion and participation.

The Leader thanked the officers for the useful presentation.

136/12 **ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE - NOMINATION**

The Cabinet considered a report on a request received from Catshill Parish Council to support the listing of Catshill Library, Barley Mow Lane, Catshill as an Asset of Community Value. It was noted that the Library building was owned by Worcestershire County Council and was currently vacant.

It was reported that the Ward Councillors and the County Council had been consulted and had no objection to the asset being placed on the register. It was noted that the final decision in relation to the listing of an asset was delegated to the Head of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED that the listing of Catshill Library as an Asset of Community Value be supported.

The meeting closed at 7.25 p.m.

Chairman