B R O M S G R O V E D I S T R I C T C O U N C I L

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Chairman), R. J. Laight (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, M. A. Bullivant, M. T. Buxton, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, R. L. Dent, K. A. Grant-Pearce, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, P. Lammas, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, C. R. Scurrell, E. M. Shannon, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. J. Tidmarsh, L. J. Turner, M. J. A. Webb, P. J. Whittaker and C. J. K. Wilson

33\14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. R. Boulter, S. J. Dudley, R. Hollingworth, E. J. Murray, J. A. Ruck and C. B. Taylor.

34\14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were made:

Item 10 – Community Governance Review – Clent and Hagley

Councillor M. A. Sherrey declared an other disclosable interest as a member of Clent Parish Council. Councillor Sherrey left the room during the consideration of the item.

Councillors S. R. Colella and K. A. Grant-Pearce each declared other disclosable interests as members of Hagley Parish Council. Councillors Colella and Grant-Pearce left the room during the consideration of the item.

Item 6 – Recommendation from the Cabinet held on 24th September 2014 on Allocation Policy for Grant Funding to Ward Members

Councillor C. R. Scurrell declared an other disclosable interest as a member of Belbroughton Parish Council. Councillor Scurrell left the room during the consideration of the item.

35\14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 20th August 2014 were submitted.

With reference to Minute No. 32/14, Councillor L. C. R. Mallett referred to the amendment put forward by Councillor C. J. Bloore that the consultation should only include all 1700 people directly affected by the proposed options for change. Councllor Mallett noted that the statement made by the S.151 Officer that this was not possible had not been recorded in the minutes.

The Chairman indicated that the minutes would be amended as necessary.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment to Minute No.32/14.

36\14 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, THE CIVIC HEAD AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Chairman referred to a recent injury suffered by one of the Council's caretakers Mr S. Godwin which would mean he would be away from work for some time.

The Chairman indicated she would like to write to Mr Godwin on behalf of herself and all Members sending the Council's best wishes and Members were in agreement with this proposal.

37\14 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader announced that Councillor R. Hollingworth had now stood down from the Cabinet.

In consequence Councillor M. J. A. Webb was now Portfolio Holder for Finance, Revenue and Benefits and Economic Development and Councillor M. A. Bullivant was now Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services and Environmental Services.

The Leader referred to the recent official re-opening of the High Street which had been attended by Members of this Council and of Worcestershire County Council.

The Leader also referred to the recent VJ Day Ceremony at the Burma Star memorial which she had attended.

38\14 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 3RD SEPTEMBER 2014**

(i) **Homes Choice Plus Allocations Policy Review**

The recommendations from the Cabinet were proposed by Councillor D. W. P. Booth and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Booth referred to the consultations which had taken place with stakeholders which had led to the proposed Policy. In addition Councillor Booth drew attention to the fact that the new policy would be reviewed further in twelve months time and that in the meantime officers would be working with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust to consider whether Choice Based lettings was the most effective way of meeting the strategic purpose of "help me to find somewhere to live in my locality".

During the debate some concern was expressed at the possibility that this Authority may be moving away from working with partners in the allocation of social housing provision. Whilst some Members welcomed the proposed review of Choice Based Letting Members queried the use of the "systems thinking" approach and the need to extend the Allocations Policy review for a further twelve months.

Councillor Booth responded to Members' concerns and stressed that the Authority was not leaving the partnership but was looking to ensure over the next twelve months that the changes would lead to improvements in the current system. In the meantime work would be undertaken on Choice Based Lettings to understand if it could provide the most effective and sustainable way of meeting the Council's strategic purpose.

Councillor C. J. Bloore proposed that the recommendations be voted on separately but on being put to the vote the Chairman declared this proposal to be lost.

RESOLVED:

(a) that the Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy as contained in Appendix 1 to the report be approved;

(b) that officers be requested to undertake a review of the Policy after a period of twelve months from the implementation date to establish whether it is the most effective way of meeting the Council's strategic purpose "help me to find somewhere to live in my locality"; and

(c) that the Council works closely with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust during the next twelve months to establish whether from a "systems thinking" perspective, Choice Based lettings is the most effective way of meeting the strategic purpose.

(ii) **Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement**

The recommendation from the Cabinet was proposed by Councillor M. A. Bullivant and seconded by Councillor R. L. Dent

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Bullivant referred to changes which were required as a result of review of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Business Model and the consequent changes required to the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement. Each of the participating Councils would need

to agree to the changes. Councillor Bullivant stated that any wider changes would be considered at a later date together with any recommendations arising from the WRS Joint Scrutiny Task Group.

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett referred to discussions which had taken place at the Overview and Scrutiny Board regarding the difficult issues facing WRS, mainly in respect of the financial situation. There was concern from Members relating to the service which WRS would be able to provide in the future and also the impact this could have on this Council as the Host Authority.

As an amendment to the recommendation It was proposed by Councillor Mallett and seconded by Councillor C. J. Bloore, that the matter be deferred until the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee had received the report of the WRS Joint Scrutiny Task Group and had the opportunity to reconsider the issues.

On being put to the vote the Chairman declared the amendment to be lost.

RESOLVED that the changes to the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

(iii) **Financial Monitoring Report 2014/2015 - Quarter 1**

The recommendation from the Cabinet was proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant.

Following a query from Councillor S. P. Shannon, Councillor Webb undertook to provide further information on the source of the Section 106 funding.

On a requisition under Council procedure Rule 17.5 the following details of voting on the recommendation from Cabinet were recorded:

For the recommendation: Councillors S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, M. A. Bullivant, M. T. Buxton, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, R. L. Dent, K. A. Grant-Pearce, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, C. R. Scurrell, E. M. Shannon, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. J. Tidmarsh, L. J. Turner, M. J. A. Webb, P. J. Whittaker and C. J. K. Wilson (31)

Against the recommendation: (0)

Abstentions: (0)

RESOLVED that the Capital Programme 2014/2015 in respect of the Public Realm within the High Street be increased by £20,000, to be funded from Section 106 funds received in relation to land at Sherwood Road, Bromsgrove.

39\14 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 2014**

(i) **Audit Findings Report 2013/2014**

The recommendations from the Cabinet were proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Webb drew attention to the fact that an "unqualified opinion" had been received from the external auditors both for the accounts themselves and in respect of the Value for Money judgement.

Councillor Webb referred to a small number of recommendations which the Section 151 Officer and the Management Team were working to address. In particular whilst officers had been able to deliver savings in 2013/2014 to maintain balances and to meet future budget pressures, it was important that there was clear reporting of savings and good financial monitoring.

Councillor Webb also thanked officers in the finance department for their work on the external audit.

Arising from consideration of the Audit Findings report Members raised a number of issues during the debate including the following:

- the importance of consideration by Members of a full Business Case in respect of large capital schemes prior to a commitment being made – in particular reference was made to the Council House/ Parkside project;
- the need for some areas of the Council's Constitution to be updated;
- the need for the interim audit report on weaknesses in IT controls to be fully addressed;
- the lack of accuracy in forecasting expenditure which had resulted in a significant underspend and which also occurred in previous years;
- the need to report performance measures to committees .

RESOLVED:

(a) that the Audit Findings Report 2013/2014 be noted; and
(b) that the draft letter of representation as included in the Audit findings Report be approved.

(ii) **Statement of Accounts 2013/2014**

The recommendations from the Cabinet were proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Webb referred to the underspend of approximately £600,000 which had enabled working balances to be increased to £3,700,000 and stated this was due to officers scrutinising expenditure very closely and working to increase income levels.

Councillor Webb drew attention to two minor adjustments to the narrative required on page 271 of the Council agenda within note 3 and to an amendment at page 211 of the Council agenda expanding the Earmarked Reserves, within note 3. Details had been circulated to all Members of the Council.

Members queried the underspend of £600,000 and expressed concern that if expenditure forecasts were incorrect this could lead to decisions on budgets being based on inaccurate information. In addition Council Tax increases had been agreed over the past few years which may not have been required in view of the savings made.

Councillor Mallett referred to the accounts process and suggested that they could be shared with Councillors earlier than September to enable appropriate scrutiny. Councillor Mallett also referred to the levels of Heads of Service salary costs.

The following amendment was proposed by Councillor Mallett and seconded by Councillor C. J. Bloore

That the Council notes the unbudgeted surplus in the accounts over the past two years . The Council agrees to freeze Council Tax at its current rate rather than increase it for 2015/2016 as proposed within the Medium Term Financial Plan and to fund this from underspends of monies realised through previous Council Tax rises accrued within general balances.

In responding to the amendment Councillor Webb stated that the savings had been achieved without a reduction in front line services and that to freeze Council Tax at current levels would have an on-going impact on the Council Tax Base.

On a requisition under Council Procedure Rule 17.5 the details of voting on the amendment were recorded as follows:

For the amendment: Councillors S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, M. T. Buxton, S. R. Colella, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, C.M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. M. Shannon, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, L. J. Turner and C. J. K. Wilson (13)

Against the amendment: Councillors D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, M. A. Bullivant, R. A. Clarke, B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, R. L. Dent, K. A. Grant-Pearce, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, C. R. Scurrell, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. J. Tidmarsh, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (18)

Abstentions: (0)

The Chairman declared the amendment to be lost.

It was

RESOLVED that the Statement of Accounts 2013/2014 be approved subject to the minor adjustments referred to at the meeting:

(a) the two adjustments referred to on page 271 of the Council agenda within note 3; and
(b) the amendment on page 211 of the Council agenda expanding the Earmarked Reserves , within note 3.

(iii) **Allocation Policy for Grant Funding to Ward Members**

(Councillor C. R. Scurrell left the room during the consideration of this item)

The recommendations from the Cabinet were proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Webb referred to the previous decision of Council on this matter and the proposal to distribute the sum of £45,000 to Ward Members to utilise within their wards in accordance with the proposed ward budget scheme. The sum of £1,115 would be distributed equally to all Members and not only to areas with Parish Councils. Councillor Webb drew attention to the comprehensive report and accompanying appendices.

Councillor S. J. Baxter expressed concern at the original decision not to grant the sum of £45,000 to Parish Councils to mitigate the impact on Parish Councils of the changes to Council Tax Support. At the time that the decision was taken there had been a lack of supporting papers and a possible lack of awareness of the original purpose of the grant. Councillor Baxter stated that only a small number of District Councils had chosen not to pass the funding direct to Parish Councils in line with the Government's intention.

A number of Members expressed similar concerns to Councillor Baxter and felt that the decision undermined Parish Councils and would be detrimental to the relationship between the District Council and the Parish Councils.

On a requisition under Council Procedure Rule 17.5 the details of voting on the recommendations were recorded as follows:

For the recommendations: Councillors C. J. Bloore, D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, M. A. Bullivant, M. T. Buxton, B. T. Cooper, R. L. Dent, P. A. Harrison, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. M. Shannon, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, C. J. Tidmarsh, M. J. A. Webb and C. J. K. Wilson (19)

Against the recommendations: Councillors R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, K. A. Grant-Pearce, B. Lewis, L. J. Turner and P. J. Whittaker (6)

Abstentions: Councillors S. J. Baxter, R. J. Deeming, M. A. Sherrey and C. J. Spencer (4)

RESOLVED:

(a) that Members note the decision of 26th February 2014 to allocate the sum of £45,000 equally to ward Councillors to spend within their wards and within the context of the more detailed report confirm this and their agreement to the introduction of the Bromsgrove District Ward Members Fund Policy detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, as amended to remove any reference to consultation by the Executive Director of Finance and Resources with the Portfolio Holder for Finance; and

(b) that delegation be given to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources to approve requests and make the formal payments in relation to the allocation of funds.

40\14 **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 20TH AUGUST 2014 AND 3RD SEPTEMBER 2014**

The minutes of the meetings of the cabinet held on 20th August 2014 and 3rd September 2014 were received for information.

20th August 2014

Further to Minute No. 22/14 Councillor C. J. Bloore requested information on the number of responses to the Council Tax Support Scheme consultation received to date.

Councillor M. A. Sherrey responded that the latest information she had received was that there were in excess of 100 responses. The consultation period would close in the first week of October.

3rd September 2014

Further to Minute No. 30/14 Members commented on a number of issues including:

- Overall Capital Projects underspend;

- Revenue underspend at the end of Quarter 1;
- Car Parking income levels – written response offered;
- Savings made in Community Transport due to renegotiation of the contract and whether the savings could be allocated to increasing the availability of the service – written response offered about savings achieved;
- Parks and Green Space – only ten per cent of Capital Budget spent;
- Planning and Development Control overspend;
- Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services - why was there expenditure of £82,000 on professional Legal Advice and Services?;
- Human Resources and Transformation – why a zero budget was shown for 2014/15

Portfolio Holders undertook to provide the information requested in writing where appropriate.

41\14 **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT PLAN 2011-2030 OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED**

Councillor R. J. Deeming presented a report on a proposed response to the queries raised by the Bromsgrove District Plan Planning Inspector in relation to the objective assessment of housing need figure being proposed within the Plan. Whilst the Inspector had been provided with a range of housing numbers which could be considered suitable, the Inspector had confirmed that the Council need to be more explicit on what it considered its objective assessment of housing need figure to be.

Councillor Deeming drew Members' attention to the proposed letter of response to the Planning Inspector at Appendix 1 to the report, which contained a revised figure of 6648 dwellings for the period 2011-2030. The letter also contained further information and justification for this revised figure.

Councillor Deeming made reference to a minor change within the letter so that the second sentence of paragraph 12 would read as follows:

"BDC does however remain unclear how market signals affect the HMA housing need figures, and we remain concerned that without similar assessments all authorities housing needs could be questioned, with potential unknown consequences."

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett referred to the difficulties and delays which had arisen in relation to the Bromsgrove District Plan and stated that the Labour Group had no confidence in the Plan which was felt to be not "fit for purpose".

Councillor S. R. Colella spoke about the importance of the Bromsgrove District Plan for the future of the Bromsgrove District and the many difficult issues which the Authority was facing including the possible need to meet part of the development needs of Redditch Borough Council and Birmingham City Council.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor P. M. McDonald and seconded by Councillor Mallett that the letter to be sent to the Planning Inspector be extended to include reference to the Council's concerns over the issues of road infrastructure, affordable housing and a Hot Food Takeaways Policy.

On being put to the vote the Chairman declared the amendment to be lost.

It was

RESOLVED:

(a) that subject to the inclusion of the amended wording to paragraph 12 referred to above, the Bromsgrove District Plan objective assessment of housing need letter (Appendix 1 to the report) be endorsed for submission to the Planning Inspectorate;

(b) that authority be delegated to the Head of Service/Director and the Strategic Planning Manager, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to prepare and submit the necessary documents to support the examination of the Local Plan; and

(c) that authority be delegated to the Head of Service/Director and the Strategic Planning Manager, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to agree any minor changes to the Plan where appropriate during the examination.

42\14 **NEW HOMES BONUS - UPDATE**

The Chairman stated that an written update on the New Homes Bonus and the progress of the Working Group had been circulated to Members and to the public present from Councillor M. J. A. Webb as Portfolio Holder for Finance

A number of questions were raised by Members. Councillor Webb responded that it was not possible to answer these at present as preferred options had not yet been developed. It was aimed to propose a scheme which would address the concerns raised later in the year.

43\14 **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - CLENT AND HAGLEY**

(Councillors S. R. Colella, K. A. Grant-Pearce and M. A. Sherrey left the room during the consideration of this item.)

Members considered a report on a petition received from Hagley Parish Council requesting a Community Governance Review which proposed boundary changes to Clent and Hagley Parish Council Areas. In order to trigger the statutory timetable and process for consultation, Council were requested to consider and approve the Terms of Reference for the Review.

It was proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant and

RESOLVED:

(a) that the petition from Hagley Parish Council formally requesting a Community Governance review proposing changes to the boundaries of Clent Parish Council and Hagley Parish Council be received and noted;

(b) that the Terms of Reference for the Clent and Hagley Community Governance Review as contained in Appendix A to the report be approved;

(c) that the proposed consultation process and statutory timetable commence forthwith;

(d) that authority be delegated to the Electoral Matters Committee to deal with all stages of the Review up to and including the making of the Re-organisation Order; and

(e) that the sum of £4,500 be released from balances to cover the cost of the consultation.

44\14 **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Question submitted by Councillor S. P. Shannon

"With reference to the Cabinet meeting that took place earlier today (24/09/14) Agenda item 4 page 16 amongst the service successes and achievements and the suggestion that the former Fire Station and County Council offices be marketed for retail purposes. With so many reports and surveys suggesting that the UK has oversupply of retail premises combined with many High Streets and shopping centres failing. That this Council recognise the popularity of internet sales, click and collect and other alternatives to traditional shopping. Has the Leader considered the possibility that further retail capacity will no longer be required in Bromsgrove, and that the town centre space might be put to better use by something that there is huge demand for in Bromsgrove such as affordable housing?"

Councillor R. L. Dent responded that the administration was committed to bringing businesses back to the High Street.

Question submitted by Councillor R. J. Shannon

"In the light of the news that the former Focus DIY store has now been taken by a new retailer to the town centre, does the Portfolio Holder share the same concern as the Labour Group and the residents of Bromsgrove, that Sainsbury's are no longer planning on building a supermarket on the Birmingham Road site. Especially given the fact that Sainsbury's are about to open a new store on the nearby Stourbridge Road, their original planning application is reaching its expiry date and taking into account they said they have no plans to do so in the near future?"

Councillor Dent responded "that the Council had written confirmation from Sainsbury's that they are committed to developing the site for the site. They do require a "clean site" with no tenants before it can be considered by their Board for construction and these sites are built into their construction plans

well in advance. There is a lease issue with the Co-op and by renting the former Focus building, Sainsbury's are just ensuring that they get some income from the site by renting to "What Store." The small store is irrelevant as they are a separate trading company under the Sainsbury's banner and having one does not preclude the other".

Question submitted by Councillor P. M. McDonald

"Does the Portfolio Holder responsible agree with me that Regulatory Services with the continual cutbacks will in future be unable to prosecute and bring to justice restaurant owners such as the one in Rubery for serving substitutes such as beef for lamb or even worse restaurants from serving horse meat as a substitution?"

Councillor M. A. Bullivant responded and thanked Councillor McDonald for highlighting the excellent work undertaken by WRS Trading Standards team "which is therefore within the legal jurisdiction of the County Council rather than the District Council. The reductions so far made to Trading standards activities have focussed on advisory and inspection work rather than the kind of enforcement activity referred to which is more intelligence lead. Members should be aware that the decisions to instigate prosecutions are taken by the local teams rather than by WRS itself. The Legal Team in Bromsgrove is contracted to deal with WRS trading standards cases and will be working with the trading standards team to streamline their processes and will continue to support the trading standards team with their formal actions including food fraud cases.

This Council will have made a small reduction in its contribution to WRS 2013/14 to 2016/17 however these savings are based on efficiencies through transformation work".

Question submitted by Councillor C. J. Bloore

"Will the Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Redevelopment confirm her plans for the DDS&S and car park site and when she expects there to be any progress in resolving the current eyesore, does she believe that the questions over funding for the Stourbridge Road improvements are a barrier to any developer coming forward in the absence of Sainsbury's?"

Councillor Dent responded "that the DDS&S Club is in private ownership. Future development on the Stourbridge Road site would be considered by Worcestershire County Council Highways who would take into account any increase or decrease in traffic movements before recommending improvements to the transport system. This would then need to form part of negotiations with the developer".

Question submitted by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett

"Does the Portfolio Holder agree with the Opposition that the previous Council Leader was wrong to pledge in the local press that work would start within a year on the High Street before the 2007 local elections, when in reality all that

happened over the next seven years was the demolition of the market hall and the chopping down of the trees , meanwhile many shops were forced to close, and if she doesn't agree, how does she account for this seven year broken promise?"

Councillor Dent responded that she was disappointed that Councillor Mallett was looking back rather than to the future.

Question submitted by Councillor C. M. McDonald

Despite assurances that action and contract signings were to take place on the Cinema/Food retailer site (and consequent "releases" of artists drawings etc. to the press) and the Recreation Road site no visible progress has been seen on the site. Please will the Portfolio Holder give me a full and frank update on where each of these negotiations are at and the steps she has taken as Portfolio Holder to conclude best value for this Council since taking on her new role?

Councillor Dent responded "that the Recreation Road site which is made up of land owned by this Council and other landowners was marketed for Extra Care or Care Village use. Progress with the preferred bidder has been extremely positive and this Council is expecting to receive a planning application in respect of the site very soon. The details of any negotiation or contract is confidential.

Members will be aware that the Cabinet previously gave approval in April 2014 for Opus to develop the Council owned site at Hanover Street car park. The Council has recently been contacted by Opus to advise that they are no longer able to deliver the scheme as originally agreed. Despite this setback the Council remains committed to developing the site in line with the Area Action Plan and officers are in the process of considering the options for the site going forward.

As a result of comments they have received, officers believe there is still a high level of interest on the part of potential tenants of the site".

Question received from Councillor M. T. Buxton

"Does the Portfolio Holder share our concerns that despite the postponement to the opening of the High Street for a month, that when it did open in August the works were still not complete, even as recently as Friday there remain bollards, works and snagging unfinished in the High Street, and does she consider works at the Worcester Road section to now be satisfactorily completed?"

Councillor Dent responded that whilst the District Council carried out the design work for the High Street, the designs were passed to Worcestershire County Council as Highways Authority. This Council asked for a completion date and was given 18th August and therefore went ahead with the re-opening of the High Street on the Bank Holiday weekend which was 23rd August. Minor works continue around the lighting of street café areas and heritage

buildings and events would be held on Saturdays to encourage people into the town centre.

45\14 MOTION - ACCOMMODATION OF STAFF AT PARKSIDE

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor S. J. Baxter:

" We call for the following to be put before this Council:

- The full Bromsgrove and Redditch accommodation plan post the move to Parkside, including which services will be located where;
- An impact assessment of the proposed remoteness of Council staff on the level of service that our residents would have, compared to those living in Redditch and other hosting authorities, including accessibility of staff and documents;
- An impact assessment on changes in budgets resulting from changes in hosting arrangements;
- An overview of the project plan with timelines, risk assessment and facilities management for the new site.

We also call for a halt on all further movement of staff until the above is approved by Council."

The motion was moved by Councillor Baxter and seconded by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett.

In proposing the motion Councillor Baxter referred to the move of the Planning development management and enforcement teams to Redditch, albeit with two planning officers being located in Bromsgrove . Councillor Baxter stated that this highlighted a concern that the service for residents would decline as staff and services were relocated away from Bromsgrove and that Shared services would mean that Bromsgrove residents would be sharing the cost but not an benefit from equal service levels.

Councillor Baxter referred to the expenditure of £3.2m incurred in respect of the office accommodation at Parkside and queried whether this would be fit for purpose. Councillor Baxter was concerned that members had not seen full details of the project or of the potential impact of the changes. The motion was requesting that no further moves take place until Members had the opportunity to consider the full picture.

Councillor Mallett referred to the lack of a full business case in respect of the Parkside project which had been highlighted in the Audit Report, and to concern that only 30-40 "hot desks" for District Council officers would be available within the building.

Members raised concerns over the decision to move to Parkside, the cost effectiveness of the changes and the impact they may have on residents.

Having been put to the vote the Chairman declared the motion to be lost.

46\14 **MOTION - SOCIAL RENTED HOUSING IN BROMSGROVE**

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

(1) That the Chief Executive and Group Leaders of Bromsgrove District Council write to the MP for Bromsgrove Sajid Javid MP laying out the case for a social rent level of 60% of local market rent as "affordable" for current and potential Bromsgrove tenants, and requesting his support for this and lobbying of the Minister for Communities and Local Government to ensure the Affordable Housing Strategy favours a Bromsgrove Social Rented Programme by working in partnership with its social housing providers.

(2) To support the work of the SHOUT campaign and take a lead in affirming the positive value and purpose of social rented provision in Bromsgrove.

The motion was moved by Councillor Shannon and seconded by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett.

In proposing the motion Councillor Shannon referred to the cross party Social Housing Under Threat (SHOUT) campaign which was aiming to address the lack of affordable social housing. The approach of the Homes and Community Agency to supporting social rent provision only in very limited circumstances meant many in Bromsgrove had little chance of renting a good quality home, particularly in view of the impact locally of the "Right to Buy" and "Right to Acquire" schemes.

Councillor Mallett stated that the lack of social housing for rent in Bromsgrove was well recognised and that it was appropriate to request the support of the MP for Bromsgrove in seeking to achieve a social rent level of 60% of local market rents.

Councillor D. W. P. Booth stated that whilst all could appreciate the sentiments behind the motion, he felt it was a simplistic approach to what was a complex problem. The motion addressed the symptoms only and there was a need to look at the whole picture in relation to affordable housing, renting and the housing market. The review of the Housing Allocations Policy as part of transformation would provide a better way of addressing the issues.

Having been put to the vote the Chairman declared the motion to be lost.

The meeting closed at 10.35 p.m.

Chairman