

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

7TH JANUARY 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillors S. R. Colella, B. Lewis, S. P. Shannon and C. J.
Tidmarsh

Officers: Ms J. Pickering, Ms A. De Warr, Mr G. Revans, Mrs S. Sellers,
Ms A. Scarce and Ms R. Cole

66/14 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

67/14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

68/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3rd December 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3rd December 2014 be approved as a correct record.

69/14 **WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 27th November 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 27th November 2014 be noted.

70/14 **NEW HOMES BONUS**

The Cabinet considered a report on the work undertaken by the New Homes Bonus Member Working Group to establish a scheme to enable community groups to apply for funding from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) grant received by the Council.

The Executive Director Finance and Resources outlined the work which had been undertaken by officers and Members following the submission to Council of the public petition in April 2014. This included a number of meetings of the NHB Working Group together with two public forums. There had been detailed consideration of feedback received from the public both at the public forums and responses received subsequently, a matrix of responses was attached as an appendix to the report. In addition the Group had considered the range of approaches taken by other Authorities to deal with NHB funding.

The report also contained a detailed breakdown of the funding received from the NHB scheme and a revised estimate of the funding for 2015/16.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor M. J. A. Webb referred to the draft scheme which had been developed by the Working Group to enable community groups to access grants from NHB funding. This draft scheme was attached as an appendix to the report. Members expressed support for the draft scheme. It was felt however that in view of the work which was on going in respect of the Medium Term Financial Plan, which would be fully considered at the next meeting of the Cabinet on 4th February 2015, it would be inappropriate at this stage to recommend to the Council a specific percentage of NHB funding to be allocated to the scheme.

Councillor Webb also referred to the discussion at the Council Meeting on 19th November 2014 relating to a Notice of Motion on NHB. There had been a request that the Cabinet consider as part of their discussion on any NHB scheme the inclusion of the additional revenue "surplus" generated in 2013/14. Councillor Webb anticipated that this would form part of the further consideration at the next Cabinet.

Members were reminded that it was open to any Councillor to make a request for funding to be allocated within the Medium Term Financial Plan and that this would be considered together with competing bids as part of the budget process.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the New Homes Bonus Allocation Scheme attached as an appendix to the report be approved; and
- (b) that consideration of an appropriate percentage/amount of New Homes Bonus to be allocated to the scheme be deferred until the next meeting of the Cabinet in order that it can be fully considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan process.

71/14

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/16

The Cabinet considered a detailed report which informed Members of the outcome of public consultation on the draft Council Tax Support scheme following agreement of the draft scheme by Cabinet on 5th November 2014. The scheme had proposed that entitlement to Council Tax support should be capped at 80% of Council Tax liability, that the provision of the second adult

rebate be removed, that non-dependents income be taken into account and enabled the future “uprating” of some of the figures to take account of other national changes in benefits and allowances.

Members were reminded of the background to the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme which were required to be considered following Government changes to the Council Tax Benefit scheme. It was noted that the Council was required to implement a scheme which protects people of pensionable age, incentivises work and had provisions to support vulnerable people in financial hardship as a result of the scheme.

Members noted that a further 28 responses to the follow up consultation had been received, including a response from the Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) which was the same as that submitted previously in which the Trust expressed concern regarding changes to support for working age residents. The results of the consultation were attached as an appendix to the report.

Members were satisfied that the consultation had been undertaken on a thorough and fair basis although the response had been limited. It appeared that many other Authorities were adopting similar provisions to those proposed within their Council Tax Support Schemes.

The establishment of a Hardship Fund was supported by Members. It was noted that the proposed Hardship Policy had been drawn up in consultation with BDHT and with the benefit of experience from work undertaken by neighbouring authorities. Members requested to be kept informed on the operation of the Hardship Scheme.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Council Tax Support Scheme as amended be approved, namely
 - (i) that entitlement to Council Tax Support be capped at 80% of Council Tax liability;
 - (ii) that provision for a second adult rebate be removed; and
 - (iii) that the future “uprating “ of some of the figures to take account of other national changes in benefits and allowances be approved.
- (b) that the proposed Hardship Scheme as attached as an appendix to the report be approved; and
- (c) that no changes be made to the provisions relating to non-dependents income

(Councillor C. B. Taylor requested that it be noted that he was a Member of Worcestershire County Council.)

72/14 **COUNCIL TAX BASE 2015/16**

Members received a report which contained details of the calculation of the District's tax base for Council Tax setting purposes.

Members noted that on this occasion there would need to be a recommendation to Council on this matter as the Council Tax Base would vary according to whether the recommendation contained within the previous minute in relation to the Council Tax Support Scheme was approved by Council.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that if the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme at a cap of 80% support is approved:

The amount calculated by Bromsgrove District Council as the Council Tax Base for the whole area for 2015/16 be approved at 34,907.84 as detailed at appendix 1 to include the individual parish elements; **or**

- (b) that if the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme at a cap of 80% is rejected:

The amount calculated by Bromsgrove District Council as the Council tax Base for the whole area for 2015/16 be approved at 34,638.82 as detailed at appendix 2 to include the individual parish elements.

73/14 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN UPDATE 2015/16 TO 2017/18**

The Cabinet considered a report on the current financial position in respect of the revenue budget 2015/16 – 2017/18. It was noted that officers were continuing to work in order to review savings and that a report would be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 4th February 2015. This would also include details of the Capital Programme.

The Executive Director Finance and Resources highlighted to some of the detailed issues contained within the report including the position on funding to be received from Central Government and the new localised regime on Business Rates.

Members were reminded of the previous decision to reduce the amount of funding provided to the Artrix from £120,000 which had been the annual funding arrangement since 2005, to £60,000. Following a review officers felt that £60,000 was sufficient funding to enable the Artrix to deliver a programme to support the Council's strategic purposes.

There was discussion in respect of the Parish Council Grant which had originally been allocated by Central Government with the intention of mitigating the impact on Parish Councils of a reduction in Council Tax base

arising from changes to the Council Tax Discount funding. This was no longer shown separately within the Government Settlement but was estimated for 2015/16 to be £38,000. Members considered in detail the options for use of this funding.

RESOLVED that the current position for 2015/16 – 2017/18 be noted and that officers be requested to review the savings that can be delivered in order to achieve a balanced budget.

RECOMMENDED that in relation to the Parish Council Grant receivable from Central Government for 2015/16, the estimated sum of £30,000 be allocated proportionately to the Parish Councils and the remaining £8,000 be shared within the non parished areas of the District.

74/14 **CAR PARKING CHARGES -EVENING PARKING**

The Cabinet considered a report on a proposal to introduce, on a twelve month trial basis, free evening parking on the following Town Centre Pay and Display car parks:

- Recreation Road North
- Stourbridge Road
- Parkside
- School Drive
- Windsor Street
- New Road
- Hanover Street

It was recognised that it was important to ascertain the outcome of the trial in terms of additional benefit to businesses within the Town Centre in addition to benefits to individual residents. Officers were in the process of determining the most appropriate method of undertaking an assessment.

It was noted that there would be a shortfall in projected income of £60,000 arising from the trial period and it was reported that this could be funded through the use of balances.

RESOLVED that for a twelve month trial period (February 2015 to February 2016) free evening car parking be introduced in Pay and Display car parks in Bromsgrove Town Centre from 7.00pm each day.

RECOMMENDED that the shortfall in projected income of £60,000 for the free evening car parking trial period be met from balances.

75/14 **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Cabinet considered a report requesting that appointments be made to certain outside bodies.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the following appointments be made:

Worcestershire Local Transport Board (one representative and one substitute from the three North Worcestershire Districts) - Councillor P. Mould and Councillor J. Campion;

Worcestershire European Union Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) Committee (one representative and one substitute from the three North Worcestershire Districts) – Councillor M. J. A. Webb and Councillor J. Fisher;

Greater Birmingham and Solihull Union Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) Committee (one representative and one substitute from the three North Worcestershire Districts) – Councillor M. J. A. Webb and Councillor J. Fisher.

- (b) that the following appointment be noted:

Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – Councillor M. Sherrey appointed on behalf of the 3 North Worcestershire Districts, as required by the LEP constitution.

The meeting closed at 7.05 p.m.

Chairman