

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

4TH FEBRUARY 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 and L. C. R. Mallett

Invitees: Councillor S. P. Shannon

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. J. Godwin, Mrs. S. Sellers Mr. D. Allen and
Ms. R. Cole

76/14 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

77/14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

78/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th January 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th January 2015 be approved as a correct record.

79/14 **AUDIT BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Board held on 11th December 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Board held on 11th December 2014 be noted.

80/14 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 15th December 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 15th December 2014 be noted.

81/14 **SHARED SERVICES BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 12th January 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 12th January 2015 be noted.

82/14 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD SHORT SHARP REVIEW - CAR PARKING**

The Cabinet received the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board Short Sharp Review on Car Parking.

The Leader invited the Chairman of the Short Sharp Review , Councillor S. P. Shannon to present the outcome of the review. Councillor Shannon gave a general introduction to the work which the cross party review had undertaken and. Councillor Shannon expressed the hope that the Cabinet would give serious consideration to the three recommendations .

In relation to Recommendation 1, it was stated that whilst the Review Group had noted the recent Cabinet decision to introduce free parking after 7pm, there had been some disappointment that this had been agreed before any outcome of the review was known. The Review Group, after some investigation and research had felt that free car parking on Sundays rather than in the evening would have a greater impact on footfall and therefore would bring more benefit to the Town and local businesses. Whilst a large number of restaurants and other businesses were already opening in the evening there were fewer businesses opening on a Sunday.

Recommendation 2 relating to the expansion of the Pay on Foot system into other car parks had also been a recommendation put forward by the Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group in August 2011.

Councillor Shannon also referred to Recommendation 3 which related to the re-introduction of a car parking permit for the over 65 year olds, which again it was considered would increase footfall into the Town Centre and contribute to the regeneration of the Town Centre. This had been supported by the Bromsgrove Older People's Forum.

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor M. A. Bullivant thanked the Review Group for their work but stated that the report did not examine the future needs of the Town Centre in the light of forthcoming developments in the area. In addition insufficient consideration had been given to the current financial position of the Council.

Members expressed concern over the cost of implementation of the Review Group's proposals and felt that there was still room for expansion in the Town Centre night time economy which would benefit from the introduction of free parking after 7.00pm. Reference was made to the substantial investment this

Council had made in the regeneration of the Town Centre together with the County Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Cabinet then considered the recommendations of the Review Group.

Recommendation 1

That free car parking on a Sunday be introduced for a 6 month trial period, to include the summer period in order to encourage people to visit the town centre.

Cabinet Response

This recommendation was not approved in view of the cost involved and the introduction of free parking in the evening from 7.00 pm.

Recommendation 2

That the Pay on Foot system be expanded to other car parks as part of the Town Centre Regeneration Programme, for example at the Hanover Street Car Park and the Dolphin Centre.

Cabinet Response

This recommendation was not approved in view of the likely high costs involved and the lack of a Cost Benefit Analysis.

Recommendation 3

That a car parking permit scheme for the over 65 year olds be re-introduced in order to encourage people to visit the town centre on a more regular basis.

Cabinet Response

This recommendation was not approved in view of the lack of information available.

83/14

HOMELESSNESS GRANT FUNDING UPDATE AND BIDS FOR 2015/16

The Cabinet considered a report on the allocation of Homelessness Grant to specific schemes for 2015/16.

It was noted that the total amount available was £120,112 which included an underspend of £8,112 from 2014/15 arising from the unexpected termination of the MyPlace private tenancy scheme.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the submissions for the funding of schemes during 2015/16 as set out in table 2 within the report be approved and be funded from the Council's Strategic Fund for Homelessness for 2015/16;

- (b) that the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing, be granted delegated authority to
 - (i) allocate any underspend during the year; and
 - (ii) make any further adjustments necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Strategic fund for Homelessness for 2015/16 in support of new or existing schemes.

84/14

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 - 2017/18

The Cabinet considered a report on the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2015/16 – 2017/18.

The Executive Director Finance and Resources referred to the budget setting process to date. Members were updated on the various issues which had impacted on the financial position of the Authority and the matters which they would need to take into consideration when determining recommendations to be made to the Council on 25th February 2015.

The Executive Director Finance and Resources reported on the pressures facing the Authority including potential further reductions in the Government Grant Settlement and changes to welfare reform. It was noted that Bromsgrove had gained £23,000 from participation in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Business Rates Pool which had been included as funding for use by small businesses in 2015/16.

Members' attention was drawn to a number of unavoidable pressures which were included in Appendix 1 to the report. These included a reduction in funding from Worcestershire County Council of £26,000 in relation to funding for the Customer Services Centre and the shortfall in anticipated income from car parking and the garden waste collection service. In addition it was noted that following a required review of the charging mechanism, the proportion of the costs of the Building Control Service to be met by this Council would increase.

Members noted the work undertaken by officers to maximise savings through transformation and to continue to consider alternative ways of providing improved services to the Community. The Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources stated that officers were aware of the need to continue to review budgets to avoid the shortfall predicted over the three years and to mitigate the financial risk to the Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance reported in detail on the New Homes Bonus Scheme and referred to the work undertaken by the New Homes Bonus Group which had taken into account views from the public via Public Forums and consultations.

It was reported that whilst the scheme for determining the distribution of New Homes Bonus Funding had been agreed, there was now a need to consider the level of funding to be allocated to the scheme during 2015/16. It was suggested that for 2015/16, 25% of the New Homes Bonus Grant be allocated to the New Homes Bonus Scheme with the 25% being based on the District Council grant which will be received in 2015/16, which is attributable solely to the increase in funding from that received in 2014/15. It was noted that this sum would be £87,000. The NHB scheme had provision for an Annual review to be undertaken.

Members expressed the view that all areas of the District should benefit from difficult decisions taken by the Authority in the past which had led to savings being made. These had to be taken into consideration together with the future impact of any decision not to increase Council Tax. It was noted that a Government Grant was available equivalent to a 1% rise in Council Tax for Councils who freeze their Council Tax in the next financial year.

Members noted the new funding arrangements in respect of the Artrix which involved a grant to the Artrix of £60,000 per annum. Under the previous agreement a sum of £120,000 per annum had been paid over the last ten years. Members expressed support for the work undertaken by the Artrix but wished to ensure that the best use was made of the proposed funding. It was understood that certain information had been requested from the Artrix in relation to what was to be provided for residents in future and it was felt that the funding should be "ring fenced" until this was received and the position clarified.

The Portfolio Holder expressed thanks to the officers for the work undertaken on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the following revenue bids be approved:

2015/16 – 2017/18

£30,000 in relation to providing financial support under the Essential Living Fund Framework

2015/16

£23,000 in relation to providing support to economic development projects to be funded from the income received from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Business Rates Pool;

- (b) that the unavoidable pressures as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved as follows:

2015/16 - £380,000

2016/17 – Nil

2017/18 - £45,000;

- (c) that the savings as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report be approved as follows:

2015/16 - £547,000
2016/17 - £222,000
2017/18 - £25,000;

- (d) that the Council Tax be frozen for 2015/16 and the net position of £63,000 be released from balances in 2015/16;
- (e) that 25% of the New Homes Bonus Grant be allocated to the NHB Scheme, with the 25% to be based on the District Council grant which will be received in 2015/16 which is attributable solely to the increase in funding from that received in 2014/15. This will equate to £87,000;
- (f) that £87,000 be released from balances to fund the New Homes Bonus Community Scheme; and
- (g) that the following be released from balances:

2016/17 - £59,000
2017/18 - 582,000

85/14

PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY - 2015 - 2018

The Cabinet considered a report on the introduction of a revised Playing Pitch Strategy 2015-2018 for the District.

It was reported that the Playing Pitch Assessment had been developed in line with Sport England's Playing Pitch Guidance 2013 and had been supported and endorsed by National Governing bodies at the Regional level and by the Council's Strategic Planning section.

It was noted that the Assessment had been undertaken to establish whether there was sufficient playing pitch provision in Bromsgrove. The Strategy would provide this Authority with an evidence base to identify sources of future investment, identify planning gain and access external grant funding. Funding could then be allocated to increase the number of pitches and the quality of future provision for example by improvements to drainage and provision of changing rooms.

The Portfolio Holder thanked officers for what was a significant piece of work which would assist the Authority to improve Playing Pitch provision either directly through the use of planning gain funding or by officers working together with clubs and other organisations.

RESOLVED that the revised Playing Pitch Strategy 2015-2018 be approved and endorsed.

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman