

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

20TH JULY 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), K.J. May (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, J. M. L. A. Griffiths, R. D. Smith and P.L. Thomas

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMES SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors C. Allen-Jones and M. Glass.

Councillor K. J. May requested that in future she be notified of any apologies from Members of the Board in the Conservative Group so that substitutes could be organised accordingly.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

In respect of Minute No. 24/15, Councillor J. M. L. A. Griffiths declared an other discloseable interest as a member of the Bromsgrove Arts Centre Trust and Councillors K. J. May and R. D. Smith declared an other discloseable interest in their capacity as members of the Bromsgrove Arts Development Trust.

There were no declarations of any whipping arrangements.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday 22nd June 2015 were submitted.

Referring to discussions at the previous meeting of the Board the Chairman thanked Councillor J. M. L. A. Griffiths for having subsequently agreed to act as the Council's representative on the Joint Increasing Physical Activity in Worcestershire Task Group.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 22nd June 2015 be approved as a correct record.

ACTION LIST

Officers explained that all but one of the actions requested at the previous meeting of the Board had been resolved. The outstanding item, requesting changes to the Quarterly Monitoring of Write Offs report, would be implemented when the Board next received the report.

QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

The Board considered the Quarterly Recommendation Tracker, containing updates on the action that had been taken to implement scrutiny recommendations.

There had been a number of developments with regard to the recommendations that had been made by the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Scrutiny Task Group. The decision making body for WRS, the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee, had recently considered a report on the subject of the future governance of the partnership. This report had contained a number of proposals which reflected many of the actions that had been proposed by the Task Group. The Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee had concluded that the existing partnership should be dissolved, to be replaced by a partnership involving the six district Councils whilst the County Council would be delivering a reduced trading standards function. The final proposals were in the process of being considered by partners. In light of these developments the Board agreed that the recommendations arising from the joint scrutiny review could be removed from the Quarterly Recommendation Tracker.

The Board noted that a significant number of updates had been received from both representatives of the Artrix and from relevant Officers in respect of the Artrix Outreach Provision Task Group. It was therefore agreed that these recommendations be removed from the tracking report.

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME 1ST AUGUST TO 30TH NOVEMBER 2015

The Board considered the content of the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme for the period 1st August 2015 to 30th November 2015. During consideration of the report a number of key issues were discussed in detail:

a) High Street Refurbishment – Phase 2 Consideration of Options

Members noted that the Licensing Committee had, in recent months, approved a new street trading policy. However, Members had received little information to indicate that the requirements of this policy had been enacted, particularly in Bromsgrove town centre. Whilst the High Street Refurbishment report would focus on a separate matter it was agreed that Officers should be asked to check how the street trading policy was being implemented on the High Street.

The Chairman commented that the subject of the High Street Refurbishment had been discussed during the Overview and Scrutiny

training session in June 2015 and there had been interest in scrutinising the subject further. Some Members suggested that the item should only be considered if there was evidence to suggest that problems had arisen, whilst others commented that, as an item listed on the Council's Corporate Risk Register, this would be an ideal subject for the Board to scrutinise. There was a short debate about the contribution the Overview and Scrutiny Board could make through pre-scrutinising this item and the suggestion was made that the Board receive a briefing paper at its next meeting for consideration and in order to feed in to the decision making process.

b) New Homes Bonus

The Board discussed the New Homes Bonus (NHB) report, scheduled for the consideration of Cabinet on 2nd September. Members noted that there had been significant public interest in the NHB, with a petition regarding the distribution of the NHB funding having been submitted to Council in 2014. Following this petition the Council had agreed that £87,000 should be made available to community bids. The deadline for these bids had passed and a summary of the applications that had been received had been loaded onto the Council's website. The report to Cabinet would contain recommendations from the NHB Grants Panel about which applicants should be awarded funding.

As the £87,000 for the NHB had only been agreed for 2015/16 there would be a need to discuss future use of the fund as part of the budget setting process. The Overview and Scrutiny Board would have an opportunity to contribute to these discussions through budget scrutiny.

c) Modifications to the Bromsgrove District Local Plan

The Bromsgrove District Local Plan was an item that the Board agreed would be of interest to Members. Unfortunately, no date was listed for the consideration of this item by Cabinet. However, a number of briefings for all Members were due to take place in forthcoming weeks, which would provide a useful opportunity to learn about the Local Plan.

d) Fees and Charges

Members suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Board could make a useful contribution through pre-scrutiny of the Council's proposed fees and charges for 2016/17. However, due to the timing of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Cabinet meetings, there would be limited time available to present the proposed fees and charges for Members' consideration prior to a decision being taken.

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources suggested that it would be useful to consider this matter in further detail at a later meeting. Officers were scheduled to deliver finance training to Members at the following meeting of the Board and this matter could be addressed as part of that item.

e) Churchfields Multi Storey Car Park Improvements

The focus of the report concerning improvements to Churchfields Multi Storey Car Park was discussed. Members were advised that there had been issues with the car park in terms of vandalism and decay of the structure. The aim was to make the car park fit for purpose.

Members noted that the intention was for the top floor of this car park to be used by Council staff following the move to Parkside. There would be a need to ensure that the parking provision was considered to be safe and secure by staff, particularly given the distance that staff would need to walk from the car park to Parkside. There was a risk that staff would park on neighbouring streets where there were no parking restrictions, which could impact on parking for local residents. Members agreed that it would be useful to receive a briefing paper from the relevant officers, at the following meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED

- (a) The contribution of Overview and Scrutiny to consideration of the Council's fees and charges 2016/17 be reconsidered at a future meeting of the Board;
- (b) A briefing paper on the High Street Refurbishment Phase 2 be presented at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 24th August 2015;
- (c) A briefing paper on the Churchfields Multi Storey Car Park Improvements be presented at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board to be held on 24th August 2015; and
- (d) That the Cabinet Work Programme 1st August to 30th November 2015 be noted.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. During consideration of this item a number of issues were considered.

a) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

Councillor B. T. Cooper, the Council's representative on Worcestershire HOSC, explained that the latest meeting of the Committee had taken place on 15th July. During this meeting 2 key items were considered:

i) Primary Care Commissioning and GP Access

In 2015 there was due to be a change to the commissioning responsibilities for primary care services and for basic general practice, with some services being devolved from NHS England to local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).

Patient satisfaction surveys had been undertaken in recent months which appeared to indicate that the CCGs in Worcestershire were performing slightly better than general for CCGs at a national level. In total 87 per cent of patients in practices that formed part of the Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG had reported that they had been able to get an appointment to see a medical practitioner when needed compared to 85 per cent of patients nationally.

Issues had been reported during the Committee meeting concerning the experiences of patients living on the borders of Worcestershire. This included:

- Patients with a GP in Alvechurch had discovered that their practices were part of a satellite group of practices for the South Birmingham CCG. These patients were finding that access to services within Worcestershire were partly restricted as a consequence.
- Anecdotal reports had been received that elderly residents from Alvechurch had been sent to hospitals outside Worcestershire rather than the Princess of Wales Community Hospital due to the funding implications of being a patient served by a GP Practice that was not part of a Worcestershire CCG.
- Councillor J. M. L. A. Griffiths reported that as a patient in a GP Practice that did not form part of a Worcestershire GP Practice she had been informed she was not eligible for a free flu vaccination in Worcestershire.
- Delays had occurred in terms of discharging patients from the Alexandra Hospital who lived in Hagley and who were patients with a GP Practice that was not part of a Worcestershire CCG.
- Patients discharged from hospital had found that they had limited access to post-operative care in cases where their GP practice was not part of a Worcestershire CCG.

This problem had been raised during a recent CALC meeting and the Chair of the Redditch and Bromsgrove CCG had been invited to attend a future meeting in order to discuss potential solutions. Members were also advised that Councillor J. M. L. A. Griffiths was due to attend a meeting alongside Parish Council members and representatives of Worcestershire Healthwatch, to discuss this matter further.

Members were advised that the CCGs had been made aware of these issues though had not yet identified a solution to the problem. In part it was suggested that this problem, in terms of a “postcode lottery” for residents living in border areas, was not a new phenomenon within the health service. However, this did not mean that no action should be taken in an attempt to resolve it.

In order to address these issues and residents’ concerns the Board agreed that the Chief Executive of the Council should be asked to write a letter to the Chief Executive and Medical Director of NHS

Arden Herefordshire and Worcestershire Area Team. In their capacity as the senior leads for the regional branch of NHS England it was suggested that they might be in a position to influence CCGs to work better together to resolve this problem to the benefit of patients. To help ensure that this letter was effective Members were urged to inform Officers of any particular examples that had been reported to them which might help to demonstrate the impact of this situation on patients.

Members also noted that at a future date it might be useful to invite the Chairman of Worcestershire Healthwatch to attend a meeting of the Board to discuss this matter.

ii) Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust: Update on CQC Unannounced Inspection

The Committee had received information about the Worcestershire Acute Hospital NHS Trust's response to the findings from the CQC's unannounced inspection. This inspection had identified a number of concerns, including staffing levels and the patient flow within emergency departments. Progress had been achieved in relation to the majority of the issues that had been found by the CQC, though 2 areas were considered to be medium risk and would continue to be monitored.

b) Burcot Lodge Homeless Unit – Topic Proposal Form

The Chairman explained that a topic proposal form had been submitted by Councillor S. Shannon. In Councillor Shannon's absence the Chairman provided a brief overview of the topic proposal. Members noted that Burcot Lodge, which provided emergency housing to vulnerable individuals at risk of homelessness, was due to be included as part of the sale of the Council House site. Councillor Shannon was keen to ensure that an alternative service was made available to residents in need of this service following the sale of the site. In the topic proposal form it had been suggested that this subject could be the focus of either a Task Group exercise or a Short, Sharp Review.

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources explained that Officers were aware of the issues surrounding Burcot Lodge. The Council House site had not yet been placed on the market as Officers were waiting until the move to Parkside had been completed. However, it was likely that any purchaser of the site would want to apply for planning permission and this could take additional time to process.

Officers had already considered the future provision of homeless services and the implications of the sale of Burcot Lodge. Discussions had been held with representatives of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) and a representative of the trust would continue to be involved in on-going discussions as part of an officer working group that had been established to investigate this matter further. No decisions had been

taken, though alternative methods of service provision would be considered alongside the existing model and an initial decision would need to be reached by October 2015. Officers suggested that a Short, Sharp Review of this subject could be helpful to enable the Council to identify alternative models that might not otherwise be considered.

Members felt it would be useful to obtain further information about the current situation before determining whether to launch a Short, Sharp Review. It was therefore agreed that the Housing Strategy Manager be invited to attend the August meeting of the Board to present a briefing paper on the subject and Councillor Shannon should also be invited to attend this meeting.

c) General Work Programme Items

Officers reported that the backlog in planning applications data would be presented at the meeting of the Board in August 2015. The briefing concerning the work of the place team, which had been requested by Members, would be presented September meeting of the Board. The Head of Environmental Services, Environmental Services Managers and with a number of the operatives would be in attendance.

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources noted that a significant number of areas were due to be addressed in the finance training session, and she suggested that it might be more appropriate for 2 separate briefings to be delivered, with a bespoke session dedicated to budget scrutiny being delivered at the September meeting. As the finance briefing would be of interest to all Councillors, the Board agreed that it all Members would be invited to attend.

RECOMMENDED that the Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council write to the Chief Executive and Medical Director of NHS Arden Herefordshire and Worcestershire Area Team to urge them to take action to encourage Clinical Commissioning Groups to work together to ensure that residents living in border areas are not penalised in terms of patient care, with copies being sent to Healthwatch and the Chairman of the Clinical Commissioning Group.

RESOLVED that

- (a) The Housing Strategy Manager be invited to attend the following meeting of the Board to present a briefing paper on the subject of the future plans for Burcot Lodge;
- (b) The finance training be delivered in two stages in August and September; and
- (c) Subject to the comments detailed in the preamble above, the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.43 p.m.

Chairman