

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

21ST MARCH 2016 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Vice-Chairman), C. Allen-Jones, S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, B. T. Cooper, M. Glass, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson and S. A. Webb

Observers: Councillor S. P. Shannon and Councillor M. A. Sherrey

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. G. Revans, Ms. B. Houghton, Mr D. Rischmiller, Ms. J. Bayley and Ms. A. Scarce

114/15 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, L. C. R. Mallett and R. D. Smith with Councillors M. Thompson and S. Webb attending as substitutes for Councillors Mallett and Deeming respectively.

115/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

116/15 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 29th February 2016 were submitted.

Officers advised that the length of time required to process the planning application at Foxlydiate, as detailed in minute No. 108/15, should have been recorded as 16 weeks rather than 6.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 29th February 2016 be approved as a correct record.

117/15 **CRIME & DISORDER PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY UPDATE REPORT**

The Community Safety Manager presented an update on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP) in 2015/16. During the delivery of this presentation the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The NWCSP was the statutory partnership for Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest.
- There was a separate Community Safety Partnership (CSP) representing the south of the county.
- In September 2015 the Safer Communities Board (SCB) had commissioned a review of countywide community safety structures.
- The findings of this review had recently been presented for the consideration of the partnership.
- Key proposals in the report for the CSPs included the suggestion that there needed to be more joined up working between the partnerships in Worcestershire. This could include working together on areas such as commissioning.
- The report had also recommended that there should be a skills audit of members of both CSPs.
- Recommendations had also been made directly to the SCB.
- This included a proposal that the number of Board meetings per year should be increased from 2 to 4.
- As with the partnerships the report authors had also suggested that a skills audit of the Board's members and a proper induction process would be useful.
- It had been suggested that links between the SCB and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) could be strengthened.
- Proposals had also been made on the subject of communications as it had been felt that more could be done to promote the work of the SCB and its sub-groups as well as to promote national and regional campaigns at the local level.
- A number of actions had been taken locally to address community safety issues.
- This included the launch of the Bromsgrove Safe Place Scheme, to provide people with a safe environment to turn to. Originally the scheme had been designed for people with learning disabilities, though it had been extended to provide a safe haven to anybody who felt vulnerable.
- The partnership was in the process of negotiating future funding with the office of the PCC. Information received to date indicated that the settlement in 2016/17 was likely to be similar to that for 2015/16.
- In future years the funding arrangements for CSPs would be changing to a commissioning model which would focus on meeting local needs.

Following the presentation Members discussed a number of points in further detail:

- The action taken to monitor the impact of local projects and to assess whether this represented value for money. Officers explained that a member of the Community Safety Team took a lead role in monitoring the effectiveness of local projects.

- The approach in the county to providing services to address substance abuse. Local initiatives to address this included drugs and alcohol workshops in schools.
- The Integrated Offender Management Programme in Worcestershire and the focus at the local level on supporting the most vulnerable. Officers advised that Bromsgrove had one of the smallest cohorts in the programme.
- The sustainability of services, particularly projects tackling domestic abuse, in challenging economic circumstances. The Board was informed that the PCC's new commissioning model was designed to enhance the sustainability of projects by allocating funding over a 3 year period rather than for a single year.
- The complexity of local CSP structures and the benefits of an induction process for both the CSPs and the SCB to ensure that participants understood their roles and the purpose of the meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

118/15

EVENING & WEEKEND CAR PARKING TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor K. J. May, Chairman of the Evening and Weekend Car Parking Task Group, delivered a presentation outlining the findings of the review. During this presentation she highlighted the following matters for Members' consideration:

- The first scrutiny review of car parking had taken place in 2007. Since that date 10 further reviews of the subject had been undertaken.
- The group had interviewed a range of expert witnesses including 51 retailers, the Town Centre Forum, relevant Portfolio Holders and appropriate Officers.
- Members had discovered that 92 per cent of retailers were not aware that free evening car parking was available in the town.
- Car parking charges had often been regarded as a useful source of Council revenue.
- However, the group had come to the conclusion at an early stage that a key role of car parking was to contribute to the economic development of the town.
- For this reason at the end of 2015 the group had asked to extend their deadline to provide time to explore weekend parking options alongside evening car parking arrangements.
- Members had discovered that there was no joined up thinking in respect of car parking.
- The group was proposing that in order to address this and to enhance the contribution of car parking to economic development in the town the Council needed to formulate a clear economic development strategy.

- The witnesses consulted by the group were keen for a strategy to be developed and for partners to be engaged in the development of this plan.
- Whilst the strategy was being developed the group was suggesting that free evening car parking should be retained.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The contribution that external consultants could make in terms of identifying the long-term strategic parking needs of the town.
- The extent to which the Council could afford to pay external consultants and whether this could be met from existing budgets.
- The role of the Economic Development Unit in formulating a clear Economic Development Strategy. Officers advised that this work would be undertaken by Council staff rather than consultants.
- The potential loss of 130 car parking spaces in the town as a result of development work and the impact that this might have on the local economy.
- The costs of providing free evening car parking, with £60,000 per annum allocated in the budget for this purpose.
- The potential for further businesses to open on Sundays and the extent to which changes to car parking arrangements could incentivise more retailers to open on this day.
- The lack of sufficient data or a business case to enable Members to determine whether the free evening car parking trial had been value for money.
- The need for data to be gathered and a clear business case to be developed in advance of any future trials being undertaken.
- The fact that many local authorities had developed car parking and economic development strategies.
- The age of the car parking machines used by the Council and the need to replace these with machines that would have a longer lifespan.
- The potential to extend pay on foot arrangements as proposed during previous car parking reviews.
- The potential for the proposed Economic Development Strategy to help the Council to support the strategic purpose: help me to run a successful business.

Prior to the vote the Board discussed the order in which the first 2 recommendations detailed in the group's report should be implemented. There was general consensus that car parking arrangements needed to support the Economic Development Strategy for the town centre. Members therefore suggested that the external consultants should only be invited to undertake a specialist piece of work to assess the car parking requirements needed to support the strategy once the strategy had been finalised. For this reason the wording of recommendation 2 was altered to begin "Having formulated the Economic Development

Strategy it is recommended that an external expert be engaged by the Council...”

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) The Council needs to formulate a clear Economic Development Strategy that includes car parking as soon as possible, whilst considering the following key features of any such strategy:
 - (a) Ensuring that car parking arrangements are managed in accordance with the interests of the local economy;
 - (b) Working with partners in business and retail to develop the Economic Development Strategy that includes parking options and tariffs that encourage customers to visit Bromsgrove; and
 - (c) Ensure car parking arrangements support the Council's Economic Development Strategy.

- (2) Having formulated the Economic Development Strategy it is recommended that an external expert be engaged by the Council, with a clear remit of what the Council wishes to achieve, it is suggested that such a consultant would need to consult with the following Council officers/Members:
 - (a) Economic Development Team
 - (b) Environmental Services Team
 - (d) Relevant Portfolio Holders
 - (e) Members of the Evening and Weekend Car Parking Task Group
 - (f) Local businesses and retailers.

- (3) Prior to any further trials (of any nature) being agreed and carried out any necessary data should be collected in order to have appropriate comparative data and information available to ensure that any such trial can be measured successfully.

- (4) Until the introduction of a strategy the current parking charges and concessions should be maintained (including the continuation of free evening car parking).

119/15

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS IN BROMSGROVE SHORT SHARP REVIEW - VERBAL UPDATE

Councillor C. J. Bloore, Chairman of the Preventing Homelessness in Bromsgrove Short Sharp Review, provided an update on the progress of the review. He explained that since the previous meeting of the Board Councillor B. T. Cooper had resigned from the group to be replaced by Councillor H. J. Jones. Councillors S. J. Baxter, R. D. Smith and S. P. Shannon had remained on the group.

The group had held a number of meetings and had interviewed the Strategic Housing Manager and the Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT). Information had been provided about

welfare changes that had already been made as well as forthcoming changes which could impact on housing provision and homelessness levels.

During the meetings of this group it had become clear that this was a complex subject which would need time to review carefully. Members were also mindful of the Cabinet's decision to set money aside to pay for any recommendations made by the group in the event that they were approved. In this context there was cross party support amongst members of the group for this review to be extended into a full Task Group to provide Members with the chance to achieve due diligence in respect of this matter.

RESOLVED that

- (1) The Preventing Homelessness in Bromsgrove review be extended to a full Task Group exercise.
- (2) The deadline for completion of this review be extended to September 2016.

120/15

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor B. T. Cooper, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), provided an update on the latest meeting of the Committee which took place on 10th March 2016. The main item of discussion during this meeting had been the transformation of Adult Mental Health Services.

Adult Mental Health Services were commissioned by Worcestershire County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Worcestershire and were provided by Worcestershire Health and Care Trust. However, in challenging economic circumstances the CCGs were reducing their contribution to the Secondary Care Community Services delivered by the Trust by £500,000 and would be reallocating this funding in future to Primary Care Mental Health Services. As a consequence the Trust would need to achieve significant levels of savings and would be investigating the potential to achieve this through service transformation. No plans had yet been finalised though would be reported back to HOSC in due course.

121/15

ACTION LIST

Officers advised that some of the additional information that had been requested by Members at the previous meeting of the Board about the staff survey had been provided and would be emailed to Members.

The Board had been due to consider an update on the Dolphin Centre project. However, the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services had advised that work was not due to be completed until September 2017 and therefore an investigation into support available to displaced groups

would not commence until January 2017. For this reason it was agreed that the update to the Board should be postponed.

RESOLVED that the Dolphin Centre update be provided at a meeting of the Board in January 2017.

122/15

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Officers advised that the High Street Refurbishment report would not be reported to Cabinet in April 2016. Instead, further work would be undertaken to gather information on this subject and would be reported in the summer. As requested at previous meetings of the Board Officers would ensure that Members' could pre-scrutinise this report before it was considered by Cabinet.

123/15

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The following updates were provided in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for Members' consideration:

a) Sickness Absence Report

The annual Sickness Absence Performance report would be presented for Members' consideration in April 2016.

b) Planning Backlog Data

Following the Board's agreement to continue to receive the Planning Backlog monitoring reports dates had been scheduled into the work programme for consideration of this item in 2016/17.

c) Budget Scrutiny

The Board was scheduled to discuss lessons learned during the budget scrutiny process in 2015/16. Members agreed that it would be useful to consider further information about the budget scrutiny process adopted at other Councils in the region as part of this process.

d) 2016/17 Meeting Dates

The dates for meetings of the Board in 2016/17 had been recorded in the Work Programme for Members' consideration.

The meeting closed at 7.07 p.m.

Chairman