

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

23RD SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 4.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. A. Sherrey (Leader), C. B. Taylor (Deputy Leader),
G. N. Denaro, R. L. Dent, R. J. Laight and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor H. J. Jones

Invitees: Ms. Z. Thomas (Grant Thornton)

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Ms. S. Morgan, Mrs S. Sellers, Mr I Roberts and
Ms. R. Cole,

34/15 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

35/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

36/15 **AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT 2014/15**

The Cabinet considered the Audit Findings Report 2014/15 together with the draft letter of representation. The Leader welcomed Ms. Z. Thomas from Grant Thornton to the meeting.

It was noted that the Audit was on-going due to the accounts being submitted late. The Auditors had agreed that the reasons for this included:

- the implementation of a new financial ledger;
- the re-structure of the Finance Team, turnover of staff and difficulties in recruiting to vacant senior posts; and
- the introduction of a new chart of accounts and changes in coding issues.

It was reported that officers were working on a wider action plan which would address the recommendations raised in the report. These included:

- the development of a comprehensive project plan for the preparation of the 2015/16 accounts;
- the production of the 2015/16 accounts to meet the statutory deadlines; and

- a robust budget preparation and monitoring processes to be put in place.

It was confirmed that the Value for Money assessment would be unqualified and that the Council was considered to be in a strong position with balances of around £4,000,000.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Audit Findings Report 2014/15 be noted; and
- (b) that the draft letter of representation , as included in the Audit Findings Report be approved.

37/15 **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2014/15**

Consideration was given to the report on the Statement of Accounts for 2014/15.

It was reported that the Statement of Accounts was still in draft as the Audit Findings Report was not yet completely finalised.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Accounting Policies as detailed in Note 1 of the 2014/15 Statement of Accounts be approved;
- (b) that the Draft Statement of Accounts 2014/15 be noted;
- (c) that in order to enable final sign off of the Statement of Accounts by the auditors, Grant Thornton by 30th September 2015, Cabinet recommends to Council that authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer to make any final changes required to the Statement of Accounts following consultation with the Chairman of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, and having taken into consideration any changes to the Audit Findings Report, to make any changes and to approve the final version of the Statement of Accounts 2014/15.

38/15 **GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION CHARGE 2016/2017**

The Cabinet considered a report on proposed changes to the garden waste collection service.

It was reported that the proposals had been put forward in order to maintain an efficient and effective garden waste collection service and to improve the customer's experience as well as allowing improvements to the administration and operation of the service.

A comparison with neighbouring authorities illustrated that the proposed increase from £38 to £40 still resulted in Bromsgrove's charges being in line with or lower than that charged by other authorities.

Officers reported that there was an opportunity to encourage new customers to sign up to the service and to pay by way of direct debit and for existing customers to switch to payment by direct debit.

It was also reported that this payment method would bring a number of advantages as payments would be taken automatically on the “anniversary “ of signing up to the service rather than there being the possibility of late or delayed payments. It would assist householders who sign up to the service part of the way through the financial year as they would then receive a full year’s service for their payment. It would also assist those who were moving house within the District.

It was anticipated there would be a peak in workload for back office staff for a period but that this could be managed as despatch of renewal letters would be phased.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the steps being suggested to run the garden waste service more efficiently as set out in the report be noted and the following actions be approved:
 - (i) that officers work to establish direct debit as the primary method of payment for the garden waste service from 2017;
 - (ii) that officers work with new customers to support payments being taken by direct debit for the 2016 service;
 - (iii) that existing garden waste customers be encouraged to sign up to payments by direct debit subscriptions for the 2016 service; and
 - (iv) that the garden waste service be promoted at minimal cost through a variety of online, social media and press advertisements.

RECOMMENDED that the charges for the garden waste collection service be increased to £40 with effect from 1st February 2016.

The meeting closed at 4.35 p.m.

Chairman