

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

8TH AUGUST 2016 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), C. Allen-Jones (from Minute No. 26/16), S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, M. Glass, R. J. Laight (Substitute), R. D. Smith, C. J. Spencer and P.L. Thomas (from Minute No. 19/16).

Observers: Councillor G. N. Denaro

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. I. Roberts, Mr M. Austin, Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

16/16 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor S. A. Webb and it was confirmed that Councillor R. J. Laight was attending as her substitute.

Members were also advised that Councillor P. L. Thomas would be slightly late.

17/16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest nor of any whipping arrangements.

18/16 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 27th June 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 27th June 2016 be approved as a correct record.

19/16 **SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT**

The Place Team Leader for Bromsgrove District presented the summary of Environmental Enforcement Action that had been taken in 2015/16. During the presentation of this report the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The number of enforcement officers had been reviewed during the year and reduced to one. This officer primarily had an investigatory role.
- Fly tipping had been the most significant environmental enforcement issue. Officers were investigating the potential to introduce surveillance, though were also using signs to discourage this behaviour.
- The number of abandoned vehicle cases had tripled with a significant rise in the number reported by housing associations. Many of these vehicles had subsequently been found to be owned by tenants and the Council was working with the housing associations to address this problem.
- There had been a reduction in the levels of dog fouling, though there continued to be a perception that the levels were high.
- In total 11 members of staff had been trained to issued fixed penalty notices to dog owners.
- There had been a slight increase in the number of cars advertised for sale on the public highway.
- There had been 2 prosecutions and a fixed penalty notice issued during the period.

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

- The use of mobile CCTV cameras for surveillance purposes in hot spot areas.
- The impact of signs on people's behaviour, particularly in respect of fly tipping rates.
- The impact of the Council's enforcement action on fly tipping rates in neighbouring authority areas.
- The mix of commercial and domestic waste in cases of fly tipping. The Board was advised that a significant proportion of fly tipping involved commercial waste.
- The Council's links with Worcestershire Regulatory Services and the Environment Agency and action that could be undertaken by working in partnership to address fly tipping.
- The potential for all investigated cases to be presented on a ward basis. Officers agreed to provide this information for Members' consideration following the meeting.
- The amount of litter at a neighbourhood level and the responsibilities of local businesses when litter had been disposed by their customers in the public realm. Officers requested that Members notify them of any particular areas where litter was consistently a problem.
- The number of abandoned supermarket trollies which Members suggested was significantly higher than the number recorded for investigation. Officers explained that the majority were reported directly as complaints to the relevant supermarket.

- The potential to charge supermarkets for recovery of abandoned trollies and the extent to which this would incentivise those supermarkets to recover trollies safely.
- The potential for the new Town Centres Manager to liaise with supermarkets with regard to the issue of abandoned trollies.
- The need to advertise the bulky collection service, to discourage residents from leaving domestic items such as washing machines on the public highway for scrap metal dealers to collect.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

20/16

PLANNING BACKLOG DATA UP TO 30TH JUNE 2016

Members considered the planning backlog data update for the period 1st July 2014 to 30th June 2016. The Board noted that the report concentrated on performance in respect of major planning applications as this had been the focus of the former designation status for the Council's Planning services. The report provided the Board with an opportunity to monitor the Council's performance in respect of major applications and to ensure that a significant backlog did not develop in respect of these applications in future. Members agreed that for clarification it would be useful for a definition of major planning applications to be provided in future editions of the report.

21/16

COUNCIL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT - PRESENTATION

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources provided an update on the role of the Council's Efficiency Statement. Members were advised that Efficiency Statements had been introduced by the Government to enable local authorities to secure some clarity about the Council's Revenue Support Grant settlement for the following four years. There was no obligation to produce an Efficiency Statement but there were concerns that if a statement was not agreed this could have a detrimental impact on the Council's budgetary position moving forward.

The New Homes Bonus (NHB) settlement for the Council did not need to be included in the calculations for the Efficiency Statement though would be considered as part of the budget setting process. Officers were anticipating that the Council would continue to receive funding from the NHB though this would reduce over the next four years.

The Council needed to submit the efficiency statement by 14th October 2016. No template had been provided by the Government for this statement which had instead been left to local discretion to determine. Many of the Councils that had already submitted efficiency statements had produced these in the style of a Medium Term Financial Plan. The statement would need to identify budgetary gaps over the next four years, which would range from £600,000 in 2017/18 to approximately £2.2 million in 2019/20. The risks to the Council's financial position in different scenarios would also be taken into account. However, Councils would be expected to include general assumptions as to how they would

address the shortfalls but the exact nature of the savings would not have to be specified.

The content of the Council's Efficiency Statement still remained to be confirmed. For this reason it was proposed that a more detailed presentation on the subject of the efficiency statement should be subject to scrutiny at the following meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group.

RESOLVED that

- (1) The Finance and Budget Working Group receive a detailed presentation concerning the content of the Efficiency Plan at its meeting on 25th August; and
- (2) The update be noted.

22/16

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor B. T. Cooper, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), explained that he had been unable to attend the latest meeting of the Committee. Based on the agenda from that meeting Councillor Cooper advised Members that the Committee had considered the following items:

a) The Future of Acute Hospital Services in Worcestershire

The Clinical Senate had approved Worcestershire Acute Hospital NHS Trust's (WAHT's) proposed changes to acute services. These proposals would be placed out to public consultation in the autumn. Under the proposals patients would continue to receive 95 per cent of services at the same location. HOSC would monitor the consultation process and contribute to the debate during the period.

Members were advised that the Leader of the Council had been contacted by the acting Chairman of WAHT about the proposed changes. It had been agreed that a representative of the trust should attend a future briefing with Members to outline the proposals. As part of this briefing Members noted that it would be useful to discuss public transport access and car parking spaces at Worcester Royal Hospital.

b) Adult Mental Health Services

Budget cuts had been imposed on the Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust in 2016/17 which would impact on adult mental health services. HOSC had received a presentation on the implications for local services and Councillor Cooper offered to share this with Members.

c) Paediatric Services

An update had been provided on the proposed temporary move of Paediatric services from the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch to Worcester.

d) E-cigarettes Briefing

A briefing had been delivered on the subject of e-cigarettes. Again Councillor Cooper offered to circulate this briefing paper amongst Members.

Members noted that it had recently been announced that a significant number of x-ray scans undertaken by the Trust had remained unchecked. It was suggested that if this subject had not already been discussed or scheduled for the consideration of HOSC that it should be raised at a future meeting.

23/16

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS TASK GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE

Councillor C. J. Bloore, Chairman of the Preventing Homelessness Task Group, provided an update on the work of the group. Members were advised that the group had held a meeting in July when the Leader of the Council had been interviewed in his capacity as the lead Portfolio Holder for finance. The group had also formulated some initial recommendations and were due to finalise their proposals and report at a meeting on 18th August. The group remained on track to present their findings for the Board's consideration in September.

24/16

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE

The Chairman explained that he had been appointed to lead the Finance and Budget Working Group. At the first meeting of the group Members had agreed their terms of reference and had set a quorum of three Members for every meeting. The majority of the meetings of this group would take place during the period in which the Council would be making decisions about the budget. However, meetings of the group would also take place throughout the year to provide Members with an opportunity to consider the quarterly finance monitoring reports and updates on write off of debts.

25/16

PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD WORKING GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE

The Board was advised that Councillor S. A. Webb had been appointed to lead the Performance Dashboard Working Group. The first meeting would take place on 26th August.

26/16

QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

Members were informed that a number of recommendations made through the scrutiny process remained to be implemented. The Leisure Provision Task Group's proposals in respect of the Dolphin Centre would be addressed in early 2017. The Board's proposal that the Task Group guidance notes should be incorporated into the constitution also still needed to be discussed by the Constitution Review Working Group.

27/16

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Officers advised that the review of CCTV in the district was scheduled for pre-scrutiny by the Board in due course. The report would no longer be considered by the Cabinet in September, as recorded in the printed work programme, and had instead been postponed for debate later in the year.

28/16

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Board was informed that the Artrix Annual Report and the staff survey results would both be presented for Members' consideration in September. The Preventing Homelessness Task Group's final report would also be considered by the Board at that meeting.

The Chairman noted that following completion of the Preventing Homelessness Task Group there would be capacity for a new Task Group or Short Sharp Review exercise to take place. A number of topics identified during the scrutiny work programme planning event in 2015, as detailed on the work programme, remained to be considered by the Board. The Chairman suggested that the Board could discuss potential topics for scrutiny review in further detail at its next meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.45 p.m.

Chairman