



**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**MONDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2016**  
**AT 6.00 P.M.**

**PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE**

**MEMBERS:** Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), S. A. Webb (Vice-Chairman), C. Allen-Jones, S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, M. Glass, R. J. Laight, C. J. Spencer and P.L. Thomas

**AGENDA**

1. Apologies for Absence and Named Substitutes
2. Declarations of Interest and Whipping Arrangements

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 8th August 2016 (Pages 1 - 6)
4. Artrix Annual Report (Presentation)
5. Staff Survey 2016 - Results and Actions (Pages 7 - 14)
6. Preventing Homelessness Task Group - Final Report (Pages 15 - 46)
7. Finance and Budget Working Group - Update (Pages 47 - 48)

Terms of Reference Attached for information and comment.

8. Measures Dashboard Working Group - Update (Pages 49 - 50)

Terms of Reference attached for information and comment.

9. Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Update
10. Cabinet Work Programme (Pages 51 - 56)
11. Scrutiny Topic Proposal (Pages 57 - 60)
12. Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme (Pages 61 - 66)
13. To consider any other business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting.

K. DICKS  
Chief Executive

Parkside  
Market Street  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B61 8DA

8th September 2016



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## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**8<sup>TH</sup> 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:

# Agenda Item 3

Overview and Scrutiny Board  
8th August 2016

- 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

## Report to Overview & Scrutiny on the 2016 Staff Survey

19<sup>th</sup> September 2016

We undertook a staff survey in April 2016. The staff survey was an opportunity to gauge employee morale, the culture of the organisation, workplace relationships and communication. It was completed by 246 employees which equates to a response rate of 25%, which whilst lower than the last response rate of 33%, it was sufficient to provide enough detail for the results to be meaningful. A breakdown of the response rate by service area is attached at Appendix 1.

The same questions were used in the survey as the previous one so a comparison could be made. A copy of the full results for the 2016 Staff Survey along with comparator results for 2013, where available, is attached at Appendix 2.

### **Summary of overall improvement**

We have seen a number of improvements across the board including communicating with more staff receiving feedback from their line manager. We can also confirm that staff are more aware of the:

- Six Strategic Purposes and operational measures
- Support available
- Changes happening within the Councils and their impact
- Process for raising concerns and confidence in doing this

### **What we are doing well**

The three areas below have been identified as the areas that have seen the greatest improvements since the last staff survey:-

I have the support that I need to be able to deal with change effectively	+12.20%
I feel that I am coping well with the changes that are taking place	+7.30%
These changes have been beneficial	+13.70%

It is encouraging that we have seen improvements in staff feeling able to deal with changes and reporting the benefits of change. This along with the positive results regarding communication is reassuring that all the hard work that has been undertaken in these areas is making a difference.

## Where we need to improve

**Specific areas which have seen the highest reduction since the previous survey:-**

I have all the skills I need to be able to do my job well.	-14.00%
I am able to meet the needs of my customers on a daily basis.	-9.40%
I have a good working relationship with my colleagues	-5.60%

Work is being undertaken to help identify what has brought about these changes and what needs to be done to ensure improvements are made as outlined below.

## How we take forward the results from the Staff Survey

A programme board has been established, chaired by the Chief Executive and supported by Head of Business Transformation, representatives from Human Resources, Organisational Development and the Trade Unions (Unison, GMB and UCATT). Following analysis and discussion of the Survey results the Board has agreed that data will be considered at both a Corporate and Service level. The board will be developing a timeline for ensuring that improvements are delivered.

Three corporate work streams have been established and are headed up by key officers as detailed below:-

- People Management – Deb Poole, Head of Business Transformation Manager
- Meeting Our Customers' Needs – Amanda Singleton, Customer Access & Financial Support
- Organisational Culture – Sue Hanley, Deputy Chief Executive

Each of the work streams will bring together work that is already ongoing in addition to work identified through the analysis of data that is available corporately.

At a Service level Heads of Service have been provided with data for their own area and are analysing this data, including:-

- identifying the three areas of greatest improvement / decline compared to the previous survey
- developing action plans to address the above, which will be presented to the Programme Board at the end of September.

Progress on the work being undertaken at a Corporate and Service level will be reported to the Programme Board, who will provide updates to CMT and Members as appropriate.

**% STAFF RESPONDING BY SERVICE AREA**

**STAFF SURVEY 2016**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>No Of Respondents</b>	<b>% of Staff Responding</b>
Enivronmental Services	223	28	12.56%
Housing Services	159	27	16.98%
Legal and Democratic Services	25	5	20.00%
Leisure and Culture	123	27	21.95%
Community Services	142	35	24.65%
Chief Exec's Unit	25	7	28.00%
Customer Access and Financial Support *	138	39	28.26%
Planning and Regeneration	59	18	30.51%
Business Transformation	44	19	43.18%

\*Includes Financial Services

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2016 responses: 1=not at all > 6=completely / 2013 responses: 0=not at all > 5=completely

Q	# valid responses	Total # responses 2016 = 246 (26.23%) Total # responses 2013 = 307 (31.65%)	2016	2013	2016	2013
1	246	I am clear about my role and responsibilities when I am at work	1	0	2.0%	2.3%
			2	1	4.5%	6.2%
			3	2	10.6%	7.8%
			4	3	13.4%	20.2%
			5	4	29.7%	20.8%
			6	5	39.8%	42.7%
2	246	I understand how my role contributes to the purpose of my team and I feel that what I do is important	1	0	2.4%	2.6%
			2	1	6.1%	3.6%
			3	2	6.9%	8.2%
			4	3	13.4%	14.4%
			5	4	28.9%	27.1%
			6	5	42.3%	44.1%
3	246	I have all the skills I need to be able to do my job well. (Please give details below if you have any training needs)	1	0	2.4%	0.3%
			2	1	5.7%	4.0%
			3	2	8.5%	5.0%
			4	3	22.0%	15.3%
			5	4	39.4%	38.7%
			6	5	22.0%	36.7%
4	245	I have the opportunity to do what I do best on a daily basis	1	0	9.4%	4.2%
			2	1	8.6%	9.1%
			3	2	10.2%	10.7%
			4	3	22.9%	25.0%
			5	4	26.1%	29.9%
			6	5	22.9%	21.1%
5	245	I have opportunities to develop my skills and knowledge for the future	1	0	11.4%	10.1%
			2	1	10.2%	10.1%
			3	2	13.9%	16.2%
			4	3	26.5%	25.3%
			5	4	21.2%	22.4%
			6	5	16.7%	15.9%
6	243	I am able to meet the needs of my customers (internal or external) on a daily basis.	1	0	3.3%	3.6%
			2	1	9.9%	6.2%
			3	2	12.8%	13.1%
			4	3	25.9%	19.6%
			5	4	32.1%	38.2%
			6	5	16.0%	19.3%
7	244	I have the materials and equipment that I need to do my job well.	1	0	4.5%	3.9%
			2	1	11.1%	8.5%
			3	2	16.4%	16.4%
			4	3	23.8%	24.9%
			5	4	28.3%	29.5%
			6	5	16.0%	16.7%
9	240	Systems, processes, people, cross-site working / travel between sites etc get in the way of me being able to do a good job	1	0	17.5%	13.6%
			2	1	13.8%	13.6%
			3	2	21.3%	20.1%
			4	3	18.8%	22.1%
			5	4	17.1%	22.4%
			6	5	11.7%	8.2%
11	245	I know that the Councils have 6 Strategic Purposes.	Y		80.0%	61.5%
			N		20.0%	38.5%
12	241	I am able to state what the 6 Strategic Purposes are.	Y		46.5%	26.2%
			N		53.5%	73.8%
13	206	I am aware that my service area has operational measures or that they are currently being developed.	Y		76.2%	67.5%
			N		23.8%	32.5%

2016 responses: 1=not at all > 6=completely / 2013 responses: 0=not at all > 5=completely

Q	# valid responses	Total # responses 2016 = 246 (26.23%) Total # responses 2013 = 307 (31.65%)	2016	2013	2016	2013
15	243	I feel that I have a suitable balance between work and the rest of my life	1	0	4.1%	3.3%
			2	1	8.6%	3.3%
			3	2	13.2%	12.4%
			4	3	20.2%	24.8%
			5	4	29.6%	29.1%
			6	5	24.3%	27.1%
16	243	I am able to take a lunch break every day	1	0	7.0%	4.0%
			2	1	8.6%	12.3%
			3	2	15.2%	12.0%
			4	3	12.3%	12.6%
			5	4	21.0%	20.9%
			6	5	35.8%	38.2%
17	242	I am able to take other breaks if I need them	1	0	7.0%	8.9%
			2	1	13.2%	13.9%
			3	2	14.9%	10.9%
			4	3	21.1%	17.8%
			5	4	23.1%	24.1%
			6	5	20.7%	24.4%
18	245	I am generally able to take advantage of flexible working arrangements	1	0	11.0%	17.2%
			2	1	6.5%	5.0%
			3	2	11.0%	5.6%
			4	3	8.6%	14.2%
			5	4	31.8%	26.7%
			6	5	31.0%	31.4%
19	244	I would be interested in taking part in health and wellbeing programmes at work (in addition to the smoking cessation and health checks that are already on offer). Please give details in the comments section below.	Y		56.6%	47.1%
			N		43.4%	52.9%
21	243	Does your working environment hinder your ability to work effectively? (If yes, please give details below)	Y		26.7%	N/A
			N		73.3%	N/A
23	245	Have you suffered from any illness, disability or other physical or mental problem within the last 12 months that was caused or made worse by your job or by work you have done in the past?	Y		19.2%	24.7%
			N		80.8%	75.3%
26	246	My team works well together	1	0	2.4%	3.7%
			2	1	6.9%	2.4%
			3	2	11.8%	7.4%
			4	3	13.0%	16.5%
			5	4	30.5%	37.4%
			6	5	35.4%	32.7%
27	245	I have a good working relationship with my colleagues	1	0	0.4%	1.7%
			2	1	1.6%	1.7%
			3	2	9.0%	2.7%
			4	3	11.4%	10.8%
			5	4	33.1%	37.0%
			6	5	44.5%	46.1%
28	244	I understand what my colleagues do and how this contributes to the overall purpose of the team	1	0	1.6%	1.3%
			2	1	1.6%	3.4%
			3	2	7.0%	6.1%
			4	3	13.1%	12.8%
			5	4	34.8%	35.7%
			6	5	41.8%	40.7%



2016 responses: 1=not at all > 6=completely / 2013 responses: 0=not at all > 5=completely

Q	# valid responses	Total # responses 2016 = 246 (26.23%) Total # responses 2013 = 307 (31.65%)	2016	2013	2016	2013
29	245	I feel that I have the opportunity to contribute to decision making or changes within the team	1	0	9.0%	9.8%
			2	1	9.8%	6.7%
			3	2	6.9%	11.8%
			4	3	16.3%	17.2%
			5	4	25.3%	23.6%
			6	5	32.7%	31.0%
30	244	Do you feel that you are affected by any conflict within the team?	Y		31.1%	34.5%
			N		68.9%	65.5%
31	241	Have you been subjected to any bullying or harassment while at work?	Y		17.0%	14.7%
			N		83.0%	85.3%
32	20	If you have answered "Yes" to the above question, what were the grounds for the bullying or harassment?  Other available options for which there was a nil response in either survey: - Marriage & civil partnership - Pregnancy and maternity	Age		10.0%	10.0%
			Disability		10.0%	2.5%
			Gender reassignment		5.0%	0.0%
			Sexual orientation		5.0%	0.0%
			Race		0.0%	7.5%
			Religion or belief		0.0%	7.5%
			Sex		0.0%	7.5%
			Caring		0.0%	2.5%
			Other		70.0%	62.5%
34	227	I think that my team meetings are useful	1	0	14.5%	15.1%
			2	1	13.2%	9.3%
			3	2	13.7%	10.0%
			4	3	14.5%	21.6%
			5	4	26.9%	25.1%
			6	5	17.2%	18.9%
35	244	We have regular team meetings so I feel that I am well informed about what is happening	Y		60.7%	54.5%
			N		39.3%	45.5%
36	244	I have regular one-to-one meetings / status updates with my line manager / supervisor	Y		57.0%	54.3%
			N		43.0%	45.7%
37	242	I am encouraged to contribute my thoughts and ideas at team meetings and one-to-one sessions	Y		73.6%	69.8%
			N		26.4%	30.2%
38	241	The way the organisation communicates with staff eg using the Oracle newsletter and Orb notifications etc meets my needs	Y		73.9%	71.0%
			N		26.1%	29.0%
40	242	I get the support I need from my line manager	Y		76.4%	74.9%
			N		23.6%	25.1%
41	243	I get the support I need from my colleagues	Y		91.8%	86.2%
			N		8.2%	13.8%
42	243	I feel that my contribution is recognised and I receive praise when I do a good job	Y		67.9%	63.9%
			N		32.1%	36.1%
43	244	I get regular feedback from my line manager about how I am doing	Y		59.4%	50.2%
			N		40.6%	49.8%
44	244	I am aware of the support on offer through the Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health and Union Representatives	Y		80.3%	70.4%
			N		19.7%	29.6%

2016 responses: 1=not at all > 6=completely / 2013 responses: 0=not at all > 5=completely

Q	# valid responses	Total # responses 2016 = 246 (26.23%) Total # responses 2013 = 307 (31.65%)	2016	2013	2016	2013
			Y	N		
46	242	I am aware of the changes that are happening within the Council	Y		81.8%	88.0%
			N		18.2%	12.0%
47	242	I understand why these changes are happening	Y		80.6%	83.8%
			N		19.4%	16.2%
48	242	I understand what impact these changes will have on my role and the way that I carry it out	Y		66.1%	58.3%
			N		33.9%	41.7%
49	239	I have the support that I need to be able to deal with change effectively	Y		69.9%	57.7%
			N		30.1%	42.3%
50	238	I feel that I have the skills I need to be able to deal with the changes that are taking place	Y		84.0%	81.9%
			N		16.0%	18.1%
51	239	I feel that I am able to influence the changes taking place around me	Y		40.2%	34.5%
			N		59.8%	65.5%
52	239	I feel that I am coping well with the changes that are taking place	Y		80.3%	73.0%
			N		19.7%	27.0%
53	240	The changes in my service area have had an impact on how I do my job	Y		75.8%	69.0%
			N		24.2%	31.0%
54	232	These changes have been beneficial	Y		52.2%	38.5%
			N		47.8%	61.5%
56	239	I understand that I have a responsibility to raise any concerns I may have over possible fraud, crime, danger or other serious risk that could threaten customers, colleagues, the public or the organisation's reputation	Y		99.2%	97.2%
			N		0.8%	2.8%
57	239	I know how to raise such a concern	Y		92.1%	83.2%
			N		7.9%	16.8%
58	238	I feel confident about raising any such concerns	Y		88.2%	78.9%
			N		11.8%	21.1%
60	224	Which of the following best describes the main focus of your role?	4th Tier/Strategic Management		8.0%	10.6%
			Office based-Customer facing role		23.2%	15.8%
			Office based-Support role		20.5%	28.2%
			Operational/Frontline role		33.5%	29.6%
			Supervisory/Teamleader		14.7%	15.8%
61	215	(2016) Which Service Area do you work within?	Business Transformation		8.8%	7.3%
			Chief Executives		3.3%	4.0%
			Community Services		16.3%	11.2%
			Customer Access & Financial Services		18.1%	24.4%
			Environmental Services		17.7%	11.7%
			Housing Services		12.6%	15.6%
			Legal, Equality & Democratic Services		2.3%	5.9%
			Leisure & Cultural Services		12.6%	9.8%
			Planning & Regeneration		8.4%	10.2%
	229	Which Directorate do you work within?	Chief Executive		-	7.4%
			Finance and Corporate Resources		-	33.2%
			Planning and Regeneration, Regulatory, Housing		-	24.9%
			Leisure, Environment and Community Services		-	34.5%

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016

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#### PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS TASK GROUP

Relevant Portfolio Holders	Councillor Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service for Overview and Scrutiny	Claire Felton – Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Ward Councillor Consulted	All Ward Councillors were invited to join the Task Group
Non-Key Decision	

#### 1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To consider the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny investigation undertaken by the Preventing Homelessness Task Group.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 2.1 Members are requested to:

- (a) consider and approve the report and the recommendations attached at Appendix 1; and
- (b) submit the report and recommendations to the Cabinet for approval.

#### 3. KEY ISSUES

##### Financial Implications

- 3.1 These are detailed within the attached report.

##### Legal Implications

- 3.2 These are detailed within the attached report.

##### Service/Operation Implications

- 3.3 Overview and scrutiny is a key part of the Council's democratic decision making process and enables non-executive Members of the Council to put forward recommendations for policy development, policy review and service improvement.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

19<sup>th</sup> September 2016

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### **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

3.4 N/A

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

4.1 N/A

#### **5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Preventing Homelessness Task Group Report

#### **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

See attached report for details.

#### **7. KEY**

None

### **AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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# **PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS IN BROMSGROVE TASK GROUP**

## **FINAL REPORT**



**September 2016**



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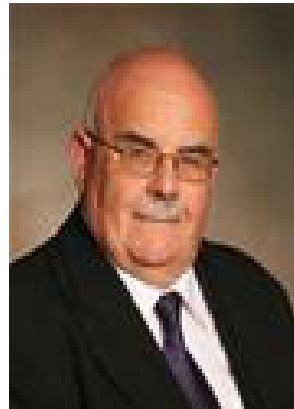
**MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP**



**Councillor Chris Bloore (Chairman)**



Councillor Sue Baxter



Councillor Sean Shannon



Councillor Roger Smith

**SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS**

Jess Bayley and Amanda Scarce – Democratic Services Officer

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## **Foreword from the Chairman**

The initial inspiration for this review came from concerns raised by my colleague Cllr Sean Shannon in respect of the future of Burcot Lodge Hostel. Whilst the Overview and Scrutiny Board decided not to undertake a specific review of Burcot Lodge, Members were significantly concerned about homelessness in the District and this review was established to investigate the extent to which this was a problem and what could be done to alleviate this.

In recent years, the cost of housing, both in terms of home ownership and renting have increased significantly all over the country. At the same time a number of welfare changes have been introduced, which have impacted on those on low incomes in particular. Local authorities, including Bromsgrove District Council, have been working hard to address these problems in order to support residents as best they can. Officers should be commended for their hard work in tackling this problem. However, we cannot be complacent and need to be forward thinking and proactive in how we address these problems.

The recommendations detailed in this report are designed to support existing good practice locally as well as to address gaps which we have identified. We feel that if these recommendations are adopted they will help the Council to plan for the future. Thereby minimising the risks of homelessness and reducing the cost to the authority in the long term. I particularly want to highlight the value of Recommendation; Private sector rental accommodation is an increasingly significant source of housing for residents and this proposal for a local authority lettings agency has the potential to ensure we make the best use of this sector.

During our investigations we have consulted with a wide range of expert witnesses so that our findings could be informed by best practice. I would like to thank those representatives of the CAB, Fry Housing Trust, Basement Project and St Basils in particular for taking the time to meet with the group and provide invaluable information.

I would like to thank the other Members of the task group (councillors Baxter, Smith and Shannon) for their hard work and support during the course of this review. I would also like to thank those Members of the Cabinet who supported us and/or provided evidence. In particular, Cllr Kit Taylor who was kind enough to set aside £15,000 for the Group to use as appropriate. I hope Cabinet will feel that our proposals make best use of this funding and will help to address risks of homelessness now and in the future.

**Councillor Chris Bloore**  
**Chairman of the Preventing Homelessness in Bromsgrove**  
**Task Group**

## Summary of Recommendations

After consideration of the evidence available and interviewing witnesses the Task Group have proposed the following recommendations, supporting evidence can be found under the relevant chapters within the main body of this report.

### Chapter 1: Housing

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
We recommend that officers should investigate the introduction of a local authority lettings scheme that would help customers to access private rented accommodation. This investigation should take into account working in partnership with Redditch Borough Council. The outcomes of this investigation should be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Cabinet.
<b>Financial Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct financial implications to the investigation except for the costs of officer time. Members of the group would expect officers to outline the financial implications of introducing a lettings agency within the review.
<b>Legal Implications for recommendations:</b> There are no direct legal implications. Members of the group would expect officers to outline the legal implications of introducing a lettings agency within the review.
<b>Resource Implications:</b> Officer time.

## Chapter 2: Voluntary Sector

### **Recommendation 2**

The Council should commit to use all of the Homeless Grant for the purposes of priority homelessness support.

#### **Financial Implications:**

The Council receives the Homeless Grant from Central Government on an annual basis, though it is not ring fenced by the Department for Communities and Local Government. There is no guarantee that this grant will be allocated to the Council in any given year.

#### **Legal Implications:**

There are no direct legal implications.

#### **Resource Implications:**

There are no direct resource implications

### **Recommendation 3**

Subject to the Council continuing to receive the Homeless Grant, it should continue to prioritise funding in respect of offender rehabilitation and emergency accommodation for young people, in order for services to remain sustainable within the district.

#### **Financial Implications:**

In the last two years the Council has provided £25,000 and then £20,000 to Fry Housing Trust. The group is proposing that a similar amount should be allocated to Fry Housing Trust on an annual basis in future years.

The Council's contribution to St Basils' Crash Pad in 2016/17 was £7,800. The Council recovers some of these costs through housing benefit whenever it is occupied. The group is suggesting that a similar amount should continue to be allocated to the crash pad per annum in future years.

#### **Legal Implications:**

There are no direct legal implications.

#### **Resource Implications:**

There are no direct resource implications

## **Chapter 3: The Impact of Legislative and Benefit Changes**

### **Recommendation 4**

The £15,000 of funding allocated by the Portfolio Holder, which has been reserved for use at the discretion of the Group, be allocated to the Essential Living Fund (ELF) and any surplus be ring fenced for use in the next financial year.

#### **Financial Implications:**

The £15,000 has already been set aside for allocation by the group. This would help to offset the loss of funding for the ELF from Worcestershire County Council which ended in March 2016.

#### **Legal Implications:**

There are no direct legal implications.

#### **Resource Implications:**

There are no direct resource implications

## Background Information

The subject of homelessness was first raised following the submission of a topic proposal from Councillor Sean Shannon in respect of the potential closure of the Burcot Lodge Homeless Hostel, which was considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 24th August 2015. Whilst the Board were interested in the issues raised within the topic proposal it was not felt that, at that stage, it warranted a more detailed investigation. The Board therefore requested an update from the relevant officers at the next available meeting. The Strategic Housing Manager duly attended the meeting held on 26th October and provided a verbal update on the position in respect of Burcot Lodge.

A written report was considered at the November meeting of the Board and a further report, which included the potential financial implications and options available to the Council, was discussed at the January 2016 meeting of the Board. The Board recommended to Cabinet that Option 1 to replace Burcot Lodge, as detailed within the Cabinet report, be approved, though it was suggested that the Council should remain open to reconsidering Proposal 2 at a later date if demand for temporary accommodation from residents at risk of homelessness increased. At its meeting on 3rd February 2016 Cabinet endorsed the Board's proposals and agreed that the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio for Housing, be granted delegated authority to organise the replacement of the Hostel with alternative temporary accommodation to be provided by Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT). Cabinet also agreed, as proposed by the Board, to remain open to re-considering proposal 2 at a later date should demand for temporary accommodation from residents at risk of homelessness be increased. For clarity the full details of those proposals are detailed in the table below.

Proposal 1	Proposal 2
<p>2 x1bed =£45k conversion cost plus rent cost while conversion takes place average 2 bed cost (average 2 bed £86.95 per week). We would require rent to be guaranteed through rent loss and void loss.</p> <p>1 x 2 bed = No conversion cost but would require rent to be guaranteed through rent loss and void loss.</p> <p>1 x 3 bed = No conversion cost but would require rent to be guaranteed through rent loss and void loss.</p>	<p>4x1 bed = £90k conversion cost plus rent cost while conversion takes place average 2 bed cost (average 2 bed £86.95) We would require rent to be guaranteed through rent loss and void loss.</p> <p>1 x 2 bed = No conversion cost but would require rent to be guaranteed through rent and void loss.</p> <p>1 x 3 bed = No conversion cost but would require rent to be guaranteed through rent and void loss.</p>

Also, during the January 2016 meeting concerns were raised not only in respect of the closure of Burcot Lodge but also about recent and forthcoming changes in legislation which could impact on homeless people within the

# Agenda Item 6

district. Following discussion it was agreed that a Short Sharp Review should be carried out to address this with Councillor Chris Bloore appointed as Chairman, together with Councillors Baxter, Cooper, Shannon and Smith as Members who had shown a keen interest in the topic.

The Task Group held its first meeting on 25th February 2016 when Members discussed their terms of reference (attached at Appendix 1) and how best to carry out their investigations. A number of key witnesses were also identified together with data which was requested from the appropriate sources. A deadline to complete the review within three months had also been set; with a view to bringing a report back to the Board at its June meeting. The Board considered a report outlining these areas at its meeting on 29th February 2016 and agreed the proposals.

It soon became apparent to Members that, if they were to do the topic justice, it would take significantly longer than first anticipated. The Chairman therefore reported back to the Board in March requesting that the Short Sharp Review be made into a full Task Group which would bring forward its recommendations and findings to the September meeting. The Chairman also reported that due to other commitments Councillor Cooper had withdrawn from the group and had been replaced by Councillor Helen Jones.

Full details of the programme of meetings held by the Task Group can be found at Appendix 3. It should also be noted that Councillor Jones withdraw from the group following her appointment as Chairman of the Council at the Annual Council meeting held in May 2016.

The Group investigated homelessness in detail and gathered evidence from a variety of sources. Based on this evidence the Group are proposing 4 recommendations which are all designed to contribute to the Council's strategic purposes, in particular Help me to Live my life independently and Help me to find somewhere to live in my locality.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Housing Sector (including background information)**

In Bromsgrove District the Council ceased to manage its housing stock directly in 2004. Social housing remains available for residents in the District and is accessible through a number of social housing providers. Predominantly social housing is provided by BDHT, though there are other providers.

Despite this, the Council retains certain responsibilities in respect of housing. The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 placed a duty on local housing authorities to secure permanent accommodation for unintentionally homeless people in priority need. Since then there have been some legislative changes and now local authorities' duties towards homeless people are contained in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Authorities do not have a duty to secure accommodation for all homeless people, only those who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

The legal definition of homelessness in the Housing Act 1996 is that a person is homeless if they have no accommodation available to them in the UK or anywhere which would be reasonable for them to continue to occupy. They would also be homeless if they have accommodation but are not able to gain access to it or if it is a moveable structure but they have nowhere to place it. A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within the next 28 days.

There are various categories of priority need for rehousing. These categories are set out in Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002. They include the following:

- A pregnant woman or a person who resides with a pregnant woman or might reasonably be expected to reside with a pregnant woman.
- A person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside.
- A person aged 16 or 17 who is not a relevant child for the purposes of Section 23 (a) of the Children Act 1979.
- A person, other than a relevant student, who is aged under 21 but over 16 and whilst still under 18 was, but is no longer, looked after, accommodated or fostered.
- A person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, physical disability or other special reason.
- A person who has reached the age of 21 who is vulnerable as a result of being looked after, accommodated or fostered. (Not including a relevant student.)
- A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular naval or military air forces.

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- A person who is vulnerable as a result of serving a custodial sentence, having being convicted for contempt of court or having been remanded in custody.
- A person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as a flood or a fire.
- A person who is vulnerable for any other special reason or anyone who lives with them.

Members note that in Bromsgrove District the local authority's duties in respect of homelessness are currently carried out by BDHT under a contract arrangement.

The Council has an Allocations Scheme for use of Home Choice Plus, which is delivered and administered on behalf of the local authority, by BDHT. Home Choice Plus helps to allocate social housing, low cost homes and privately rented properties. The Council is part of a Home Choice Plus Partnership with other local authorities including, Malvern Hills District Council, Stratford-On-Avon District Council, Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council. The allocations scheme outlines how the partnership will prioritise households on the register for accommodation. The Councils involved in this partnership work with local housing associations to allocate social housing to eligible residents. It should be noted that many social housing associations have their own allocations schemes and these also need to be taken into account when a customer is seeking accommodation.

Home Choice Plus uses a banding system to help determine who should be prioritised for housing. This banding system stretches from "gold plus", considered the highest priority for housing, to "bronze", which are households who do not meet any reasonable preference criteria, have no local connections and may have low housing need.

There are therefore various residents at risk of becoming homeless for whom accommodation in the social housing sector is not always an option. For people in this situation housing is often only available in the private rented sector as many can struggle to afford to become home owners. Difficulties accessing affordable accommodation, both in terms of home ownership and in the rental market, have recently been raised by the Local Government Association (LGA). The LGA reported in July 2016 that based on their research they were anticipating that four million people of working age would be in need of affordable housing by 2024. The number of people in need of affordable housing nationally is likely to be higher, at 5.4 million people of working age, according to the LGA, if qualification levels do not increase amongst the working population. (The LGA defines affordable housing as someone who spends up to 30 per cent of their household income on their housing costs). The LGA is therefore calling on the Government to take urgent action now in order to help tackle this situation.

At a local level the costs of accommodation in Bromsgrove have been highlighted by a number of witnesses as a concern. Members have been



informed that the lowest price to purchase a property starts at approximately £130k, though the average price of a property in the district is £225K. The group was advised that this was not comparable with the average salary of a person employed to work in the District and is more expensive than in some parts of the region. The group has also been informed that the cheapest rental properties available in Bromsgrove start at approximately £500 per calendar month. (To see how rental prices compare to other parts of the county please refer to Appendix 5). In addition Members have been informed that there are significant on costs associated with leasing a property in the private rental sector, including paying an estate agency's fees, deposits and in some cases guarantor fees. The Group consulted with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) about these fees and were advised that charges for reference checks made by letting agencies varied significantly from £6 to £300 nationally whilst locally the variance between the least and most expensive fees is from just under £200 to £560 for a single tenant and from £235 to £660 for a couple. Guarantor fees range from £25 to £120.

The Bromsgrove and Redditch branch of the CAB commented on this situation in its letting agents' survey for the period September to December 2015. This stated that *"what's surprising is that fees vary so wildly and inexplicably at a fundamental level it is debateable how much any of these charges should be levied upon tenants. Essentially agents are providing a service to landlords in finding, referencing and managing tenants for their properties. With the possible exception of credit referencing, it would seem only fair that the burden of this should largely fall on the landlord."*

In addition to this during the course of the review a number of witnesses raised concerns with the Group about the willingness of landlords in the private sector to accept tenants in receipt of housing benefits. The introduction of Universal Credit led to changes to the way in which housing benefit payments were paid to recipients. Whereas in the past housing benefit was paid directly to the landlord, this is now to be paid to the recipient unless they can demonstrate that they are vulnerable in some way. There is a risk that in some cases the rent will not reach the landlord if it is used by the tenant to cover other expenses, particularly if the resident experiences difficulties with personal budgeting. In this context the Basement Project advised the Group that they had recently carried out a search on a property location website and had found that 90% of landlords would not permit tenants to lease their properties if they were in receipt of housing benefits.

The Council has previously recognised the importance of the private rented sector as a source of housing. With this in mind Council representatives meet regularly with representatives of the private rental sector. As part of this process private sector Landlord Forums are held in order to maintain a constructive working relationship to the benefit of all concerned. The local authority has also previously established the Step Up Private Tenancy Scheme to support people seeking to lease a property in the private rented sector. This scheme helps families to start renting privately by working with landlords to find suitable properties and by helping the tenant with the upfront

costs of renting. The scheme provides an extensive support for landlords covering the following areas:

- Sourcing a suitable tenant for a property.
- Providing free inspections and surveys of properties.
- Funding streams for any works required on the property.
- Payment of rent in advance.
- Deposit Guarantee Bond in cases of damage or rent arrears (to the value of one month's rent not subject to deposit protection legislation).
- Support to deal with housing benefits applications.
- Tenancy agreement forms.
- Free inventory service with digital pictures as back up.
- Settling in support to set up service accounts and budgets.
- Ongoing support for landlords and tenants to help sustain the tenancy.

To date this scheme has been relatively effective; there were 60 private rented properties participating in the scheme as of July 2016. On average tenants remain in their properties as arranged through this scheme for two to three years. However, Members had some concerns that this scheme did not go far enough in helping everybody seeking a property in the private rented sector to secure accommodation. Their fears were confirmed in the CAB's letting agents' survey which has stated that "*whilst Bromsgrove Council tries to assist some tenants through the Step Up Scheme none of these fees (as referred to above) are covered which disproportionately affects the most vulnerable.*" The Group has also been advised that after home ownership, the private rented sector is now the main source of accommodation for people in the country. It is therefore important to ensure that it is as accessible as possible for residents in Bromsgrove.

With this in mind the Group have explored ways in which the Council and partners could support people more effectively when accessing private rented accommodation. They were interested to learn that in some parts of the country local authorities have introduced their own form of letting agency. For example Ashford Borough Council operates the ABC Letting Scheme. In some respects this is similar to the Step Up Scheme in that it supports tenants and landlords but it goes beyond this to guarantee that rent will be paid on a monthly basis for the duration of the tenancy and provides reassurance that the tenancy will be fully managed for a competitive fee by the Council. The Group has learned that there are similar schemes locally such as Worcester City Council's City Life Lettings and Birmingham City Council's Let to Birmingham scheme.

The Group has discussed this with officers from the Council's private sector housing team and have been informed that it would be feasible to introduce a similar scheme in Bromsgrove. However, Members recognise that in order to manage any risks associated with such a scheme and to ensure that the model of service delivery meets the needs of local residents further investigation needs to be undertaken by relevant officers.

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There are a number of options available for a local authority lettings agency including the following:

- A new lettings agency established and managed directly by Bromsgrove District Council.
- Working in partnership with an established letting agent already operating in Bromsgrove district. This could take advantage of their existing expertise.
- Working in partnership with Redditch Borough Council on a joint lettings agency initiative across the two districts. The benefits of this could be sharing overheads and the fact that many landlords may have properties in both districts and could therefore be more inclined to work with the Councils on this scheme.
- Working with an existing local authority's lettings agency. Members are aware of Ashford Borough Council's ABC Lettings, Worcester City Council's City Life Lettings and Birmingham City Council's Let to Birmingham scheme though there are other local authority letting schemes which may be more suitable for Bromsgrove. This could take advantage of their existing expertise.

The group believe that in respect of the Council the most appropriate and cost effective option would be to consider working with a neighbouring authority (or authorities). In Bromsgrove established shared working arrangements are already in place, including the Private Sector Housing team, mainly with Redditch Borough Council. There may also be opportunities to work with Wyre Forest District Council to potentially form a North Worcestershire lettings agency.

Officers in the Private Sector Housing Team have advised the group that there is the capacity to investigate this matter. The Group is suggesting that at the end of this process officers should report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Cabinet on its findings and bring forward any recommendations at this stage as to whether to introduce a lettings agency scheme in the district.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
We recommend that officers should investigate the introduction of a local authority lettings scheme that would help customers to access private rented accommodation. This investigation should take into account working in partnership with Redditch Borough Council. The outcomes of this investigation should be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Cabinet.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Voluntary Sector**

The Group recognised that voluntary and community sector groups provide many essential services to support people at risk of becoming homeless. With this in mind the Group arranged to visit a number of organisations to find out more about the services they delivered. Details of the Group's findings are set out below. It should be noted that they also interviewed representatives of the Bromsgrove and Redditch branch of the CAB and the information they provided is detailed in Chapters 1 and 3 of this report. The Group was very impressed by the work of the CAB and hope the Council will continue to support their work.

In recent years the Council has provided funding to a number of voluntary sector groups from its Homelessness Grant, which is received from central Government. This Grant has been allocated to the Council on an annual basis for a number of years, although there is no guarantee that the Council will continue to receive this Grant in future years. The distribution of this Grant in Bromsgrove has tended to be for use to address homelessness, though the budget is not ring fenced by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Allocation of these funds to the voluntary sector is managed through a bidding process. The bids panel is currently managed by officers under delegated powers, although it was noted that the final decision was made by Cabinet and Council.

### **Basement Project**

The Basement Project is a drop in centre, based in Bromsgrove town centre which provides floating support for 16-25 year olds in and around Worcestershire who are homeless or are facing homelessness. This is a well-established, registered charity which is staffed by both paid employees and volunteers. Experienced staff at the project help young people to explore their accommodation options, complete forms such as benefit applications and deliver a number of useful workshop activities, for example healthy eating and cookery workshops. Young people can access washing facilities as well as a washing machine and in cases where no accommodation could be provided, particularly for high risk individuals, the Basement Project has distributed tents and sleeping bags. Members were also interested to learn that there is a food bank at the Basement Project.

Floating support officers employed by the project can also meet with and support young people who have just started out in their tenancies. This can be especially helpful for young people who do not necessarily have the life skills needed to live independent lives. For example they provide guidance on budgeting and cleaning. The Group was very impressed by the Basement Project, particularly as this organisation provided rare support services to some of the most high risk individuals.

## Fry Housing Trust

At the start of the review the Group issued a press release inviting the public to comment on their experiences of homelessness. Whilst there were limited responses from the public, the Group was pleased to receive a very detailed and informative letter from the Chief Executive of Fry Housing Trust. This outlined their concerns about homelessness, the work of the trust to address this and uncertainty with regards to forthcoming welfare changes. The letter was so informative that the Group felt it appropriate to interview representatives of the Trust.

Fry Housing Trust is a charitable housing association which provides supported accommodation to offenders and those at risk of offending aged 18 and over. The Trust was established in 1959 and has been operating in Bromsgrove district for approximately 25 years. In Bromsgrove there are 18 bed spaces available predominantly in shared housing. Service users stay in accommodation with the trust usually for up to 12 months. Many clients are referred on to social housing at the end of their tenancies. In 2015/16 the Trust received 100 referrals for the Bromsgrove district and housed 25 of those, so it is clearly in demand as a local service. Members have been advised that 75% of clients complete their tenancy with the Trust and only a tiny minority go on to re-offend which compares favourably with the national average.

The Group was advised that previously Fry Housing Trust was in receipt of Supporting People Funding from Worcestershire County Council (WCC). This had helped to support both the Bromsgrove branch of the Trust's supported accommodation and floating support workers. However, WCC ceased to provide Supporting People Funding in 2014/15 and this impacted on funding for organisations like Fry Housing Trust. In the first year after the withdrawal of this funding Bromsgrove District Council provided £25k to Fry Housing, which enabled the organisation to continue to provide supported housing in the district, though it has had to cease providing its floating support service. In 2016/17 the Council provided £20k with the remaining £5k obtained by the trust from the charitable sector. Members have been advised that this funding has been essential to keeping services in Bromsgrove sustainable. If this funding was to be removed the service would no longer be able to cover its costs in the district. Members agree that given the valuable nature of the work undertaken by Fry Housing, particularly in view of the positive community safety outcomes from the work of the Trust, it is important to ensure that the organisation's services remain sustainable locally.

## St Basils

St Basils is a charitable organisation that offers a range of services to young people in need of accommodation. They work with young people aged 16 to 25 years, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness across Birmingham, Sandwell, Solihull, Worcestershire, Coventry and surrounding areas. There is a branch of St Basils providing accommodation in Bromsgrove district which offers housing for 15 young people. St Basils specialises in supporting young

people who are considered to be low risk and they can be referred to St Basils by a variety of agencies. From the information provided to the Group Members understand that the majority of referrals come from BDHT though other agencies also refer to St Basils such as the Basement Project.

The Group was advised that on average a young person will stay at St Basils in Bromsgrove for 14 months. During this time young people are provided with support in order to develop the life skills that are needed to manage and maintain their own tenancies. Training is provided in respect of completing job applications, CV writing and other practical skills. Many will also be placed in a position where they can continue with or apply for education and employment opportunities. Members were advised that in 98% of cases the young people who stayed at St Basils went on to live productive lives.

In recent years the Council provided funding to the Bromsgrove branch of St Basils to install a “crash pad” at the site. This crash pad is primarily used by the most vulnerable young people, usually aged under 18, who are at risk of becoming homeless. It was introduced because there were concerns that it was not appropriate to house younger adolescents in temporary bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation alongside mature adults. Typically young people stay in the crash pad for up to six weeks and may then either become long term residents of St Basils or secure appropriate accommodation elsewhere. The Council has continued to provide funding to help support the crash pad and in 2016/17 this amounted to £7,800. The Council recovers some of these costs through housing benefit payments whenever it is occupied. As this crash pad serves some of the most vulnerable people at risk of homelessness the Group feel that it is a valuable asset to the district and therefore the Council should continue to provide funding to ensure it remains available.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

<b>Recommendation 2</b>
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The Council should commit to use all of the Homeless Grant for the purposes of priority homelessness support.
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<b>Recommendation 3</b>
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Subject to the Council continuing to receive the Homeless Grant, it should continue to prioritise funding in respect of offender rehabilitation and emergency accommodation for young people, in order for services to remain sustainable within the district.
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## Chapter 3

### Impact of Legislative and Benefit Changes

As part of its investigations Members were keen to explore the impact of welfare changes, both current and future, on the risks that residents in Bromsgrove might become homeless. As part of the review therefore the Group received an overview of the impact of changes to welfare support from officers.

The table below details some of the welfare changes that have occurred in the last three years or are due to take place in the near future. The information provided, particularly the figures quoted in the table, was presented for the Group's consideration in March 2016. As such some of the figures may now have changed.

Type of Change	Implementation Stage	Impact Locally
<p><b>Benefit Cap</b> – the cap applies to the total amount that people in a household can receive from a number of benefits combined. The level of the cap is:                      £500 per week for couples with or without children.                      £500 per week for single parents who have children living with them.                      £350 per week for single adults who do not have children living with them.</p>	<p>Already implemented. The cap reduced from £26,000 to £20,000 per annum outside London as of April 2016.</p>	<p>37 households by March 2016. Members were advised that the impact was relatively low and most residents were able to stay in their homes and found ways of meeting the financial gap.</p>
<p><b>Spare Room Subsidy</b> –this is the calculation of housing benefit payments based on the number of people in the household and the size of the accommodation. The spare room subsidy applies to all working age tenants renting from a local authority, housing association or other registered social landlord. It brings housing benefits payable to tenants of social housing in line with private tenants. (Those with one spare bedroom lose 14% of their eligible rent and those with two or more spare bedrooms lose 25% of their eligible rent.)</p>	<p>Implemented from April 2013.</p>	<p>As of March 2016 there were 199 cases in Bromsgrove where the spare room subsidy was applied at 14% and 36 cases where it was applied at 25%.</p>

# Agenda Item 6

<p><b>Introduction of Local Council Tax Support Scheme</b> – Council Tax benefits ended in March 2013 and local authorities were required to introduce a Council Tax Support Scheme. Under this scheme all working age claimants pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax liability. Up to 80% Support is available under the scheme. (Pensioners have been protected.)</p>	<p>A Default Scheme was introduced in 2013/14 and 2014/15 and 80% support was introduced in April 2015.</p>	<p>As of February 2016 2,895 households with working age tenants were impacted by these changes. This compares to 2,890 in April 2015. In terms of Council Tax collection rates in 2013/14 98.29% was collected. In 2014/15 98.5% was collected. As of February 2016 96.92% had been collected. (It should be noted that these figures were obtained before the end of the financial year).</p>
<p><b>Universal Credit</b> – this currently applies to single job seekers with no child dependents making a new claim in Bromsgrove.</p>	<p>This was introduced in Bromsgrove in October 2015. Further roll out to other groups of claimants is due to take place although dates remained to be confirmed at the time of writing.</p>	<p>As of February 2016 27 claims had been made for Universal Credit, with 7 claims remaining live on the system.</p>
<p><b>Temporary absences from Great Britain Rules for Housing Benefits</b> – Residents who spend four or more weeks out of the country are unable to claim housing benefits.</p>	<p>This requirement was implemented in July 2016.</p>	<p>It was too soon to assess any impact at the time of writing.</p>
<p><b>Removing entitlement for Housing Benefit payments to Young People aged 18-21</b> - Certain categories of young people will be exempt, including vulnerable young people, those who cannot return home to live with their parents, young people who are parents who have children who live with them and young people who have been in work for six months or more prior to making a claim.</p>	<p>The entitlement to the housing benefit element of Universal Credit is due to be withdrawn for this age group with effect from 2017.</p>	<p>This remained to be confirmed at the time of writing.</p>
<p><b>Reduction in social rents</b> – under the welfare reform and work bill 2015, all social rents were due to reduce by 1% for the 4 financial years in the period 2016/17 to 2019/20.</p>	<p>This was due to be implemented from April 2016 onwards.</p>	<p>Significant reduction in social housing rental income was anticipated to have knock on effects on business plans and finances for social housing providers in the district.</p>



<p><b>Restrictions on housing benefits for the under 35s</b> – Housing benefit claimants aged under 35 with no dependents living in the private rented sector are only eligible to claim housing benefits that cover the costs of a room in shared accommodation.</p>	<p>This rule has already been introduced for claimants in private rented accommodation. The restrictions have not yet come into force in respect of social housing tenants, though local housing associations are planning for this change.</p>	<p>Whilst no figures have been provided for the number of people affected by this rule Members have been advised that there are limited number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in the private rental sector in Bromsgrove district.</p>
<p><b>Cap of Housing Benefit in the social rented sector</b> - new tenancies arranged as of 1st April 2016 will only receive rent capped at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate.</p>	<p>This is due to take effect from 2018 but will apply to those whose tenancies took effect from April 2016 (or from 1st April 2017 if they are in supported housing).</p>	<p>This remained to be confirmed at the time of writing.</p>

The Council has recognised that many of these changes may have an impact either now or in the future on Bromsgrove residents. In order to support customers the Council currently provides additional support to those affected and Officers try to assess the needs of the customer from a holistic perspective. In recent months the Financial Inclusion Team (FIT) has been providing specialist support to help assess customers' specific needs and to provide advice. The Benefits and Customer Service teams also provide useful support.

The support available from the Council to residents includes Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), which were introduced in July 2001 to provide financial assistance to claimants in receipt of housing benefit where it is considered that additional help with housing costs is required. The Council generally defines housing costs as –

- Rental liability
- Rent deposits
- Rent in advance and
- Other lump sum costs, such as removal.

DHPs may be awarded as one off payments or periodically to cover an appropriate period of time. Officers work with the applicant to identify whether they need any additional support. DHP awards are not conditional and decisions are based on a fair assessment of need. When considering

whether to award a DHP officers take into account what the award will achieve, the consequences of not making the award and whether any alternative support can be provided. In 2015/16 the DHP fund amounted to £57,774. The average award for each customer during that year was £275.61 with just over 13% of applicants making repeat requests during the year.

The Council has also operated a Hardship Fund in recent years comprising £25,000 per annum. This provides transitional relief to those facing hardship as a result of changes to Council Tax Support. As of March 2016 345 customers had made contact with the Council about financial difficulties that might be eligible for hardship fund assistance, including 215 direct applications. By 31st January 2016 £12,141 of this scheme had been used to support those customers.

Residents can also apply for support through the Essential Living Fund (ELF). This was previously operated by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as crisis support, but responsibility subsequently passed to Worcestershire County Council (WCC). Bromsgrove District Council lobbied for local delegation to ensure that the scheme best met local needs. The ELF has operated since as a flexible discretionary scheme. Need is assessed on a face to face basis and support is provided in a variety of ways, though not it should be noted, in the form of cash payments. Between April 2013 and March 2016 1,527 awards were made through ELF to Bromsgrove residents; of these 215 awards were to help people move house or to help those at risk of homelessness.

In April 2016 WCC removed their funding for ELF. This will lead to a reduction in the funding available to vulnerable residents through the ELF scheme. Members feel that this is such an important fund that it needs to continue in the short term until the review as detailed in recommendation 1 has been undertaken and a decision taken as to the introduction of a local authority letting agency in Bromsgrove District.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following

<b>Recommendation 4</b>
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The £15,000 of funding allocated by the Portfolio Holder, which has been reserved for use at the discretion of the Group, be allocated to the Essential Living Fund (ELF) and any surplus be ring fenced for use in the next financial year.
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## **Areas to Note**

At the start of the review a press release was issued which encouraged local residents to submit their views about homelessness. Unfortunately there was a limited response to this publicity, although the group were grateful for those that took the time to comment. This limited number of responses means that it is difficult to reach any conclusions based on the evidence submitted.

From the group's discussions with Voluntary Sector organisations it became apparent that many of the clients they come into contact with have increasingly complex needs. The group was advised that many people at risk of homelessness seeking support had mental health problems and / or learning disabilities which made them very vulnerable and complicated their situation. This resulted in the staff at these organisations needing specific training to help their customers in this situation which required extra resources and were time consuming. This may be an area suitable for further investigation by scrutiny Members in the future.

During the group's visits to St Basils and the Basement project both organisations raised concerns about the need for more information to be provided to children and young people at school about the risks of homelessness. In both cases approaches had been made to a number of local schools with limited results. This is something which ward Councillors may wish to address with schools within their wards and they may wish to make contact with St Basils and the Basement Project to find out how they can assist further.

Another area covered by Members during the investigation was the number of affordable houses being built in the district. According to the Council's Allocations Policy affordable housing is defined as "...housing let at a social or affordable rent or a low cost home ownership property let to a specified eligible household whose needs are not met in the market also known as social housing." Members were concerned that an apparently low number of affordable houses were being built as part of new housing developments. However, when the group consulted with the Council's Strategic Planning Manager Members were pleased to hear that the majority of larger housing developments met the Council's aim of 40 per cent affordable housing.

Finally a particular area of concern identified during the review was the availability of houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs) in the district. This is an area that the group believes will become an increasing area of importance once benefit changes are implemented which will effect single people under the age of 35 as their benefits will only cover a single room in a shared household. Members were advised that there are currently very few HMOs, both within the existing social housing stock and in the private rented sector in Bromsgrove district. Members have been advised that BDHT are working to address this and they would urge Officers to remain vigilant in monitoring progress with this.

## Appendix 1



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL

This form can be used for either a Task Group or a Short Sharp Review topic proposal.

Completed forms should be returned to [scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk) – Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council.

<b>Name of Proposer: Councillor Chris Bloore</b>	
Tel No: 07905612710	Email: <a href="mailto:c.bloore@bromsgrove.gov.uk">c.bloore@bromsgrove.gov.uk</a>
Date: 19/01/16	

<b>Title of Proposed Topic</b>  (including specific subject areas to be investigate)	Homelessness in Bromsgrove - the impact of legislative changes on this and action the Council will take to address any problems which may arise.
<b>Background to the Proposal</b>  (Including reasons why this topic should be investigated and evidence to support the need for the investigation.)	Following the submission of a topic proposal from Cllr Sean Shannon in respect of the potential closure of the Burcot Lodge Homeless Hostel the Board received a number of reports/briefing papers in respect of action the Council would take to address the loss of this building, this has led to a number of other questions being raised at the Board's meeting on 18/01/16 including the changing housing policy of Central Government and changes to housing benefits.
<b>Links to national, regional and local priorities</b>  (including the Council's strategic purposes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help me to live my life independently</li> <li>• Help me find somewhere to live in my locality</li> <li>• Help me to be financially independent</li> </ul>

# Agenda Item 6

<p><b>Possible Key Objectives</b></p> <p>(these should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely)</p>	<p>The data shows the Council has to make more and more interventions to prevent homelessness.</p> <p>In light of the need to replace the Burcot Lodge Homeless Hostel, we need to ensure that as a Council we are best placed to meet the needs of residents, particularly due to the significant forthcoming changes to the benefit system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify what the legislative changes will entail;</li> <li>• Clarify the impact of all of these changes on the Council’s services and customers; and</li> <li>• ensure that appropriate steps are in place to minimise the impact and support our customers.</li> </ul>			
<p>Anticipated Timescale for completion of the work.</p>	<p>8 to 10 weeks (It is anticipated that the review will hold its first meeting w/c 22/02/16.)</p>			
<p>Would it be appropriate to hold a Short Sharp Inquiry or a Task Group? (please tick relevant box)</p>	<p>Task Group</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Short Sharp Inquiry</p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>

## **Appendix 2**

### **Declarations of Interest**

At the initial meeting of the Group Councillor Shannon confirmed that whilst he had in the past been a member of the board of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT), he no longer had an interest.

There were no declarations of interest made at any other meetings.

## Appendix 3

### WORK PROGRAMME

Date of Meeting	Subject
25/02/16	Discussion of the terms of reference and agreeing future meeting dates and expert witnesses.
03/03/16	CANCELLED
10/03/16	Interview: Derek Allen – Housing Strategy Manager Matthew Bough – Housing Strategy and Enabling Team Leader
17/03/16	Interview: Mike Brown BDHT John Whitwam BDHT
23/03/16	Interview: Lynn Jones – Customer Service Manager Shona Knight – Assistant Financial Support Services Manager
20/04/16	Review of investigation findings to date
12/05/16	Visit to St Basil's
16/05/16	Visit to the Basement Project
08/06/16	Interview: Councillor Kit Taylor in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Planning Services and Housing. Mike Dunphy – Strategic Planning Manager Derek Allen – Housing Strategy Manager
16/06/16	Interviews: 1. Judy Sharpe and Lilian Miller (Bromsgrove and Redditch Branch of the CAB) 2. Paul Wright – Chief Executive of Fry Housing Trust Martin Wright – Lead Officer for Bromsgrove branch of Fry Housing Trust.
29/06/16	Review of investigation findings to date and planning final steps.
11/07/16	Interviews: 1. Councillor Geoff Denaro in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Finance, ICT, HR and Enabling Services together with Amanda Singleton, Head of Customer Access and Financial Support, and David Riley, Revenue Services Manager. 2. Derek Allen, Strategic Housing Manager, to discuss Ashford Borough Council's ABC Lettings scheme.
18/07/16	Finalising the group's recommendations.

## **Appendix 4**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Task Group wishes to thank the Democratic Services Officers, Jess Bayley and Amanda Scarce, for their support throughout the Group's investigations.

The Task Group would also like to thank those residents who took the time to respond to the Group's press release.

### **WITNESSES**

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations:

#### **Internal Witnesses:**

Derek Allen – Strategic Housing Manager  
Matthew Bough – Housing Strategy & Enabling Team Leader  
Mike Dunphy – Strategic Planning Manager  
Sue Hanley – Deputy Chief Executive  
Lynn Jones – Customer Support Manager  
Shona Knight – Assistant Financial Support Services Manager  
David Riley – Revenue Services Manager  
Amanda Singleton – Head of Customer Access and Financial Support

#### **Councillors:**

Councillor Kit Taylor – Portfolio Holder for Planning Services and Housing  
Councillor Geoff Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Finance, ICT, HR and Enabling Services

#### **External Witnesses:**

Mike Brown – BDHT  
John Whitwam – BDHT  
Leigh Hesketh, Support Manager – St Basil's  
Jackie Hooper - Basement Project  
Judy Sharpe and Lilian Miller – Bromsgrove and Redditch CAB  
Paul Wright and Martin Wright – Fry Housing Trust

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Bromsgrove Allocations Policy 2015  
Banding System for the Home Choice Plus Service  
Letting Agents' Survey September – December 2015 (Bromsgrove and Redditch CAB)  
Financial Affordability Update April 2015, (draft amendment 2016 by the CAB), Bromsgrove and Redditch CAB.  
A Better Choice Lettings and Property Management (ABC Lettings) Landlord Pack, Ashford Borough Council.



## Appendix 5

### Rent and Housing Costs

Research was undertaken on 28th July 2016 to assess the costs of renting and purchasing properties in Bromsgrove. Equivalent costs for other parts of the county were also investigated for comparative purposes. Findings from this research, which was completed online using a property search engine, are detailed in the table below.

Location	Cheapest property to rent	Cheapest property for sale
Bromsgrove	1 bedroom flat £475pcm	2 bedroom apartment for sale under a 50% shared ownership deal £59,950.  £79,950 for a one bedroom maisonette (cheapest property not subject to shared ownership or sold as a retirement property).
Droitwich	1 bedroom flat £495pcm	2 bedroom apartment for sale under a 50% shared ownership deal £75,000.  £85,000 for a one bedroom apartment (cheapest property not subject to shared ownership or sold as a retirement property).
Kidderminster	Studio apartment £300pcm	1 bedroom apartment for £35,000 (cash purchase only).
Malvern	1 bedroom flat £350pcm	1 bedroom apartment for sale under a 50% shared ownership deal £60,000.  £73,500 for a one bedroom apartment (cheapest property not subject to shared ownership or sold as a retirement property).
Redditch	A bedroom in a shared house £350pcm or £450pcm for a 1 bedroom apartment.	£47,500 for a studio apartment.
Worcester	£285pcm for a room in a shared house or £350pcm for a studio apartment.	1 bedroom apartment for sale under a 50% shared ownership deal £39,950.  £70,000 for a one bedroom apartment (cheapest property not subject to shared ownership or sold as a retirement property).

**Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services**

Bromsgrove District Council, The Council House, Burcot Lane,  
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 1AA

Telephone: (01527) 881288

Email: [scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk)

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD – Finance & Budget Scrutiny Working Group**

### **Terms of Reference as at August 2016**

The Finance & Budget Scrutiny Working Group has been set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Board to carry out detailed scrutiny/pre-scrutiny of a number of Financial Reports (listed below) and the setting of the Council's budget.

1. The Working Group be made up of 5 Members with a quorum of 3. The Working Group will meet throughout the year at intervals dependent upon the reports to be considered. It is anticipated that this will be most frequent during the budget setting period.
2. The Working Group will be a standing item on the agenda of the Overview & Scrutiny Board and either a verbal or written report will be provided at each of the Board's meetings.
3. The Working Group is able to make recommendations in one of two ways (dependent on the timescales of its meetings and the reports it considers); by reporting back to the Overview & Scrutiny Board who will then put forward its recommendations for consideration by Cabinet or directly to Cabinet/Council.
4. The work of the Working Group will be reviewed as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Board's annual report process.

The Working Group will scrutinise the following reports, which had previously been part of the Overview & Scrutiny Board's Work Programme:

- Finance Monitoring Report (on a quarterly basis)
- Write Off of Debts Report (received annually)

### **Budget Scrutiny**

Scrutiny of the budget will cover the following areas, although this list is not exclusive.

- Full review of the cost centres for actual spend, involving comparable figures for consecutive years.
- Assessing income levels.
- Considering the quarterly budget monitoring report.
- Reviewing the capital programme and borrowing costs.
- Commenting on the report format for budget reports to Committee.
- Considering links to the strategic purposes.
- Addressing the S11 recommendations.
- Investigating new pressures on savings.
- Reviewing reserves and balances.
- Assessing any sources of external funding that has been received.

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## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD – Measures Dashboard Working Group**

### **Terms of Reference as at August 2016**

The Corporate Dashboard Working Group has been set up to carry out detailed scrutiny and monitoring of the Council's performance on behalf of the Overview & Scrutiny Board.

One of the key roles of the Board under the Constitution is to monitor performance improvement and also help the Council to address the role that Overview and Scrutiny has to play in respect of performance management from a best practice perspective.

1. The Working Group has a maximum of 5 Members with a quorum of 3. The Working Group will meet throughout the year as intervals to be decided by the Group.
2. The Working Group will be a standing item on the agenda of the Overview & Scrutiny Board and either a verbal or written report will be provided at each of the Board's meetings.
3. The work of the Working Group will be reviewed as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Board's annual report process.

The Working Group will consider the Corporate Measures Dashboard and use the knowledge gained and information extracted from it, in a variety of ways in order to inform the Overview & Scrutiny Board and assist it in its role. Its main aims and objectives are listed below, however it should be noted that these are not exhaustive.

- Develop familiarity with the dashboard and to identify ways in which this could be used to support the scrutiny process.
- Develop expertise in respect of using the dashboard in order to review the measures currently used, with a possible view to widening its scope by suggesting content that would focus more on issues which mattered to local residents.
- Monitor and review service performance and identify key areas which might be considered suitable for further scrutiny by the Board or a task group.
- The group may wish to focus on different areas of the dashboard, perhaps in accordance with each strategic purpose, via a set work programme.
- Recommendations would be reported back to the Cabinet via the Board by the Chairman of the Working Group and/or the Board.

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# **CABINET LEADER'S WORK PROGRAMME**

**1 SEPTEMBER 2016 TO 31 DECEMBER 2016**

**(published as at 9 August 2016)**

This Work Programme gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken in the coming four months by the Council's Cabinet

(NB: There may be occasions when the Cabinet may make recommendations to Council for a final decision e.g. to approve a new policy or variation to the approved budget.)

Whilst the majority of the Cabinet's business at the meetings listed in the Work Programme will be open to the public and media organisations to attend, there will inevitably be some business to be considered that contains confidential, commercially sensitive or personal information.. This is called exempt information. Members of the public and media may be asked to leave the meeting when such information is discussed.

If an item is likely to contain exempt information we show this on the Work Programme. You can make representations to us if you consider an item or any of the documents listed should be open to the public.

The Work Programme gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken by the Council's Cabinet, or full Council, in the coming four months.

**Key Decisions** are those executive decisions which are likely to:

- (i) result in the Council incurring expenditure, foregoing income or the making of savings in excess of £50,000 or which are otherwise significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (ii) be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the district;

**Key Decisions** will include:

1. A decision which would result in any expenditure or saving by way of a reduction in expenditure of £50,000 provided the expenditure or saving is specifically approved in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
2. A virement of any amount exceeding £50,000 provided it is within any virement limits approved by the Council;
3. Any proposal to dispose of any Council asset with a value of £50,000 or more or which is otherwise considered significant by the Corporate Property Officer;
4. Any proposal to cease to provide a Council service (other than a temporary cessation of service of not more than 6 months).
5. Any proposal which would discriminate for or against any minority group.

The Work Programme is available for inspection free of charge at Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8DA from 9am to 5pm Mondays to Fridays; or on the Council's web-site [www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

If you wish to make representations on the proposed decision you are encouraged to get in touch with the relevant report author as soon as possible before the proposed date of the decision. Contact details are provided, alternatively you may write to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Parkside, Market Street, B61 8DA or e-mail: [democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

The Cabinet's meetings are normally held every four weeks at 6pm on Wednesday evenings at Parkside. They are open to the public, except when confidential information is being discussed. If you wish to attend for a particular matter, it is advisable to check with the Democratic Services Team on (01527 881409) to make sure it is going ahead as planned. If you have any queries Democratic Services Officers will be happy to advise you.

The full Council meets in accordance with the Councils Calendar of Meetings. Meetings commence at 6pm.



**CABINET MEMBERSHIP**

(Under review at present)

Councillor G. N. Denaro                      Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, ICT, HR and Enabling Services

Councillor C. B. Taylor                      Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning Services and Housing

Vacant    Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Regulatory Services

Councillor K. J. May                              Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Community Safety and Partnerships

Councillor P. J. Whittaker                      Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Cultural Services (temporarily covering Environmental Services and Regulatory Services)

Decision Including Whether it is a Key Decision	Decision Taker including Details of Exempt Information (if any)	Date of Decision	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Application in respect of Asset of Community Value Register Blackwell Methodist Church Hall	Cabinet	7 September 2016	Report of the Executive Director Finance and Resources	Jayne Pickering 01527 881400 Councillor C. B. Taylor
New Policy on Animal Welfare Matters	Cabinet	7 September 2016	Report of the Head of Culture and Leisure Services	John Godwin 01527 881742 Councillor P. Whittaker
Page 54 T Infrastructure Resource	Cabinet <i>(may be an exempt item)</i>	7 September 2016	Report of the Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development	Deb Poole 01527 881256 Councillor G. Denaro
Road Traffic Islands – Update of Sponsorship Policy	Cabinet	7 September 2016	Report of the Head of Culture and Leisure Services	John Godwin Head of Culture and Leisure Services 01527 881472 Councillor P. Whittaker
Efficiency Statement	Cabinet	7 September 2016	Report of the Executive Director Finance and Resources	Jayne Pickering 01527 881400 Councillor G. Denaro

<b>Decision Including Whether it is a Key Decision</b>	<b>Decision Taker including Details of Exempt Information (if any)</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List</b>	<b>Contact for Comments</b>
Council Plan	Cabinet <i>(recommendations to Council)</i>	7 September 2016	Report of the Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development	Deb Poole 01527 881256 Councillor G. Denaro
Corporate Performance Strategy	Cabinet	7 September 2016	Report of the Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development	Deb Poole 01527 881256 Councillor G. Denaro
Engagement Strategy	Cabinet	7 September 2016	Report of the Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development	Deb Poole 01527 881256 Councillor G. Denaro
Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Report	Cabinet	7 September 2016	Report of the Executive Director Finance and Resources	Jayne Pickering 01527 881400 Councillor G. Denaro
Report of the Potential Homelessness in Bromsgrove Task Group	Cabinet	5 October 2016	Report of the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services	Claire Felton 01527 881400 Councillor G. Denaro
Staff Survey	Cabinet	5 October 2016	Report of the Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development	Deb Poole 01527 881256 Councillor G. Denaro

Decision Including Whether it is a Key Decision	Decision Taker including Details of Exempt Information (if any)	Date of Decision	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Council Tax Support Scheme – Final Scheme	Cabinet <i>(recommendations to Council)</i>	2 November 2016	Report of the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support	Amanda Singleton 01527 881421 Councillor G. Denaro
Review of CCTV in the District	Cabinet	7 December 2016	Report of the Head of Community Services	Rachel McAndrews CCTV and Telecare Manager 01527 64252 x 3126 Councillor K. May

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016

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#### SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION PROPOSAL

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Not at this stage
Relevant Head of Service for Overview and Scrutiny	Claire Felton – Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Wards Affected	All wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	No – not at this stage
Non-Key Decision	

#### 1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 An Overview and Scrutiny Topic Proposal Form relating to Social Media has been completed by Councillor Chris Bloore and is submitted for consideration by the Board.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Board considers the completed proposal form (at Appendix 1) and agrees to one of the following:
- (a) that further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation is required;
  - (b) that the topic is included on the work programme for further investigation at a future date;
  - (c) that the topic is included on the work programme and a Task Group is established to undertake a more in-depth investigation, appoint a Chairman for the Task Group and set a time scale for completion of the investigation; or
  - (d) take no further action.

#### 3. KEY ISSUES

##### Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications directly relating to this report, however, if the proposal is accepted, any implications would be considered as part of the subsequent investigation undertaken.

##### Legal Implications

- 3.2 There are no legal implications directly relating to this report, however, if the proposal is accepted, any implications would be considered as part of the subsequent investigation undertaken.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD** 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016

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### **Service/Operation Implications**

- 3.3 An Overview and Scrutiny Topic Proposal Form relating to the Social Media has been completed by Councillor Chris Bloore .
- 3.4 If the Board decides that it does wish to investigate this topic further, it then needs to decide whether it is appropriate for the Board itself to undertake the investigation or whether a more in-depth investigation is required and a task group or short sharp review established.
- 3.5 Another option is for the Board to request further information on the topic from a relevant source to assist Members to decide whether an investigation is required.
- 3.6 Alternatively, the Board could decide that it is not a topic it wishes to investigate, in which case no further action would be required.

### **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

3.7 N/A

## **4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

4.1 N/A

## **5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Proposal Form

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## **7. KEY**

None

## **AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Amanda Scarce – Democratic Services Officer  
E Mail: [a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01527 881443



## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL

This form can be used for either a Task Group or a Short Sharp Review topic proposal.

Completed forms should be returned to [scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk) – Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council.

<b>Name of Proposer: Cllr Chris Bloore</b>	
Tel No:	Email: <a href="mailto:c.bloore@bromsgrove.gov.uk">c.bloore@bromsgrove.gov.uk</a>
Date: 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2016	

<p><b>Title of Proposed Topic</b> (including specific subject areas to be investigate)</p>	<p>Review of the Council's use of Social Media</p>
<p><b>Background to the Proposal</b> (Including reasons why this topic should be investigated and evidence to support the need for the investigation.)</p>	<p>During the course of the recent Preventing Homelessness Review it has come to my attention that social media is an increasingly important form of communication with the public.</p> <p>The Council already uses various forms of social media to engage with residents, but I feel that this could be enhanced to the benefit of Council Services and residents.</p> <p>At present I feel that it is often used mainly by the Council to let residents know what is happening rather than as tool for engagement with them.</p>
<p><b>Links to national, regional and local priorities</b> (including the Council's strategic purposes)</p>	<p>Enabling services to meet the needs of residents. Whilst this task group would not link directly to any specific strategic purpose, enabling itself, if conducted appropriately can enhance the Council's ability to achieve these purposes.</p>
<p><b>Possible Key Objectives</b> (these should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish how social media is currently used within the Council and what improvements, if any could be made.</li> <li>• Review any related policies.</li> <li>• Research into how other Council's use social media.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve greater engagement with the public and customer satisfaction.</li> </ul>			
Anticipated Timescale for completion of the work.				
Would it be appropriate to hold a Short Sharp Inquiry or a Task Group? (please tick relevant box)	Task Group	x	Short Sharp Inquiry	

**OFFICE USE ONLY - TO BE COMPLETED WHEN THE TOPIC PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED**

<b>Evidence</b>	
Key documents, data, reports	
Possible Site Visits	
Is a general press release required asking for general comments/suggestions from the public?	
Is a period of public consultation required?	
<b>Witnesses</b>	
Officers	
Councillors (including Portfolio Holder)	
Any External Witnesses	



## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

### WORK PROGRAMME

2016/17

#### RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board considers and agrees the work programme and updates it accordingly.

#### ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
<b>19/09/16</b>	Artrix Annual Report	
	Staff Survey 2016 Results & Actions Report	
	Preventing Homelessness Task Group – Final Report	
	Finance and Budget Working Group – Update	
	Measures Dashboard Working Group – Update	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – update from Representative	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List (if necessary)	
	O&S Work Programme	
<b>31/10/16</b>	Sickness Absence Update Report	6 month update requested at meeting on 25/4/2016
	Quarterly Recommendation Tracker	
	Finance and Budget Working Group - Update	
	Measures Dashboard Working Group – Update	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – update from Representative	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List (if necessary)	
	O&S Work Programme	
<b>28/11/16</b>	Review of CCTV – pre-scrutiny	Picked up from the Cabinet Work Programme 27/06/16 meeting

# Agenda Item 12

Date of Meeting	Subject	Additional Information
	Finance and Budget Working Group – Update	
	Measures Dashboard Working Group – Update	
	Planning Backlog Data up to 30/09/16	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – update from Representative	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List (if necessary)	
	O&S Work Programme	
<b>19/12/16</b>	Finance and Budget Working Group – Update	
	Measures Dashboard Working Group – Update	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – update from Representative	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List (if necessary)	
	O&S Work Programme	
<b>16/01/16</b>	Finance and Budget Working Group – Update	
	Measures Dashboard Working Group – Update	
	Quarterly Recommendation Tracker	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – update from Representative	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List (if necessary)	
	O&S Work Programme	
<b>13/02/17</b>	Dolphin Centre - Update on work with displaced Groups	
	Planning Backlog Data up to 31/12/16	
	Finance and Budget Working Group – Update	
	Measures Dashboard Working Group – Update	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – update from Representative	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List (if necessary)	
	O&S Work Programme	
<b>27/03/17</b>	Scrutiny of Crime & Disorder Partnership	
	Finance and Budget Working Group – Update	

Date of Meeting	Subject	Additional Information
	Measures Dashboard Working Group – Update	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – update from Representative	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List (if necessary)	
	O&S Work Programme	
<b>24/04/17</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Board Annual Report and Review of the Work of the Board (including the role of the working groups).	
	Quarterly Recommendation Tracker	
	WCC Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee – update from Representative	
	Cabinet Work Programme	
	Action List (if necessary)	
	O&S Work Programme	

**Items to be included on the Work Programme at future meetings (dates to be confirmed)**

Staff Survey – Results of the April 2016 survey

**Updates Received - Monthly**

The Council’s representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (who must be a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board) provides a verbal update to the Board each month.

The Council’s representative on any Joint Scrutiny Task Group’s will be expected to provide an update (verbal or written) on the work of that Group at each Board meeting.

The Chairman of any Working Group or Task Group set up by the Board will be expected to provide a written or verbal update in respect of the work being carried out and progress of the investigation by the Group Members.

**Reports to be Received Annually by the Board (at its discretion) - dates to be confirmed**

Write Off of Debts Report

(last report received 27/06/16)

Sickness Absence Performance (last report received 25/04/16)  
Making Experiences Count - Annually (last report received 27/0616)  
Summary of Environmental Enforcement (last report received 08/08/16)

Artrix SLA Annual Report – 19/09/16

## **Scrutiny of Crime & Disorder Partnership**

The Board must hold at least one meeting at which it considers the scrutiny of Crime and Disorder Partnership.

## **Areas for further discussion and possible inclusion within the Work Programme carried forward from the 2015/16 Training Event**

- Community Transport facilities
- Planning Issues – Particularly enforcement
- Local Plan Development
- Residential developments causing traffic problems
- Social Housing issues
- Lack of affordable social housing for young people
- BDHT addressing issues re sites.
- Youth provision
- Town Centre shops
- Town Centre Regeneration

When considering topics for investigations Members may wish to take into account the Council's Strategic Purposes as detailed below:

# Our Strategic Purposes for Bromsgrove



*Help me to live my life independently*

*Help me to be financially independent*

*Keep my place safe & looking good*

*Help me find somewhere to live in my locality*

*Provide good things for me to see, do & visit*

*Help me run a successful business*

**Support services enable us to deliver our purposes**

 **Bromsgrove District Council**  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

For more information view the Council Plan at:  
<http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/council-plan.aspx>

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