



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2016 AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

MEMBERS: Councillors G. N. Denaro (Leader), C. B. Taylor (Deputy Leader), K.J. May, R. D. Smith and P. J. Whittaker

AGENDA

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest

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 Cabinet held on 7th September 2016 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 19th September 2016 (Pages 9 - 20)
 - (a) To receive and note the minutes
 - (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes
5. Report of the Task Group on Preventing Homelessness in Bromsgrove (Pages 21 - 54)
6. 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

26th September 2016

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

7TH SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors G. N. Denaro (Leader), C. B. Taylor (Deputy Leader), K.J. May, R. D. Smith and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillors S. R. Colella, M. Glass, C. A. Hotham, L. C. R. Mallet and P. L. Thomas

Officers: Ms S. Hanley, Ms J. Pickering, Ms D. Poole, Mr J. Godwin, Mrs S. Sellers, Mr M. Hanwell, Ms R. Dunne, Mr S. Shammon, Ms K. Manning and Ms R. Cole.

17/16 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

18/16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor K. J. May referred to an other interest which she had previously declared in respect of item 15 relating to the New Inn, Bournheath.

The Leader indicated that this item was to be withdrawn.

19/16 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6th July 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 6th July 2016 be approved as a correct record.

20/16 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The Leader welcomed the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor L. C. R. Mallett to the meeting.

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 27th June 2016 and 8th August 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 27th June 2016 and 8th August 2016 be noted.

21/16

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 22nd June 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services board held on 22nd June 2016 be noted.

22/16

ICT INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCE

(The Leader reported that this item was no longer considered to be a Confidential or Exempt item and that therefore there was no requirement to exclude the public from the meeting whilst it was considered.)

The Cabinet considered a report on a proposal to address an ongoing problem experienced by the Authority relating to the retention and recruitment of staff with certain specialised technical skills in respect of the ICT infrastructure. It was reported that the staff in these posts performed a key role in maintaining day to day delivery of the Authority's ICT service, including ensuring that the servers and storage enabling business applications to work were operating successfully.

Members noted that the proposed solution was to outsource to an external provider this small section of the ICT Team which involved two posts one of which was currently vacant. This was to address the particular issue described within the report of recruiting and retaining suitable staff. The organisational approach overall would continue to be to share internal resource.

It was reported that at present the cost to the Council of providing the service was currently £34,093 and it was anticipated that following a competitive exercise, the new cost would be approximately £30,000 in the first year. A charge of £225 per month would be made to any supplier retaining members of staff on BDC premises. It was noted that the approach would require the Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment of two posts (one of which was currently vacant).

Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the proposal for the functions provided by the ICT infrastructure roles be outsourced to an external provider;
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Head of Transformation and organisational Development to undertake a tendering process to identify a suitable supplier to undertake the ICT infrastructure functions; and
- (c) that authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to finalise and enter into a suitable legal agreement with the supplier identified under (b) above.

23/16

CABINET APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Cabinet considered a report on a review of appointments made by Cabinet to a number of Outside Bodies. The review was required following the change in the Leader of the Council and the subsequent reorganisation of Cabinet portfolios.

RESOLVED that the appointments be made to the bodies as listed in the appendix to the report.

24/16

NEW HOMES BONUS COMMUNITY GRANTS AWARDS

The Cabinet considered the report on the findings and recommendations of the New Homes Bonus Community Grants Panel. The report related to the grants recommended to be made for 2016/17 and also made recommendations in respect of the future allocation of the balance of the unallocated funding from the 2015/16 process and from this year which together totalled £72,328.

In accordance with Cabinet procedure rules and with the agreement of the Leader, Councillor S. R. Colella spoke on this issue.

Councillor Colella referred to the proposed grants awarded within the Hagley area. These comprised £10,000 to Hagley Scouts for a mini bus (which was the full amount requested) and £5,948 to Hagley Football Club for a Community Pavilion (£20,000 requested).

Councillor Colella expressed appreciation for the sums already awarded but requested that consideration be given to increasing the amount in respect of the Hagley Community Pavilion.

In support of this Councillor Colella stated that the pavilion would be used by a number of organisations and groups within Hagley as there was no similar provision at present. The facility would contribute towards this Council's commitment to promote Health and Well Being within the District and would help to address the impact of social isolation particularly in an ageing population. Councillor Colella felt that the scheme met the Council's requirements that projects provided a sustainable legacy which supported the Council's strategic purposes. It was hoped that the project would be completed in 2017 so it would not be possible to submit a further application next year as this would be a retrospective application.

Cabinet noted that the total of £15, 948 awarded to the Hagley Wards was the maximum amount under the 2016/17 scheme which had been drawn up to reflect the number of properties completed during 2014/15 which was the latest year for which the data was available.

Members were however mindful of the resources required to administer the scheme and did not wish to see balances of funding continue to “roll over” from year to year.

The Cabinet expressed thanks to the NHB Community Grants Panel for the work they had undertaken so far but felt that further consideration was required by the Panel particularly in respect of the proposal that further bids be capped at £3,500.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the grants as detailed in the summary of the NHB Grants Panel recommendations attached as appendix 1 to the report be approved; and
- (b) that the NHB panel be requested to meet to reconsider any additional qualifying bids within the terms of the scheme in respect of the remaining balance of £72,328, taking into consideration the suggestion by Cabinet that the maximum award should not be capped as low as £3,500.

25/16

BROMSGROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY FUND AND SCHEME

The Cabinet considered a report on a proposal to set up an Energy Efficiency Fund and Scheme which would assist home owners within the District to heat their homes more reliably and at a lower cost. This would involve assistance with heating system improvements and other cost efficient energy measures.

It was proposed that the scheme would be delivered by this Council’s energy efficiency advice partner “Act on Energy” who had provided a number of other projects within Worcestershire. The details of funding for the scheme, including the capital funding, were set out in section 3 of the report.

Members noted the details of the proposal as set out within the report. In particular the health benefits arising from warmer homes and the links between an Energy Efficiency scheme and two of the Council’s strategic purposes “Help me to be financially independent” and “Help me to live my life independently”.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that an Energy Efficiency Fund and associated Scheme for home owners in Bromsgrove District be launched and delivered from autumn 2016 – 2019;
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Head of Community services to finalise details of the approved scheme and in consultation with the Portfolio for Strategic Housing to make minor amendments to the scheme and review the scheme as required; and
- (c) that authority be delegated to the Head of Community Services to agree a legal contract with Act on Energy to deliver the scheme.

RECOMMENDED that the capital budget of £100,000 previously allocated to disabled facilities grants be transferred to a capital budget for funding the installation of energy efficiency measures and that this be split over 3 years as follows:

2016/2017 - £34,000

2017/2018 - £33,000

2018/2019 - £33,000

26/16

ANIMAL WELFARE MATTERS - COUNCIL OWNED LAND

Cabinet considered a report on a proposed policy in respect of Animal, Bird and Fish Welfare at Events on Council Owned land.

It was noted that the policy as revised had arisen from a Notice of Motion from Council earlier in the year and that as a result of this, Councillors M. Thompson and B. T. Cooper had been involved in the process.

Cabinet considered the policy and it was

RESOLVED that that the policy relating to Animal, Bird and Fish Welfare at Events on Council Land be approved and adopted.

27/16

SPONSORSHIP POLICY UPDATE

The Cabinet considered an updated Sponsorship and Advertising policy attached as an appendix to the report. The policy now included a section relating to types of unacceptable sponsorship which had previously been included within the Sponsorship Agreement.

It was noted that the sponsorship process had now also been included within the policy to improve the clarity of the procedures.

RESOLVED that the updated Sponsorship and Advertising Policy be approved and adopted.

28/16

THE COUNCIL PLAN

The Leader requested Cabinet to defer consideration of the draft Council Plan.

The Council Plan was not subject to statutory deadlines and it was felt that whilst it was a very good document there was an opportunity for some additional work to be undertaken before it was formally considered. It was intended this would be before the end of the year.

RESOLVED that consideration of the Council Plan be deferred.

29/16

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE STRATEGY

Members considered a report on the proposed Corporate Performance Strategy, including how performance would be reported across the Council.

Members discussed the importance of the use of the Measures Dashboard which should give live sets of data and would enable officers and Members to be more proactive and to use the Dashboard on a daily basis. Additional training and familiarisation sessions for Members were being arranged.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Performance Strategy attached as an appendix to the report be approved.

30/16

EFFICIENCY PLAN

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council's Efficiency Plan 2016/2017 – 2019/2020.

Members were reminded that the submission of an Efficiency Plan to the Secretary of State would provide certainty regarding the financial settlement from Central Government over a four year period. It was noted that the New Homes Bonus funding was the subject of a separate consultation and therefore did not form part of the settlement.

It was reported that there had been no specific guidance from Government regarding what was to be included in the Efficiency Plan. It was anticipated however that the basis would be the Medium Term Financial Plan and information from the Council Plan. This would provide the information to the Government as to how the Council is aiming to deliver its strategic purposes to the community within the reduced funding it will be receiving.

It was noted that the Council did not accept the methodology of "negative grant" and that there was an expectation this would be offset by changes to the Business rate legislation.

The Executive Director Finance and Resources referred to the work undertaken by Directors and Heads of Service in providing best estimates in respect of the savings, efficiencies and additional income which could be achieved to address the budget pressures over the four year period.

RECOMMENDED that the Efficiency Plan 2016/2017 – 2019/2020 as set out in appendix A to the report, be approved for submission to Central Government to enable a four year financial settlement to be secured.

31/16

QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council's financial position for Revenue and Capital for Quarter 1 2016/17.

It was noted that there were some variances including an increase in income from planning fees due to two significant applications and a decrease in car parking income. It was queried whether this was related to the Hanover Street Car Park and information would be sought on this from the Head of Environmental Services.

RESOLVED that the current financial position on Revenue and Capital as detailed in the report be noted.

32/16

APPLICATION FOR INCLUSION ON ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE REGISTER - THE NEW INN, BOURNHEATH

It was reported that following the need to defer this application at the last Cabinet the application was now out of time and under the relevant regulations it would not be possible for a decision on designation to be made. It would therefore be placed on the unsuccessful register with an explanatory note.

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

19TH SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: 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, C. J. Spencer and P.L. Thomas (from Minute Item No. 31/16)

Observers: Councillor G. N. Denaro, Councillor S. P. Shannon, Hannah Phillips and Dorothy Wilson (The Artrix)

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. D. Poole, Mr J. Cochrane, Ms L Wood, Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

29/16 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor R. J. Laight.

30/16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillors C. Allen-Jones, P. L. Thomas and S. P. Shannon declared pecuniary interests in respect of Minute item 34/16 in their capacity as landlords of properties in the private rented sector located in Bromsgrove district.

There were no declarations of any whipping arrangements.

31/16 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday 8th August 2016 were submitted.

The Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. T. Cooper, asked for it to be noted that his update on the work of the previous meeting of that Committee should have been recorded as having been based on the content of both the agenda and minutes from that meeting.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday 8th August 2016 be approved as a correct record.

32/16 **ARTRIX ANNUAL REPORT**

The Board welcomed the Director and the Chairman of the Artrix to the meeting and invited them to deliver a presentation containing an

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overview of engagement and activity at the Artrix in 2015/16 and plans for the following financial year. During the delivery of this presentation the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration, with a number of points discussed in detail:

- During the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 72,924 people had attended the Artrix, including 25,717 children, young people and families.
- There had been 431 performances during the period, including 37 performances promoted by Bromsgrove Arts Alive.
- A total of 496 workshop activities had taken place during the period at the Artrix.
- The Artrix's 10th Birthday Artistic Programme had been delivered in partnership with Walk the Plank and Motionhouse Dance Company. Over 300 children, young people and families had engaged with the programme.
- The programme had aimed to raise funding for The Artrix and had managed to raise over £13,000, which was £3,000 more than the target.
- Live screenings of performances delivered by the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Ballet Live had continued to be screened at the Artrix alongside a lot of successful comedy performances and contemporary theatre productions.
- The Artrix New Generation Festival had engaged with 27 out of 39 state schools in Bromsgrove district since 2014, providing performances, workshops and other activities suitable for children and young people.
- HOW College offered a BTEC National Diploma in performing arts at the Artrix.
- The Artrix had used Catalyst and ACE investment in dance to offer dance residences to local students, which had involved working with professional dance companies.
- The Artrix became an official Fun Place on 3rd October 2015, offering family friendly arts and events themed activities.
- The Out of the Box Youth Theatre had launched a new section for junior participants in September 2015.
- A number of specific community events had taken place at the Artrix including an Ageing Well Day, which had been attended by over 100 people, Over 55s Cinema on a Friday and a Family Fun Festival, which had attracted 680 audience members in July 2015 and over 1,000 in August.
- Specific community events had been held to mark Black History Month, which had engaged with an audience of 80 people and involved a screening of the film *The Colour Purple*, and LGBT History Month which had been attended by over 110 people and included a showing of the film *Pride*.
- Worcestershire County Council (WCC) had invested £30,000 in the Artrix which had been used to fund a new full-time Marketing and Fundraising Officer. This was a one off payment from WCC but it

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was noted that the Fundraising and Marketing Officer's post to be sustainable and self-funding.

- A Fundraising Strategy and Audience Development Plan had been produced for the venue.
- Average attendance figures during the autumn season had been at their highest since records began in 2012. A total of 60 per cent of all tickets were now sold online and The Artrix had a mailing list of 17,000.
- Audience segmentation had been reviewed which had revealed that the majority of customers lived in Bromsgrove district.
- The Artrix had many volunteers who undertook a valuable role. A new Volunteer Co-ordinator had been employed to develop and refresh the Council's volunteering scheme.
- A total of 25 new volunteers had recently attended a session organised by the venue's Volunteer Co-ordinator and work was being undertaken to specifically attract younger volunteers.
- In April The Artrix won the What's On Award – Best Small Arts Centre in Worcestershire.
- There had been a change in governance arrangements for The Artrix with a new Director and the number of representatives on the board from HOW college and the Council reduced to 2 per organisation whilst 3 new community representatives had been recruited.
- Artrix the Next Decade had been launched on 28th April to promote the venue's new fundraising campaign and strategic priorities.
- The venue's Business Plan was in the process of being redrafted. Detailed within the new plan would be the new priorities for the Artrix for the next 3 years.
- Greater use would be made in future of digital technology to increase young people's engagement.
- There were plans to develop the existing programme at The Artrix to include more family and children's theatre productions and activities.
- In the future there were plans to deliver more challenging projects that would help to engage with hard to reach groups.
- The Artrix was aiming to produce their own work for young people with a company of emerging artists focusing on specific health and wellbeing problems.
- The Artrix was looking to diversify sources of funding and would be making applications to the Arts Council England, various Trusts and Foundations for grants. Business sponsorship would also be explored in future as a potential source of funding going forward.
- The Artrix was aiming to work in partnership with other organisations, including within the education and health sectors, with a view to deliver specifically funded projects. For example the involvement of arts bodies in social prescribing work within the community.
- The difficult budgetary situation for local authorities and the impact that this might have in the long-term on the availability of Council finances to support The Artrix.

- The potential to access funding and other forms of support from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Members were advised that this had been identified as a potential source of support and options for enhanced working were being explored by local arts partnerships.
- The maintenance costs of the building and the need for capital investment in the long-term. Members were advised that the roof had been repaired and renovation work would be undertaken on the doors and drains.

At the end of these discussions the Board

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

33/16

STAFF SURVEY 2016 - RESULTS AND ACTIONS

The Head of Business Transformation and Human Resources and Development Officer presented a report detailing the feedback provided in the staff survey undertaken in April 2016. Whilst presenting the report the following matters were raised for Members' attention:

- The latest staff survey had followed the format of the previous survey in order to enable officers to compare and measure the results.
- There had been a decline in the proportion of staff completing the survey, from 33 per cent of staff in August 2013 when the survey was last conducted to 25 per cent in 2016.
- Efforts had been made to disseminate information about the survey and to encourage staff to respond, including provision of paper copies to staff who did not have access to a computer.
- When comparing the results it emerged that a number of improvements had been achieved since the previous survey including an increase in awareness of the Council's strategic purposes and underpinning operational purposes.
- The feedback was also encouraging in respect of staff confidence about reporting mental health and wellbeing difficulties. Officers suggested that the significant action taken in the past few years to address this, including the Time to Change initiative, had had a positive impact on this.
- However, some areas had been identified which were concerning including a reduction in staff reporting that they had the skills to do their job well, a decrease in staff reporting that they felt they could meet the needs of their customers and a fall in the number of employees reporting that they had a good working relationship with colleagues.
- A programme board, to be chaired by the Chief Executive, had been established to co-ordinate work to address these problems.
- There had also been 3 working groups established to address people management, meeting customer needs and organisational culture respectively.

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- Heads of Service had been provided with data pertaining to staff within their teams, though all responses had remained confidential and had not identified individual respondents.
- The Heads of Service would be expected to identify 3 areas requiring improvement for their service areas and to devise action plans to address these.
- All action plans would need to be presented to the programme board for consideration.

Once the report had been presented Members discussed a number of areas in detail:

- The reasons why there had been a reduction in response rates and the extent to which this was concerning.
- The comparable level of response rates at other local authorities and within the private sector and the potential to obtain benchmarking data.
- The organisational culture at the Council and the impact that this might have on willingness amongst staff to complete the survey.
- The potential to offer incentives to encourage a greater proportion of staff to complete the survey in future.
- The approach that had been taken to comparing responses in 2013 to those in 2016 and the need to take into account the differences in the number of respondents when doing so.
- The inclusion of data from staff employed by both Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council in the completed responses. Members were advised that this survey had been conducted jointly as the majority of services were shared between the 2 Councils.
- The number of questions that had been included in the survey and the extent to which this might have discouraged some employees from taking part due to concerns about the time that would be required.
- The potential for different sections of the survey to be circulated on a quarterly basis in order to reduce the number of questions that staff needed to answer at any given time.
- The resource implications of undertaking staff surveys on a quarterly basis.
- The focus of the 3 working groups and whether these would address every area of concern in terms of the organisational structure at the Council.
- The provision of status meetings for staff, the frequency of team meetings and the extent to which this impacted on employees' willingness to take part in initiatives like a staff survey.
- The arrangements in place to ensure a consistent approach across the organisation to Personal Development Reviews.
- The implications of the staff survey results for overall performance at the Council.

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- The possibility of using a traffic light system in future reports to help Members assess progress compared to previous staff survey results.
- The potential to set targets to address in respect of the survey feedback, which could be monitored in relation to future surveys.
- The option for the survey to be facilitated by an external independent body and the extent to which this might encourage more staff to complete those surveys.
- The cost implications of working with an external body and the need for any costs to be clarified before taking a decision about future facilitation arrangements for the survey.

During consideration of this item Members discussed the potential suitability of this subject for further scrutiny. Particular concerns were raised about the progress that had been achieved since the previous survey was circulated and the decrease in the number of responses and Members commented that a detailed investigation might help to address some of the underlying issues. The appropriate forum for this investigation was considered and whilst Members acknowledged that the Board could review the matter there was general consensus that a Task Group would be in a better position to review this subject in detail.

The specific focus of an investigation of this matter was also considered. As part of the investigation Members agreed that it would be useful to review the feedback contained in completed surveys. This would include considering the work of the programme board. It would also be useful to consider lessons that could be learned in order to influence future versions of the survey and to improve participation. In line with standard practice the terms of reference would need to be outlined in a topic proposal form.

The relevance of the subject to Redditch Borough Council, due to the shared nature of the survey, was also briefly considered. Members concurred that as this involved staff working for both authorities and a scrutiny investigation could have implications for both Councils the subject might be appropriate for consideration as a joint scrutiny Task Group. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Redditch was due to meet on 25th October and could be invited to consider the Board's suggested terms of reference and to decide whether to take part in this proposed joint exercise. In advance of this date the Chairman confirmed that he would contact the Chair of the Redditch Committee to discuss the matter further.

Following further discussions the Board

RESOLVED that

- (1) A Task Group review of the staff survey be established;
- (2) Councillor S. R. Colella, in consultation with the Democratic Services Officers, complete a Topic Proposal form detailing the proposed terms of reference for the review;

- (3) The proposed terms of reference be circulated electronically for the approval of Members of the Board in early October; and
- (4) Redditch Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approached about the possibility of undertaking this review as a Joint Scrutiny Task Group exercise.

34/16

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Preventing Homelessness Task Group, Councillor C. J. Bloore, presented the findings of the group and its recommendations and a number of key points were highlighted:

- The review had been launched following the Board's consideration of proposals in respect of the future of Burcot Lodge.
- At the start of the review £15,000 had been set aside in case any issues were identified during the Task Group which might benefit from that funding.
- As part of the review changes to welfare had been explored as well as the implications for residents, Council services and partner organisations.
- Housing was increasingly challenging at both the national, regional and local level and innovative local solutions would help people who were struggling to secure accommodation.
- It was in the Council's interests to secure a range of housing solutions, particularly as temporary accommodation could be expensive.
- Evidence had been obtained from a range of sources, including interviews with Council Officers, representatives of VCS organisations and the relevant Portfolio Holders for Housing and finance respectively.
- The first recommendation, in respect of a local authority lettings agency, had been made following investigation of arrangements in place at other local authorities.
- There were various models of local authority lettings agency that could be introduced, including the potential to work in partnership with Redditch Borough Council.
- Officers were suggesting that time should be provided to enable them to investigate this matter in further detail to ensure that the most appropriate model of local authority lettings agency was introduced in the district.
- The second recommendation, in respect of the homelessness grant, had been proposed as Members were aware that in the past the grant had not always been allocated to addressing homelessness when the full budget had not been spent in a given year.
- In light of further forthcoming welfare changes, and as the grant was not ring-fenced, the group had considered it to be expedient to suggest that the Council restrict future spending of the grant to address homelessness only.

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- The group's third recommendation detailed suggestions about which types of organisations and projects should be prioritised when the grant was distributed in future.
- Consideration had been given to proposing that that grant be allocated to specific organisations but following consultation with Officers it had been suggested that the group should advocate funding in line with specific themes.
- This recognised volatility within the VCS and the potential for partnership working arrangements to emerge over time.
- The final recommendation proposed that the £15,00 which had been set aside at the start of the review, should be allocated to the Essential Living Fund (ELF) to assist people in need.
- Councillor Bloore thanked the other Members of the group, Councillors S. J. Baxter, S. Shannon and R. Smith for their hard work and the Democratic Services Officers for their support.

Officers clarified the following key points which had been raised when the report was considered at a recent meeting of Leaders' Group:

- Councillor R. Smith had participated in the review but had stepped down when he had been appointed to the Cabinet and had not taken part in the meeting when the group's recommendations were agreed. This needed to be reflected in the group's final report.
- A request had been made for the group's fourth recommendation to remove the words "...which has been reserved for use at the discretion of the Group..."

There was general consensus among Board Members that the proposed amendments should be made to the report. In addition, a number of points were raised by Members during consideration of this item:

- The level of detail contained within the report and the importance of the investigation.
- The potential for further information to be added as an appendix to the report in respect of the numbers of homeless people in the district.
- The extent to which an appendix detailing the number of homeless people would contain accurate information, given the number of 'sofa surfers', particularly amongst young people, living in the district.
- The potential for the Board to receive updates in future concerning the number of homeless people in the district to enable Members to monitor progress.
- The valuable work of St Basil's and the Basement Project to support young people at risk of homelessness.
- The important work of Fry Housing Trust in supporting people who had been through the criminal justice system or who were at risk of offending.

- The proportion of affordable housing that needed to be provided in large developments in accordance with the Council's Planning policy.

The Chairman advised that Councillor Bloore would be standing down from the Board after this meeting. However, given his role in chairing the review Members agreed that Councillor Bloore should attend Cabinet on behalf of the Board to present the group's final report and recommendations.

RECOMMENDED that subject to the amendments detailed in the preamble above the four recommendations detailed in the group's final report should be submitted for the consideration of the Cabinet; and

RESOLVED that the board should receive updates on a biannual basis in relation to homelessness numbers within the district.

(At the start of this item there was a brief 5 minute adjournment whilst the IT equipment was activated to enable Councillor Bloore to deliver his presentation).

35/16

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group, Councillor L. C. R. Mallett, provided an update on the work of the group to date and presented the group's proposed terms of reference.

The Board was advised that 5 Members had originally been appointed to the Working Group; Councillors Mallett, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. Smith and P. L. Thomas. Following his appointment to the Cabinet Councillor Smith had stood down from the group creating a vacancy. Councillor S. J. Baxter volunteered to fill this vacant position.

The Chairman advised that at the first meeting of the group Members had considered the terms of reference for the group. Consideration had also been given to the contents of the Council's Efficiency Plan and the group had been particularly interested in the detail underpinning that overarching plan, including new ways of working and the extent to which risk would be taken into account. The proposed management review had been discussed and Members had noted potential options for the Council.

At the latest meeting of the group the Council's Capital Programme, borrowing costs, reserves and budget virement had all be discussed. In several areas Members had identified that additional information was required and it was anticipated that this would be considered at a meeting in October.

The group had already discussed and agreed a number of recommendations on various matters. These would be recorded in an interim report and presented for the consideration of the Board in

November with a view to referring proposals on to Cabinet the following month. In the meantime if any recommendations were agreed at meetings of the group which required urgent consideration these would be presented by the Chairman for the consideration of the Board as soon as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the proposed terms of reference for the Finance and Budget Scrutiny Working Group be approved and adopted; and
- (2) Councillor S. J. Baxter be appointed to the Finance and Budget Scrutiny Working Group.

36/16

MEASURES DASHBOARD WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman of the Measures Dashboard Working Group, Councillor S. A. Webb provided an update on Members' work to date and presented the proposed terms of reference for the group. The Board was advised that 4 Councillors had been appointed to the group; Councillors Webb, C. Allen-Jones, S. J. Baxter and C. J. Spencer. Members agreed that this should be revisited at the following meeting.

The Chairman advised that the group had held 2 meetings. At the first of these meeting the group had considered their terms of reference and had received an overview of the dashboard. The second meeting had been attended by members of the Policy Team who had provided a detailed presentation on the subject of the dashboard.

Members were hoping that they would be able to access the dashboard directly on their iPads by the date of the next meeting of the group. During this meeting further consideration would be given to an option that had already been identified for each member of the group to mirror the Portfolio Holders and to take a lead on addressing specific strategic purposes.

RESOLVED that the proposed terms of reference for the Measures Dashboard Working Group be approved and adopted.

37/16

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

The Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. T. Cooper, advised that there had been no further meetings of HOSC since the last meeting of the Board.

38/16

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The latest edition of the Cabinet Work Programme was tabled for Members' consideration. The Chairman noted that the Review of CCTV in the District was already scheduled to be pre-scrutinised by the Board

and that many of the financial items detailed on the work programme would be considered by the Finance and Budget Working Group.

Members questioned the timing for future reports on the subject of membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The Board was advised that no item was scheduled on the work programme in respect of this matter and that the Council was awaiting further clarification regarding the timeframes for a local authority to become a member of the WMCA.

39/16

SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL

Councillor C. J. Bloore presented a topic proposal form containing proposed terms of reference for a Task Group review of the Council's use of social media. Members were advised that the subject had been raised at a meeting of the Preventing Homelessness Task Group, when the potential for social media to be used more effectively to promote the support available from the Council to vulnerable residents had been considered. The Council used social media, including Facebook and Twitter, but it was suggested that more creative use could be made of these and lessons could be learned from other organisations.

The Board was advised that the Council's Communications Team had been contacted about the proposed review and were very enthusiastic about the suggestion. Opportunities to make further use of social media had been identified and Officers were keen to discuss these with Members. Whilst it was noted that these could potentially be discussed with the Board, a Task Group activity would provide an opportunity to explore potential uses of social media for a range of services and to investigate how other organisations, in the public, private and Voluntary Sector, used social media to engage with customers. A review could also explore how social media could help the Council to engage more effectively with hard to reach groups.

As this would be the last meeting when Councillor Bloore would be a Member of the Board it was noted that he could not be the chairman of a Task Group, though it would be possible for him to serve on the review. Members agreed that the Chairman should be identified at the following meeting, though volunteers to serve on the Task Group could be identified prior to this date.

RESOLVED that

- (1) The Review of the Council's Use of Social Media Task Group be launched;
- (2) Officers invite Members to express an interest in participating in the review; and
- (3) The Board consider and appoint a Chairman at its next meeting in October 2016.

40/16

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. Reference was made to the Planning Backlog Data Monitoring Update report, which was received by the Board on a quarterly basis. Officers were asked to investigate the potential for the data covering the period up to 31st March 2017 to be made available for Members' consideration at the meeting of the Board in April.

The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

Chairman

CABINET

5th October 2016

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS TASK GROUP

| | |
|--|---|
| Relevant Portfolio Holder | Councillor Kit Taylor |
| Portfolio Holder Consulted | Councillor Taylor was consulted during the review. |
| 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

The purpose of this report is to allow Cabinet to consider the findings and recommendations of the attached Overview and Scrutiny Board report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Cabinet is requested to:

- (a) consider the attached Overview and Scrutiny Board report (Appendix 1) and the recommendations contained within it;
- (b) to either agree, amend or reject each of the recommendations contained in the report;
- (c) provide an Executive Response to the Overview and Scrutiny Board report and recommendations, which may include an Action Plan to summarise how and when each of the agreed recommendations will be implemented.
- (d) request the relevant Portfolio Holder in consultation with appropriate officers to indicate the expected implementation dates, as appropriate.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The estimated Financial and Resource implications of the recommendations are detailed in the Summary of Recommendations of the appended report.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 These are detailed within the attached report.

CABINET

5th October 2016

Service/Operation Implications

- 3.3 The Overview and Scrutiny board agreed to launch a short sharp review of Homelessness in Bromsgrove. At the agreement of the Board the timescale of the Group was extended and the title amended to Preventing Homelessness in Bromsgrove Task Group.
- 3.4 Full details of the Task Group's investigations are detailed in the attached report.
- 3.5 The report and recommendations were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 19th September 2016 and referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.6 N/A

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

N/A

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Preventing Homelessness Task Group final report

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

See attached report for details.

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PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS IN BROMSGROVE TASK GROUP

FINAL REPORT



September 2016



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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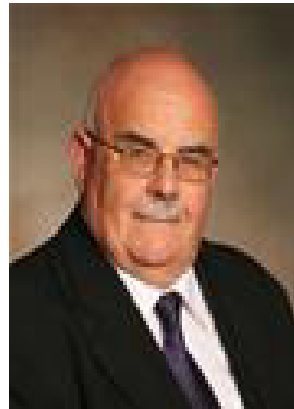
MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP



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

| Recommendation 1 |
|--|
| <p>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.</p> |
| <p>Financial Implications for recommendations: 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.</p> |
| <p>Legal Implications for recommendations: 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.</p> |
| <p>Resource Implications: Officer time.</p> |

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 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 x 1 bed = £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 5

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 be noted that Councillor Jones withdrew from the group following her appointment as Chairman of the Council at the Annual Council meeting held in May 2016. It should also be noted that Councillor Roger Smith withdrew from the Task Group following his appointment to the Cabinet and was not present during the Group's discussions and agreement of its final recommendations.

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.

- 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.

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:

| |
|---|
| Recommendation 1 |
| 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:

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| Recommendation 2 |
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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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| Recommendation 3 |
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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>Benefit Cap – 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>Spare Room Subsidy –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> |

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| <p>Introduction of Local Council Tax Support Scheme – 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>Universal Credit – 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>Temporary absences from Great Britain Rules for Housing Benefits – 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>Removing entitlement for Housing Benefit payments to Young People aged 18-21 - 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>Reduction in social rents – 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> |

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|---|---|---|
| <p>Restrictions on housing benefits for the under 35s – 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>Cap of Housing Benefit in the social rented sector - 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

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| Recommendation 4 |
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| The £15,000 of funding allocated by the Portfolio Holder, be allocated to the Essential Living Fund (ELF) and any surplus be ring fenced for use in the next financial year. |
|--|

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

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 – Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council.

| | |
|--|---|
| Name of Proposer: Councillor Chris Bloore | |
| Tel No: 07905612710 | Email: c.bloore@bromsgrove.gov.uk |
| Date: 19/01/16 | |

| | |
|--|---|
| Title of Proposed Topic (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. |
| Background to the Proposal (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. |
| Links to national, regional and local priorities (including the Council's strategic purposes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help me to live my life independently • Help me find somewhere to live in my locality • Help me to be financially independent |

Agenda Item 5

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|--|--|-----------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| <p>Possible Key Objectives</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"> • Clarify what the legislative changes will entail; • Clarify the impact of all of these changes on the Council’s services and customers; and • ensure that appropriate steps are in place to minimise the impact and support our customers. | | | |
| <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>Yes</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

Homelessness Data for Bromsgrove District

Prevention of homelessness 2011-2015

| | | Prevented | Relieved | Total |
|------------|------|-----------|----------|-------|
| Bromsgrove | 2011 | 208 | 17 | 225 |
| | 2012 | 225 | 23 | 248 |
| | 2013 | 190 | 0 | 190 |
| | 2014 | 218 | 48 | 266 |
| | 2015 | 102 | 60 | 162 |

Homelessness Acceptances 2009 - 2015

| (Elw) now E11g | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Bromsgrove | 53 | 67 | 70 | 77 | 75 | 58 | 85 |
| Worcestershire | 418 | 498 | 659 | 738 | 718 | 654 | 692 |

Housing Options Interviews 2011 - 2015

| Year | Housing Options Interviews | Acceptances | Preventions | Reliefs |
|------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| 2015 | 742 | 85 | 102 | 60 |
| 2014 | 623 | 58 | 218 | 48 |
| 2013 | 818 | 75 | 190 | 0 |
| 2012 | 624 | 77 | 225 | 23 |
| 2011 | 806 | 70 | 208 | 17 |

Appendix 6

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). |

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