

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

TUESDAY, 8TH JANUARY 2008 AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), J. T. Duddy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker, R. J. Deeming, B. Lewis F.CMI, D. L. Pardoe and C. B. Taylor

Observers: Councillors G. N. Denaro, Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, D. Hancox, Mrs. H. J. Jones, D. McGrath, C. R. Scurrrell, Mrs. C. J. Spencer, E. C. Tibby and C. J. Tidmarsh

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mr. M. Bell, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. D. Hammond, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. J. Pitman, Ms. D. Poole, Mrs. S. Sellers and Ms. D. McCarthy

Before the meeting commenced, the Chairman welcomed the new Executive Director - Services, Mr. Beirne.

67/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

68/07 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were made.

69/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 4th December 2007 and the special meeting held on 20th December 2007 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of both meetings held in December 2007 be approved as correct records.

70/07 **RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

A report listing scrutiny recommendations was considered. It was clarified that recommendations listed in the report were those which had been put forward by the Board since it had been agreed to track recommendations using the tracker report method.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

71/07 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2008/09 - 2010/11**

Members received a presentation from Ms. Pickering, Head of Financial Services, on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2008/09 to 2010/11. The presentation covered key areas including key budget pressures and savings.

The Chairman allowed questions from all Members including those present as observers. All questions put forward were answered by Ms. Pickering and relevant Heads of Service as required.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

72/07 **JOINT COUNTYWIDE SCRUTINY ON FLOODING**

The Board received a report on the proposed joint scrutiny on flooding issues in Worcestershire.

Members were informed that further details of the draft joint scrutiny proposal had been received from officers at Worcestershire County Council on 7th January 2008 for Overview and Scrutiny Committees of each District Council to consider and these were tabled. It was explained that the intention was to agree the final scope of the scrutiny at the next joint meeting which was likely to be held late January or early February.

Councillor Lewis stated that although previously it was anticipated that he might act as the representative for this Council on the joint countywide scrutiny group, he informed the Board that he had to turn down this opportunity and there was a brief discussion on who would be available to take on this task.

RESOLVED

- (a) that Bromsgrove District Council participate in the joint countywide scrutiny on flooding in Worcestershire;
- (b) that the suggested arrangements paper be supported;
- (c) that Councillor McDonald be nominated as this Council's representative to serve on the joint countywide scrutiny group;
- (d) that Councillor McDonald's wish not to be nominated to Chair the scrutiny investigation at the present time, pending the outcome of the next joint meeting, be supported; and
- (e) that any comments on the joint scrutiny proposal tabled be passed on to the Committee Officer as soon as possible.

73/07 **UPDATES ON SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS**

- (i) Public Transport – Buses Task Group

Councillor Lewis, Chairman of the Public Transport – Buses Task Group, informed the Board that the scrutiny report with recommendations was in the process of being compiled and finalised.

(ii) Refuse and Recycling Task Group

A brief update from Councillor Scurrell, Refuse and Recycling Task Group Chairman, was read out to the Board. Members were informed that the Task Group had been provided with additional information in relation to NVQ training for refuse and recycling crews and further responses from Parish Councils on fortnightly waste collections had also been received. It was reported that the relevant Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs. Sherrey, was expected to attend the next meeting to respond to questions from the Task Group. Finally, it was confirmed that Task Group recommendations had been considered and approval of the final report was expected at the last meeting of the Task Group scheduled to be held on 28th January 2008.

The Chairman of the Board stated that he had concerns over the work of the Task Group and questioned whether Members should look at Value for Money as the terms of reference included "Identifying issues affecting the efficiency and performance of the service..." The Chairman proposed that the Task Group be requested to ensure that they investigated this key issue.

However, reasons against this proposal were put forward from other Members of the Board. It was pointed out that the Task Group was at the stage of completing its report and recommendations and therefore extending the work of the Task Group at such a late stage would delay current recommendations due to be put forward.

After some discussion over various options, it was proposed that this issue be referred to the Task Group to consider.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the updates given on the progress of each of the Scrutiny Task Groups be noted; and
- (b) that the Refuse and Recycling Task Group be requested to consider investigating Value for Money issues.

74/07 **SCRUTINY PROPOSALS**

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services stated that there was an operational issue which affected the Committee Services Team and impacted on support that would be available for scrutiny task groups established over the next couple of months. It was understood that at the present time, the team was working at full capacity and were servicing three task groups. The Board was also aware that the Air Quality Task Group could not be disbanded until the outcome of discussions by the Cabinet relating to the Air Quality Scrutiny Report were known.

Councillor Mrs. Bunker referred to information contained within the report relating to the suggestion of scrutinising issues surrounding older people. It was stated that following the last ordinary meeting of the Board when this was considered, Councillor Mrs. Bunker had discussed this matter further with Mr. Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive. It was believed that the best way forward would be for Mr. Bennett to set up focus groups to find out the areas

of concern from older people themselves with a view to using the findings from the focus groups to narrow down the specific issues that could be scrutinised. Members of the Board supported this course of action.

RESOLVED that consideration of scrutiny proposals received be postponed until the next meeting of the Board in February.

75/07 **CABINET'S FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Cabinet's Forward Plan which contained the key decisions scheduled to be made over the next few months.

It was clarified that with regard to item number 21, Value for Money Strategy, the Cabinet was due to consider an update at its meeting in March 2008.

The Board was informed that it was anticipated that the Cabinet's Forward Plan would be developed and improved in the near future to make it more meaningful to the Scrutiny Steering Board.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Cabinet's Forward Plan be noted; and
- (b) that the Value for Money Strategy be circulated to Members of the Scrutiny Steering Board.

76/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme for the Scrutiny Steering Board was considered. It was confirmed that, as usual, the work programme would be updated to reflect decisions made by the Board at this meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

77/07 **CALL IN PROCEDURE**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer, Mrs. Sellers, informed the Board that following the recent call in of a Cabinet decision, it had come to light possible improvements which could be made to the procedure, such as providing more guidance to Members who wished to call in a decision to enable them to more easily identify reasons for the call in. It was reported that this would be picked up as part of the Constitution Review and any comments Members of the Board wished to make in this respect would be welcomed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that any comments Members of the Board wished to make in relation to improving the Call In procedure should be directed to the Deputy Monitoring Officers, Mrs. Sellers and Mrs. Warren; and
- (b) that the update be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm

Chairman