

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

TUESDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY 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: Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., Councillor S. P. Shannon and Councillor M. J. A. Webb

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. S. Sellers and Ms. D. McCarthy

78/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

79/07 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were made.

80/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 8th January 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment to minute number 72/07 to include "(f) that Councillor Duddy be nominated as this Council's reserve representative on the joint countywide flooding scrutiny group", the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

81/07 **CABINET RESPONSE TO THE AIR QUALITY SCRUTINY REPORT**

As the Portfolio Holder for Planning (which included Climate Change), Councillor Mrs. Dyer presented the Cabinet's response to the Air Quality Scrutiny Report. It was explained that the Cabinet had considered the report at its last meeting held on 9th January 2008 where the work of the Task Group, together with the excellent quality of the final scrutiny report, had been acknowledged.

Responses to each recommendation were taken one by one and it was noted that the majority of recommendations put forward had been approved.

With regard to the first recommendation relating to Low Emission Zones, part of the Cabinet's response was that the impact on the surrounding road

network as a result of motorists attempting to avoid the Low Emission Zones could make the situation worse. However, the Chairman questioned how the Cabinet could come to that conclusion with no supporting evidence. A discussion ensued.

It was confirmed that in relation to recommendation 4, Scrutiny Members were correct in stating that Worcestershire County Council (as the Highways Authority) were responsible for the particular set of traffic signals referred to in the recommendation and therefore, the County Council was the appropriate authority.

Councillor Mrs. Dyer was thanked for her attendance.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Cabinet be requested to reconsider its response to recommendation 1, as it appeared it had no supporting evidence; and
- (b) that the Cabinet's response to all other recommendations contained within the Air Quality Scrutiny Report be noted.

82/07 **PUBLIC TRANSPORT (BUSES) SCRUTINY REPORT**

Councillor Lewis presented the Scrutiny Report as Chairman of the Public Transport (Buses) Task Group. There was a brief discussion on the report, including its format.

The Task Group Chairman stated that he wished to be involved in ensuring the approved recommendations were implemented. Mr. Street, the Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects, informed the Board that there was already a Joint County and District Town Centre Steering Group and to ensure proper coordination, it was suggested that Councillor Lewis might wish to join that Group.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the following recommendation be included in the report: "Councillor Lewis be invited to sit on the Joint County and District Town Centre Steering Group to assist the Council in ensuring any approved recommendations contained within the scrutiny report are implemented";
- (b) that, subject to (a) above being included, the Public Transport (Buses) Scrutiny Report containing recommendations be approved.

RECOMMENDED that the Public Transport (Buses) Scrutiny Report, as agreed by the Scrutiny Steering Board, be placed on the next available Agenda for Cabinet's consideration and all recommendations contained with the report be approved.

83/07 **UPDATE ON REFUSE AND RECYCLING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP**

Councillor Scurrall, Chairman of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group, provided a brief update which was read out to the Board.

Members were informed that at the Task Group Meeting held on 28th January 2008, the suggestion of investigating value for money was considered. It was agreed that as the current scrutiny investigation had now concluded, the Task Group would not delay its Scrutiny Report and the proposals it contained. However, the Task Group were of the opinion that the Scrutiny Steering Board should consider examining this issue as a separate scrutiny exercise.

It was confirmed that the Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Report with recommendations would be on the next agenda for consideration by the Scrutiny Steering Board and the Task Group Chairman would be in attendance to present the report.

RESOLVED that the update given on the progress of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group be noted.

84/07 **UPDATE ON JOINT FLOODING SCRUTINY**

The Chairman of this Board, as the nominated representative on the Joint Countywide Task Group looking at flooding, stated that unfortunately, he had been unable to attend the meeting held at County Hall the previous evening.

However, he had received an update from Worcestershire County Council's officers and therefore could inform the Board that Councillor King from Wychavon District Council had been appointed Chairman. It was stated that the Task Group was intending to invite all agencies involved to future meetings to discuss the impact of recent flooding, the lessons learnt and ways all agencies could work better together in the future.

RESOLVED that the update provided by the Chairman be noted.

85/07 **CALLS FOR ACTION - CLG CONSULTATION**

The Board considered the report on Calls for Action as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Members were informed of the consultation exercise currently being carried out by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) and were urged to put forward recommendations to full Council, via the Monitoring Officer, in response to the consultation paper.

There was a discussion on the Calls for Action process and various points were raised, such as the possible timescales for Councillors to respond and the impact certain timescales might have on single Member wards. There was also a concern over how letters to Councillors from the public would be monitored and it was suggested that perhaps they could be sent via officers.

It was reported that due to the limited information available from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), a further report on the matter would be submitted later in the year when guidance had been issued. (It was stated that if any Member had any comments relating to Local Petitions they should direct them to the Monitoring Officer after the meeting.)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED that full Council include the following concerns of the Scrutiny Steering Board in response to the CLG consultation exercise on Calls for Action:

- (a) what would be the timescales for Councillors to respond to public requests and how could it be ensured single Member Wards would not be disadvantaged by those timescales; and
- (b) what procedure could be put in place to ensure requests from the public were monitored and recorded.

86/07 **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.

Members were reminded 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. It was explained that Heads of Service would be expected to incorporate information required for the Forward Plan into Business Plans and that through the constitution review a 'key decision' would be defined and agreed by full Council in March 2008. It was anticipated that the newly developed Forward Plan would be available to the public and the Scrutiny Steering Board by June 2008.

The Board was informed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman had invited Councillor Webb (Portfolio Holder for Customer Care and Customer Service, and Revenue Generation) to attend to explain why the report relating to the Customer Panel 2 Results (item number 7 on the Forward Plan) had been delayed by a month by officers.

Councillor Webb responded that the delay had been due to the time taken to compile suitable questions. It was believed that it was important that questions within the survey covered all necessary areas in a clear and concise way, as it was believed that the quality of feedback was linked with the quality of questions. Councillor Webb informed the Board that he had a meeting scheduled with the Assistant Chief Executive the following week and would be discussing: (i) the progress of the report; and (ii) ensuring further delays would be avoided.

More information was requested on item number 15 which related to a write-off. However, it was believed that this was a confidential item and officers might not be able to provide any further information. It was also stated that it was unlikely to be a key decision.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services be requested to provide either further details in relation to item number 15 on the Forward Plan or an explanation as to why more information could not be disclosed, including details on the relevant legislation.

- (b) that the comments received from Councillor Webb (Portfolio Holder for Customer Care and Customer Service, and Revenue Generation) in relation to item number 7 on the Forward Plan be noted; and
- (c) that the Cabinet's Forward Plan be noted.

87/07 **SCRUTINY PROPOSALS**

Members considered the three scrutiny proposals received and there was a discussion on which should be added to the Board's work programme and the priority order. During that discussion it was pointed out that the spatial strategy, which one of the scrutiny proposals related to, was already on the work programme of the Performance Management Board.

The suggestion made by the Refuse and Recycling Task Group regarding scrutinising Value for Money in relation to Street Scene and Waste Management was also considered.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a Task Group scrutinising Anti-Social Behaviour be established but that the appointment of Chairman be deferred until the next meeting of the Board;
- (b) that a Task Group scrutinising issues surrounding Alcohol Free Zones (AFZ) be established and Councillor Duddy be appointed as Chairman;
- (c) that letters be sent out to non-Cabinet Members requesting them to complete a membership form if they wish to join one of the Task Groups; and
- (d) that the topic of Value for Money in relation to Street Scene and Waste Management be considered by the Board at its next meeting.

88/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme of the Scrutiny Steering Board was considered.

RESOLVED that the full work programme be noted.

89/07 **MEMBER TRAINING**

(The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item as a matter of urgency as a decision was required thereon before the next ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board.)

Mrs. Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, informed the Board that at a recent Modern Councillor Steering Group Meeting, scrutiny training which had been provided in 2007/08 was discussed. Members were requested to put forward their views on the training to Mrs. Felton to assist officers in developing the training programme for 2008/09. It was explained that Members' views on training content was of particular interest.

It was requested that school holidays, industrial shut downs and other Member meetings should be avoided where possible. With regard to content, it was stated that training on Value for Money would be useful.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that officers consider the suggestion of incorporating Value for Money training into the training programme for 2008/09; and
- (b) that any other suggestions/comments be directed to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services.

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm

Chairman