



## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

**TUESDAY, 5TH FEBRUARY 2008 AT 6.00 PM**

**COMMITTEE ROOM, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE**

**MEMBERS:** 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

### **AGENDA**

1. To receive apologies for absence
2. Declarations of Interest and whipping arrangements
3. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 8th January 2008 (Pages 1 - 4)
4. Cabinet Response to the Air Quality Scrutiny Report (Pages 5 - 12)

**Please Note:** Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., as the Portfolio Holder for Planning (which includes Climate Change), will be in attendance to present this report.

5. Public Transport (Buses) Scrutiny Report (Pages 13 - 86)
6. Verbal update on progress of Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Task Group (Chairman - Councillor C. R. Scurrall)
7. Verbal update on Joint Flooding Scrutiny (Councillor McDonald)
8. Calls for Action - Communities for Local Government (CLG) Consultation (Pages 87 - 118)

9. Cabinet's Forward Plan (Pages 119 - 122)
10. Work Programme (Pages 123 - 126)
11. Scrutiny Proposals (Pages 127 - 136)
12. 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

The Council House  
Burcot Lane  
BROMSGROVE  
Worcestershire  
B60 1AA

25th January 2008

# Agenda Item 3

## 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 Scurrall, 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

## **Cabinet Response to the Air Quality Scrutiny Report**

### Introduction

At the Cabinet meeting on 9th January 2008 consideration was given to the report of the Air Quality Task Group. In introducing the item the Leader acknowledged the detailed work which it was clear had been undertaken by the Task Group together with the excellent quality of the final report. The Leader invited the Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor P. M. McDonald, to introduce the report. Councillor McDonald referred to the thorough exercise which had been undertaken and highlighted the consultation which had taken place with a variety of organisations as an important part of the scrutiny process. The Cabinet then considered each of the recommendations in detail.

### Response to recommendations

Please find below responses to the recommendations contained within the scrutiny report:

#### **Recommendation 1 - Low Emission Zones**

This Council considers applying to Worcestershire County Council for certain roads to be made low emission zone roads therefore limiting access to certain types of vehicles which reduce air quality. Specifically, the Task Group believe the following roads/areas should be low emission due to high NO<sub>2</sub> levels:

- Approximately a 2 mile radius around Bromsgrove town centre
- A38 Bypass in Rubery
- All roads in Rubery with a weight restriction
- A456 in Hagley
- A491 in Hagley

The Cabinet resolved that this recommendation be deferred until further information is available regarding the results of the scheme which is shortly to be introduced in London. The Cabinet felt they did not have enough information regarding how such a scheme would operate in practice and how the results would be monitored. In addition it was felt 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.

## **Recommendation 2 – Bromsgrove Railway Station Improvements**

The Council remain committed to improving Bromsgrove Railway Station including the Park and Ride facility as this will encourage the public to use public transport and therefore reduce the numbers of cars on the roads which are having a negative impact on air quality.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

## **Recommendation 3 – Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group**

Support be given to any recommendations relating to the work of the Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group which relate to improving local bus services as this will (similar to improving Bromsgrove Railway Station) encourage the public to use public transport, therefore reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

The Cabinet resolved that whilst they were minded to support the future recommendations of the Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group which relate to the improvement of local bus services, they would need to give full consideration to the recommendations when they were received and in particular would have to consider the recommendations in the light of any financial implications. The Cabinet felt they would need to be fully aware of the recommendations before giving a commitment to acceptance.

## **Recommendation 4 – Traffic Signals near the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)**

- (a) Request that Worcestershire County Council's Highways alter the traffic signals on the A38 North into Bromsgrove so to reduce exit blocking and improve traffic flow near the AQMA; and
- (b) Request that both Worcestershire County Council's Highways and this Council's Environmental Health Team monitor the area before and after the alterations in order to obtain evidence to prove whether or not the alteration have been successful.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation subject to the request in (a) being considered by the appropriate authority as there was some doubt as to whether it would be the responsibility of the County Council or of the Highways Agency. The Cabinet also wished the appropriate authority to consider making the operation of the traffic signals part time as for example during the night, the traffic was much lighter and this would reduce the amount of stationary traffic and therefore improve air quality.

### **Recommendation 5 – Yellow Box Markings at Junction 1 M42**

Request that Environmental Health monitor the AQMA before and after the Highways Agency have added and amended yellow box markings on the roundabout at M42 Junction 1 at gridlock (which is hoped will improve the flow of traffic) to investigate whether or not there has been a reduction in air pollution.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation and it was also resolved that the Police be requested to monitor the misuse of the yellow boxes as it was felt some motorists were not complying with the markings.

### **Recommendation 6 – M42 Westbound to M5 Scheme**

Request that the Highways Agency monitor the area of the M42 Westbound to M5 to find out if this scheme has been successful in reducing the number of incidents (which has often led to traffic congestion and therefore impacted on the AQMA) and communicate their findings to the Environmental Health Team.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 7 – Town Centre Redevelopment**

The Town Centre Redevelopment Steering Group (LSP Theme Group) be requested to consider air pollution caused by traffic congestion when looking at redeveloping the town. This would include the Group looking at the possibilities of having vehicle access to The Strand from Birmingham Road (by Davenal House) and investigate, in partnership with Worcestershire County Council Highway's, whether or not it might help decrease traffic congestion and therefore lower the air pollution at this location which has high NO2 levels.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 8 – High Street and The Strand**

- (a) Request that Worcestershire County Council review the timing of the traffic signals located at the top end of the High Street by The Strand with a view to reducing the build up of standing traffic;
- (b) If (a) is agreed and County Council decide to amend the timing of the traffic signals, request that they monitor the traffic congestion before and after making the alteration to measure whether the action has had a positive impact; and
- (c) If (a) is agreed, request Environmental Health monitor air quality around Davenal House, Birmingham Road before and after the alteration to measure whether it has helped improve air quality (which is known to be poor at this location).

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 9 – Property Development**

- (a) The Head of Planning and Environmental Health Services be requested to consider the best ways to discourage development within an AQMA; and
- (b) An air quality guidance note for developers be drafted by the Planning and Environmental Health Officers to try and control and mitigate the impact property development has on air quality.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 10 – Communication with Local Residents**

- (a) There is ongoing communication with local residents who own and/or reside in a property located in the AQMA to ensure they are fully aware of the situation. (The Task Group will be ensuring the households affected receive a copy of this report for their information.); and
- (b) A sign be erected (by the County Council) in the AQMA to inform the public that it is an AQMA and that the District Council is working with other agencies to reduce air pollution in the vicinity. The sign should also pose the question “Is your journey necessary?” to encourage the public to think about their travel habits and the impact it has on air pollution.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 11 – Web Site**

Environmental Health be requested to update information on the Council’s website as soon as possible and ensure it is regularly updated.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 12 – Health of Local Residents**

- (a) The Environmental Health Team be requested to work in partnership with Worcestershire PCT (and local GP surgeries) and ensure they are kept up to date in regards to which areas are known poor air quality areas to help investigate further the correlations between poor air quality areas and respiratory illnesses such as asthma; and
- (b) Request that Worcestershire PCT work closely with GPs to ensure the criteria used for diagnosing and recording data relating to asthma is standardised wherever possible to enable the analysis of data to be more meaningful.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 13 – Bonfires**

- (a) The Environmental Health Team be requested to actively discourage bonfires (with the exception of social events on and around 5th November) through promotion, similar to Birmingham City Council; and
- (b) Ensure that members of the public are aware how to report bonfires if they are a nuisance.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 14 – Street Scene and Waste Management Vehicles**

The Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be requested to further investigate and assess options available (such as using bio fuel in refuse and recycling vehicles) which could assist the Council in contributing to improving air quality.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 15 – Staff Travel Plan**

It is requested that the newly established Energy Efficiency Project Group progress the Council's Staff Travel Plan as a matter of urgency and work together with the LSP Better Environment Theme Group.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 16 – Training/Briefing**

- (a) To help the Council lead by example to other agencies, training be offered to all Members and staff (including those based at the Depot) on air quality (and other green issues) to improve their awareness of the impact their behaviour at home and at work can have on air quality;
- (b) As part of that training, it is suggested that the film "An Inconvenient Truth" relating to the work of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner Al Gore be shown at the Council House; and
- (c) The Head of Street Scene and Waste Management ensure specific training is provided to refuse and recycling crews relating to where refuse vehicles should be parked (to avoid causing traffic congestion) with engines turned off during breaks.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 17 – Taxi Drivers**

The Licensing Section be requested to remind taxi drivers not to leave their engines running whilst waiting for the next fare at a taxi rank. As an incentive to

change their behaviour, it should be pointed out that (a) it will save fuel; and (b) it is an offence to leave a vehicle running when not in the vehicle and any person doing so is at risk of receiving a fixed penalty notice. This information could be included in a newsletter for example.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 18 – Car Sharing Scheme**

- (a) To ensure car parking spaces are reserved for those who join the car sharing scheme (which could act as an incentive);
- (b) Through various forms of publicity, the Communication Team ensure that staff are frequently reminded and encouraged to join the Car Sharing Scheme and encouraged to use other alternatives to travel to work such as walking, cycling or public transport; and
- (c) The numbers of staff from Bromsgrove District Council joining the car sharing scheme be monitored.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 19 – Essential and Casual Car Users**

Further investigations be carried out by the Human Resources Section into the possibility of having: (a) a pool of Council owned environmentally friendly cars for essential and casual car users; or (b) a loan/lease scheme to assist and encourage staff to convert their own car to alternative fuel.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 20 – Car Allowance Pay Scales**

The Council consider revising the current car allowance pay scales and not pay more to those who are potentially the worst polluters. Instead, base the car allowance pay scales on the Vehicle Exercise Duty (VED) Rates (attached as Appendix 5) to ensure payment is based on CO2 emissions. (Alternatively, the Council could as a minimum follow the example of other local authorities who have introduced a flat rate for all users (regardless of engine size) as this method would indirectly benefit those employees with smaller engine sized cars as these use less fuel per mile.)

The Cabinet resolved that investigations be undertaken into the revision of the current car allowance pay scales to include the possibility of paying a flat rate for all users regardless of engine size. It was felt that the payment of a flat rate may discourage the use of vehicles with larger engines.

## **Recommendation 21 – Home Working Policy**

Support be given to a Home Working Policy as reducing the number of times staff need to travel to and from the office will help reduce the number of cars on the road and this will help towards improving air quality. Therefore, a report from the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development should be submitted to the Corporate Management Team without delay.

The Cabinet approved this recommendation.

Following consideration of the Task Group report The Leader and Cabinet expressed their thanks to the Chairman and Members of the Task Group for the thorough scrutiny exercise which had been undertaken which had resulted in such a clear report.

Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M. B. E.  
**Portfolio Holder for Planning**

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## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

**5TH FEBRUARY 2008**

#### **PUBLIC TRANSPORT (BUSES) SCRUTINY REPORT**

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey J.P.
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Street Scene and Waste Management Services
Chairman of Scrutiny Task Group	Councillor B. Lewis F. CMI

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 It is a Government requirement that Local Authorities provide a Public Transport Strategy that best meets local needs and provides best value for money, at the same time subsidising services which are considered vital to the public good, thus allowing the community to access social activities, health care and educational amenities.
- 1.2 The role of the Public Transport (Buses) Task Group was to examine the current bus services (or lack of), timetables, bus condition and age, and the general availability and acceptability to current bus users at large within the Bromsgrove District. The attached scrutiny report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Task Group.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 Members are requested to consider and approve the recommendations set out in the attached report.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At a meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on the 12th June 2007, it was decided that a Task Group would be established to scrutinise issues relating to public transport in and through the Council's area, with specific reference being made to buses.
- 3.2 The full terms of reference were approved (as amended) by the Scrutiny Steering Board at its meeting held on 3rd July 2007, when membership of the Task Group was also agreed.
- 3.3 Further details can be found in the "Background and Terms of Reference" in Section 3 of the attached Report.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The financial implications for the Council are as outlined in the attached report.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no significant legal implications (although see 4.1 above).

#### **6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 The report links to the Council's Objectives Regeneration and Improvement.

#### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The risk of not approving the recommendations contained within the report is to undermine the Council's commitment to the regeneration of the town centre.

#### **8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Residents living within the Bromsgrove district will benefit from an improved public transport service if the recommendations contained within the attached scrutiny report are implemented.

#### **9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Disability Discrimination Act Regulations 2000 govern the provision and minimum standards for various transportation issues, and all buses, regardless of age, must conform to the DDA by 2017. It is hoped, however, that by maintaining a dialogue with the County Council and the various Operators every effort will be made to achieve such compliance at the earliest opportunity.

#### **10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Any projects that are undertaken by the Council as a result of the recommendations contained within this report will be subject to Contract Procedure Rules to ensure value for money in the delivery of services to the community.

**11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues - Possible admin set-up costs connected with the creation of any Partnership Project Team established to plan, fund-raise and implement a new purpose-built town centre bus station for Bromsgrove.
Personnel Implications – Possible implications with the proposed recommendation to liaise with Redditch Borough Council with a view to extending their existing Dial-a-Ride scheme.
Governance/Performance Management -None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 - This report has considered Sn. 17 of the CDA and the duty it imposes, and there are no implications arising from it.
Policy - None
Environmental – If all of the proposals contained within the report are put into place, there should be a marked improvement in public transport arrangements resulting in a better service, and reduced carbon emissions through fewer car journeys.

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	No – however, has been sent a copy of the attached report for information.
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	Yes
Executive Director (Services)	No
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes

Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards of the District are likely to be affected by the contents of the Report.

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Public Transport (Buses) Task Group Report, including its appendices.

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011: Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy  
 Passenger Transport Infrastructure Best Practice Report  
 Passenger Transport Accessibility Best Practice Report  
 Passenger Transport Vehicles & Rolling Stock Best Practice Report  
 Traffic Management and Parking for Passengers Best Practice Report  
 Passenger Transport Marketing and Information Best Practice Report  
 Community Transport Best Practice Report  
 Land Use and Development Control for Passenger Transport  
 Executive Summaries Best Practice Workshops 6th and 7th Nov. 2007.  
 Achieving Disability Equality in the Bromsgrove District  
 Local Transport Bill

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**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

# SCRUTINY REPORT

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORT (BUSES) TASK GROUP**

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## **SCRUTINY REPORT**

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**Completed: January 2008**

Committee Services Officer: Andy Jessop

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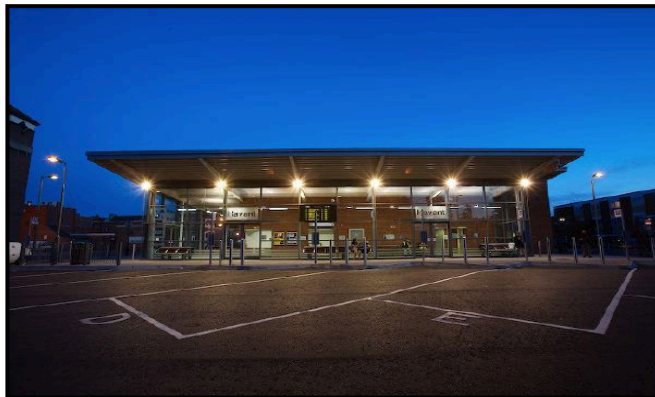
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# ***TRAVELLING FIRST CLASS?***

**SURVEYS, REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC  
TRANSPORT (BUSES) TASK GROUP**

***OF BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL***

**WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE:**



***A VISION OF A NEW AND PRESTIGIOUS BUS STATION IN THE CENTRE OF  
BROMSGROVE***



***MODERN ACCESSIBLE BUSES, SPECIALIST TRANSPORT SERVICES,  
BETTER ROUTES, MORE FREQUENT SERVICES, REAL TIME TRAVEL  
INFORMATION, BETTER WAITING AREAS, IMPROVED DRIVER TRAINING  
AND CUSTOMER SERVICE***

**Task Group Members:** Councillors B. Lewis F. CMI (Chairman), D. Hancox, Mrs. J.D. Luck, P.M. McDonald and C.R. Scurrell).

18<sup>th</sup> January 2008

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<b>5</b>	<b>Making sense of the numbers</b>	<b>Pages 14 – 15</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>A new bus station for Bromsgrove</b>	<b>Pages 16 – 18</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Improved routes and frequencies</b>	<b>Pages 19 – 22</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>A bus shuttle link from the new railway station</b>	<b>Page 23</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Improve rolling stock (buses)</b>	<b>Pages 24 – 26</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Providing new bus shelters</b>	<b>Page 27</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Transforming Bus Timetable information</b>	<b>Pages 28 – 30</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Improving Bus Driver skills</b>	<b>Pages 31 – 32</b>
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## 1 Foreword

I am pleased to present this Scrutiny Report on behalf of the Task Group members, and am indebted to Councillors D. Hancox, Mrs. J. D. Luck, P.M. McDonald and C.R. Scurrell for their support, assistance and determination in completing this challenging review. I am also very grateful to David McGrath (Facilitator, Link Support Services (UK) Ltd), our Scrutiny Support Officer Andy Jessop, and to Ray Crossland, representing the Bromsgrove Disabled Action Group. Members and officers of Worcestershire County Council Integrated Transport Strategy Group were also very generous in giving their time and co-operation and informing our thinking by attending our Scrutiny meetings.

Our Group carried out two surveys of bus passengers to gather evidence of their experiences and knowledge of bus travel at first hand, and we also invited widespread participation via post and email using the 'Together Bromsgrove' newsletter. Our gratitude is extended to the 257 members of the public who informed us of their experiences, gave us their opinions and forwarded ideas for consideration by the Task Group.

In addition, and to reinforce our Scrutiny, particularly with regards to accessibility and inclusion, the Group appraised the merits of Redditch Borough Council's "Dial-a-Ride" Scheme, and we are particularly grateful to the Peter Rose (Redditch Dial-a-Ride, Shopmobility and Market Manager) for his guidance in this respect. Representatives from the Group also attended a meeting of the Equalities and Diversity Forum, and subsequently considered a report from them entitled "Achieving Disability Equality in the Bromsgrove District" which highlighted (inter-alia) that accessible public transport was needed for disabled people who did not own a car; that transport within the district was poor, and that, accordingly, it was a "number one priority issue."

The review – and this report - has two facets to it:

- (1) it reveals the shortcomings of Bromsgrove Bus Station and its infrastructure, the non-existent bus service to and from the railway station, the general mediocrity of the services currently available and the low level of local public regard; and
- (2) it identifies the potential for Bromsgrove to achieve a new, prestigious station, infrastructure and service that is truly 'fit for purpose' which should inspire current users and entice car owners from their vehicles.

We do not believe that the proposals contained in this report are 'pipe-dreams' or a 'wish list'. We believe that there is an emerging political will and an overwhelming social and environmental case for a radical overhaul of our local transport system within the regional transport context.

Councillor B. Lewis F. CMI,  
Chairman, Public Transport (Buses) Task Group,

January 2008.



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## 2 Summary of recommendations

1. Establish a Partnership Project Team to plan, raise funds and implement a new purpose-built town centre bus station for Bromsgrove.

Against the backdrop of increasing traffic volumes and its associated adverse effects on congestion, air quality and carbon emissions, together with the timely prioritising of the regeneration of Bromsgrove town centre, this Council should encourage the establishment of a Partnership Project Team consisting of all relevant stakeholders to achieve the best possible result for a new and improved facility on this existing site.

*(Cost: It is not envisaged that this will involve any financial implications, other than perhaps some minor initial set-up costs).*

2. The need for a major review of routes and frequencies to provide (a) better links to outlying areas (b) better links to major amenities such as Hospitals and (c) evening and Sunday services.

A major complaint which emerged from the surveys and questionnaire replies was that more frequent services and better links were required to outlying areas, key community amenities (e.g. hospitals) and better evening routes and Sunday services were requested. Accordingly, the Task Group are of the view that the County Council, along with bus operators and Bromsgrove District Council should embark on a major review of routes and frequencies to produce new business cases to provide those services required by the community (e.g. a circular service connecting Bromsgrove, Redditch, Worcester, Kidderminster and returning to Bromsgrove).

*(Cost: It is envisaged that the County Council would initiate such a review, possibly with the help and co-operation of the Local Strategic Partnership Transport Theme Group, or externally from someone like the Bus Users UK Group).*

3. Introduce a bus shuttle service between the proposed new railway station and the town centre.

The new railway station being built by Network Rail will have a "Park-and-Ride" facility adjacent to it, which will be in accordance with the County Councils "gold" or "silver" standard. The Task Group recommend therefore that this Council should participate to the fullest extent in a new partnership aimed at supporting and advising upon the bus interchange facility to the proposed new rail station, e.g., advising on routes and frequency based on local research.

*(Cost: This matter should be referred for discussion by the Railway Station Theme Group).*

4. Modern accessible bus fleets through proactive involvement by Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council to develop a new 'vehicle rolling stock' (buses) strategy and bid for funds.

This should be addressed/achieved via the County Council's rolling stock renewal strategy. The Task Group recommends that this Council supports moves by the County Council to continue to develop such strategy and invites this Council to become proactive partners in future bids for new rolling stock. The Task Group also requests that the Council submits this report as part of the "evidence" required to support such bids.

*(Cost: Nil).*

5. Joint feasibility study to introduce 'Dial-a-Ride' and other community transport to Bromsgrove.

The Task Group recommend that, in accordance with best practice, preparatory discussions be commenced with Redditch Borough Council to assess the feasibility of a joint bid (via the County Council) for a co-operated Ring-and-Ride scheme, and also that the Council should investigate with the County the potential to introduce a Community Bus Service to further "infill" gaps in current services.

*(Cost: Nil. However, there would be a cost implication should a joint scheme with neighbouring Redditch Borough Council for an extended Dial-a-Ride scheme be implemented).*

6. Provide new bus shelters and improve waiting areas.

It was noted that the County Council were to introduce a "Worcestershire Standard" bus shelter/stop, which was commended by the Task Group, as it was felt that there is a need for a uniform standard, and they recommend a period of consultation to establish whether (and where) more pick-up points could be located (see below).

The Task Group also requested that, given the implications for winter bus travellers, urgent action should be taken at a number of sites mentioned in the report to repair damaged/vandalised bus shelters.

*(Cost: There would be a cost implication for any repairs carried out to shelters, or for the provision of any new/additional shelters within a non-parished area of the District.*

7. Consider other (convenient) pick-up areas.

In addition to the need for more (modern) bus shelters, a number of people responding to the surveys indicated that consideration could also be given to (a) an increased number of pick-up points (to bridge the walking gap especially for those with mobility difficulties); and (b) the flexibility to "flag down" drivers in areas where it is safe to do so.

*(Cost: Nil).*

8. Improve bus time tables and make them more widely available.

The County Council are currently considering the production of a new strategy to apply a consistent approach to the marketing and delivery of information on passenger transport services in Worcestershire, and, as part of such review, will re-assess all their printed, electronic and face-to-face and marketing information.

Accordingly, the Task Group (a) commends the move towards a "best practice strategy" by the County Council in this regard, and (b) urges Bromsgrove District Council to use a variety of "engagement" methods available to it (e.g. Together Bromsgrove, website, etc.), to consult with the public further to support the County's preparation of a new marketing and information strategy.

*(Costs: Nil).*

9. Offer Bromsgrove District as a 'pilot' area (to the County Council) for the introduction of Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) at major amenities.

Clearly Bromsgrove should not be left behind in the move towards modernising the information (and methods of providing information) to our bus travellers. There are a range of initiatives being planned or suggested, from a new railway station to a new bus station and town centre redevelopment, which makes this essential. The Task Group therefore recommends that the Council becomes a pilot authority to work with

our County Council partners to develop and implement a local best practice marketing and implementation strategy which can become a model for the County.  
(Costs :Nil).

10. Introduce a 'London Underground' style bus route map.

In order to help local residents plan and envisage travel around the area, it is recommended that, as part of the review, a route map be produced similar to the London Underground system map. The map would be based on a North/South and East/West configuration to enable it to capture the main destinations, i.e. Birmingham/Bromsgrove/Worcester (being North/South) and Redditch, Bromsgrove, Stourbridge (being East/West). This would enable all principal villages and estates along these routes to be listed together with the appropriate bus service number.  
(Costs: Nil – this could be something that the County might sponsor/organise the launch of a design award)

11. Improved driver training to improve customer service.

The County Council are seeking to ensure the development and delivery of appropriate training and assessment programmes from September 2008 (Passengers) and September 2009 for all small and medium sized operations in Worcestershire. The Task Group therefore (i) commends the County's Strategy for bus driver training to this Council; (ii) asks that a copy of this report be forwarded to all bus operators drawing their attention to the broad issue of reminding drivers of their duty of care and courtesy to passengers; and (iii) recommends that a newsletter in this regard be sent from the County Council to all operators and drivers.  
(Costs: Nil).

12. Proactive involvement by Bromsgrove District Council in the Worcestershire County Council Transport Strategy.

Having established a good working relationship with the relevant officers from the County Council during the consideration of this issue, it is the view of the Task Group that this Council should continue to foster this good relationship through a proactive involvement in the Worcestershire County Council Transport Strategy.  
(Costs: Nil).

13. A new Bus Station for Bromsgrove

The existing bus station is wholly owned by Worcester County Council, and, as such, future development would be their primary responsibility. Our liaison with the County has engendered a positive response leading to a general appreciation that

- (a) It is essential that the town centre bus station is completely rebuilt (preferably on the existing site) and should involve public consultation at the design and layout stage, which should include 'County Standard' bus shelters and signage;
- (b) The site of the present bus station is the preferred site according to the public survey, and lends itself to be developed incorporating an Information Centre and perhaps a Police Drop-In Centre; and
- (c) The existing toilet block should be re-located, possibly on ground opposite the Drill Hall)

Our discussions with Worcestershire County Council have revealed a willingness to establish a Joint Working (or Focus) Group with the critical focus of achieving a new Bus Station for Bromsgrove.

*(Costs: There will no doubt be a cost implication in effecting (a), (b) and (c) above, but which are unspecified at this point in time.)*

### 3 Background and terms of reference

*‘Increasing traffic volumes and its associated adverse effects on congestion, air quality and carbon emissions is a key problem....’*

*The situation is likely to continue to deteriorate as long as the private car remains the dominant mode of travel choice, even for short journeys...The proposed growth in travel demand arising from the Regional Spatial Strategy puts further emphasis on the needs to provide a sustainable and realistic alternative to the car for certain types of journey’*

*(Passenger Transport Accessibility Best Practice Report November 2007 –  
Worcestershire County Council)*

#### Terms of Reference

At a meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007 it was decided that a task group would be established to scrutinise issues relating to public transport in and through the Council’s area, with specific reference being made to buses.

The Task Group’s terms of reference, which were compiled by the appointed Chairman, Councillor B. Lewis F. CMI, were approved (as amended) by the Board at its meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007, although the Chairman did remark at the first meeting of the Task Group that there was a possibility that the work of the Group might involve some “cross-border” enquiries (i.e. transport systems employed by West Midlands/Worcestershire County Councils). Further comments were made at a subsequent meeting of the Cabinet, where the Leader suggested that the scope of the Task Group should be extended to include the impact of the proposed re-development of the Bromsgrove Railway Station, particularly with regard to issues associated with the relocation option which would allow for increased parking capacity, a bus interchange facility, and potential for a Park-and-Ride station in a strategic location. Comments were also expressed that transport links to railway stations across the whole of the district should also be covered by the scrutiny exercise. Whilst it was conceded that these latter points were extremely important and relevant issues, and that due consideration would be given during the overall deliberations, it was considered that, with the timescale available to the Task Group for consideration and report, they would not take up a predominant amount of the Groups’ time and/or recommendations. (Indeed comments were made that this was an issue worthy of a possible scrutiny exercise of its own). For information, the full terms of reference are set out in the attached **Appendix 1**.

#### Summary

It is a Government requirement that Local Authorities provide a Public Transport Strategy that best meets local needs and provides best value for money, at the same time subsidising services which are considered vital to the public good, thus allowing the community to access social activities, health care and educational amenities.

In this regard, a Local Transport Bill was published in November 2007, and covered four key policy areas, namely (i) Improving local bus services; (ii) Reforming local transport governance; (iii) Updating the legal framework for local road pricing schemes; and (iv) Delivering the new regulatory framework for bus services ( See attached notes from the Local Government Association at **Appendix 2**).

Briefly, the role of the Public Transport (Buses) Task Group was to examine the current bus services (or the lack of), timetables, bus condition and age, and the general availability and acceptability to current bus users at large within the Bromsgrove District.

### **Methodology**

There were a total of 9 Task Group meetings, and at the first meeting a schedule of work was compiled, and the group decided on a range of activities, including

- Endeavours to establish who was operating the various bus services, and to interview the key Personnel if possible;
- An examination of timetables, fares and available subsidies;
- Liaison with Worcestershire County Council to establish their remit for services, current thinking and opportunities to work together;
- Discussions with representatives from Equalities and Disability groups regarding accessibility and inclusion;
- Involvement of the District Council's Assistant Chief Executive and Transport and Engineering Officers;

To bring together the above-mentioned points a "One Page Strategy" was adopted (see **Appendix 3**) to focus and clarify members' aims into specific areas i.e.,

- (a) Listing 'ambitions' to promote 'step change' and creative thinking;
- (b) Establishing current performance levels so that our 'starting point' for the review was grounded in reality;
- (c) Wide consultation of the travelling public with a view to establishing current satisfaction levels and areas for improvement;
- (d) Consultation with strategic partners and other transport experts;
- (e) Development and resource support for members (e.g. training, admin and facilitation support);
- (f) Project management planning (i.e. who does what, when, how and to what timescale); and
- (g) Anticipated outcomes.

***This approach meant that the scrutiny investigation was not simply an exercise in 'fault finding' or appraising the 'status quo' but instead a purposeful, evidence based examination of transport issues (focused on buses) and an earnest attempt to articulate a new, achievable vision for Bromsgrove***

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## 4 Consultation and background research

### Opening Gambit – press release

At the start of the review a press release was issued by the Council, and the Public were encouraged to submit comments and suggestions relating to bus services in the town and its environs. Nineteen letters and emails were received and it became obvious that more work was needed to engage directly with people who had views but did not tend to correspond with the Council.

### Contacting Bus Operators

The Task Group Chairman also wrote to the Managing Directors and Chief Executives of the fourteen bus companies Operating in/through Bromsgrove (**Appendix 4**) enclosing a questionnaire and seeking their views. Sadly, only five replies were received, two of which were in the form of personal interviews, with Mr. Mark Davis, proprietor of MRD Travel, and Mr. Sean Simpson, Network Performance Manager, First Travel.

### Face-to-face surveys of bus users

After opting to apply a more hands-on approach, the Task Group undertook **two** face-to-face surveys of the public at Bromsgrove bus station and obtained the views of **107** concessionary travellers. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at **Appendix 5**.

**Survey no.1** was held in the late morning and resumed in the late afternoon of Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007, and collected (in the main) views from concessionary bus pass holders. This survey also captured objective data regarding the **condition of buses** (e.g. age and accessibility) with some subjective comments regarding external appearance.

**Survey no.2** was conducted in the early evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2007 and involved interviews of some **40** commuters.

Whilst carrying out these surveys we also sought views of a small number of bus drivers, people who were considering using the buses, and two local beat Police Officers.



## Reply form in 'Together Bromsgrove' magazine

The survey was designed by the Task Group in conjunction with officers from the County Council and also became the basis for a separate postal survey (i.e. reply form) which was issued in the winter edition of Bromsgrove District Council's own publication 'Together Bromsgrove'. The reply form was aimed at both bus users and non-users. This 'easy to use' format was more successful than the initial press release and generated **91** responses.

The survey form is titled "Bus User Survey for Bromsgrove District Council" and is part of the "IMPROVEMENT" section of the "Together Bromsgrove" magazine. It contains the following questions and options:

- Q1** How many times per week do you use bus services?
  - Every day
  - At the weekend
  - Once a week
  - Once a fortnight
  - Once a month
  - Other (please specify)
- Q2** Why do you usually take the bus?
  - Work
  - Shopping/leisure
  - Social
  - Visiting family/friends
  - Education
  - Hospital
  - Tourism
  - Other (please specify)
- Q3** Which of these things would encourage you to use the buses more often? Number your top 3 with 1 being the most important?
  - More convenient pick up/drop off points
  - Improved waiting areas
  - More direct routes
  - Cheaper fares
  - More information about public transport
  - More frequent service
  - Cleaner buses
  - More accessible buses e.g. lower platforms
  - Reliable service
  - I use it as much as I am able to already
  - Other (please specify)
- Q4** Do you have a car at your disposal today?
  - Yes  No
- Q5** Where do you CURRENTLY look for passenger travel information? • Please tick ALL that apply
  - Local media
  - Leaflet
  - Website
  - Telephone
  - On the bus
  - By text/SMS
  - At the bus stop
  - I just know
- Q6** Where would you PREFER to look for passenger travel information? • Please tick ALL that apply
  - Local media
  - Leaflet
  - Website
  - Telephone
  - On the bus
  - By text/SMS
  - At the bus stop
  - I just know
- Q7** How old are you/What age group do you belong to? • Please tick ONE only
  - 18 or under
  - 19-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-49
  - 50-64
  - 65+
- Q8** If you are 60 years old or over, do you have a concessionary travel pass?
  - Yes  No

There are also two large text boxes for "ARE THERE ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?" and "WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE KEPT INFORMED OF OUR REVIEW OF BUSES?". The form includes the "worcestershire county council" logo and a page number "17" in the bottom right corner.

In total, our consultation exercise resulted in responses from **257** members of the public being received.

## **Equalities and Diversity**

As referred to earlier, as part of the terms of reference, the Task Group covered accessibility and suitability of bus services for people with mobility difficulties. It is interesting to note the comments contained in a separate report recently completed and entitled “Achieving Disability Equality in the Bromsgrove District” by Rhyan Berrigan. For completeness, a copy of part of that report is attached (**Appendix 6**), and the parts of the report which related to public transport are shown on page 19, paragraph 4.3.

Members of the Disability Action Group also very kindly reciprocated with our visit to them by attending some Task Group meetings and participating in our survey work.

## **The Expert View**

Mr. Steve Harrison (Project Leader, Transportation) Worcester County Council and his colleagues were immensely helpful in providing us with background data, reports and examples of ‘best practice’ which has inspired us to be positive, forward looking and creative in what we can achieve for Bromsgrove.

Likewise the Chairs’ review of the Ring and Ride Service in neighbouring Redditch was ably supported by Mr Peter Rose during a ‘benchmarking visit’ in November ’07.

## **To avoid re-inventing the wheel:**

Worcestershire County Council have recently (November 2007) published a series of Best Practice Reports to ‘support the development and provision of a high quality passenger transport system...’ We have drawn on these reports to (in part) substantiate and inform our recommendations and commend these reports to Bromsgrove District Council. It is our hope that, in turn, our work helps to inform the Bromsgrove dimension of these County-wide reports i.e.

- **Passenger Transport Infrastructure Best Practice Report**
- **Passenger Transport Accessibility Best Practice Report**
- **Passenger Transport Vehicles & Rolling Stock Best Practice Report**
- **Traffic Management and Parking for Passenger Best Practice Report**
- **Passenger Transport Marketing and Information Best Practice Report**
- **Community Transport Best Practice Report**
- **Land Use and Development Control for Passenger Transport**
- **Executive Summaries Best Practice Workshops 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Nov 2007**

Source [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/transport](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/transport)

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## 5 Making sense of the numbers

Statistics can prove or disprove any point. There are inevitably potential issues of (a) surveyor bias (which we have done our best to remove); (b) the vested interests expressed when talking to professionals and interest groups (e.g. bus drivers, operators, strategic partners etc.); and (c) whether the people (for example) who respond to postal surveys are typical of the travelling public. In addition, our 'consultees' expressed multiple views, and some of the opinions captured were sometimes hurried as passengers boarded their buses.

Nevertheless we have endeavoured to speak to *'the ordinary man and woman on the Bromsgrove omnibus'* and there are a number of irrefutable trends that emerge from the survey work. The trends will be obvious to anyone who spends even a short period of time investigating this matter and they cannot be ignored.

Of 91 **postal replies** received via the Together Bromsgrove survey;

- **30** respondents said that more **frequent services** was their **first priority**;
- **22** respondents said that more **frequent services** was their **second priority**, and
- **5** respondents said that it was their **third priority**.

Therefore 57 people (nearly 63%) rated this as one of the top three priorities.

Other main priorities included the need for:

- More information (12 first priorities);
- A reliable service (11 first priorities);
- More convenient drop of points (9 first priorities);
- Improved waiting areas (6 first priorities);
- More direct routes (6 first priorities).

In our first "face-to-face" survey of 107 bus users at Bromsgrove Bus Station, 88 people asked us to **record specific comments on the survey sheet (indicating a strong opinion)**. Of these:

- **35** people made comments relating to **poor frequency and gaps in routes**;
- **13** comments were received concerning the need to improve the **bus station**;
- **5** comments described '**rowdyism**' on the buses by school children;
- **9** people expressed dissatisfaction with **timetabling** arrangements;
- **9** people made adverse comments regarding **drivers**;
- **17** respondents felt that they were generally satisfied but added a caveat stating that **bus frequency and the bus station need to be improved**.

In our second face-to-face survey involving 40 commuters, **strong opinions** were received from 32 people. Of these:

- **17** comments were received concerning the need to **improve the bus station**;

- **13** people made comments relating to **poor frequency and gaps in routes**;
- **2** made comments regarding 'nefarious behaviour' of school children in and around the station area.

In both 'station surveys' it was noticeable that people were highly likely to comment on the area that they were standing in whilst responding to the survey – particularly if it was (as with the December survey) cold, raining, with little shelter, poor seating and a predominance of litter!!

To summarise therefore the issues commented upon most often are:

- (a) The need to improve the **FREQUENCY** and **RELIABILITY** of the bus services;
- (b) The need to bridge **GAPS** in **ROUTES** and;
- (c) the need to **IMPROVE THE BUS STATION** itself;

Other issues that were mentioned less often – but are nevertheless very important are also dealt with in this report e.g. the need for

- (d) greater **ACCESSIBILITY** on the buses for people with mobility difficulties;
- (e) improved **ROLLING STOCK** and **DRIVER TRAINING**;
- (f) a reduction in **NUISANCE** and **LITTER** caused by young people using the bus services and station; and
- (g) a new railway interchange.

This report therefore attempts to provide realistic solutions to these issues which, we feel, **can** be achieved with our partners.

## 6 A new bus station for Bromsgrove

To say that Bromsgrove has a bus station is somewhat of a misnomer. It is more accurately described as a 'linear arrangements of bus stops' poorly suited for that purpose.

The station is characterised by:

- **Poor access for bus drivers** (who sometimes have to circle to gain access – and are unable to stop at designated points);
- **Poor waiting areas** that are inadequately sheltered from the elements (of particular concern given the potential for hypothermia for the elderly);
- **Inadequate timetable information** and **no 'real time' information**;
- **Poor signage** which adds to the feeling of **confusion and congestion**;
- A general appearance of being **run down with poorly maintained public toilets**;
- Frequent complaints of **poor links to outlying areas** and **inadequate service frequency** and **unhelpful drivers**;
- Frequent complaints of **rowdy school children littering the vicinity**; and
- A feeling that Bromsgrove Bus station is the '**poor relation**' compared to others areas (Worcester, Kidderminster etc.).

In their own words, here is a sample of comments from survey respondents:-

*"The bus station is dirty, badly maintained, few seats or timetables"*

*"Provide better cover from the rain"*

*"Buses don't stop at designated places - very confusing"*

*"The bus station is improved but still very poor compared to Worcester and Kidderminster"*

*"The bus station is appalling – there are no seats"*

*"Don't re-site the bus station to Recreation Road – this will involve an extra walk for the elderly and mobility impaired"*

*"Switch off engines at Bromsgrove bus station"*

*"I am partially sighted- there is a lack of shelter when waiting"*

*“Buses and coaches easily congest the area - have to circle 3 times to get in”  
(DRIVER)*

*“Put the number 93 on the bus stop so people know where it will stop” (DRIVER)*

*“The toilets at the station are appalling”*

*“Provide better cover from the rain...I’m cold and wet”*

Bromsgrove bus station is tolerated by the local community as a ‘necessary evil’ but it is certainly not an advert to promote increased use of the service.

### **A new Bus Station for Bromsgrove**

**The existing bus station is wholly owned by Worcester County Council**, and, as such, future development would be their primary responsibility. Our liaison with the County has engendered a positive response leading to a general appreciation that

- (d) It is essential that the town centre bus station is completely rebuilt (preferably on the existing site) and should involve public consultation at the design and layout stage, which should include ‘County Standard’ bus shelters and signage;
- (e) The site of the present bus station is the preferred site according to the public survey, and lends itself to be developed incorporating an Information Centre and perhaps a Police Drop-In Centre; and
- (f) The existing toilet block should be re-located, possibly on ground opposite the Drill Hall)

Our discussions with Worcestershire County Council have revealed a willingness to establish a Joint Working (or Focus) Group with the critical focus of achieving a new Bus Station for Bromsgrove.

*(Cost: There will no doubt be a cost implication in effecting (a), (b) and (c) above, but which are unspecified at this point in time.)*



## Bromsgrove – The Way Forward

- A Partnership Approach (for bus and rail stations):
  - County & District Councils (officers & members)
  - Infrastructure providers (e.g Network Rail)
  - Service operators
  - User representatives
- Agree outcomes;
  - Quality of facilities
  - Capacity
  - Implementation programme
  - Ongoing funding
- Identify costs
- Identify funding
- Deliver scheme

**We therefore recommend that Bromsgrove District Council agree to initiate and participate to the fullest extent in a new partnership focused on achieving a new bus station for Bromsgrove**

**We currently have this:**



Linear stops/poor seating  
A narrow slip road prone to congestion



Poorly presented  
time-table Information



Culverts used for dumping  
Extensive littering

**Working with our partners we COULD have something more like this:**



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## 7 Improved routes and frequency

A major complaint which emerged from both the 'face to face' survey work and the "Together Bromsgrove" questionnaire establishes the requirement for more frequent bus services and better links to

- (a) **Provide new or extended services to outlying areas where residents feel cut off and unable to use public transport;**
- (b) **Provide better links to key community amenities (such as hospitals)** where there is obvious demand but limited and inconvenient supply (e.g. services finishing before visiting hours); and
- (c) **Provide new and better evening routes and Sunday services** as it is apparent that a lack of these services frustrates the use of other public amenities.

### Improved Routes and Frequency

A lack of frequency and gaps in routes and services was **the** issue most complained about in the surveys undertaken.

**The Task Group is of the view therefore that the County Council, in conjunction with its bus operators and Bromsgrove District Council, should embark on a major review of routes and frequencies to produce new business cases to provide those services required by the community.**

*(Costs: Nil)*

Section 9 of this report expands on this recommendation to include a review of rolling stock (and funding bids) as part of the County Council's move to develop a 'Vehicles and Rolling Stock Strategy for Worcestershire'

Below are the details, comments and suggestions received from current bus users which underpin our conclusions:

**(a) Provide new or extended services to outlying areas where residents feel cut off and unable to use public transport**

**In their own words:** LINKS TO WYTHALL / HOLLYWOOD / CHARFORD / KIDDERMINSTER AND HAGLEY

*"I Live in Wythall- can't get to Bromsgrove without going to Redditch or Brum"*

*"Wythall and Hollywood only have an hourly bus service- forces us to use car"*

*"I can't get from Birmingham to Wythall at night - can't go to the theatre"*

*" We are cut off and can't use buses"*

*"A Sunday and evening service is needed for Wythall"*

*"More Sunday buses in Charford"*

*"More frequent service needed through Belbroughton, currently every 1.5 hours"*

*"The last bus from Kidderminster to Bromsgrove is at 4.30pm !"*

*"143 service has been reduced - Birmingham Rd/Lickey end residents don't have bus route"*

*"Hagley is very poorly served. Some of the 192 service axed recently"*

*"Hagley, Romsley, Clent, Bromsgrove not linked up"*

*"The Hagley link is terrible"*

*"I can't get home to Redditch from Bromsgrove after 6.00pm"*

*"I can't get to Redditch from Romsley in time for work. Would use bus if I could."*

*"Very poor service which is unreliable, can only use car"*

*Services criticised for poor frequency included the 93, 141, 143, 144, 145, 177, 192, 202, 318 and 627.*

It is apparent, therefore, that the bus services connecting Bromsgrove with Birmingham, Redditch and other outlying areas are **not satisfying public demand**. The survey illustrates the demand for improvement.

**(b) Provide better links to key community amenities**

The population of Bromsgrove is served principally by four hospitals. The scrutiny review found that evening visiting to all, with the exception of the Princess of Wales hospital, was not possible as the bus services were not compatible with visiting times.

A similar situation is evident on Sundays, when hospital visiting is more convenient to most.

Bus services (in general) from Bromsgrove to the various hospitals is severely criticised for the lack of appropriate service – it is felt that this must be addressed sooner rather than later as we have an ageing population which will, by definition, be more likely to require hospital services and will need the support of family visits.

**In their own words: LINKS TO LOCAL HOSPITALS**

*“I work at Bromsgrove Hospital (POW). The Sunday bus is every two hours, the 334 and 343 leave Bromsgrove within four minutes of each other-stagger them to provide a better service”*

*“I am Disabled – it is a nightmare since they stopped the 143 route( Catshill to the Alex Hospital)”*

*“More buses needed at night on 143 - they finish too early for those visiting Hospital”*

*“I live in Hollywood. The only bus from the Alex Hospital is the 178 Johnsons Travel. It leaves at 17.39 but visiting time is until 8.00 p.m.”*

*“We need more frequent links to HOSPITALS in Redditch & Bromsgrove - means long waits”*

*“X3 no longer stops at PRINCESS OF WALES & ALEXANDRA HOSPITALS”*

*“Direct bus from Bromsgrove to Alex hospital please”*

*“Kidderminster hospital bus should go to Redditch hospital without us having to change bus”*

*“Would like 3rd bus to Redditch hospital from Catshill’.*

**(c) Provide new and better evening routes and Sunday services** as it is apparent that a lack of services frustrates the opportunities to use other public amenities.

**In their own words: IMPROVE SUNDAY AND EVENING SERVICES**

*“Can’t get home to Redditch from Bromsgrove after 6pm -therefore can’t socialise in Bromsgrove”*

*“More evening buses between BROMSGROVE and Redditch”*

*“Alvechurch needs a better weekend service and extra morning buses”*

*“Need to re-introduce the evening service on the 177”*

*“The last bus from Kidderminster to Bromsgrove is 4.30 p.m. - needs to be later”*

*“Stoke Prior needs a Sunday service”*

*“More Sunday services in Charford”*

*“A Sunday and evening service for Wythall”*

*“Sunday and Bank Holiday buses please for Wythall/Hollywood”*

*“Better weekend service and extra morning buses for Alvechurch”*

A specialist Sunday Service provided by the County or “a. n. other” bus operator could be the solution.

The Task Group noted that with the introduction of cross-country ‘concessionary’ bus passes scheduled to commence in April 2008, it is conceivable that there will be an increase in the number of passenger journeys – and therefore increasing levels of frustration felt by passengers at the poor frequency and gaps in routes and service.

**The Task Group recommends that Worcester County Council investigates the opportunity and business case to provide, via a bus operator or through one of its own County-owned (and branded) buses, to complete a circular service connecting Bromsgrove, Redditch, Worcester, Kidderminster, and returning to Bromsgrove ( i.e. a circular route).**

## **8 A bus shuttle link from the new railway station**

The new railway station being built by Network Rail will have a 'park and ride' facility adjacent to it. The 'park and ride' area will be in accordance with Worcester County Councils' 'Gold' or 'Silver' standard.

It is considered essential that that the proposed bus interchange (providing the shuttle service to the town) is completed simultaneously with the other works.

*A number of comments were received regarding poor links between buses and the rail service e.g.,*

*"The 143 from Redditch doesn't give enough time to pick up train passengers – we need a Station Shuttle Service"*

*"All buses should link up to the new station that I heard about".*

In the County Council's most recent best practice publication 'Executive Summaries' Best Practice Workshops 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2007, it is clear that new Rail and Bus Stations should operate to the 'Gold or Silver Standard'. In relation to bus interchange facilities this includes:

*'ADEQUATE CAPACITY FOR ALL SERVICES: Sufficient bus bays/platforms/layover facilities to accommodate existing levels of service with sufficient capacity/space for future expansion' and....*

*FREE CAR PARKING: For passenger transport ticket holders and bona-fide bus/rail users. All stations are to be treated as Park-and-Ride sites' (page iv)*

**We therefore recommend that Bromsgrove District Council agrees to participate to the fullest extent in a new partnership aimed at supporting and advising upon the bus interchange facility to the proposed new rail station – e.g. advising on routes and frequency based on local research**

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## 9 Improve rolling stock (buses)

*“There is clear evidence that improving the quality of passenger transport vehicles has a major role in supporting balanced and integrated transport strategies. Passenger transport vehicles meeting the needs of users in terms of safety, accessibility, capacity, comfort and information can support the development and funding of a passenger transport network offering a realistic and sustainable alternative to the car”*

(Passenger Transport Vehicles and Rolling Stock Best Practice Report Nov 2007).

So how good is the bus ‘rolling stock’ serving the people of Bromsgrove – and does it need to be upgraded? During the first ‘face to face’ survey at Bromsgrove Bus Station, one of the Task Group members recorded details of the number of buses frequenting the site, their age (based on registration plate) and made a subjective judgement on the external appearance (e.g. clean or not).

Comments were also made by our surveyor regarding the age and condition of buses, together with their ability to accommodate wheelchairs, a pram or a shopping trolley. In short, the age and accessibility of buses left a lot to be desired.

The survey indicated the following:

- 26 **different** buses arrived at the bus station (a number of local route buses made a number of “repeat” journeys while we were on site);
- 16 were managed by “FIRST” (61.5%);
- The average age of the “FIRST” buses was **7 years old**;
- The average age of other buses was **9 years old**;
- The oldest bus operated was by “CLEARWAYS”, which was **seventeen years old** (1990);
- The general overall visual impression of all buses was that of “*ok/ reasonably clean*”; and
- Both “FIRST” and “LUDLOWS” had low floor entrance capabilities but none of the buses could be said to have all of the facilities needed to encourage use by people with mobility difficulties, as referred to below.

(N.B. Subsequent to the surveys undertaken by the Task Group, a Vehicle Examiner from the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) has conducted vehicle condition checks at the Bus Station, during which he spoke to a number of drivers, reminding them of the legalities of leaving their engines running unnecessarily, and also of the damage to the environment and the health risk such action poses to the general public within the vicinity of the bus station).

### The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Regulations 2000

These govern the provision and minimum standards for various features including:

- A space for a wheelchair with suitable safety provisions
- A boarding device to enable wheelchair users to get on and off vehicles
- A minimum number of priority seats on buses for disabled passengers
  - The size and height of steps
  - Handrails to assist disabled people
- Colour contrasting of features such as handrails and steps to help partially sighted people
  - Easy to use bell pushes throughout a bus
- Audible and visual signals to stop a bus or request a boarding device
  - Equipment to display the route and destination

The view from our expert adviser on accessibility (who was present at the survey) Mr Ray Crossland is:

*“I see no evidence that bus operators are fully ‘gearing up’ to serve the needs of people with mobility difficulties (or even carrying heavy loads). Even if people with mobility difficulties can access the bus through low level platforms, it is then extremely difficult for them to move around. This means that a crucial part of the community is discouraged from using the buses.”*

The Task Group supports this view and none of our surveyors (or passengers) felt that Bromsgrove is served by modern, well equipped and fully accessible bus fleets.

From a legal perspective we believe that all **new** buses must now conform to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and that all buses, regardless of age, must conform by 2017.

However, by virtue of the cost of DDA compliant buses, even at the “second-owner” stage, it is questionable whether the smaller operators can sustain the ever-increasing costs based on their current business models. This has ‘knock-on’ effects for the increasing aged rolling stock ranging from poorer air quality from inefficient engines to a general deterrent to travel by bus.

The need to support the development and introduction of new, suitable rolling stock through subsidies is overwhelming. The position of our partners at the County Council is clear and positive and involves drawing together a vehicle and rolling stock strategy for Worcestershire.

- *‘for inclusion within the Worcestershire Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy’...and to*
- *Provide the evidence base required to underpin funding bids to external bodies (such as the Dept of Transport) for enhancement of the Worcestershire passenger Transport network’ (page i Executive Summary)*

An important addition to the establishment of appropriate and modern rolling stock for Bromsgrove would be through the introduction of a 'Ring-and-Ride' and Community Taxi, or similar scheme. For clarity:

A Ring-and-Ride/or Dial-a-Ride is a 'door to door' service which is pre-booked by individuals. These individuals become members of the sponsoring organisation and pay a fare. The service is usually grant funded and operates using minibuses or cars.

This is different to a Community Bus Service/Community Taxi scheme whereby minibuses are operated by volunteers and paid drivers serving regular routes to published timetables – available to all members of the public.

We have certainly found demand for both services. For the Ring-and-Ride Scheme it is possible to envisage a link between (or expansion of) the currently successful service in Redditch to provide an efficient and effective Bromsgrove/Redditch service facility. (Further details of the Redditch scheme can be obtained by telephoning 01527 64910, or by visiting the website [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk) and keying in Redditch Dial-a-Ride).

Approaches for funding could be made via the County Rolling Stock Strategy for start up Capital and Revenue costs for both Ring-and-Ride and Community Bus Services. It is worthy of note that the annual cost to Redditch Borough Council for the 'Ring-and-Ride' scheme is approximately £300,000 - however, some relief is available by way of grants and fares recovery.

**In their own words: RING-AND-RIDE SERVICE**

*"I would like a ring-and-ride service like they have elsewhere. I have 2 sons – both in wheelchairs"*

*"We need a ring-and-ride because there is no bus service from Hollywood to Bromsgrove - I'm 76"*

*"A ring-and-ride for Wythall please".*

This Task Group therefore:

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>(a) Supports moves by the County to develop a Vehicles and Rolling Stock Strategy and invites this Council to become proactive partners in future bids for new rolling stock;</b></li> <li><b>(b) Requests that the Council submits this report as part of the 'evidence' required to support such bids;</b></li> <li><b>(c) Commences preparatory discussions with Redditch Borough Council to assess the feasibility of a joint bid (via the County) for a co-operated ring-and-ride scheme; and</b></li> <li><b>(d) That Bromsgrove District Council should also investigate – with the County Council – the potential to introduce a Community Bus Service to further 'infill' gaps in current services.</b></li> </ul> |
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## 10 Providing new bus shelters

The Worcestershire County Council's Transport Strategy identifies that a 'Worcester Standard' of bus shelter/stop will be introduced. This will bring uniformity across the County, save for a variation in style to suit village scenes. It is conceivable that in future, Parish Councils will be asked to contribute to the funding of village bus shelters.

This approach should be encouraged as the way forward and is **recommended**.

Certainly there is some evidence of public dissatisfaction with the condition (and lack of modernisation) of bus stops, e.g.,

*"Other places have decent bus stops and shelters - we're not very good at those"*

*"Proper seats in bus shelters please"*

*"Solar powered stops and shelters to provide information about the next bus"*.

There were also comments regarding the need to repair specific bus stops/shelters, e.g.,

*"Replace bus shelters in Marlbrook"*

*"Re-instate bus shelter by the Museum in Bromsgrove. It was well used."*

*"Shelter needed in Belbroughton, outside Talbot"*

*"More bus shelters in Charford"*

*"Bus shelter o/s St Chads Church in Rubery has a leaking roof and is vandalised"*

*"Please repair seat in Alvechurch to Redditch Bus stop - Parish Council won't do it because of vandalism"*

*"Cleaner buses please and MORE bus shelters"*.

*In addition to the need for more (modern) bus shelters, a number of people during our surveys mentioned that consideration could also be given to:*

*(a) an increased number of pick-up points (to bridge the walking gap especially for those with mobility difficulties); and*

*(b) Flexibility to 'flag down' drivers in areas where it is safe to do so.*

**This Task Group commends the need for a uniform standard and recommends a period of consultation to establish whether (and where) more pick-up points could be located. The Task Group requests urgent action to repair the damaged/vandalised shelters identified above given the implications for winter bus travellers.**

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## 11 Transforming Bus Timetable Information

Each local authority has a statutory duty to provide bus service information (Transport Act 2000). There is however no statutory duty to market the local passenger transport network although the need to do so proactively in conjunction with our County Council partners has become apparent throughout this review.

Our survey research found widespread dissatisfaction with the lack of availability (and accuracy) of timetable information.

### In their own words: THE NEED TO IMPROVE INFORMATION

*“More timetables at bus station, also at Morrisons and bus stops in Aston Fields”*

*“Not enough timetables at Bromsgrove Station”*

*“Timetables needed for all services at the Bus station”*

*“Don’t put timetables too high on bus shelters so we can’t read them”*

*“Catshill timetable info is limited – I get it from Library - need more details*

*“A map showing routes is a good idea”*

*“Notify local routes in local papers”*

*“Real-time electric info at bus stops”*

*“Ink smudges easily on timetables”*

*“Timetable information is FALSE on the bus stops Redditch to B'ham - says there is NO Sunday service”*

*“Need better timetables so that I know where buses go and can plan trips”*

*“Proper timetable books needed”*

*“Changes in timetables are not properly announced”*

*“This timetable at the bus station is 2005 therefore out of date”*

*“More accurate timetables at station please”.*

In order for bus travellers to plan their routes and time efficiently, bus time tables must be:

- Current
- Available at bus stops, on buses, local shops, community locations and other amenities (e.g. Railway station)
- Free
- Relevant to a particular route
- Updated

Timetables should also be

- Displayed in larger print or Braille for those with visual impairments
- Available in a range of format from electronic media, paper format to ‘electronic real time passenger information displays (RTPI) at shelters
- Positioned appropriately
- Using quality printed materials which does not decay, fade or smudge easily.

Clearly there is scope for the County Council, Bus Operators and Bromsgrove District Council to work in concert to provide high quality local travel information.

The County Council is currently considering the production of a new strategy to

*“apply a consistent approach to the marketing and delivery of information on passenger transport services in Worcestershire. It is also recommended ( in the document referred to below) that ‘Worcestershire County Council prepare a review of all their printed, electronic and face-to-face information and marketing information.....”*

Further, (and under the Transport Act 2000),

*“it is recommended that, where an operator fails to ensure the provision of required information, Worcestershire County Council uses its powers under the Transport Act 2000 to arrange for the necessary information to be made available to the public and to recover from the operator the reasonable costs of doing so’.*

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**The Task Group therefore:**

- **Commends the move towards a ‘best practice strategy’ by the County Council**
- **Urges Bromsgrove District Council to use a variety of ‘engagement’ methods available to it ( e.g. ‘Together Bromsgrove’, website etc.) to consult with the public further to support the County’s preparation of a new marketing and information strategy.**

Insofar as Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) is concerned, Worcester County Council are looking to work with other local authorities in this regard:

*“to provide where appropriate,( and subject to funding), passenger transport information in electronic format...at key passenger transport interchanges such as bus stations and rail stations.”*

*The further roll-out of RTPI systems to other locations should be explored in terms of costs and benefits. These additional locations should include:*

- *Hospitals*
- *Town and City Centres*
- *Major Leisure and sport facilities*
- *Along key passenger transport service corridors that carry a volume of passengers.”*

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Clearly Bromsgrove should not be left behind in the move towards modernising the information (and methods of providing information) to our bus travellers. There are also a range of initiatives being planned or suggested (from a new railway station to a new bus station and town centre re-development) which makes this essential.

**This Task Group therefore recommends that Bromsgrove District Council becomes a pilot authority to work with our County partners to develop and implement a local best practice marketing and implementation strategy which can become a model for the County.**

**A London Underground style route map for Bromsgrove and the surrounding area.**

**In order to help local residents plan and envisage travel around the area it is recommended that (as part of the above mentioned review) a route map be produced similar to the 'London Underground System' map.**

The map should be based on a North/South and East/West configuration to enable it to capture the main destinations, i.e., Birmingham, Bromsgrove, Worcester ( being North/South) and Redditch, Bromsgrove, Stourbridge (being East/West).

This would enable all principal villages and estates along these routes to be listed together with the appropriate bus service number.

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## 12 Improving bus driver skills

A condition of the Worcestershire County Council subsidy to bus operators requires bus drivers (operating on subsidised routes) to undergo a two hour driving test. The re-testing is at three year intervals.

Our survey revealed less than complimentary comments regarding the skills and attitudes of some drivers ranging from:

*“Drivers are impatient”*  
*“Can’t understand the drivers”*  
*“Bus drivers move off before people are seated”*  
*“Rude drivers--sometimes break the speed limit”*  
*“Drivers not cheerful”*  
*“Drivers could be more pleasant”.*

It should be noted, however, that we **did** receive some complimentary comments (shown below) but it is clear that there is not a consistent level of driver skills or customer service across the network of providers:

*“145 drivers are friendly”*  
*“007 drivers are helpful and kind.”*

Neither is the problem simply a local issue. In the County Councils’ recent ‘Passenger Transport Driver Training Best Practice Report Nov 2007’, they cite national statistics regarding complaints against drivers, i.e.,

*“A study in 2005 concluded that of the 43,043 complaints received (0.002% of all passenger journeys), 36,634 were attributable to drivers” (Section 3.10.1).*

A number of the most commonly complained about issues were mentioned by our respondents, which included

- Poor or dangerous driving
- Poor/ unhelpful attitude
- Not allowing those unsteady on their feet to sit down before moving off, etc.

We have found the County Councils’ attitude and approach to this issue as helpful, positive and forward looking. In the above-mentioned Best Practice Report they state:

*“Worcestershire County Council, as a major provider of and sub-contractor of passenger, education and special needs transport, has the opportunity to take a lead in the setting of both driving standards, customer care and disability awareness for all members of the community’ (Section 5.3).*

The County are seeking to ensure the:

“Development and delivery of CPC training and assessment programmes from September 2008 (Passengers) and September 2009 for all small and medium sized operations in Worcestershire.”

(It may be prudent to consider the impact of the said training in terms of passenger satisfaction at a later date).

**This Task Group therefore:**

- **Commends the County strategy to Bromsgrove District Council**
- **Asks that a copy of this report be forwarded to all bus operators drawing their attention to the broad issue of reminding drivers of their duty of care and courtesy to passengers**
- **Recommends that a newsletter in this regard be sent from the County Council to all operators and drivers.**

**APPENDICES**

**1 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**2 LOCAL TRANSPORT BILL**

**3 “ONE-PAGE STRATEGY”**

**4 CHAIRMAN’S LETTER TO BUS COMPANIES/LIST OF COMPANIES**

**5 FACE TO FACE SURVEY FORM**

**6 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY REPORT (RHYAN BERRIGAN)**

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE –**

#### **PUBLIC TRANSPORT(BUSES) TASK GROUP**

The terms of reference as set out below were noted and approved at the first meeting of the Task Group, held on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2007:-

“Bus routes and frequencies; bus load factors; bus suitability and age; value for money, and accessibility and suitability of the bus service for disabled users”.

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## Local Transport Bill

8 November 2007

### Councils must have a greater say in delivering high quality, sustainable and affordable public transport.

LGA key messages on the Local Transport Bill, published today:

- **Strong local leadership is essential in tackling congestion and improving local transport services.** This will require councils to join up all the different elements of transport to benefit the local economy, the environment and to provide better access to services for all; as such, solutions must be decided and delivered locally.
- **Franchised contracts for local bus services should be delegated to local authorities, rather than unelected panels.** We support the proposals designed to enhance partnerships and remove obstacles to franchised local bus services. However, we oppose approval of these by an appointed panel, when this power should be delegated to democratically accountable local transport authorities.
- **Greater powers over transport planning should be devolved to groups of councils in major urban areas.** Proposals to devolve more transport powers and allow for a bottom up reform of governance arrangements in major urban areas are positive. This will give authorities realistic options for improving services and enable a more cohesive approach to transport planning. We want flexible transport powers devolved to groups of authorities at the sub-regional level and allow individual areas to make decisions on governance arrangements.
- **Road pricing are only one vital element of a wider package required to allow councils to raise investment and improve local transport services.** We support the increase in flexibility for councils to bring forward local road pricing schemes. But such schemes can make sense only as part of a wider package of powers over decisions and funding that allow councils to invest in roads, buses and trains and provide better public transport to benefit the local area.

#### Summary of government proposals:

The stated purpose of the bill is to tackle congestion and improve public transport through empowering local authorities to develop local solutions to local transport challenges. The intention is to provide a tool-kit of powers within an overarching national framework.

The bill covers four key policy areas:

- Improving local bus services
- Reforming local transport governance
- Updating the legal framework for local road pricing schemes
- Delivering the new regulatory framework for bus services

#### Further information

For further information on this briefing, please contact Andy Taylor in LGA Public Affairs at [andy.taylor@lga.gov.uk](mailto:andy.taylor@lga.gov.uk) or 020 7664 3334.

briefing

## Summary of key proposals affecting local government

### Improving the quality of local bus services

#### Voluntary partnership agreements and statutory quality partnerships

- Voluntary partnership agreements will be strengthened with a revised competition test to allow multilateral agreements between a local authority and more than one operator.
- Existing arrangements would be changed to allow quality partnership schemes to cover minimum frequencies, timings and maximum fares where there are “no admissible objections” from relevant bus operators. This bill would also allow for improvements to be phased in over time.

#### LGA view

- The LGA supports the proposals to allow councils to enter agreements with more than one operator and to specify minimum frequencies, timings and fares. We are disappointed that the bill now states that a QPS can include provisions as to maximum fares, frequencies or timings only where there is agreement from operators. This will give operators, rather than local authorities, the upper hand in negotiating deals on fares and frequencies and seriously undermines the objective of giving Local authorities more control over bus services.
- It appears that some progress has been made on competition issues since the publication of the draft bill. We will look closely at the revised proposals to ensure that they are proportionate and give local authorities and operators’ confidence that they can satisfy the competition authorities.

#### Quality Contract Schemes

- The current arrangements require local authorities to demonstrate that quality contracts are “the only practicable way” for a local authority to implement a policy in its bus strategy. Under the bill’s proposals, this will be replaced by a set of criteria requiring councils to demonstrate that a scheme is in the “public interest”. The current requirement for schemes to be approved by the Secretary of State will be replaced by approval by an Approvals Board appointed by the Senior Traffic Commissioner. The time limits for quality contract schemes will be extended and provisions will allow for schemes to be phased in. There will be no requirement to secure approval for straightforward continuations of schemes, or for certain types of variations to existing schemes.

#### LGA view

- The LGA has argued for a significant reduction in the barriers to the use of quality contracts where Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) consider this approach to be the best means of delivering their bus strategies. We therefore support the replacement of the Secretary of State’s approval role with a new framework for approval. However, we believe that this power should be delegated to LTAs as elected representatives of their communities, rather than appointees who have no democratic mandate.
- We are therefore pleased with the proposals to remove the “only practicable way” test and support the revision to the proposals for the “competition” test to be replaced by a broader “proportionality” test within the public interest criteria.
- We remain concerned that the process for development and approval of Quality Contracts may present barriers to local authorities’ ability to implement the schemes in practice. We will be lobbying during the parliamentary process for the bill to address these issues.

#### Punctuality

- The bill includes proposals designed to improve quality of punctuality data provided to Traffic Commissioners and to give them additional powers to hold operators to account for their contribution to the performance of local bus services. Local

authorities' contribution to performance will be monitored and managed through the national indicator on punctuality included within the new performance framework and the duties under the Traffic Management Act.

#### **LGA view**

- The LGA recognises that the current regulation exercised through traffic commissioners is inadequate and that better monitoring of standards of service delivery is required. We are pleased that performance arrangements for local authorities are within the framework for local areas as proposed by the Local Government White Paper. Traffic Commissioner involvement and intervention should come into play only where issues affecting punctuality cannot be resolved locally.

#### **Traffic Regulation Conditions**

- The bill clarifies that traffic regulation conditions may be applied in order to address an anticipated future need, as well as an existing one.

#### **LGA view**

- This will allow proactive rather than purely reactive imposition of traffic regulation conditions which will be helpful, for example in preventing excessive competition between operators (bus wars) before it has significant detrimental effect on services.

#### **Other measures**

- Other measures include increasing flexibility for local authorities to subsidise services; a review of the Bus Service Operators Grant; removal of the requirement for the Secretary of State to give consent to the sale of council-owned bus companies. The bill will also remove restrictions to allow Passenger Transport Authorities to buy and lease buses, bringing them into line with other LTAs.

#### **LGA view**

- These are a positive set of proposals. We particularly interested in working with government to look at how subsidies which are currently related to fuel usage could be used as effectively and as well targeted as possible to tackle objectives such as carbon reduction.

## **Reforming Local Governance**

- Local authorities in metropolitan and other areas outside London will be empowered to carry out a review of transport governance and propose changes to existing arrangements. In a change to previous proposals, authorities will no longer require direction from the Secretary of State to initiate a review of governance.
- The bill changes the name of Passenger Transport Authorities to Integrated Transport Authorities.
- The bill also provides options for updating the existing powers and duties of PTAs, including:
  - Make changes the constitution of an existing PTA
  - Make changes to the existing transport responsibilities of PTA/Es, district councils and potentially the Secretary of State in respect of Highways Agency and heavy rail.
  - Allow new PTA/E to be set up or existing PTA/Es to be dissolved with agreement of all authorities affected.
  - Make changes to the geographical area covered by a PTA/E, similarly with the agreement of local authorities affected. New boundaries will be able to follow district boundaries rather than county boundaries as previously proposed.
- Cities will be able to develop its governance arrangements over time and keep arrangements under review.

### **LGA view**

- This set of proposals is intended to allow bottom-up reform of governance arrangements and enhance powers for transport in the major urban areas. Much of this directly reflects the LGA's arguments for devolving transport powers to cities and their surrounding city regions and stronger leadership within PTAs. We have argued that as circumstances differ in different parts of the country, flexibility to allow decisions on the most appropriate governance arrangements to be made by individual areas is crucial. We are pleased that the requirement for the Secretary of State to "direct" local authorities and PTAs to review local arrangements has been dropped.
- We are also pleased that Government has listened to arguments from local government that new sub-regional governance arrangements should be able to be extended to cover district boundary areas, rather than having to include whole county areas as was previously proposed.

### **Local road pricing schemes**

- The bill aims to give more flexibility to local authorities to take forward local road pricing by:
  - replacing the requirement for approval from Secretary of State with a new framework of accountability which would set out guidance on scheme design, the legal framework, how local authorities can use the revenues arising and options for how it might operate.
  - allowing a scheme to be taken forward jointly by an LTA and relevant PTA
  - requiring local authorities to apply their share of the net proceeds of the scheme to support the achievement of its local transport policies
  - removing the specific powers of the Secretary of State to require a local authority to consult or hold a public enquiry, while still allowing the LTA to do so if it wishes.
- It also includes measures to ensure consistency and interoperability between local schemes through specifying standard data formats, specifying unique numbering for equipment and setting standards for encryption and security.
- The bill also makes it very clear that it makes no provision for a national road pricing scheme.

### **LGA view**

- Increased flexibility for local road pricing is welcome and we are pleased to see that the consultation document states that the decision to undertake such schemes is for individual areas to decide.
- The proposals in the bill do not however address significant barriers to establishing local schemes :
  - how the substantial amount of upfront funding required will be provided; and
  - how they will form part of a wider package of powers to deliver improved transport networks.
- If local schemes are to be successful, local authorities implementing them will require real freedom and flexibility to invest in and plan for improvements in public transport in advance of the introduction of a scheme.

### **New regulatory framework for bus services**

#### **Passenger representation**

- The bill now includes enabling powers to allow a new national body to represent passenger interests to be established.

#### **LGA view**

- As locally elected representatives of the community, local authorities are best placed to represent the interests of bus passengers in their areas. The LGA is keen to engage with Government on proposals for passenger representation to ensure they develop in

a way that supports local authorities in this role.

### **Traffic Commissioners**

- The bill will place the existing Senior Traffic Commissioner role on a statutory footing and enable him to issue guidance to the Traffic Commissioners.
- The bill has abandoned proposals consulted on over the summer to radically restructure the traffic commissioner system. Instead it introduces flexibility to allow traffic commissioners to be allocated more flexibly according to workload and areas of expertise.

### **LGA view**

- Again we are pleased that Government has listened to local government's response to its proposals for reform to the traffic commissioner system. The LGA argued that a stronger regulatory regime and increased consistency and efficiency among traffic Commissioners could be delivered with modifications to the existing system without creating a centralised bureaucratic system. The proposals in the bill should still allow for flexibility in decision making according to local circumstance.

### **Further information**

For further information on this briefing, please contact Andy Taylor in LGA Public Affairs at [andy.taylor@lga.gov.uk](mailto:andy.taylor@lga.gov.uk) or 020 7664 3334.

The full text of the bill and the government's response to the consultation on the Draft Transport Bill 2006 can be found here:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/localtransportbill/>

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**ONE-PAGE STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT (BUSES) TASK GROUP**

**What is the broad Topic area?** *'Travelling First Class'* A review to support improvements to bus service travel in and through the Bromsgrove district

**What are the specific topic areas?**

- 1/ Internal condition of the buses (suitability and age) in the operators vehicle fleets
- 2/ Access to buses for the public with restricted mobility or heavy loads (Shoppers/Mothers)
- 3/ Bus routes & frequency

**What are the ambitions?**

- 1/ To improve the quality of travel for bus users (leading to more bus users)
- 2/ To improve entry onto buses. To promote this as a viable option for all sections of the community (elderly, people with mobility difficulties, shoppers with heavy loads)
- 3/ To improve frequency of bus routes where appropriate

**How well do we perform at the moment?**

We will review the current condition of the vehicle fleets. We have asked a number of questions to establish the current 'benchmark' see below

**Who shall we consult about the current service and how we can improve it?**

**Residents of Bromsgrove:** possibly via our Customer Service Panel or similar body

**Businesses:** Visits to (and from) bus operating companies (e.g. Clearways/Diamond/First)

**Expert Witnesses:** Equalities and Diversity forum visit by the Chair and Cllr McDonald (13<sup>th</sup> Sept), County Cllr Ed Moore (Transport Working Party) and Mr Harris (Author of Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy). Other experts to be identified

**What other help do we need?**

**Research help:** to answer the following questions: **(1)** How many bus operators – names & addresses (SM) **(2)** How many buses in each fleet & carrying capacity (SM) **(3)** number with 'low loaders' (SM) **(4)** Future plans to improve vehicle fleet (SM) **(5)** demographic information to show the changing nature of the travelling public (HB) **(6)** Other reviews carried out like this by other authorities (David M) **(7)** Other similar districts – how do we compare and what can we learn from them (David M) ? **(8)** Legal position regarding payment of subsidies (SM) **(9)** Route information (SM/BL)

Key: BL: Cllr Brian Lewis SM: Steve Martin. David M: David McGrath. HB: Hugh Bennett

**How long should it take?**

**4 months** – within which timescale we will complete:

- ✓ Base line/ benchmarking exercise to assess condition of fleet (end Sept 07) if statistical information available
- ✓ Interview operators/ identify improvement plans/ make recommendations (end of Dec 07)

**What will be the outcomes?**

*Recommendations to improve internal vehicle condition, access to buses and targeted improvements to specified routes*

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**Councillor B. Lewis F.CMI**

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**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**THE COUNCIL HOUSE**  
**BURCOT LANE**  
**BROMSGROVE**  
**WORCESTERSHIRE. B60 1AA**



The Managing Director  
First Midland Red  
Heron Lodge, London Road  
Worcester  
WR6 2EW

**bromsgrove council**  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

10<sup>th</sup> September, 2007

Dear Sir,

**Re: Bus Services in Bromsgrove and Environs**

The Bromsgrove District Council Scrutiny Steering Board has outlined several issues which it deems worthy of Scrutiny.

I have been appointed Chairman of the Task Group, which is exploring the provisions of the existing bus services in the Bromsgrove District.

It is therefore, necessary to have your thoughts, insofar as your Company is concerned, regarding present conditions of service, and future aspirations, say, for the next five years and should include the following points:-

- Routes. Can they be improved ?
- Age of current fleet of buses
- Replacement schedule for new buses
- Will replacement buses have facilities for the physically impaired, i.e. wheelchairs, prams etc.
- Anticipated customer use (load factors)
- Do any of your company routes serving Bromsgrove, receive Worcestershire County Council subsidy support ?
- Does your Company liaise with other bus operators regarding route time tables and frequency of services?
- Your views regarding bus stops in the Bromsgrove District, and in particular the Bromsgrove bus station, would be appreciated.

I would appreciate your comments at your earliest convenience.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,

**Councillor Brian Lewis**

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER SENT TO THE FOLLOWING:-

Company	Title	First Name	Last Name	Job Title	Address 1	Address 2	City	Postal Code	Work Phone
Birmingham Coach Company	Mr Howle	Geoffrey	Howle	Chairman	Cross Quays Business Park	Hallbridge Way, Tipton Road	Tividale, Warley	B69 3HY	
Central Connect Ltd	Mr Elms	Steve	Elms		Beacon House	Long Acre	Birmingham	B7 5JJ	01213222731
Clearways Coaches	Mr Wheeler	David	Wheeler	Managing Director,	56 Meadow Road	Catshill	Bromsgrove	B61 0JL	01527 872556
Cotton Coaches (Euroliners)	Mr Stiles	Glen	Stiles	Managing Director	1631 Bristol Road South	Rednal	Birmingham	B45 9UA	
First Midland Red					Heron Lodge	London Road	Worcester	WR6 2EW	01905 763888
Hughsons Coaches					60A Hayes Lane	Lye	Stourbridge	DY9 8RD	01384 894020
Hughsons Coaches	Mr Playford	Malcolm	Playford		Oxleasow Road		REDDITCH	B98 0RE	
Johnson's Coach Travel					Liveridge House, Liveridge Hill	Henley-in-Arden	SOLIHULL	B95 5QS	01564 797010
Ludlows Bus And Coach Company					Coombs Road		Halesowen	B62 8AA	0121 559 7506
Midland Rider					Unit 6 CMT Trading Estate	Broadwell Road	Oldbury	B69 4BQ	07989 948810
MRD Travel	Mr Davies	Mark	Davies	Managing Director	60 Woodrow Lane	Catshill	Bromsgrove	B61 0PL	01527 875592
Travel Express					30 Cotton Road	Penn	WOLVERHAMPTON	WV4 5AT	
Travel West Midlands	Mr Rampton	Richard	Rampton	Head Office,	51 Bordesley Green		Birmingham	B9 4JZ	0121 254 7200
Whittle					Foley Business Park	Stourport Road	KIDDIMINSTER	DY11 7QL	01562 820002



**Bus User Survey for Bromsgrove District Council**

*Hi we're from Bromsgrove Council and we're doing a quick survey to see how bus services can be improved in this area*

**Q1 How many times per week do you use bus services?**

- Every day*
- At the weekend*
- Once a week*
- Once a fortnight*
- Once a month*
- Other (please specify)*

M	<input type="text"/>
F	<input type="text"/>

**Q2 What is the purpose of your journey today?**

- Work.*
- Shopping/leisure*
- Social*
- Visiting family/friends*
- Education*
- Hospital*
- Tourism*
- Other (please specify)*

**Q3 Which of these things would encourage you to use the buses more often? Tell me which are your top 3 with 1 being the most important?**

- a) More convenient pick up/drop off points*
- b) Improved waiting areas*
- c) More direct routes*
- d) Cheaper fares*
- e) More information about public transport*
- f) More frequent service*
- g) Cleaner buses*
- h) More accessible buses e.g. lower platforms*
- i) Reliable service*
- j) I use it as much as I am able to already*
- k) Other (please specify)*

**Q4 Where have you travelled from today?**

*(Postcode/Road/area)*

**Q5 Where are you travelling to today?**

*(Postcode/Road/area)*

**Q6 Number bus you are waiting for/ just got off?**

**Q7 Did you have a car at your disposal today?                      Yes    No**  
**Q8 Where do you CURRENTLY look for passenger travel information?**

Please tick ALL that apply

- Local media
- Leaflet
- Website
- Telephone
- On the bus
- By text/SMS
- At the bus stop
- I just know

**Q9 Where would you PREFER to look for passenger travel information?**

Please tick ALL that apply

- Local media
- Leaflet
- Website
- Telephone
- On the bus
- By text/SMS
- At the bus stop
- I just know

A FEW BRIEF DETAILS ABOUT YOURSELF PLEASE

**Q10 How old are you/What age group do you belong to?**

Please tick ONE only

- |             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| 18 or under | 19-24 |
| 25-34       | 35-49 |
| 50-64       | 65+   |

**Q11 If you are 60 years old or over, do you have a concessionary travel pass? Yes/No**

**Q12 How would you describe your ethnicity?**

- |  |  |                     |
|--|--|---------------------|
| <i>White: British</i>                      | <i>White: Irish</i>                      | <i>White: Other</i> |
| <i>Mixed: White &amp; Black Caribbean</i>  | <i>Mixed: White &amp; Black African</i>  |                     |
| <i>Mixed: White &amp; Asian</i>            | <i>Mixed: Other</i>                      |                     |
| <i>Asian or Asian British: Indian</i>      | <i>Asian or Asian British: Pakistani</i> |                     |
| <i>Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi</i> | <i>Asian or Asian British: Other</i>     |                     |
| <i>Black or Black British: Caribbean</i>   | <i>Black or Black British: African</i>   |                     |
| <i>Black or Black British:</i>             | <i>Other</i>                             | <i>Chinese</i>      |

ARE THERE ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE KEPT INFORMED OF OUR REVIEW OF BUSES? YES NO  
IF YES – PLEASE SUPPLY DETAILS E.G. NAME ADDRESS/EMAIL



# Achieving Disability Equality in the Bromsgrove District

Report of Research Findings  
by Rhyan Berrigan



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)



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#### **4) Findings**

Throughout the course of my investigation and from points discussed at the Disabled Users Group on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2007 it became clear that the high dependency unit, although important, was not top priority. Instead it emerged that transport was top priority. The High Dependency Unit and access to the Town Centre was second and third priority respectively.

I interviewed disabled people, getting their individual perspective. 3 issues came to light 1) Transport; 2) HDU and 3) Access to the Town Centre. All affect disabled people in the Bromsgrove District as does the exclusion of outer lying areas such as Wythall, Alvechurch and Hagley.

I decided to focus my report on Transport, the HDU and accessibility of the Town Centre.

##### **4.1) Transport**

In one of my first meetings, when discussing the priority issues affecting disabled people in the local community, it was stated that “there would be no point installing a HDU and improving access to shops in the Town Centre if disabled people could not get to the Town Centre to access them”. Accessible public transport is needed for disabled people who do not have access to a car. Transport is poor that is why it is a number 1 priority issue. While meeting with a wide range of disabled individuals and disabled organisations, in the Bromsgrove District, the common theme was that transport needed to be improved. Bromsgrove’s rural population have difficulty getting into the Town Centre. Alvechurch, for example, have better public transport links to Redditch than to Bromsgrove.

##### **4.2) Parking**

Disabled parking charges is another transport issue disabled people felt very strongly about. Bromsgrove District Council is the only Council in the County to charge disabled people for parking. There are a number of disabled people in the Bromsgrove area who are disabled enough to be entitled to and subsequently apply for disabled Blue Badges.

#### **Bromsgrove Customer Service Centre 2006/07**

There is a steady stream of Blue Badge applications throughout the year; there are similar numbers of applications every month. The average number per month from July 2006 to June 2007 = 152, 75% (1366) are dealt with face to face and 25% (456) apply by post.

Month	Number of Blue Badges Issued
June 2007	150
May 2007	162
April 2007	127
March 2007	170
February 2007	147
January 2007	146
December 2006	107
November 2006	157
October 2006	185
September 2006	154
August 2006	158
July 2006	159
<b>Total Badges Issued</b>	<b>1822</b>

Disabled people classified under the autistic spectrum could be entitled to Blue Badges later in 2007. Therefore Bromsgrove District Council could receive more Blue Badge applications. More people will also be able to claim the reduced cost disabled parking permit, this would reduce Bromsgrove District Council's revenue received from parking charges and parking permits.

Having to pay for disabled parking is still a major bone of contention. The majority of disabled people I spoke to had strong negative views on the issue. They felt that they hadn't been consulted when the Council started to impose charges. In discussion with my colleague I discovered that there had been a consultative process before Shopmobility was set up.

When deciding on disabled parking charges and parking permits the Council would not have been able to take into account the proposed changes in Blue Badge eligibility. If Blue Badge eligibility does change the Council would have to rethink its parking strategy.

There has recently been further dialogue between Bromsgrove District Council and the disabled community regarding car parking charges.

#### 4.3) Buses

Buses are inaccessible to wheelchair users. 1<sup>st</sup>) according to disabled people I have interviewed there is only 1 space for wheelchairs if indeed they have any space at all. 2<sup>nd</sup>) If a bus is full to capacity; few people are willing to move for the disabled wheelchair passenger. Mobility scooters are bigger than they have been in the past so are not allowed on the buses as they are too big. Learning disabled people I have interviewed have stated that they find the bus time tables confusing. The bus times are not clear, the print too small and is often obscured by graffiti. The unreliability of the buses was also raised. The unreliability of buses was a particular concern to learning disabled people and their support workers. Learning disabled people are encouraged to go out and about in the local community if able to do so. It is pointless if a learning disabled person travels to another part of the District and cannot return due to irregular timetables. In order for learning disabled people to build up confidence whilst travelling independently they need a reliable and frequent service, allowing them to learn a routine.

New regulations which came into force on 4 December 2006 gave disabled people a 'right of access' to goods, services and facilities, with respect to transport services. These duties make it unlawful for a transport operator to discriminate against a disabled person simply because they are disabled, or to treat disabled people less favourably or fail to make a reasonable adjustment to the way they provide their services. In light of these regulations, bus operators throughout the country will have to review their policies and procedures to ensure that they are not in contravention of the new duties. However, buses do not have to be fully accessible until 2016. Come 2016 bus operators in the Bromsgrove District could stop operating altogether rather than comply with the new access legislation.

Many bus companies in Bromsgrove use old buses that have steps. Wheelchair users, people with mobility problems and parents with babies in prams would not be able to access the buses without a ramp. Many disabled wheelchair users and those who are mobility impaired have free bus passes but they are not benefiting from free travel because they cannot get onto a bus.

Bromsgrove District Council does not have control of the bus services. They can however inform bus companies of disabled people's access problems and press for companies to do something about inaccessibility. By bringing the problem of accessibility for disabled people to the attention of various bus companies, the bus companies are more likely to act.

In the Bromsgrove District, buses are run by several different companies. It would be difficult to approach each company individually. It has been suggested that the District Council first raise concerns of disabled people's inaccessibility to public transport by contacting Worcestershire County Council. The County Council can then approach inaccessibility issues with the bus companies directly. The regularity of the bus services is poor. Many buses run on an hourly basis and only run for a short time frame throughout the day.

#### 4.4) Dial-a-Ride

The majority of disabled people I talked to would like to see a Dial-a-Ride scheme set up in the Bromsgrove District.

The Dial-a-Ride scheme is part of community transport. Dial-a-Ride schemes vary from one area to another. I researched the Redditch Dial-a-Ride scheme. Redditch pays their 6 drivers a salary. Paying minibus drivers a salary is not the norm but there are a few areas that do.

The Redditch Dial-a-Ride operates to and from the Town Centre. The scheme looks at the transport needs in the area they cover, where there are gaps not covered by a good bus service. As Bromsgrove bus service is poor there would be a lot of gaps in transport that could be covered by Dial-a-Ride. There would be potentially a large number of users in the Bromsgrove District.

The service is aimed at people that are unable to use public transport. There are no age restrictions on Dial-a-Ride users; most however are in their 70's/80's. There is a high proportion of elderly people and disabled people in the Bromsgrove District therefore lots of potential service users.

In order to use Dial-a-Ride it is a legal requirement that users have to register before using the service. Registration is free of charge.

Dial-a-Ride operators would have to apply for an operators permit costing £7.00 a year for each vehicle under section 19 of the Transport Act. Operating permits are a legal requirement. Changes in the Transport Act will come into force later in the year.

Size of the minibus has to be considered. The most regular size minibuses have 9 seats with 1 wheelchair space, the size Redditch generally uses. Minibus sizes range from 8 seaters to 16. Less than 8 seats are classified as a car. 16 seats are classified as a bus. Operators can not pay drivers of cars because then the service becomes like a taxi service. The size of minibus depends on scheme, it is difficult to judge the size of the minibuses required.

Doctors and social services refer many people to Dial-a-Ride; it improves customers' quality of life and access to the community.

#### Pros

Dial-a-Ride is a popular choice of transport service; many disabled people would like to see the scheme set up as soon as possible.

Fares have to be cheap and comparable to other means of public transport. The service improves disabled peoples quality of life. Service users have more independence not having to rely on friends and family to get out and about and are able to maintain social links.

Dial-a-Ride fares are cheap. Fares cost £1.50 one way and £3.00 return. Concessionary pass fares cost 50p 1 way, 1.00 return. To provide one journey it costs Dial-a-Ride £7.50.

Section 19 of the Transport Act states that the Dial-a-Ride scheme can only charge for cost of transport, this makes source of financial assistance important because it would be difficult to self finance.

In Redditch there is a very big demand for the service. There are six minibuses are in use and sometimes all six driving about community at same time.

## Cons

There is only one wheelchair space in most common sized Dial-a-Ride minibus. Running of an effective Dial-a-Ride service is complex. A software package that allows the service to be run as efficiently as possible is expensive. Minibuses themselves are expensive. Second hand minibuses are cheaper to buy however they may have to be adapted. The quantity of minibuses required to run an efficient service varies from place to place. Bromsgrove is spread out with rural areas. A greater number of minibuses may be required to run a good service. Strict maintenance procedures have to be followed, drivers have to check their vehicle for wear and tear every morning and general maintenance and fuel costs are all a great expense.

Redditch Dial-a-Ride is over subscribed, sometimes the service is fully booked and they have to turn customers away.

Customers can book up to three days in advance. Generally the customer is not encouraged to book transport on the same day because the service doesn't want to become like a taxi service. However late bookings are accepted if there is enough space in the minibus. Bookings for medical appointments can be booked seven days in advance because appointment times are at specific times. 10/15 % of customers use the service for medical appointments.

Flexibility is a must. Booking over phone is the most popular method but it is possible to book face to face, email or fax as well. Dial-a-Ride staff try to match bus routes to times of customer appointments. It is important to have a maximum travel time so customers know what to expect in journey time and ensure that customers know that the service cannot guarantee to pick up a passenger then drop them off straight to their destination. Drivers must follow a route picking up all the customers along the way.

There are regular group bookings; roughly 70% of customers are group bookings. Roughly 30% of service users are individual bookings. Groups consist of 4 or more people. Booking reservations need to be confirmed every week. There are a lot of group pick ups. It is often the same people every week that pre book slots for regular activities e.g. Age Concern. Group travel is more efficient

### 4.5) Dial-a-Ride - Issues to consider:

Minibuses have to be checked every 6 weeks. Minibuses with a tail lift have to have the tail lift inspected every 6 months to check if it is in good working order. The more minibuses purchased means the more maintenance involved. Maintenance takes a large amount of the budget but it is legal requirement.

Before drivers start their rounds they have to go through a 20 minute check list every morning. When timing drivers' shifts and bookings you must allow time for completion of the safety check list. Simple checks include tyre pressure and condition before the start of the journey.

The service operates Monday – Friday 8.45am– 4.20pm. Evening and weekend schemes were researched but there was not enough demand. Paying drivers more money if they worked evenings and weekends and lone working would need to be considered if Bromsgrove wanted a Dial-a-Ride service to run evenings and weekends. Bromsgrove Council may consider operating the scheme on evening and weekends especially if Shopmobility opens on Saturday. There is a seasonal variation in demand, similar in variation to Shopmobility usage. In winter there are few bookings after 3.30 because of the dark afternoons.

Redditch Dial-a-Ride uses Mobirouter computer software to run the service efficiently. The software looks complicated on the screen, confusing to start with. There is 3 days training to get used to the software however it has taken staff members a month to feel confident using the system.

### Pros

The software enables office staff to log bookings and plan routes of the day's bookings easily. Colour coding is used, using the code staffs know when minibus over booked, full, or half full.

Office staff can map customers pick up points, the software package shows the precise route every minibus is travelling. Therefore it is easier to fit in late bookings allowing the service to become a more efficient system.

Since Redditch Dial-a-Ride started using the software package it has picked up more passengers with same number of minibuses. The software package maximises the services potential and customer demand. The software package enables the drivers to have a computer print out of their routes before start of their journey. The routes are easier to follow and more structured.

### Cons

The system looks complicated to use at first. The office staff take a while to become fully confident using the software package. The software package could crash. If this occurs, until the system is back up and running, operating the Dial-a-Ride service would be difficult.

There are too many pop up windows on screen to get to customer/route details and to log/cancel booking, therefore making the booking process complicated.

Minibuses are accessible, they have a moving step which can be lowered to help people to step on to the minibus, and there is also tail lift for wheelchair access.

Fuel is expensive; the Dial-a-Ride service spends £20,000 on diesel a year. It is costly to run a successful Dial-a-Ride service.

Employment of staff is another cost to consider. To run the software package smoothly staff must be adequately trained. Redditch employs three office staff who log and coordinate the bookings plus a manager to oversee the scheme plus six drivers. Cost is an important issue, costs include fuel costs, tax, operating permit, minibus maintenance and office staff and drivers salaries to name but a few.

Bromsgrove District Council would have to decide whether or not to pay Dial-a-Ride minibus drivers a salary. Salaried minibus drivers are an added expense but maybe necessary to maintain a full compliment of drivers to meet customer demand. Wyre Forest Dial-a-Ride have volunteer drivers, however they never have a full compliment of drivers to meet customer demand.

Who would control Dial-a-Ride and fund the service is something to be researched further. Many Dial-a-Ride schemes are funded at least partly by Worcester County Council grants. Redditch Borough Council also funds Redditch Dial-a-Ride.

If Bromsgrove Council were to decide on minibuses with over 16 seats there would a legislation problem. Using minibuses with over 16 seats would mean having to have only volunteer drivers because otherwise it could be seen as competition for public bus services.

One suggestion is to link the Dial-a-Ride scheme with Rural Rides, to help keep Dial-a-Ride set up costs down.

#### 4.6) Rural Rides

Rural Rides is a similar scheme to Dial-a-Ride in its aims and activities. Its aim is to assist anyone who has difficulties in accessing public transport in order to attend medical, social and other appointments. Also for any other travel necessary to support their daily living needs. Rural Rides activities are provided by volunteer drivers who take people to appointments – medical and social and other essential needs. Also for shopping, visiting relatives and friends and any other important visits to be made to support them in getting around in the community in which they live.

#### Pros

Combining the two schemes could speed up the process and time scale in which Dial-a-Ride is set in the Bromsgrove District. Setting up a Dial-a-Ride service as soon as possible would be very positively received by the local disabled community. The feasibility of linking with Rural Rides requires further research.

Rural Rides is a popular service, however it is over subscribed. The fares in comparison to Redditch Dial-a-Ride are expensive. However Bromsgrove is a very different area to Redditch. Bromsgrove is more rural and spread out, a Bromsgrove Dial-a-Ride service would have to cover more miles. Bromsgrove Dial-a-Ride fares maybe more expensive than Redditch Dial-a-Ride fares, this needs further research.

Cons

Rural Rides uses volunteer drivers, there is never a full compliment, not enough to meet demand. The volunteer drivers use their own cars and are only paid a mileage allowance; this may explain their expensive fares. The Rural Ride service cannot accommodate less mobile and disabled customers who need help getting in or out of the car. The service also cannot accommodate wheelchair users. The volunteers' cars have no access ramps and are too small to carry wheelchair users. Most of the volunteer drivers are retired so they are not physically able to lift a customer out of the car. Rural Rides would need more funding if it was to run a minibus service and take on more staff to cope with the rise in customers. Accessible transport would mean disabled people could attend public events more easily. This meets with the legal requirement of the Disability Equality General Duty to "encourage participation by disabled persons in public life."

Funding could come from a range of sources from Worcestershire County Council, Lottery funding, and Bromsgrove District Council subsidy.

The feasibility of linking Dial-a-Ride with Rural Rides requires further research.

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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

5TH FEBRUARY 2007

#### CALLS FOR ACTION – CLG CONSULTATION

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor R. Smith
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update Members on the process for Calls for action as now set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and to inform Members of the consultation exercise currently being carried out by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the contents of the report be noted;
- 2.2 That the members of the Board decide on the recommendations they wish to put forward to Full Council in response to the consultation paper at Appendix 1.

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members will be aware that for some time the government has been working towards introducing a mechanism for issues which are of importance to local people to be subject to an overview and scrutiny process. This has been part of the agenda for empowering communities. Initially the government introduced legislation in relation to the scrutiny of crime and disorder issues in the Police and Justice Act 2006. Section 19 of the Act provided for what became known as a "Community Call for Action". Briefly, the key features included that:-

- ward councillors would be under a duty to respond to a "community call for action" from any member of the public living or working in their ward.
- the ward councillor's response would need to indicate what (if any) action they proposed to take to resolve the matter.
- the ward councillor could refer such matter to the overview and scrutiny committee (OSC) for consideration.
- If a councillor declined to refer the matter to OSC the member of public who originally raised it could ask the executive to look at it and the executive would have the power to refer it to OSC.

3.2 Subsequently a slightly different version of the Community call for action was proposed in the Local Government and Involvement in Public Health Bill. The main differences under the bill were as follows:-

- the power to originate a call for action would rest with a councillor or member of a local authority.
- the Councillor could refer the matter to the OSC .
- the subject matter of the call for action can be any matter relevant to the function of the OSC or any local government matter (except crime and disorder and any other matter that is excluded).
- If a councillor decides not to refer a matter no further action can be taken.

In public consultation on the bill concerns were raised about the fact that two different systems for calls for action were being proposed and the confusion as to how the processes would operate that this would cause.

3.3 The present position is that the Local Government and Public and Involvement in Health Act received the royal assent in October 2007. Under the final drafting of the legislation the government has attempted to align the two versions of the “Community call for action”. This has been done by amending section 19 of the Police and Justice Act to take out the “Community call for action” triggered by the public and leaving the more simple procedure originating from the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Bill which is now being referred to as a “Councillor call for action”. The relevant section of the new act is section 119.

3.4 The key features of the Councillor call for action are as follows:-

- The power to originate a call for action will be vested in councillors rather than members of the public.
- The overview and scrutiny committee when receiving a call for action will be required to put the matter on its agenda and discuss it at a meeting.
- The overview and scrutiny committee is not required to take any further action, although if it feels it to be appropriate it can carry out inquiries and make recommendations to the executive in the usual way.
- The issue in question must be of direct concern to the ward which the councillor represents; a councillor can refer a matter even if no citizen has asked for it to be considered, and there is no requirement in multi member wards for all councillors to agree; any of them can refer a matter independently.

3.5 The legislation as now drafted provides for a distinction to be made as regards the subject matter of the call for action. Where the issue relates to crime and disorder or misuse of drugs, alcohol or other substances, mechanisms should be in place for this to be referred to a Council’s crime and disorder scrutiny committee; where the issue is of a more general nature it should be referred to a general overview and scrutiny committee.

- 3.6 Further details are awaited as to what the implementation dates will be for section 19 of the Police Justice Act and section 119 of the new Local Government Act. The information available from the Department for Communities and Local Government states only that consultation on Councillor Calls for Action will take place in 2008 and implementation will take place in 2008. Clearly the Scrutiny Steering Board is going to have to give consideration to the practical implications of dealing with Councillor Calls for Action, and the more general issue of arrangements to provide for scrutiny of crime and disorder. However, in view of the lack of detail available at this time, officers would propose presenting a further report on this issue later in the year.
- 3.7 In the meantime, the government have started a consultation exercise which covers both Local Petitions and Councillor Calls for Action. Members are referred to the consultation publication which is attached at Appendix 1. Officers will be consulting all Members on both these issues, but it was felt that the SSB Members as a group should have the opportunity to raise any comments on the issue of Councillor Calls for Action. There is something of a overlap in the government's approach to the consultation, as the legislation referred to at 3.6 above is already on the statute book, whilst at the same time comments are also invited on the green paper "Governance of Britain" which was published in July 2007. This also includes a section on empowerment of Local communities, the relevant extract of which is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.8 The main issues on which views are sought are:-
- Topics which should be excluded from calls for action and why.
  - Key issues which should be covered in the guidance to be issued when the provisions for Councillor calls for action are brought into force.
  - Whether in addition to Councillor calls for action and responses to local petitions, there are any other examples of community empowerment that should be considered.
  - Any other views on the operation of the call for action.
- 3.9 The consultation period runs until 20th March 2008. The constitution provides that the official response on behalf of the Council shall be made by Full Council. Accordingly the consultation paper will be considered at Full Council on 27th February 2008. SSB members are therefore asked to consider their response to the consultation and formulate appropriate recommendations which will then be forwarded to Full Council. If any Member wishes to submit an individual response, officers would ask that these are forwarded to the Monitoring Officer no later than **Friday 8th February 2008**.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 As referred to above, this report advises Members of the latest developments relating to calls for action under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and under the Police and Justice Act 2006. Changes will be needed to the operation of SSB once the relevant legislation comes into force; however at this stage the government have not stated when this will be.

#### **6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

6.1 The report links to the objective of Sense of Community and Well being (C03) and the priority of Sense of Community.

#### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

7.1 The main risks associated with this report would be as follows:-

- The risk of failing to respond to the consultation and therefore members losing the opportunity to influence the government actions on this issue.
- The risk of the Council failing to be ready and have suitable procedures in place for when the new legislation on calls of action when it comes into force. Officers will be planning for this, although as stated above the government has not yet announced the implementation date.

These risks are being managed as follows:

- Procedures are in place for a response to be submitted on behalf of the Council and the issue will be on the agenda for the Full Council meeting on 27th February.
- To monitor the risk associated with the failure to be ready for the implementation of the legislation, this issue will be added to the Risk Register – see 7.2.

7.2 Currently the risk identified in the second bullet point in 7.1 is not addressed by any risk register and will be added to the Legal Equalities and Democratic risk register as follows:

- Monitor the implementation of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act and associated statutory instruments and guidance (including implementation of section 19 of the Police Justice Act 2006) with a view to identifying the key areas of impact on the operation of the Council and implementing any associated changes required to the constitution/ practice and procedure.

**8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no customer implication arising out of this report which at this stage is only considering consultation rather than implementation.

**9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising out of this report.

**10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no value for money implications arising out of this report.

**11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues - None
Personnel Implications - None
Governance/Performance Management - See 5.1 and 7.1 above
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 - When implemented there will be a link between community safety and scrutiny of crime and disorder.
Policy - None
Environmental - None

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	No
Executive Director (Services)	No
Assistant Chief Executive	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No

Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

All wards

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Description Department of Communities and Local Government Consultation Paper – Local Petitions and Calls for Action Consultation

Appendix 2 Extract from the green paper - The Governance of Britain – pages 49 to 52 re Local Communities

[ A complete copy of the green paper can be found at:  
<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm71/7170/7170.pdf> ]

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Green Paper – The Governance of Britain
- Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006
- Section 119 of the Local Government and Involvement in Public Health Act 2007

**CONTACT OFFICER**

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Tel: (01527) 881397



## Local petitions and Calls for Action Consultation





## Local petitions and Calls for Action Consultation

Communities and Local Government  
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Bressenden Place  
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Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

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Fax: 01603 723000 or email: [HMSOLicensing@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HMSOLicensing@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk)

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# Preface

This Government is determined to breathe new life into local democracy. That means giving elected local councillors the space to show a lead: less red tape from Whitehall and more freedom to spend money on local priorities. But it also means giving local people new opportunities to set the agenda for themselves, to have their say about local services and get things done on the issues they care about. Whether it's improving housing, cleaning up the streets, or getting tough with anti-social behaviour, it's often local people themselves who understand the problem best and can come up with the best solutions.

We've taken big steps towards 'devolution to the doorstep' in recent years. The 2006 Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* made clear that new discretion for town halls needed to go hand in hand with greater accountability to local people. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provided a vital framework – a duty on local authorities to inform, consult and involve local people in their decisions and services, and new powers for local councillors to call for action on a broad range of local issues.

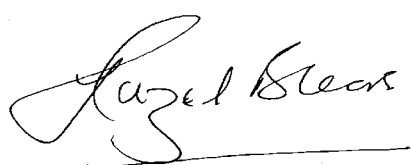
Today, we want to go further still. In *The Governance of Britain* the Prime Minister launched a national conversation about renewing our democracy, including at the local level; and in October, I published an *Action Plan for Community Empowerment*, setting out what my Department is doing to give people a real say over their neighbourhood.

This consultation takes forward one of the commitments in that plan – to look carefully at the idea of placing a duty on local authorities to respond constructively to the petitions they receive from local people.

We in the UK are some of Europe's biggest petition writers. People use petitions as a way to raise local issues they really care about – speed bumps, local shops, social care. Many local authorities already deal with petitions systematically, scrupulously and fairly.

But I want everyone, no matter where they live, to have the confidence of knowing that their concerns will be taken seriously. I believe that there is a case for acting to ensure that standards everywhere are brought up to those of the best, and am inclined to put all authorities on the same footing by providing a legislative framework for dealing with local petitions. I want to give people the chance to help shape that framework before reaching a conclusion on the best way forward.

I look forward to hearing your views.



**Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP,  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

1. The Governance of Britain Green Paper, published in July 2007, said that petitions can provide an important way for local communities to express their views collectively and generate local debate, and improve the connection between residents and local authorities. It added that the Government is considering the introduction of a duty requiring local authorities to consider and investigate petitions from local communities, and guarantee a response on the issues which have been raised.
2. In the Green Paper, the Government also announced its intention to consult on extending the right of people to intervene with their elected representatives through community rights to call for action.
3. This consultation paper seeks views on:
  - how the arrangements for local petitions can be strengthened and the details of how the new system might operate
  - the call for action introduced under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
4. This consultation does not cover petitions to the House of Commons or the Government, which are dealt with separately in paragraphs 157 to 163 of the Governance of Britain.

# Chapter 2

## The consultation criteria

5. The Government has adopted a code of practice on consultations. The criteria below apply to all UK national public consultations on the basis of a document in electronic or printed form. They will often be relevant to other sorts of consultation. Though they have no legal force, and cannot prevail over statutory or other mandatory external requirements (eg under European Community Law), they should otherwise generally be regarded as binding on UK departments and their agencies, unless ministers conclude that exceptional circumstances require a departure.
  - Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy
  - Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses
  - Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible
  - Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy
  - Monitor your department's effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator
  - Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.
6. The full consultation code may be viewed at: [http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/consultation\\_guidance/index.asp](http://bre.berr.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/consultation_guidance/index.asp)
7. Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed these criteria? If not, or if you have any other observations about ways of improving the consultation process please contact:

Albert Joyce,  
Communities and Local Government Consultation Co-ordinator  
Zone 6/H10  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

or by email to [albert.joyce@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:albert.joyce@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

8. Please note that responses to the consultation itself should be sent to the contact shown within the main body of the consultation (page 17).
9. A summary of responses to this consultation will be published by 12 June 2008 (within three months of end of consultation period) at the address below.

[www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/publications/consultations/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/publications/consultations/)

Paper copies will be available on request.

10. Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).
11. If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.
12. The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and, in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

# Chapter 3

## Local petitions

### Evidence for change

13. There is evidence that a formal process for handling petitions adds value to public life. In 2005, 38 per cent of respondents to the Citizenship Survey said they had undertaken a civic activity. 60 per cent of them claimed that they had signed a petition in the previous twelve months. Petitioning was the most commonly undertaken of the nine activities grouped under civic engagement for the purposes of this survey.
14. Qualitative research in 2006 found that participants felt that petitions were a good method for bringing issues to the attention of local government. However, they were sceptical about local government's ability or willingness to act on or be responsive to petitions<sup>1</sup>.
15. Overall, research indicates that responsiveness is a key element to petitions' political efficacy, whether in the form of a formal response from the governance body concerned, or of a referendum or ballot to decide the issue.
16. Petitioning is used in a number of countries as a trigger leading to electoral action, typically in the form of a referendum – Switzerland and the USA are typical examples. These can be either citizens' initiatives or popular referendums. In some instances, the referendums are binding. Petitions can also be used to initiate recall ballots. This system is used in the USA (at state and local/municipal levels), and in British Columbia, Canada.
17. Other jurisdictions, for example Scotland and Queensland, have formal petitioning systems which do not lead to ballots. Instead, the petitioner can expect a response from either the relevant committee or MP. In these examples, a response is not guaranteed.
18. Political parties and campaign groups in countries where petitioning is a well-established feature of the democratic landscape have become adept at using petitions to further their own agendas. They can also counteract a petition campaign, either through developing a counter proposal or by demobilising support for the petition. The evidence therefore indicates that petitioning (as a tool of direct democracy), can support representative democracy.

<sup>1</sup> BMG, 2006

## General principles underpinning a new duty

19. The Government believes that there should be a duty on local authorities to respond to petitions in the following circumstances:

**(a) The subject of the petition relates to the functions of the local authority, or other public services with shared delivery responsibilities with the local authority through the Local Area Agreement or other partnership arrangement**

20. Local authorities have a wide range of functions, which include the promotion of the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the area and its people. They are the “place shapers” for their area, and this has been reinforced by provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which require a long list of partner organisations to cooperate with the local authority in developing the Sustainable Community Strategy for the area, and in setting local improvement targets. The role of local authorities has also been reinforced by the Sub National Review published in July 2007.
21. The Government’s proposal is that local authorities should be required to respond to any petition that asks them to consider any issue which falls within their broad functions as outlined above. Petitions which would more properly be dealt with by another public body – and raise issues which relate neither to local improvement targets agreed by that body, nor to the area’s sustainable community strategy – would fall outside the proposed new duty.
22. An important example of this principle will arise in the context of education services. A local authority would not be required to respond to a petition which raises issues which can only be addressed substantively by the governors and head-teacher of a particular school. On the other hand, the duty would apply where the petition relates to the education functions of the local authority.

**(b) The petition has been organised by a local person**

23. It is proposed that there should be nothing to prevent local petitioners from invoking the help of national organisations having wider interests – but that the organiser-of-record of a local petition should be a local person. It is that person who should present the petition to the local authority. We would welcome views about how “local person” should be defined. Obvious options are:
- (a) a person appearing in the electoral register for the local authority’s area
  - (b) any adult who lives or works in the area at the time the petition is submitted, or
  - (c) any adult who has lived or worked in the area for at least a qualifying period of time before the petition is submitted.

24. Options (b) and (c) might both be extended to anyone who attends a school or college in the area, in order to make this form of engagement available to children. We would welcome respondents' views on that possibility.

**(c) The petition demonstrates a sufficient level of support from local people**

25. On the one hand, requiring local authorities to respond to all petitions, even those with a minimum level of support, could impose unnecessary processes and costs. On the other, setting a very high level of support as a requirement for a petition to receive a formal response would frustrate the underlying purpose of the policy. There are three possible approaches to setting a threshold of a sufficient level of support. They are to define:
- in absolute terms the number of relevant signatories that a qualifying petition must have (for example, "at least 250 signatures"); or
  - a qualifying petition as one that has the signatures of a given proportion of those whose signatures are regarded as relevant (for example, at least 1 per cent of the electorate of the area in question). This could make it difficult for the petition organiser to know how many signatures were required for the petition to be valid; or
  - an absolute number, or a given proportion of the population, whichever is the lower (for example. "200 signatures or 5 per cent of the population" would mean that communities of less than 4,000 people would have to find fewer than 200 signatures).

**Signatures**

26. In the above options, a "relevant" signature could be regarded as that either of:
- (a) an elector of the area; or
  - (b) anyone who lives or works in the area.

Support would have to be reasonably current (eg signature within the last 12 months).

27. We would, in either case, want to consider options for extending the range of relevant signatures to local children who either live in the area, or attend school there. We would welcome respondents' views on that possibility.
28. Support for petitions might take the traditional form (signature, date, and address), but we would want to allow for electronic petitions too, and would be glad to have respondents' views on how they might work.
29. We believe local authorities should be entitled to accept signatures without further validation if they have no reason to doubt them; but should be empowered to investigate if they felt it necessary, and to strike them out if appropriate.

**(d) The petition satisfies minimum requirements in relation to**  
**i) The manner in which it was submitted**  
**ii) its form**  
**iii) its content**

30. It is proposed that petitioners ought to be able to present their petitions either to the council, or to one of its councillors.
31. Councils and their councillors would be under a general duty to consider whether any request or document they receive is a petition. We would hope to avoid technicalities here. The word “petition” would, we hope, have a plain English meaning; we would probably not seek to define it in statute. Where a council or councillor is of the view that a document is a petition, that decision would trigger the petition provisions.
32. We take the view that a petition should at least contain:
- (a) the proposition which it promotes
  - (b) the name and address of the organiser
  - (c) the local authority from which a response is sought (and, if more than one, all the local authorities to which it has been submitted)
  - (d) the area to which it relates (ie the whole authority, or a defined area forming part of it)
  - (e) the names, addresses and signatures of those who support it (or, in the case of an electronic petition, their names, addresses and email addresses).

**Guidance**

33. We believe that the Secretary of State should have the power to issue guidance about all aspects of the process.

# Chapter 4

## Calls for action

### The Councillors' Call for Action

34. In the recent Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Parliament amended section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 – before, indeed, it had come into force – to align it with the provision in section 119 of the 2007 Act. All councillors are thus empowered to refer local government matters and local crime and disorder matters for consideration by the relevant overview and scrutiny committees of their local authorities.
35. The result amounts to a **“councillor call for action”**. Any councillor will be able to refer a local matter affecting his or her ward or division to the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee of his or her authority. In the case of a local crime and disorder matter, that will be to the authority's crime and disorder committee.
36. The committee is required then to put the matter on its agenda, and discuss it at a meeting. It is not to be required to take any further action; but all the powers it has – to mount inquiries, to require information, and to make reports and recommendations – are to be available to it, if it decides to take the matter up.
37. The power to refer a matter is available only where the matter is of direct concern to the ward or division which the councillor represents. A councillor can refer a matter even if no citizen has asked him or her to consider it. There is no requirement for councillors in multi-member wards to agree – any of them can refer a matter.
38. A local government matter, in relation to a member of a local authority, is defined as a matter which:
  - (a) relates to the discharge of any function of the authority
  - (b) affects all or part of the electoral area for which the member is elected or any person who lives or works in that area, and
  - (c) is not an excluded matter.

A local crime and disorder matter, in relation to a member of a local authority, has been defined to mean a matter concerning:

- (a) crime and disorder (including in particular forms of crime and disorder that involve anti-social behaviour or other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), or
- (b) the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances

that affects the electoral area represented by the member, or the people who live or work in that area.

39. It will no doubt happen that some local issues have implications in more than one field. The Government's view is that, in such a case, the councillor would be entitled to refer it to every overview and scrutiny committee which covers some aspect of the issue. In practice, committees will, no doubt, take the sensible decision to join forces in order to consider such matters in the round.

## Excluded matters

40. The Secretary of State has power to exclude by order specified descriptions of matter that would otherwise be "local government matters". This was included primarily so that confusion could be avoided between calls for action and well-defined statutory processes such as planning and licensing appeals. We now wish, as part of this consultation, to seek views about exactly what ought to be excluded, and why.

## Guidance

41. The Secretary of State is empowered to issue statutory guidance for local authorities, their committees, and their members. She intends to do so when these measures are brought into force. Respondents are invited to highlight the key issues on which guidance (whether statutory or not), would be helpful.

## Empowering communities to call for action

42. In the *Governance of Britain* green paper, Government highlighted its desire to achieve greater direct empowerment of communities, and undertook to consult on a number of areas, including "extending the right of people to intervene with their elected representatives through community rights to call for action".

43. Having established a *councillor* call for action (in law, if not yet in practice), we take the view that a duty on local authorities to respond to qualifying local petitions would amount to a *community* call for action – albeit a call made by a community of interest. We should, however, like to hear views on whether other steps should be considered as well.

# Chapter 5

## Consultation questions

44. We wish to take the views of citizens, local authorities, councillors and community organisations on all the details of the proposals set out in this document, but particularly on the following questions.

### Petitions

- (a) The Government believes there should be a statutory duty on local authorities to respond to local petitions. What conditions must be met before a local authority is required to respond formally to a petition? (*Paragraph 19*)
- (b) In particular, how should we define the level of support required before a petition must get a formal, substantive response?
- By a fixed number of signatures?
  - By a percentage of the electorate in the area?
  - By a hybrid of the two?
  - Or in some other way? (*Paragraph 25*)

### Calls for action

- (d) What if any matters should be excluded from the call for action? (*Paragraph 40*)
- (e) What guidance should Government provide on the operation of the councillor call for action? (*Paragraph 41*)

### Overall

- (f) Taken together, would petitions and calls for action sufficiently empower communities to intervene with their elected representatives? Should we contemplate other measures? (*Paragraph 43*)
- (g) Do you have other views on the operation of the new duty to respond to petitions and the call for action?

# Chapter 6

## How to submit your views

Responses from individuals and organisations may be submitted in writing to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Comments should be received no later than 20 March 2008 and should be sent to:

Rosie Milner  
Communities and Local Government  
5th floor, Zone F8  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

or emailed to:

[petitions@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:petitions@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

The consultation document and its response form can be downloaded from the consultations page on the Communities and Local Government website ([www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)). For details of how to order hard copies see the inside front cover.

This consultation is available on request in alternative formats.

We may publish or make public the responses and comments received. If you do not consent to this, you must clearly request that your response be treated confidentially. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in email responses will not be treated as such a request.

If you wish your response, if published, to be unattributable, please let us know when you send it to us. Unattributable responses may also be included in any statistical summary of comments received and views expressed.

## Next steps

The consultation will run until 20 March 2008. Once this deadline has passed, Government will consider the responses received by that date and issue a report on the consultation by 12 June 2008.

## Regulatory Impact Assessment

An Impact Assessment has not been produced as the cost to the public sector is likely to be less than £5 million per annum and the impact on the private and third sectors is likely to be negligible and currently unquantifiable. We would welcome suggestions as to how such impacts might be determined and will consider the need for an Impact Assessment as we take this policy forward.

**Extract from the Green Paper:  
The Governance of Britain  
(Pages 49 to 52 relating to Local Communities)**

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Commission, *Capacitybuilders* and sector leaders to explore the options for enabling charities and other sector organisations to better campaign on issues that are likely to advance the cause of the purposes for which they have been established. As part of this process, the Government will consider the recommendations of the recent report of the independent Advisory Group on Campaigning and the Voluntary Sector, chaired by Baroness Helena Kennedy QC (23 May 2007).

### Local communities

169. Much of this paper focuses on how government and Parliament interact, and how power should be shared between them. But power should not just be devolved from the national government to the national Parliament: power must also rest with local communities. In the past individuals and communities have tended to be seen as passive recipients of services provided by the state. However, in recent years people have demonstrated that they are willing to take a more active role, and that this can help improve services and create stronger communities. The Government believes it must find new ways to enable people to become active citizens, empowered and fully engaged in local decision-making. The Government will enhance democracy by devolving more power directly to the people. It will consult on the following areas:

- extending the right of people to intervene with their elected representatives through community rights to call for action;
- duties to consult on major decisions through mechanisms such as citizens' juries;
- powers of redress to scrutinise and improve the delivery of local services; and
- powers to ballot on spending decisions.

170. *Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper*, published last autumn set out a range of proposals for empowering local communities in England (see Box 4).<sup>30</sup> The new Community Call for Action enables local people to raise issues of concern in their area and demand a response from their local council. Issues raised might range from the quality of local youth services to a request for the transfer of a local asset into community ownership. The transfer of assets to community control creates a catalyst for active citizenship, as people come forward to run and direct a local facility or service. The evidence suggests that if people feel their efforts will be rewarded by real change in their communities, they will be willing to step forward.

<sup>30</sup> Following the consultation the Department for Communities and Local Government published a White Paper – *Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper*, Cm 6939-I, London, The Stationery Office, October 2006.

**Box 4: Empowering local communities**

*Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper*, sets out a range of proposals for devolving power to citizens and revitalising local democracy including:

- giving people a new right to an answer from their local authorities when they demand action on any issue they want to raise through a new Community Call for Action;
- increasing opportunities for communities to take on the management and ownership of local assets and facilities such as under-used community centres or empty schools;
- simplifying and extending the scope of tenant management of housing;
- encouraging local charters between communities and service providers which set out what local people can expect from their services and how they can take action if standards are not being met;
- providing a new power of well-being for the best parish councils to improve the development and coordination of support for citizens, communities groups and local authorities; and
- changing the "Best Value" Duty to ensure that authorities inform, consult, involve and devolve to all citizens and communities.

171. Communities in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales also have measures to hold service providers to account. The Government will soon publish its Sub- National Review of Economic Development which will signal a shift of focus to local authorities, open up the possibility of powerful city regions and give a clearer role for the regions of England.

172. To ensure that citizens have the opportunity to express their needs and concerns to those who are providing public services, the White Paper set out the new duty that the Government is placing on local authorities in England to consult and involve local people in the major decisions which affect them. This means that local authorities must take the views of their communities into account and will make services more responsive to their needs.

173. In recent years the Government has introduced Local Area Agreements, which are individual agreements signed by central government with every local authority. They set out the priorities in the local area and how the local authority and other public service providers such as health and the police will respond to them. The *Strong and Prosperous Communities* paper

also set out how the Government will strengthen these agreements, ensuring that English local authorities have the flexibility to respond to the needs and priorities expressed by the community.

174. The *Strong and Prosperous Communities* paper was an important first step in setting out how the Government will empower local communities. Building on those proposals, the Government will also examine new ways in which to strengthen the ability of citizens to influence local decisions and hold service providers to account.
175. Petitions can provide an important way for local communities to express collectively their views about an issue and generate local debate. They can also improve the connection between residents and local authorities, especially when they are taken seriously by local authorities. However there is evidence that major petitions are often not fully analysed and responded to. Introducing a more formal petitioning system would provide another way to strengthen the ability of communities to have a legitimate voice in, and direct influence on, local authority decision-making. It would also help ensure that local authorities are aware of, and respond to, the issues, concerns and aspirations of most importance to local people. The Government is considering introducing a duty that requires local authorities to consider and investigate petitions from local communities, and guarantees petitioners and the wider community a response on the issues which have been raised.
176. Enabling communities to take decisions about how to use local funds can also help ensure that local priorities are being met. The Government will explore the possibility of a new provision for local communities to apply for devolved or delegated budgets to fund projects which will benefit the local community. These might range from the creation of a new park or playground to the provision of new services for the elderly.
177. To help make local services more accountable to local people, the Government will also work with local authorities and public service providers in England to ensure that there is widespread use of local real-time data. This will provide communities with regular and accessible information on their local services, helping citizens judge the effectiveness of those services and giving them evidence on the performance of service providers. In vital services which really affect peoples lives and the way that they feel about their local community, we must explore further opportunities for citizens to contribute to services in their area and ensure that services feel more accountable to them. The Government will look in particular to take further steps in policing and in health services.

178. The Government currently supports the recruitment of thousands of citizens to take on a wide range of lay governance and scrutiny roles (eg, school governors, health trust members and tenant representatives). Once recruited, however, they receive little support and there is no overall co-ordination of the contribution that they make. The Government will explore how citizens who have the potential and willingness to contribute to public decision making can be better encouraged and supported to realise that potential, in a much more systematic and cost effective way.
179. Creating a more participatory democracy requires a healthy representative democracy at local level. It also requires citizens to understand the roles of central and local government, and who can be held responsible for the decisions and services which affect their lives. The performance of local authorities, as measured through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, has improved greatly in recent years. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will now work with the Local Government Association to establish a concordat to govern the relations between central and local government. This will establish for the first time an agreement on the rights and responsibilities of local government, including its responsibilities to provide effective leadership of the local area and to empower local communities where possible.

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**FORWARD PLAN – 1ST FEBRUARY 2008**

This Forward Plan lists the key decisions which the Cabinet expects to have to make during the period 1st February 2008 to 31st May 2008.

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member Responsibility</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Details of Proposed Decision</b>	<b>Expected Date of Decision</b>	<b>Original Expected Date of Decision</b>	<b>Principal Groups or Organisations to be consulted and date and method of consultation</b>	<b>Documents to be considered in relation to the Decision</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	Councillor M. J. A. Webb	Customer First Strategy Review	To consider an update on the Customer First Strategy and to agree the priorities for the year ahead	6th February 2008			Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	
2	Councillor P. J. Whittaker	Homelessness Grant Funding	To consider proposals for the allocation of the Homelessness Grant funding received for 2008/09-2010/11	6th February 2008			Report of the Head of Planning and Environment Services	
page 19	Councillor R. Hollingworth	Improvement Plan Exception Report	To consider any exceptions to the Council Improvement Plan as at November 2007	6th February 2008			Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	
	Councillor R. Hollingworth	Worcestershire Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy	To consider the Council's response to the draft Worcestershire Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy	6th February 2008	9th January 2008		Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	The production of the Strategy was delayed

Item No.	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member Responsibility	Subject	Details of Proposed Decision	Expected Date of Decision	Original Expected Date of Decision	Principal Groups or Organisations to be consulted and date and method of consultation	Documents to be considered in relation to the Decision	Comments
5	Councillor G. N. Denaro	Capital Strategy	To consider and recommend Council to approve the Capital Strategy for 2008-2011	5th March 2008			Report of the Head of Financial Services	
6	Councillor R. Hollingworth	Council Plan 2008/11 – Part 2	To consider and make recommendations on the Council Plan 2008/11 Part 2	5th March 2008	6th February 2006		Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	Delayed by officers
7	Councillor M. J. A. Webb	Customer Panel 2 Results	To consider the findings of the Customer Panel 2 Survey	5th March 2008	6th February 2008		Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	Delayed by officers
8	Councillor G. N. Denaro	Financial & Performance Monitoring – Integrated Report	To consider the financial position and performance indicators for the 3rd quarter of 2007/08 and any corrective actions required	5th March 2008			Report of the Head of Financial Services	
9	Councillor R. Hollingworth	Improvement Plan Exception Report	To consider any exceptions to the Council Improvement Plan as at December 2007	5th March 2008			Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	
Page 129	Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey	Public Transport – Buses Task Group	To consider recommendations from the Public Transport – Buses Scrutiny Task Group	5th March 2008	6th February 2008		Report of the Scrutiny Task Group/Scrutiny Steering Board	Delayed due to the extension of the period allowed for the scrutiny exercise
	Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer	Regional Spatial Strategy	To consider the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision	5th March 2008	9th January 2008		Report of the Head of Planning and Environment Services	Delayed to tie in with the government's consultation timetable
12	Councillor R. D. Smith	Single Status (Job Evaluation)	To recommend the implementation of new pay and grading for staff and changes to pay protection and terms and conditions, subject to results of ballot to be undertaken	5th March 2008			Report of the Head of HR and Organisational Development	
13	Councillor G. N. Denaro	Treasury Management Strategy	To consider and approve an update Treasury Management Strategy	5th March 2008			Report of the Head of Financial Services	
14	Councillor G. N. Denaro	Value for Money Strategy	To consider a Value for Money Strategy	5th March 2008			Report of the Head of Financial Services	
15	Councillor G. N. Denaro	Write-Off	To consider a proposed write-off	5th March 2008			Report of the Head of Financial Services	

Item No.	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member Responsibility	Subject	Details of Proposed Decision	Expected Date of Decision	Original Expected Date of Decision	Principal Groups or Organisations to be consulted and date and method of consultation	Documents to be considered in relation to the Decision	Comments
16	Councillor R. Hollingworth	CPA re-categorisation request	To consider and recommend the Council to approve a submission to request the re-categorisation of the Council's CPA ranking	2nd April 2008			Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	
17	Councillor R. Hollingworth	Improvement Plan Exception Report	To consider any exceptions to the Council Improvement Plan as at January 2008	2nd April 2008			Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	
18	Councillor P. J. Whittaker	Mobile Home Licensing	To consider an update on the implications of the introduction of Government model standards in Mobile Home licensing agreements	2nd April 2008	5th September 2007		Report of the Head of Planning and Environment Services	Delayed due to staff shortage within the Strategic Housing team
19	Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey	Refuse and Recycling Task Group	To consider recommendations from the Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Task Group	2nd April 2008			Report of the Scrutiny Task Group/Scrutiny Steering Board	
20	Councillor G. N. Denaro	Single Status (Job Evaluation)	To approve, subject to the outcome of a ballot, the implementation of new pay and grading for staff and changes to pay protection and terms and conditions	2nd April 2008			Report of the Head of HR and Organisational Development	

Item No.	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member Responsibility	Subject	Details of Proposed Decision	Expected Date of Decision	Original Expected Date of Decision	Principal Groups or Organisations to be consulted and date and method of consultation	Documents to be considered in relation to the Decision	Comments
21	Councillor R. Hollingworth	Improvement Plan Exception Report	To consider any exceptions to the Council Improvement Plan as at February 2008	30th April 2008			Report of the Assistant Chief Executive	

NOTE: There will be no Cabinet meeting in May 2008

All decisions will be taken collectively by the Cabinet. Any person who wishes to make representations to the executive or decision taker about a matter in respect of which a decision is to be made can write to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services at The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AA, or by email to [k.firth@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:k.firth@bromsgrove.gov.uk) before the date shown in the 5th column.

Councillor R. Hollingworth  
Leader of the Council

The Council House  
Burcot Lane,  
BROMSGROVE B60 1AA

18th January 2008

## SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

### WORK PROGRAMME

The Work Programme consists of three sections: Items for Future Scrutiny and Updates; Current Scrutiny Task Groups; and Scrutiny Task Group Reviews.

**RECOMMENDATION:** To consider and agree the work programme

### ITEMS FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY AND UPDATES

Subject	Date of Consideration	Other Information
Recommendation Tracker	Jan/Mar/May/ July/Sept/Nov	Report monitoring recommendations to be included on the Board's Agenda on a bi-monthly basis for a trial period of 12 months starting January 2008.
Scrutiny Proposal: Reducing Teenage Anti-Social Behaviour  (Councillor Hollingworth)	5th February 2008	The Board considered the scrutiny proposal put forward. Due to the scrutiny investigations already underway, the Board decided to defer this item until a new Task Group could be set up. Therefore, it was agreed, this scrutiny proposal would be considered in February 2008 together with other scrutiny proposals submitted.
Scrutiny Proposal: Alcohol Free Zones  (Councillor Duddy)	5th February 2008	At the November 2007 meeting, it was agreed that Councillor Duddy would complete a scrutiny proposal form for the Board to consider together with other scrutiny proposals submitted.
Worcestershire Chairmen and Vice- Chairmen Network (Update)	5th February 2008	Members to receive an update from Chairman after the next Worcestershire Network meeting expected to be held on 4th February 2008 relating to the Joint Flooding Scrutiny Group.
Climate Change  (Possible scrutiny topic)	4th March 2008	Due to the scrutiny proposals above and to avoid duplication of work now the Energy Efficiency Project Group had been set up to evaluate the recommendations contained within the Energy Savings Trust Assessment, the Board agreed at its November 2007 meeting to consider this item as a possible topic for scrutiny at a later date. A scrutiny proposal would need to be completed if the Board was minded to scrutinise this area.

<p>Older People</p> <p>(Possible scrutiny topic – Councillor Mrs. Bunker)</p>	<p>TBC</p>	<p>Possible area to be scrutinised following outcome of a focus group to find out specific issues which may need to be scrutinised in future. A scrutiny proposal would need to be completed if the Board was minded to scrutinise this area.</p>
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CURRENT SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

Current Task Groups	Date Report Due	Other Information
<p>Public Transport - Buses</p>	<p>5th February 2008</p>	<p>Task Group established and Councillor B. Lewis F.CMI appointed as Task Group Chairman. Membership and Terms of Reference agreed July 2007. First Task Group Meeting held on 22nd August 2007 following the Scrutiny Training on 20th August 2007. Task Group has been granted one month's extension and work is to be completed no later than <b>21st January 2008</b>.</p>
<p>Refuse and Recycling</p>	<p>4th March 2008</p>	<p>Task Group established and Councillor C. R. Scurrill appointed as the new Task Group Chairman in October. Membership and Terms of Reference originally agreed July 2007. First Task Group Meeting held on 22nd August 2007 at 6pm following the Scrutiny Training on 20th August 2007. Due to change in Chairman, Task Group work is now due to be completed no later than <b>28th January 2008</b>.</p>

## SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REVIEWS

<b>Task Group</b>	<b>Date of Review (when Task Group is due to reconvene)</b>
Culture and Community Services	9th July 2007 - Task Group work complete -
Use of Consultants	24th July 2007 - Task Group work complete -
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT)	11th December 2007 - Task Group work complete -
Flytipping	March/April 2008
Car Parking	March/April 2008
Watercourses	March/April 2008
Air Quality	January 2009

Note: A seminar relating to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 will be held in the future covering key courses of action. This will be arranged once more is known on what the impact will be on overview and scrutiny committees.

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## BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

5TH FEBRUARY 2008

#### SCRUTINY PROPOSALS

Responsible Portfolio Holder	
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

#### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are asked to consider the scrutiny proposal forms received.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members of the Board are requested to decide whether or not the scrutiny proposals submitted should be included in the future work programme of this Board.
- 2.2 If the Board does wish to add these to the work programme, Members will also need to agree the priority order.
- 2.3 Finally, Members will need to decide if they wish to establish a Task Group. (Please Note: There are currently two Task Groups running. The Public Transport (Buses) Task Group is likely to be disbanded at the Board's meeting in April and the Refuse and Recycling Task Group is likely to be disbanded for the Board's meeting in May. These dates are subject to the decisions made by this Board and Cabinet when considering the scrutiny reports from each Task Group.)

#### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the current ways of working, any Member can request a subject is scrutinised by completing a scrutiny proposal form and their request can then be considered by the Scrutiny Steering Board.
- 3.2 The scrutiny proposal attached as appendix 1 relates to reducing teenage anti-social behaviour which was submitted by the Leader, Councillor Hollingworth. The Board considered this at its meeting in November when it was agreed that it should be deferred until the New Year when current Task Groups were closer to completing their scrutiny investigations.

- 3.3 The scrutiny proposal attached as appendix 2 came out of discussions held at the November Meeting where it was agreed that Councillor Duddy would complete a scrutiny proposal form relating to Alcohol Free Zones (a suggestion made by Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects)
- 3.4 Attached as appendix 3 is the final scrutiny proposal received which relates to scrutinising issues surrounding the ICT Spatial Project and has recently been submitted by Councillor McDonald.
- 3.5 This Board needs to decide whether or not the issues set out in appendices 1 to 3 should be scrutinised in the future.
- 3.6 If the Board decides to include any of these topics on the work programme as items they believe should be scrutinised, the Board should ensure they agree the priority order.
- 3.7 Assuming Members wish to scrutinise one (or more) of the proposals, the Board then needs to agree whether or not it wishes to establish a Task Group to scrutinise the issue. If Members are minded to create a Task Group, they will also need to appoint a Chairman and decide when the terms of reference and membership of the Task Group should be considered.
- 3.8 Members are reminded that the Public Transport – Buses Task Group is due to be disbanded in April and the Refuse and Recycling Task Group is due to be disbanded in May, subject to this Board's and the Cabinet's responses to the findings and scrutiny recommendations.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications directly related to this report.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications directly related to this report.

#### **6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 This report does not directly link to the Council objectives, however, it could be said that the scrutiny proposals link to sense of community and well being.

#### **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 There are no risk management issues directly related to this report.

**8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no customer implications directly relating to this report.

**9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no implications directly relating to this report for the Council's Equalities and Diversity Policies.

**10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no value for money implications directly relating to this report.

**11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Procurement Issues – None
Personnel Implications – None
Governance/Performance Management – None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – None, however, the scrutiny proposals do relate to community safety as well as Section 17 of the 1998 Act.
Policy – None
Environmental – None

**12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	N/A
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	Yes
Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No

Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**13. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards.

**14. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Proposal Form submitted by Councillor Hollingworth.

Appendix 2 – Scrutiny Proposal Form submitted by Councillor Duddy.

Appendix 3 – Scrutiny Proposal Form submitted by Councillor McDonald.

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

**CONTACT OFFICER**

Name: Della McCarthy, Committee Services Officer  
E Mail: [d.mccarthy@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:d.mccarthy@bromsgrove.gov.uk)  
Tel: (01527) 881407

**STEERING SCRUTINY BOARD****SCRUTINY PROPOSAL**

- Name of Councillor: Roger Holdingworth
- General Subject Area to be Scrutinised: Reducing anti social behaviour - teenagers
- Specific Subject to be Scrutinised: Strategies and policies for the reduction of anti-social behaviour in the 11 to 17 yr age group in the District. Emphasis to be on policy development in this area to look at methods used to better occupy this age group eg youth facilities, play areas, youth clubs & projects in partnership with voluntary sector. Wide ranging remit to consider any policies/strategies which may
  - This subject should be scrutinised because it meets at least two of the following criteria (please indicate which):
    - It is an area of council activity which has been identified as performing poorly
    - It is an area of concern identified by CPA/external audit
    - It is a corporate plan priority - Sense of Community - Youth.
    - It is a government priority area
    - It is an external priority area
    - It is of key interest to the public
    - It has a high level of budgetary commitment
    - There is a pattern of overspending or underspending
    - It is new government guidance or legislation
    - It is a proposed new policy for the Council
    - It is a review of an existing Council policy to enhance the service provided
    - It affects more than three wards within the District
    - It is an area which affects not only Bromsgrove but also one of the neighbouring authorities
    - It is a review of progress made since a previous Scrutiny exercise
    - It is a post implementation review of a new policy or way of working

▪ Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

▪ Should any Officers be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

If yes, state name and/or post title: Graham Root - Community Safety,  
John Goodwin - Culture, Community & Officers  
from Sports Development & Neighbourhood Warden

\* lead directly or indirectly to reduction of anti social behaviour

Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence?

YES/NO

If so, who and from which organisations? *Police - Community police officers*  
*Possibly Parish Council reps - County Council*  
*(Speak to children themselves)*  
*see below*

Should the Task Group receive evidence from other sources other than witnesses? YES/NO

If so, what information should the Task Group wish to see and from which sources should it be gathered?

*Survey of childrens views*  
*Consultation with other councils & sharing of*  
*strategies they have ~~used~~ ~~successful~~ in*  
*in their areas*

Should a period of public consultation form part of the Scrutiny exercise? YES/NO

If so, on what should the public be consulted?

.....  
.....

Will the scrutiny exercise cross the District boundary? YES/NO

If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate?

.....  
.....  
.....

Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group whilst the Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? YES/NO

If so, who and from which organisations?

*Voluntary sector - LSP ??*

Signed: *R. Hollingworth*

Councillor: *ROGER HOLLINGWORTH*

Date: *25/10/07*

Please return completed forms to:  
Della McCarthy, Committee Services Officer,  
Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council

**STEERING SCRUTINY BOARD****SCRUTINY PROPOSAL**

- Name of Councillor: James Duddy
- General Subject Area to be Scrutinised: Alcohol Free Zones (AFZ)
- Specific Subject to be Scrutinised: To examine the application, reasons, use and effectiveness of AFZ to look into the impact on crime / Anti social behaviour / enforcement levels and the effects of displacement and drinking in public

- This subject should be scrutinised because it meets at least two of the following criteria (please indicate which):

- It is an area of council activity which has been identified as performing poorly
- It is an area of concern identified by CPA/external audit
- It is a council plan priority
- It is a government priority area
- It is an external priority area
- It is of key interest to the public
- It has a high level of budgetary commitment
- There is a pattern of overspending or underspending
- It is new government guidance or legislation
- It is a proposed new policy for the Council
- It is a review of an existing Council policy to enhance the service provided
- It affects more than three wards within the District
- It is an area which affects not only Bromsgrove but also one of the neighbouring authorities
- It is a review of progress made since a previous Scrutiny exercise
- It is a post implementation review of a new policy or way of working

- Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO** *Maybe*
- Should any Officers be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

If yes, state name and/or post title: Head of Culture and Community, Safety manager and neighborhood wardens

- Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**

If so, who and from which organisations? Chief Inspector of the Police  
and Youth Service

- Should the Task Group receive evidence from other sources other than witnesses? **YES/NO**

If so, what information should the Task Group wish to see and from which sources should it be gathered?

It may wish to obtain statistics on Anti Social behaviour in Bromsgrove.  
Any data on ~~operations~~ Operations of AFZ in terms of prosecutions  
or application of powers.

- Should a period of public consultation form part of the Scrutiny exercise? **YES/NO** ?

If so, on what should the public be consulted?


- Will the scrutiny exercise cross the District boundary? **YES/NO**

If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate?

It may be possible to gather information about the use of AFZ  
from neighbouring authorities

- Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group whilst the Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? **YES/NO** ?

If so, who and from which organisations?

Signed: 

Councillor: JAMES DIDDY

Date: 10TH DECEMBER 2007

Please return completed forms to:

Della McCarthy, Committee Services Officer,  
Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council

**STEERING SCRUTINY BOARD****SCRUTINY PROPOSAL**

- Name of Councillor: P. M. McDONALD
  - General Subject Area to be Scrutinised: SPATIAL PROGRAMME (IT)
  - Specific Subject to be Scrutinised: VALUE FOR MONEY:  
PERFORMANCE - TIME SCHEDULES/ MILESTONES  
METHODS OF EVALUATION
  - This subject should be scrutinised because it meets at least two of the following criteria (please indicate which):
    - It is an area of council activity which has been identified as performing poorly
    - It is an area of concern identified by CPA/external audit
    - It is a corporate plan priority
    - It is a government priority area
    - It is an external priority area
    - It is of key interest to the public
    - It has a high level of budgetary commitment
    - There is a pattern of overspending or underspending
    - It is new government guidance or legislation
    - It is a proposed new policy for the Council
    - It is a review of an existing Council policy to enhance the service provided
    - It affects more than three wards within the District
    - It is an area which affects not only Bromsgrove but also one of the neighbouring authorities
    - It is a review of progress made since a previous Scrutiny exercise
    - It is a post implementation review of a new policy or way of working
  - Should the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**
  - Should any Officers be invited to give evidence? **YES/NO**
- If yes, state name and/or post title: K. DICKS; D. POOLE, J. PICKERING

Should any external witnesses be invited to give evidence?

YES/NO

If so, who and from which organisations?..... M.D.A - PROJECT MANAGER  
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

▪ Should the Task Group receive evidence from other sources other than witnesses? YES/NO

If so, what information should the Task Group wish to see and from which sources should it be gathered?

▪ Should a period of public consultation form part of the Scrutiny exercise? YES/NO

If so, on what should the public be consulted?

▪ Will the scrutiny exercise cross the District boundary? YES/NO

If so, should any other authorities be invited to participate?

▪ Would it be appropriate to co-opt anyone on to the Task Group whilst the Scrutiny exercise is being carried out? YES/NO

If so, who and from which organisations?

Signed: P.F. McDonald

Councillor: P. McDONALD

Date: 18/01/08

Please return completed forms to:

Della McCarthy, Committee Services Officer, Legal and Democratic Services,  
Bromsgrove District Council