

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY 2008 AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Deputy Leader, in the Chair), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E. (during Minute No's. 135/07 to 140/07), R. D. Smith (during Minute No's.135/07 to 140/07) , Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Also in attendance: Mr. N. Potter, Housing Enabler Officer for Worcestershire (during Minute No. 135/07)

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mr. H. Bennett, Mr. M. Bell, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. J. Godwin, Mr. D. Hammond, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. J. Pitman, Ms. D. Poole, Mr. A. Coel and Ms. D. Parker-Jones

130/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R. Hollingworth (Leader).

131/07 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E. declared a personal interest in agenda items 7 and 8 (Variation to Car Parking Order and Homelessness Grant Funding), as a holder of a current parking permit and a Trustee of the Bromsgrove Youth Homelessness Forum.

Councillor R. D. Smith declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Notice of Motion - Allocation Policy), as an employee of a housing association.

132/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9th January 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record, subject to the correction of Minute No. 123/07(Medium Term Financial Plan 2008/09 to 2010/11) - Recommendation (d) to state Appendix C rather than Appendix G.

133/07 **SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

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

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

134/07 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The minutes of the Performance Management Board held on 22nd January 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting be noted and the recommendation approved.

135/07 **MOTION - ALLOCATION POLICY**

Further to the referral by full Council on 16th January 2008, consideration was given to the following motion submitted by Councillor Mrs. C. M. McDonald, together with the supporting officer report:

"The Council's Allocation Policy for the letting and allocation of rural affordable housing developed under "Exception Site" policy cannot be supported by its own Equality and Diversity Policy. In the light of this the Council no longer supports such a policy."

Mr. N. Potter, Rural Housing Enabler Officer for Worcestershire, was in attendance for this for this item. He advised that the aim of the Policy was to redress the balance for those people brought up in rural communities who would not otherwise have the opportunity to remain within the community. It was noted from the Officer's Conclusion at 9.6 of the report that the Worcestershire County Housing Enabling Officers Group intended to review the rural lettings criteria of a number of authorities in the County, with a view to developing a uniform countywide policy for adoption by the authorities concerned, and that it would be appropriate for the Group to consider the issue of potentially over restrictive residency restrictions in developing a draft countywide policy.

Councillor Mrs. McDonald spoke on the motion and following the Cabinet's consideration of this and the officer report, was given a further opportunity to respond to the issues raised.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet supports the Council's Criteria and Allocations Policy for the Letting and Allocation of Rural Affordable Housing Developed under 'Exception Site' Policy, whilst recognising the need for the officers of the Council to work within the Worcestershire County Housing Enabling Officers Group to ensure that their proposals embrace the Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice and best practice principles when reporting back to the Cabinet with policy updates.

136/07 **VARIATION TO CAR PARKING ORDER**

The Cabinet considered a report which sought authority to make changes to the District of Bromsgrove (Off-Street Parking Places) Order, which were required in order to implement increases in fees, the increase in excess

charges and the removal of concessionary passes agreed by the Council on 16th January 2008.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the proposed amended Schedules to the District of Bromsgrove (Off-Street Parking Places) Order be approved; and
- (b) that the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Street Scene and Recycling, to consider any objections received and to make the Variation Order.

137/07 **HOMELESSNESS GRANT FUNDING**

Consideration was given to a report on homelessness grant funding for 2007/08 and performance and proposed use of grant for homelessness preventative schemes for 2008/09 - 2010/11.

In relation to paragraph 8.2 of the report and the work to be undertaken by the temporary Under Occupation Officer post within the Strategic Housing Team, Members requested that an assistance scheme, similar to that currently in place in Wychavon, to support elderly people who wished to move to more appropriate accommodation but who felt unable to cope with the practicalities of doing so, be investigated.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the update on the homelessness preventative and support schemes funded through Communities and Local Government (CLG) Homelessness Grant during 2007/08 be noted;
- (b) that the increased level of CLG Homelessness Grant funding and three year allocation process for the period 2008/09 – 2010/11 be noted;
- (c) that the Council's performance in halving the use of temporary accommodation two years in advance of the Government's target date be noted;
- (d) that the submissions for the funding of schemes recommended by the Bromsgrove Homelessness Steering Group set out at Section 7 of the report to receive funding from the 2008/09 – 2010/11 allocation of homelessness grant be approved;
- (e) that the additional bids for funding of schemes submitted since the announcement of additional grant funding set out at Section 7.3 of the report be refused;
- (f) that the surplus additional grant funding be allocated to the temporary employment of an Under Occupation Officer to identify and develop opportunities to make better use of existing housing stock in the District; and
- (g) that the Head of Planning & Environment Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing, be granted delegated authority to re-allocate any under spend or make further adjustments necessary to ensure full utilisation of the grant allocation for 2008/09 in support of existing or new schemes.

138/07 **RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON DRAFT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE 2008-2013**

The Cabinet considered the Council's response to the draft Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire 2008-2013.

RECOMMENDED that the response to the draft Sustainable Community Strategy for Worcestershire 2008-2013, as detailed in both the report and Appendix 2 to the report and with particular focus on: geographic focus around Bromsgrove town centre, Longbridge and the Bromsgrove railway station relocation; community cohesion; children and young people; and older people, be approved for submission to the Worcestershire Partnership, subject to the following changes:

- (a) Question 7 - Threats of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis - Affordable housing: insertion of the gross figure of 2,100 houses to be built on Bromsgrove over the next 20 years, rather than the nett figure of 1,400 houses; and
- (b) Question 16 - Opportunities - Longbridge regeneration: insertion of a reference to the Technology Belt.

139/07 **IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXCEPTION REPORT (NOVEMBER 2007)**

Consideration was given to the updated Improvement Plan Exception Report for November 2007, together with the corrective action being taken.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the revisions to the Improvement Plan Exceptions report and the corrective action being taken be noted and approved; and
- (b) that it be noted that of the 159 actions highlighted within the Plan for November 2007, 86.9% of the Plan was on target (green), 7% was one month behind (amber) and 3.1% was over one month behind (red). 3.1% of actions had been rescheduled or suspended with approval.

140/07 **CUSTOMER FIRST STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Cabinet considered a report which provided a review of the Council's customer performance since the Customer First Strategy was agreed in March 2006, together with a review of the strategic action plan and an updated action plan for the following three years.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the improving customer performance of the Council, as detailed at paragraph 3.4 of the report and Section 4 of Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (b) that it be recognised that whilst the Council had made significant progress since the approval of the Customer First Strategy in March 2006, much still remained to be done to deliver excellent customer service; and

- (c) that the Strategy's priorities for the year ahead be agreed and the detailed action plan to support the delivery of the priorities be approved, as detailed in Section 8 of Appendix 1.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm

Chairman