

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

6TH SEPTEMBER 2017, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor S. R. Colella, Councillor R. L. Dent and Councillor
L. C. R. Mallett

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Mrs. C. Felton, Ms. D. Poole,
Mr. G. Revans, Mr. D. Allen, Mrs B. Talbot, Ms. A. Scarce, Ms. J. Bayley
and Mr. M. Bough

23/17 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor M. A.
Sherrey.

24/17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor G. N. Denaro declared a pecuniary interest in Minute Item No.
27/17 in his capacity as a trustee of the Wythall Community Association
which had applied for a New Homes Bonus grant. Consequently he left
the room during consideration of the item and he took no part in the
discussions or voting thereon.

25/17 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE CABINET HELD ON 12TH JULY 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th July 2017 were
submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th
July 2017 be approved as a correct record.

26/17 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
BOARD HELD ON 26TH JUNE 2017**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor L. C. R.
Mallett, confirmed that there were no recommendations arising from the
meeting of the Board held on 26th June 2017. However, there was a
recommendation arising from the Board's pre-scrutiny of the Burcot
Lane Site Redevelopment Update, which took place at a meeting on
22nd August 2017. This recommendation would be considered alongside
the report at Minute Item No. 38/17.

27/17

NEW HOMES BONUS COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME

The Deputy Leader welcomed the report from the New Homes Bonus Grants Panel and thanked Members of this group for their hard work.

A significant number of applications had been received from local community groups for grant funding covering a range of areas. The Panel had identified a number of groups that Members felt should be awarded funding and these applicants had been notified in writing that, subject to the agreement of the Cabinet, they would be receiving a grant.

The Deputy Leader drew Members' attention to a grant request for the Bromsgrove Baptist Church in respect of the Youth and Community Hub. Whilst the Panel were supportive of this in principle it had requested that further work be undertaken to ensure that this did not impact on other youth services in Bromsgrove district.

For the first time a checking service had been offered to applicants who were able to submit draft paperwork prior to the deadline. Some applicants had used this service and had found it to be helpful. A number of applicants had had their bids rejected but future bids would be welcomed from these applicants in subsequent years.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet agree the grants, as detailed in the Summary of NHB Grants Panel recommendations attached at appendix 1 to the report.

(Prior to the start of this item Councillor G. N. Denaro declared a pecuniary interest in the subject in his capacity as a trustee of the Wythall Community Association which had applied for a New Homes Bonus grant. Consequently he left the room during consideration of the item and he took no part in the discussions or voting thereon. The Deputy Leader therefore chaired the meeting for this item).

28/17

ACQUISITION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Acquisition and Investment Strategy for Members' consideration.

Members were advised that the strategy would form a key part of the Council's work in respect of economic development. Any opportunities for investment would be subject to a business case to ensure that adequate funding would be available. Specific criteria would apply when assessing the viability of investment and acquisition opportunities and each option would be assessed on a case by case basis. Only in cases where both Members and Officers felt assured would these opportunities be progressed.

A number of local authorities were currently investigating investment opportunities. Many of these Councils were making investments outside their local authority boundaries. In Bromsgrove, however, Officers were

keen to focus on making investments within the district's boundaries only. The Council would also seek to focus on low risk opportunities, though Members might want to consider options with higher associated risks where it was felt that this might lead to economic development in an area of the district in need of regeneration.

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources explained that a minor amendment was proposed to the report at paragraph 3.7. This would clarify that the report was calling for the Executive Director to have delegated powers to approve business cases and complete acquisitions in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holders for Economic Development and Finance and Resources.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas in detail. Questions were raised about the costs involved in establishing a trading company and the length of time this could take to complete. Officers explained that a trading company could be opened at a cost of £6,000 relatively quickly, though in order for a local authority to do so effectively time needed to be taken to follow the proper democratic process. Members also questioned the general level of abortive costs which other local authorities making investments had tended to encounter. The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources undertook to speak to other treasurers in the county in relation to this matter.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) the Acquisition and Investment Strategy be approved;
- (2) the Executive Director of Finance and Resources together with the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration (North Worcestershire) be responsible for identifying suitable opportunities and developing the viability appraisal and business case for the Council; and
- (3) the Executive Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holders for Economic Development and Finance and Resources have delegated powers to approve business cases and complete acquisitions.

29/17

HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The Human Resources and Development Manager presented the Human Resources and Organisational Development Policy for consideration.

The strategy outlined the skills required by staff across the organisation to deliver on the Council's strategic purposes. Whilst the strategy was a separate document the content needed to be considered in conjunction with the Council's Plan.

The Trade Unions had been consulted during the development of the policy and had indicated that they were supportive of the contents.

The covering report had incorrectly proposed that the policy should be referred to Council. Members were advised that the Cabinet in fact had the authority to determine this item.

RESOLVED that the Human Resources and Organisational Development Policy be approved and adopted.

30/17

**POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER CONSULTATION ON
HEREFORD AND WORCESTERSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS (VERBAL UPDATE)**

The Leader advised that, as agreed at the meeting of Council on 19th July 2017, he had met with the two other Group Leaders to formulate a response to the proposed changes to the Governance arrangements for the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services. During their discussions the three Group Leaders had concluded that they could not support the proposals from the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in respect of the governance arrangements as there were too many unanswered questions. The Leader was providing an update to the cabinet on the outcomes of these discussions as requested by Council.

A formal response would be submitted by the deadline of 11th September 2017 on behalf of the Council, as a non-statutory consultee, explaining that the authority did not support the proposed governance arrangements proposed by the West Mercia PCC.

31/17

STAFF SURVEY JOINT SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

Cabinet welcomed the Chairman of the Staff Survey Joint Scrutiny Task Group, Councillor S. R. Colella, to the meeting and invited him to present the group's report.

The group had initially focused on the reasons for the low response rate to the 2016 staff survey. Staff sickness data had also been taken into account to help Members gauge the possible impact of changes in the workplace on staff morale as it was felt this would potentially manifest itself in sickness absence. As the review progressed it had become apparent that the Programme Board was making significant progress addressing many of the issues that had been raised by staff in completed surveys. The group had concluded that it would be best to focus on looking forward and constructive steps that could be taken to improve future surveys. There had been general consensus that more staff needed to be encouraged to complete the surveys in the future and this might be achieved if bespoke questions were to be provided that were suitable for particular service areas.

The Cabinet discussed the contents of the report in detail and noted that the group had considered the suitability of the Council's strategic purposes moving forward. Councillor Colella explained that the group had found it could be difficult to determine the exact meaning of the strategic purposes and more specific targets might be helpful for staff. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Corporate Management Team was aware of the breadth of areas covered by the strategic purposes. For this reason senior officers, in conjunction with Members, were developing detailed action plans for each strategic purpose covering the next three years. The contents of these plans would be shared with all Members in due course.

A small number of recommendations had been proposed at the end of the review. The Overview and Scrutiny Board had been able to resolve on the majority of these at their meeting on 22nd August but one required the attention of the Cabinet.

The Leader commented that at recommendation (b) in the report Members were calling for him, as the relevant Portfolio Holder, to assist the lead Scrutiny Member supporting staff with the formulation of all future staff surveys and attend staff briefings. The Cabinet was advised that he would decline this offer as he felt that it would be more appropriate for a Scrutiny Member to take a lead on this. This recommendation was also due to be reported for Members' consideration at Redditch Borough Council and Officers confirmed that a different decision in Bromsgrove would not affect the decision making process in Redditch.

Councillor Colella thanked every Member of the Task Group for their hard work during the review, together with all the officers who had submitted evidence and the Democratic Services Officers. The Cabinet was also asked to note that this had been the first joint scrutiny exercise involving only Bromsgrove and Redditch Members and a number of useful lessons had been learned which could be applied to any future joint working arrangements.

RESOLVED that the lead Councillor for supporting staff from each Council assists in the formulation of future staff surveys and attends staff briefings.

32/17

CONSULTATION RESPONSES TO WYRE FOREST DC PREFERRED OPTION PLAN AND WORCESTERSHIRE RAIL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Planning Services and Strategic Housing presented the Consultation Responses to Wyre Forest District Council's Preferred Option Plan and the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy. The Cabinet was advised that there had been limited time to consider the plans, though Members would have another opportunity to comment at the next Council meeting. The report provided for Members' consideration therefore contained a draft response.

The Wyre Forest District Council plan addressed care home units but there were some concerns that the locations where these would be installed had not been specified, nor had the potential impact in those locations been addressed. Similarly there was limited information about the potential impact on traffic in surrounding areas.

The Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy made reference to parking spaces in Bromsgrove and other locations. However, specific information about the exact locations for these parking spaces had not been provided. Reference was also made to Wythall Railway Station, though no parking spaces were available at this location.

At the conclusion of this item the Cabinet

RESOLVED that Members note the contents of the report; and

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) the draft officer response to Wyre Forest Local Plan Review Preferred Option (as attached at Appendix A to the report) be approved by Council, and submitted to Wyre Forest District Council as the formal consultation response; and
- (2) the draft officer response to Worcestershire Draft Rail Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix B to the report) be approved by Council, and submitted to Worcestershire County Council as the formal consultation response.

33/17

PROVISION BY BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL OF A GARDEN WASTE SERVICE ON BEHALF OF REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Leisure presented a report detailing arrangements for the operation of a Garden Waste Service on behalf of Redditch Borough Council.

Bromsgrove District Council already had a Garden Waste collection service. Following the implementation of route optimisation the service had spare capacity and would be in a position to deliver this service on behalf of Redditch Borough Council. The cost of the service per subscription for Redditch Borough Council, in terms of the level paid to Bromsgrove, would be graduated in accordance with the number of customers in order to keep the income at a preferred level. Economies of scale would be achieved where the number of subscriptions reached 2,000 or more.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) From March 2018 Bromsgrove District Council will operate a seasonal (March to November inclusive) garden waste service on

behalf on Redditch Borough Council as part of the existing shared service agreement; and

- (2) Bromsgrove District Council will recoup operating and overhead costs from Redditch BC at an agreed amount per subscription.

34/17

TREASURY MANAGEMENT - UPDATED BORROWING LIMITS 2017/18 TO 2020/21

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Treasury Management Updated Borrowing Limits 2017/18 to 2020/21.

The report addressed the potential to revise the operational and authorised limits for borrowing purposes, taking into account the areas covered in the Acquisition and Investment Strategy. This included the option to increase the operational limit for approval to £38 million by 2020/21. The authorised limit for approval would also increase to £41 million by 2020/21.

Net savings were already being achieved through advance payments of pension contributions to Worcestershire County Council and this would continue up to 2020/21. These savings would be achieved over the full 4 year period rather than in a single year.

RECOMMENDED that

- (1) The Operational Limit for borrowing be increased as follows:-

	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m
Operational Limit brought forward	12.0	20.0	23.0	26.0
Add Pension Advance Payment	6.0	-2.0	-2.0	4.0
Add Acquisitions and Investment Strategy	2.0	5.0	5.0	8.0
Revised Operational Limit for approval	20.0	23.0	26.0	38.0

(2) The Authorised Limit for borrowing be increased as follows:-

	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m
Authorised Limit brought forward	15.0	23.0	26.0	29.0
Add Pension Advance Payment	6.0	-2.0	-2.0	4.0
Add Acquisitions and Investment Strategy	2.0	5.0	5.0	8.0
Revised Authorised Limit for approval	23.0	26.0	29.0	41.0

35/17

CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING CODE (WHISTLEBLOWING)

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented an update to the Council's Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing).

The whistleblowing policy enabled staff and customers to raise specific areas of concern in relation to matters such as fraud and crime. A whistleblowing policy was essential to demonstrate transparency and accountability within the local authority. The code provided assurances to staff that they could report matters confidentially without being placed at risk of victimisation or discrimination.

It was anticipated that in many instances staff would approach their managers to report any areas of concern. However, this might not always be possible and in such instances staff would be encouraged to report their concerns to the Corporate Anti-Fraud team, a Statutory Officer or Internal Audit. The potential for matters to also be reported to Members was discussed, however, the Cabinet was advised that this could compromise the position of Members, particularly if they were later required to participate in any processes necessary to respond to the matter that had been raised. Members were therefore encouraged to report any whistleblowing issues raised by staff or customers to the appropriate Officers.

RESOLVED that the Confidential Reporting Code (Whistleblowing) be approved.

36/17

FINANCE MONITORING 2017/18 QUARTER 1

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Finance Monitoring report for quarter 1 of 2017/18 and in so doing she advised Members that a replacement table had been issued in an additional papers pack as a couple of the figures that were originally provided were incorrect.

The Cabinet was advised that it was difficult in the first quarter of the financial year to assess variances in the budget. However, details had

been provided about the variances that had been identified per strategic purpose wherever possible.

An update had also been provided in the report in respect of progress with the implementation of the Council's Efficiency Plan. Savings had been achieved already through a number of service restructures. Moving forward the budgets were being considered line by line by the Financial Services Team in consultation with Directors and Heads of Service.

The Cabinet discussed the report and noted that the Finance and Budget Working Group had recently questioned the reasons why there had been limited expenditure of the budget for the 'keep my place safe and looking good' strategic purpose. The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources explained that this budget included all the capital charges which were not included in the figures until the end of the year. For this reason the budget could appear to be underspent in earlier stages of the financial year.

RESOLVED that the current financial positions for the quarter April to June 2017, as detailed in the report, be noted; and

RECOMMENDED that the 2017/18 Capital Programme is increased by £414k to include S106 Projects as included in Appendix 2.

37/17

TO CONSIDER, AND IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, TO PASS THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS CONTAINING EXEMPT INFORMATION:-

RESOLVED that under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended:

This paragraph is:

Subject to the "public interest test", information relating to Paragraph 3 – financial or business affairs.

Minute 38/17 – Overview and Scrutiny Board Minute Extract (Burcot Lane Pre-Scrutiny) 22nd August 2017.

Minute 39/17 – Burcot Lane Site Redevelopment Update.

38/17

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD MINUTE EXTRACT (BURCOT LANE PRE-SCRUTINY) 22ND AUGUST 2017

The Cabinet considered a minute extract from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 22nd August 2017 when Members had pre-scrutinised an update in respect of the redevelopment of the Burcot Lane site.

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which relates to financial or business affairs].

39/17

BURCOT LANE SITE REDEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Cabinet considered an update report in respect of redevelopment of the site of the former Council House on Burcot Lane.

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which relates to financial or business affairs].

The meeting closed at 7.29 p.m.

Chairman