

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

25TH APRIL 2018, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones (Chairman), C. J. Spencer (Vice-Chairman), C. Allen-Jones, S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, M. T. Buxton, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, R. L. Dent, M. Glass, J. M. L. A. Griffiths, C.A. Hotham, R. E. Jenkins, R. J. Laight, L. C. R. Mallett, K.J. May, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, S. R. Peters, S. P. Shannon, M. A. Sherrey, C. B. Taylor, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson, K. J. Van Der Plank, M. J. A. Webb, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

95\17 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L. J. Turner and Members were advised that Councillor J. M. L. A. Griffiths would be a little late.

96\17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor S. J. Baxter declared another disclosable interest in respect of Minute No. 104/17 the Community Governance item from the Electoral Matters Committee, as the Chairman of the National Associate of Local Councils (NALC), but saw no need to leave the room during the debate.

Councillor R. Jenkins highlighted that in respect of Minute No. 102/17 and the recommendation from Cabinet of 7th March in respect of the Air Quality Management Area, she lived within that designated area.

97\17 **MINUTES**

Immediately prior to consideration of the Minutes Councillor C. Hotham raised a point of clarification in respect of a request for an extraordinary meeting to be held and the need for individually signed notifications to be received in order for this to be triggered. He therefore questioned the legality of this meeting as the signature of the Chief Executive was not included within the summons received by Members.

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett also raised a similar point of clarification as he had also made a request for an extra ordinary meeting.

Following a brief debate it was confirmed that a report on this matter would be considered by the constitution Review Working Group at its meeting on 30th April with a view to that report being brought before full Council in due course.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21st February 2018 were submitted. A number of areas of clarification were sought in respect of the following:

- Page 2 bullet point 3 – confirmation from the Leader that he had looked into this matter. The Leader believed that he had already done so, but would follow the matter up the following day.
- Page 5 – final paragraph, it was noted that it should read “ the recommended maximum ratio of 1:20.”
- It was questioned as to whether the Council had been misled in respect of the Sports Hall in light of the report which had been considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 26th March 2018.
- Page 13 second paragraph, second line, should read “the Dolphin Centre was not owned by the Council”.
- Page 17 fourth paragraph, it was questioned whether the Council had been misled in respect of the procurement process for the market service, when it appeared that the intention was to bring this service back “in house”. The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, the Town Centre and Partnerships confirmed that the Council had not been misled in anyway.

RESOLVED that, subject to the preamble above, the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21st February 2018 be approved as a correct record.

98\17

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank all those who had attended and made donations, to the Civic Dinner, which had raised over £2k for NewStarts, her chosen charity.

Councillor C. J. Bloore took the opportunity to congratulate Bromsgrove Sporting on their recent promotion and success as league champions.

99\17

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader provided an update in respect of the application for Burcot Lane and confirmed that he had spoken to the Secretary of State who advised that the application was making good progress and a final decision was expected shortly. The Leader confirmed that he would provide an update as soon as further information was available.

Councillor M. Thompson questioned the Leader in respect of an update in respect of the Sports Hall and made particular reference to an email which had been sent to a parish council giving a particular view on this matter. Concerns were raised in respect of this matter and the implications of this on the reputation of the Council. The Leader advised that he was not aware of the correspondence referred too, but that he would look into the matter outside of the meeting.

100\17

APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Leader asked for nominations in respect of the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that Councillor C. J. Bloore be appointed as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

101\17

TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman announced that there had been a question raised by a member of the public.

Louise Humphries

"It's fantastic that the need for a sports hall in Bromsgrove has been recognised. However the options appraisal raised two major concerns. Firstly the huge increase in the cost of building a sports hall and secondly the low figure predicted for the potential income from a sports hall.

Sports England have published a document called Affordable Sports Halls which is freely available on their website at <https://www.sportengland.org/media/4647/affordable-sports-halls-main-document-2015.pdf> In this document the typical construction costs of building a 4 court sports hall and changing facilities is £1.3M compared to over £3M quoted in the options appraisal. The Sports England document was published in 2015 so obviously prices will have gone up since then. However, I think it very much shows that the figures we were given in the options appraisal need to be questioned. Surely inflation doesn't explain an increase of over 100% in just under 3 years.

My first question is how were the figures put together for the options appraisal? Specifically how many quotes were received when putting together the options appraisal and who were these quotes from?

Secondly in the Sports England document the potential income of a 4 court sports hall for 40 hours of use is listed as £48,250. Whereas in the options appraisal the potential income for the sports hall is £0 - £20k. Why is the potential income for a sports hall in Bromsgrove predicted to be so much lower than what Sports England think is achievable?"

Councillor P. J. Whittaker, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Cultural Services responded that the design of the proposed new Sports Hall was based on option 1b of the Sport England guidance. Mace had based their costs on a like for like comparison with the Sports England model in the first instance including their design. The reason for a higher estimated capital cost compared to the guidance was:

- Increased costs in the early stage development were down to inflation, on which Sports England had based their costs in 2015.
- Mace options appraisal included for a number of site abnormal costs which included an extensive cut and fill exercise, allowances for potential further main services alterations, retaining wall, disability ramps and external canopies, which were not included in the Sports England model.
- Sports England also only allowed a nominal allowance for contingency as well as professional fees and survey costs. At this stage of the project Mace had allowed for higher allowances in each of these areas, which in turn increased the overall cost per m².
- Quotations had not been received at this stage and the estimates were based on robust benchmark costs from a Mace database, in addition as the design was not detailed enough be priced by a contractor, should the project proceed, tender of the work could be based on a stage 3 design. At this stage Mace have benchmarked their costs against 8 recent sports hall and pavilion projects and over 25 sports and leisure projects which indicate the proposed cost plan was in line with these.

In response to the second question, Councillor Whittaker advised that the potential income in Sports England's guidance was based on a community use as part of a school set up, and therefore the variable costs for maintenance were not comparable to the proposed sports hall in Bromsgrove. Whilst a detailed income projection for the sports hall needed to be completed, benchmark data and initial projects completed by the team suggested that an average sports hall should generate in the region of £15k to £20k per annum per badminton court. The planned facilities included 4 badminton courts, therefore on that basis the anticipated annual gross revenue from the sports hall would be in the region of £60k to £80k per annum.

Based on those initial estimates, the Council could expect the income to be in the region of £60k to £80k per annum with expenditure of around £60k. Therefore the net revenue position could be between £0 to £20k per annum. The next stage would be to complete a detailed business case on the information and local market in the Bromsgrove district, it should be noted that this study could have either a negative or positive impact on the current projections.

Members thanked Ms. Humphries for bringing forward these questions and questioned why this had not been included within the original proposal which had been brought before the Council in 2014. Members also questioned why the figures were so "out of line" with those provided by Sports England. Members thanked the Portfolio Holder for his response and requested assurances from him that the project would go ahead.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

Air Quality Management Area – Kidderminster Road, Hagley

The recommendation from Cabinet in respect of the Air Quality Management Area, Kidderminster Road, Hagley was proposed by Councillor P. J. Whittaker and seconded by Councillor G. Denaro.

In proposing the recommendation Councillor Whittaker, as Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services, presented the report and in so doing highlighted that this matter had been debated in detail at both the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting and again at Cabinet and therefore he did not propose to go into detail.

Members discussed a number of areas in more detail, including:

- The data within the report was only up to 2016 and concerns were raised that a decision should not be made until more up to date data was available as due to a number of new developments in the area there was the potential for the traffic and therefore the air quality, to have changed in that period.
- The type of monitoring that was undertaken and recent news reports were highlighted in respect of the dangers in other areas which were proving to be more harmful to people's health.
- The use of variable messaging systems to redirect vehicles away from the AQMA – it appeared that there was new technology which could be used but that there had been no progress on this since 2016.
- Concerns were raised in respect of a previous AQMA which had been in Rubery which had been revoked due to a decrease in traffic, however due to recent developments in the area Members were concerned that there was the likelihood that this would need to be reinstated and requested that this was looked at as a matter of urgency. The Leader agreed to take this matter up with the WRS Officers outside of the meeting.
- The need for monitoring to continue – it was explained that whilst the AQMA would be revoked monitoring would continue and that the WRS Officers had discussed with the relevant ward councillor particular areas which should be monitored.
- The need for that monitoring to be more detailed and in more appropriate locations. It was noted that Cabinet had agreed to look at the costings for this to take place.
- The current levels were below those required by the Defra guidelines and therefore Defra would not look upon the Council favourably in the future should they continue to have what they would class as an unnecessary AQMA.
- It was suggested that a decision in respect of the revocation of this Kidderminster Road, Hagley AQMA be deferred until further information had been received in respect of more detailed and regular data collection and the cost implications of alternative methods.
- The recommendations made at the Overview and Scrutiny Board had been considered by Cabinet and they had agreed to investigate the potential for further, more detailed, monitoring in both Hagley and other areas throughout the District.

Councillor Peter McDonald proposed that an amendment was made to ensure that air quality in Rubery was monitored and following the Leader's agreement that he would take this up with officers at WRS the amendment was withdrawn.

Councillor L. Mallett proposed an amendment to the recommendation that the report be deferred pending receipt of up to date monitoring data and the information and cost in respect of more detailed monitoring, this was seconded by Councillor S. Baxter.

Following further discussion the item was deferred.

Addendum to Council Tax Support – Hardship Policy

The recommendation from Cabinet in respect of the Addendum to Council Tax Support – Hardship Policy, was proposed by Councillor B. C. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. Denaro.

In proposing the recommendation Councillor Cooper reminded Members that this was in respect of a resolution made at Worcestershire County Council in January 2018, when the Council had recognised the challenges young people faced when transitioning out of the care system into adulthood. This had been endorsed by Leaders across the county at the Leaders Board meeting on 1st February 2018 with an amendment to provide full support until the care leavers' 25th Birthday. It was explained that the most appropriate manner in which to implement this was through an addendum to the Council Tax Support Scheme Hardship Policy until the review of the Council Tax Support Scheme was completed and a decision reached, following that review, as to whether it be included within the core Scheme.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas and agreed that whilst this was a good policy there was an opportunity to go a step further and to cover the young people should they move outside of the area, it was suggested that the number that this applied to would be negligible but would be a great support for any young person who was able to seek employment or training outside of the area.

Councillor Cooper acknowledged that this was an important point and hoped that it would be something which was picked up within the review of the scheme later in the year. The Leader also acknowledged this suggestion and assured Members that he would look into the matter further.

RESOLVED that the addendum to the Council Tax Support Hardship Policy 'Support for Care Leavers' be agreed.

Finance Monitoring Quarter 3 Report

The recommendations from Cabinet in respect of the Finance Monitoring Quarter 3 2017/18 Report were proposed by Councillor B. C. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. Denaro.

In presenting the report Councillor Cooper highlighted that it gave the Council's financial position for Revenue and Capital for the financial period April to December 2017. The Council was on course to meet its targets with a small underspend. The recommendations referred to two technical issues which needed Council approval, an increase in the Capital Programme for the Disabled Facilities Grants and a virement of capital for from the vehicle replacement to the infrastructure works at the Bromsgrove depot.

During the ensuing debate Councillor Cooper clarified that the virement would not impact on the purchase of vehicles, but that would cover the first stage of the depot car park resurfacing, which had been flagged up as a health and safety issue.

A Member raised an issue in respect of the cost of IT Software Licensing and it was agreed that this would be taken up through the Finance and Budget Working Group, with the relevant officer being invited to attend the Group's next meeting.

RESOLVED that

- a) a retrospective increase in the 2017/18 Capital Programme of £78k for the Disabled Facilities Grants be approved (this reflects the recent funding received from the DCLG for the provision of adaptations); and
- b) a retrospective capital virement of £100k from the vehicle replacement to the infrastructure works at the Bromsgrove depot be approved (this is due to improvements undertaken in relation to Phase 1 of the depot car park resurfacing).

103\17

TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 21ST FEBRUARY, 7TH MARCH AND 11TH APRIL 2018

The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 21st February, 7th March and 11th April 2018 were received for information.

104\17

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

The recommendation from the Electoral Matters Committee in relation to a Governance Review was proposed by Councillor B. T. Cooper and seconded by Councillor R. L. Dent.

Councillor Cooper, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented the report and in so doing highlighted to Members that the Electoral Matters Committee had discussed the supporting report in some detail before making its recommendation. Those discussions had covered a range of areas including the timescale for such a review and concern that it would not be sufficient time to complete such a task, the financial implications had also been discussed and considered.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas in more detail:

- Councillor Mallett as Vice Chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee commented that the financial implications should be considered as, it had been explained that currently there was capacity within the Elections Team to carry out such a review but, in future years this may not be the case and additional resource would be needed.
- There was also the possibility that “ad hoc” parish reviews were requested the cost of which could quite quickly escalate.
- It was also noted that it was good practice to carry out a full review on a regular basis, and the Electoral Services Manager had been unable to trace when the last full review had been carried out.
- It was important to allow those from unparished areas to have their say and also for those who were within parishes, but who felt they did not get value for money from the parish to have a voice in any future arrangements.
- The appointment of parish councillors through the process of co-option was also highlighted and the boundaries which they covered.
- Whether the report was correct in saying there would not be another opportunity when there was no schedule election until 2026. The Monitoring Officer agreed to check this with the Electoral Services Manager. She also explained that there was always the opportunity to carry out a review but that there could be additional resource and financial implications if it was carried out whilst in an election period.
- Concerns were raised should a number of parishes come forward and ask for a review to be carried out in their area and the financial implications of a number of small reviews as opposed to an overall review.
- The need for a review to be carried out, but that the current timescales did not appear to give sufficient time for this to be carried out in a timely manner.
- It was reiterated that the Electoral Matters Committee were not saying that a review should not be carried out, but merely that due to time constraints 2018 would not be the appropriate time for this to be done.

RESOLVED that a Community Governance Review of the Bromsgrove District Area does not take place in 2018.

105\17

TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER A REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL WITHOUT PORTFOLIO (RETAINING OVERARCHING RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOVERNANCE/POLICY AND PERFORMANCE/HR)

The Leader presented his annual report and explained that he had broken it down into three main areas, Overarching Governance, Policy and Performance and Portfolio responsibilities regarding HR and OD.

In respect of performance, the Leader advised that he had recently instigated a series of review meetings to assess current performance across all portfolios and thought it fair to start with an assessment of his own areas. Part of that review is included within the report and he was particularly interested in reviewing performance against budget to date and following up on any restructuring to monitor achievements against the original plans. He acknowledged that some of the areas looked at also fell under Councillor Cooper's remit and confirmed that this would be reviewed to ensure clarification.

The Leader advised that he was pleased with the new support structure for Members at Bromsgrove and it had certainly served him well and the more permanent presence than before was welcomed. Savings had been made as proposed and the addition of our Procurement Officer to the team had enabled reviews of the Council's existing contracts to ensure value for money. The Legal Services team continued to exceed budget targets from external income and were on target to exceed an increased budget this year. He also advised that to support the commercialism agenda the Council was obtaining ad hoc advice from various different professions until the nature of the post had been properly determined.

In respect of Governance, Officers had been working with the Constitution Review Working Group to review and tidy up our Constitution to be more user friendly and easier to access relevant areas. Specific work has also been carried out regarding delegations, which is a large piece of work. Progress has been made and specific recommendations will be forthcoming later this year. One aim is to ensure Members are kept informed of Council activity in their area.

The Leader went on to say that he believed there had been an improved and constructive working relationship between Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board, additionally the role of the Finance and Budget Working Group had been particularly helpful.

Members were advised that they would be receiving governance suggestions from the recent Corporate Peer Review, which although received, was currently embargoed due to the elections in Redditch. It would be released as soon as possible.

In respect of Performance the Leader advised that the first performance report had been made available to Cabinet using data from the Measures Dashboard. Each report covered one of the strategic purposes from the Council Plan as well as a set of corporate measures. In respect of HR the Leader advised that the response rate to the revised staff survey had shown a 54% return rate compared to the previously low rate. He understood that CMT would be receiving details from this next week. It was also noted that the Agency Supply Contract with Matrix had been reviewed and a two year with one year possible extension has been agreed. It was anticipated that this would reduce the agency costs over the term. It was anticipated that the implementation of the HR21 self-serve system would be a large step in

reducing the old paper-based system and allow managers more speedy access to figures.

The Leader advised that there had been a review of the Gender Pay Gap and ways in reducing this further had been identified. The UK figure was currently 18.1% which was much higher than the Council's figure of 4.3%.

Following presentation of the report Members asked a number of questions to which the Leader responded. These included:

- Why the Peer Review report, which had been requested by this Council should be subject to an embargo from Redditch Borough Council. It was also highlighted that as purdah had not started until March, there had been time prior to this for the report to be circulated. The Leader confirmed that he had received this advice from the LGA who had written the report. He assured Members he would seek further advice and if possible, release the report to the other Group Leaders as soon as possible.
- It was noted that a CIPFA report received at Worcestershire County Council had been released, upon request, despite it being during the purdah period.
- It was noted that the Legal Team provided Legal advice to other authorities, but Members questioned how much was paid to other legal bodies as a retainer for legal advice. The Leader advised that he was not aware of any retainer being paid but he would clarify the position to Councillor P. McDonald outside of the meeting.
- The Gender Pay Gap compared to other local authorities. The Leader confirmed that Worcester City was the leading authority for Worcestershire followed by Wyre Forest and then Bromsgrove. Regionally it was understood that the Council was in ninth place and the Leader acknowledged that there was still some way to go but progress was being made.
- Members also requested further details in respect of the Gender Pay Gap, specifically the number of staff affected by it. The Leader advised that he was not aware of the exact figures but would provide these outside of the meeting.
- Discussions around opportunities for higher grade jobs for women.

106\17

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Question submitted by Councillor C. Hotham

“The outgoing Bromsgrove market operating company won the contract on the basis of paying Bromsgrove District Council a fee of £95,000 over the 5 year contract period. The operator will have run the market for nearly 2.5 years at the completion of the notice period. Please could the relevant cabinet member confirm the amount of that this council has received?”

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships advised that she been informed that CJ Events have paid £11,314.96 gross to Wyre Forest District Council

(WFDC), and that WFDC had instigated proceedings for the recovery of the balance.

107\17

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman reminded Members that one hour was allocated to consider the motions on notice.

G. L. Hearn Report

Members considered the following notice of motion, submitted by Councillor C. A. Hotham:

“BDC will temporarily set aside the broad brush basic report of Hearn until such time as its own in depth comprehensive review of the green belt has been completed. Only then will the content and conclusions of the Hearn report be considered alongside our own detailed investigation into the green belt.”

The motion was proposed by Councillor C. A. Hotham and seconded by Councillor S. R. Colella.

In proposing the motion Councillor Hotham highlighted a number of areas included within the G. L. Hearn report, which included a housing requirement of 28,000 by 2031 and 60,800 houses by 2036. He believed that there by using a higher housing density the number could drop by 13,000, reducing these figures to 15,000 and 48,000 respectively. In respect of the sites which the report stated were available across the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area it showed that 180,000 to 2031 and 198,000 available to 2036. However, in March 2018 the Government and WMCA announced funding to “clean” Brown Field sites, which meant that 215,000 sites would now be available to 2031. Councillor Hotham said his understanding of this was that it actually meant that to 2031 there would be a housing surplus of 20,000 with the shortfall dropping to 25,684 to the end of 2036. The report also suggested that should all the proposed sites be maximised then Bromsgrove could take 27,500, which would actually be 2,000 more than its total shortfall. His concern was that the majority of these homes would be executive style and not affordable ones, which were desperately needed. Councillor Hotham went on to comment about the role of G. L. Hearn and the other work which they carried out and questioned whether they had been impartial during the preparation of this report.

Councillor Hotham went on to question the methodology used in assessing the Green Belt and the designation of Principle and supportive categories, highlighting that most of the Bromsgrove Green Belt was classed as Principle and how this could undermine the strategic purpose of the Green Belt. Councillor Hotham believed that at no point had it been suggested within the Council Chamber that it was anything other than a needs assessment and not as an identification of sites. He also highlighted that there still appeared to be confusion over who had commissioned and paid for the report. He went on to say he understood that the document had been described as not

a consultation document, but merely informed us of Birmingham's needs, and that he believed that the housing number had shifted fundamentally and therefore undermined the report. Councillor Hotham therefore requested that the report be put on hold under the Council was able to complete its own review and that not to do so would give the report a credence and credibility that it did not currently deserve.

Following presentation of the motion Members went on to discuss the following areas in more detail:

- Who commissioned the report and its status – Members were concerned that if it was of more significance to Birmingham.
- The view that it should be ignored and that the Council should carry out its own piece of work in the first instance.
- Concerns around the reports provenance and why this Council had been involved in it.
- Whether the Black Country and Wyre Forest should be included within the process and who decided on who was “in” and who was “out”.
- The original “Brett” report from 2014 and the outcome from that report.
- The duty to co-operate and the need for this Council to work out what it needed before considering any other areas' needs.

Councillor C. B. Taylor as the portfolio holder for Planning and Strategic Housing responded that he had sympathy with Members' views and understood their concerns. However, it was not appropriate to not allow residents to respond to the findings of the report and officers would be required to seek responses from stakeholders. It was important that the Council understood the views of all concerned and that this would not limit its ability to respond to the evidence provided. The Hearn Report was not a consultation document, but would be included as part of the review which was currently being undertaken. It appeared that there was some confusion in respect of the LEPs and the Housing Market Area and it was confirmed that the report had been prepared and paid for by the Housing Market Area, of which the Council was a member. If the Council were to ignore this report as part of its review then the Inspectorate would question why this had happened, therefore it had to be considered and the aim was to do this in a constructive and controlled manner.

Further discussion followed in support of the motion and concerns were raised further in respect of the information within the report and the need for the Council to carry out its own Green Belt review before making reference to this document. The importance of putting the Council's residents first was highlighted and it was felt that this was not the case within this report. The following comments were also highlighted:

- The apparent lack of transparency as to how this situation had arisen.
- The level of affordable housing to be included within any future developments.
- The potential impact on the future sale of land within particular areas and the knock on effect with developers.

- Agreements that had been made with other authorities in respect of this Council under the duty to co-operate.

Councillor Denaro confirmed that since he had taken up the position as Leader he had held no discussions with Birmingham in respect of housing. He advised that he would be meeting with the Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority in due course and would feedback following that meeting.

Councillor Taylor also reminded Members that, through the Strategic Planning Steering Group all Members had the opportunity to feed their views into the Local Plan Review. He encouraged Members to attend these meetings and highlighted that there had been limited attendance at the meetings which had been held to date. Opportunities had also been given to both Members and Parish Councils to discuss this report with meetings held prior to the document's release.

Councillor S. Baxter commented that someone must have provided the Housing Market Area what parameters and boundaries were to be included within their report and why this was not a decision made by this Council. Councillor Taylor agreed to give a full written response outside of the meeting. Councillor Baxter responded that her concerns were around the impact of this work on Neighbourhood Plans being worked on by a number of parish councils and how best those parish councils can manage this. She also questioned the procurement process which had been followed in the appointment of G. L. Hearn as wherever it had been funded from it would be public money that had funded it. She reminded Members that this Council had already, under the duty to co-operate accepted housing on behalf of Redditch Borough Council and the concern was that this would continue with other authorities before this Council had addressed its own housing needs.

In summing up Councillor Hotham reiterated that he was not asking for this report to be disregarded, simply that it be delayed until all the fact were available to the Council. It was particularly difficult to understand as to why the Council was giving this report credence when it was not something which it had commissioned.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 18.3 a recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

For the recommendation Councillors Baxter, Bloore, Buxton, Colella, Hotham, Jenkins, Mallett, Peter McDonald, Christine McDonald, Peters, Shannon, Thompson, Van der Plank (13)

Against the recommendation Councillors Allen-Jones, Cooper, Deeming, Denaro, Dent, Glass, Griffiths, Laight, May, Sherrey, Spencer, Taylor, Thomas, Mike Webb, Shirley Webb, Whittaker (16)

The Chairman declared the motion to be lost.

Negative Grant

Members considered the following notice of motion, submitted by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett:

“Council is deeply concerned about the impact of the negative grant / tariff adjustment, also known as the “Sajid Tax” on our ability to meet the needs of our community. Council believes this is damaging and unjust.

Council notes it is in the top fifty for highest bills and Top 30 when compared to head of population.

Council calls on our MP Sajid Javid to give immediate assurance that the negative grant will be cancelled.”

The motion was proposed by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett and seconded by Councillor C. J. Bloore.

In proposing the motion Councillor Mallett commented that after a number of requests for the MP to attend a Council meeting with no response he had no option but to make a formal request through this notice of motion. He appreciated that it was difficult for Mr. Javid to attend on a Wednesday and had suggested an extraordinary meeting to fit in with his availability. He had also asked the Monitoring Officer to arrange for Standing Orders to be suspended in order for Mr. Javid to be given the opportunity to respond to questions asked of him. Councillor Mallett highlighted a number of other obstacles which had been raised which would prevent Mr. Javid from attending and advised that he did not believe these would have been insurmountable. Councillor Mallett called for an urgent review in respect of the Negative Grant, which would have a huge impact on the finances of this Council and request that Mr. Javid as the local MP give his support to the removal of this additional “tax”. The Council had faced a number of cuts to its budget over recent years and there was now the opportunity for this to be brought to a halt.

Following presentation of the motion Members discussed a number of areas in more detail:

- That the local MP should be support the residents of Bromsgrove in the first instance.
- How the funds that had been recouped by Central Government could have been spent within the local community.
- The impact on the Council of the continuous cuts to its budget.
- If this matter was not addressed it was clear that from 2019/20 the Council would struggle financially.
- The Council was one of a number of Councils who had been hit hard by the Negative Grant.
- Those Councils had made representations in respect of its impact on their overall budget position.
- The difficulties this caused in the Council being able to forward plan, together with the impact it had on decisions that it currently made.
- The pressures on services provided and the knock on effect on the parish councils because of this.

- The need for the Council to make a stand on behalf of its residents and the impact it will have on them.
- The potential for this to lead to an increase in Council Tax, which had already been raised each year.
- The impact any further increases would have on those residents with particular needs and the knock on effect on the services which they relied upon.
- Concerns that this would mean services would need to be cut – the Leader advised that no services would be cut and that there was currently a Government consultation being undertaken and a response from the Council had been submitted.

In summing up Councillor Mallett highlighted that the decision to impose this grant had cost this Council £750k and that Mr Javid as the MP for Bromsgrove residents should attend a Council meeting in order for this matter to be discussed and to allow him the opportunity to explain his rationale in imposing this “negative grant” and to be held to account for the impact of it.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 18.3 a recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

For the recommendation Councillors Baxter, Bloore, Buxton, Colella, Hotham, Jenkins, Mallett, Peter McDonald, Christine McDonald, Peters, Shannon, Thompson, Van der Plank (13)

Against the recommendation Councillors Allen-Jones, Cooper, Deeming, Denaro, Dent, Glass, Griffiths, Laight, May, Sherrey, Spencer, Taylor, Thomas, Mike Webb, Shirley Webb, Whittaker (16)

The Chairman declared the motion to be lost.

It was noted that the notices of motion which had not been debated due to the one hour time allocation being used on these motions, would be carried over to the next ordinary meeting of Council to be held on 13th June 2018.

The meeting closed at 9.15 p.m.

Chairman