

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER 2019, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. Thompson (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter (substituting for Councillor C. A. Hotham), A. J. B. Beaumont, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, S. P. Douglas, R. J. Hunter, A. D. Kriss and C. J. Spencer

Observers: Councillor G. N. Denaro

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. D. Poole, Mrs. R. Green, Ms. A. Scarce and Mrs. P. Ross

26/19 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors M. Glass and C. A. Hotham. It was confirmed that Councillor S. Baxter was attending as the substitute for Councillor Hotham.

27/19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest nor of any whipping arrangements.

28/19 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 8th July 2019 were submitted for Members' consideration.

With the agreement of the Chairman, the Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development took the opportunity to update the Board with regard to the next Staff Survey.

Members were informed that the next Staff Survey, which was due to be circulated to staff in September 2019, would now be circulated early 2020.

The Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development informed the Board that Chief Executive had scheduled a number of staff briefings, during September 2019, to provide staff with information on the Council's current financial situation; and that the Deputy Chief Executive was also looking to arrange another series of staff culture presentations / events. It was therefore felt, that it would be more appropriate to carry out the next Staff Survey in the New Year.

RESOLVED

- a) that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be updated to reflect the new proposed date for the Staff Survey; and
- b) that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 8th July 2019, be approved as an accurate record.

29/19

COUNCIL PLAN - PRE SCRUTINY

The Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development briefly informed the Board, that with new Members being elected for 2019/2023 and a new Leader of the Council; officers had seen this as an opportunity to update and refresh the Council Plan. An 'Away Day' was held for Cabinet Members and the Corporate Management Team, in order to capture their full input. A lot of data was presented including information from members of the public. All of the input from the 'Away Day' had now been incorporated within the Council Plan. A full review and consultation on the Council Plan would be carried out in 2020.

The Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager drew Members' attention to the diagram, as detailed on page 3 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack.

This detailed the Council's Vision, Strategic Purposes and Priorities for 2019/2023. At the 'Away Day', Cabinet Members had identified eight priorities for 2019/2023. The six Strategic Purposes had been reduced to five. 'Provide me with good things to see, do and visit' had been incorporated into 'Living independent, active and healthy lives'.

It was also agreed at the 'Away Day' that it was important to have 'green thread' actions running throughout, which would refer to the environment. Page 5 of the Supplementary Agenda Pack highlighted 'Our Challenges'.

It was hoped that the new measures information under 'How will we measure progress' would be easier and make more sense for members of the public.

Members thanked officers for the update on the Council Plan.

An in depth discussion followed whereby Members questioned, if there was a potential risk of mixing the Council's priorities, (namely diabetes), with other agencies priorities.

Councillor Baxter expressed some concern that the strategic priority 'Living independent, active and healthy lives' appeared to be moving away from young people, there was not a lot in the Plan to encourage young people.

Councillor Kriss commented that diabetes was not just linked to the elderly; young people were also diagnosed with diabetes. The cost

pressure on the NHS was one of the most expensive, mainly due to complications as a result of diabetes. The key factor was to look at ways to help prevent and reduce diabetes with lifestyle changes, which included diet and exercise. We should be looking at promoting lifestyle changes to young people as a preventative measure against the onset of diabetes.

Members raised a number of questions with regard to some of the wording used within the Plan.

Following on from this discussion, it was

RECOMMENDED that the following wording be included / changed within the Council Plan as follows:-

- a) Work and financial independence – Ensure people get the benefits they need – amend the measure to read:

“Number of emergency Essential Living Fund payments”.
“Number of emergency Discretionary Housing payments”.

- b) Live independent, active & healthy lives – Why? – amend to read:

“Increasing numbers of people living with reduced mobility, dementia and diabetes are a particular issue for the District”.

- c) Affordable & sustainable homes – Priority: A balanced housing market – include this priority within the “We will” and “How we will measure progress” section.

- d) An effective & sustainable Council – amend “Sustainability – We Will” to read:

“Focus more on commercialisation of services, where appropriate, maximising every opportunity to generate income”.

30/19

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS PROTOCOL - PRESENTATION

The Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources provided a brief presentation on the Customer Services Response Protocol.

During the commencement of the presentation it became apparent that there had been some miscommunication. At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Colella confirmed that this item had been placed on the Board’s Work Programme following his request at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11th February 2019.

Councillor Colella provided clarification as follows; in that he had wanted information with regard to customers who contacted the Council regarding service requests and the responses they had received and the time it had taken to respond to those customers. He was aware of

customers who had contacted the Council, but had not received a response or follow up to their service request.

In response to the Chairman, Members agreed to continue with the presentation.

The Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources continued and informed Members that all complaints were logged on an electronic system and that the system was available to every member of staff. A Customer Service Advisor would check for any unassigned complaints on a daily basis and assign them. Managers for each service area were responsible for managing their own complaints. Customer Services were not in control of the system. There was no overall responsibility from Customer Services to respond to complaints or measure the performance of the service areas. There was no overarching view of complaint response times, hence slight inconsistencies. However, the Customer Services Team was working on achieving a more consistent approach and she was happy to bring that information to the next meeting of the Board.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources.

A further discussion continued, whereby Councillor Colella further explained that he was aware that customers who contacted Worcestershire County Council, by phone or via their on-line service were provided with a reference / log number, which could be quoted during any further contact regarding their service request. He had wanted information with regard to the Council's customer response system and not customer complaints. Members were in agreement that a customer log or reference number would be extremely useful for customers. They would be able to quote this number should they need to contact the Council for an update / response to their service request. It was felt that this would also create more transparency for both customers and officers.

Councillor Douglas also commented that it would be useful to have an 'App' made available to Councillors to log, track or follow up any resident's queries or complaints received by Councillors. Councillor Denaro suggested that this could be raised at a future meeting of the Member Development Steering Group.

The Chairman asked Members if they felt it might be informative to invite partner agencies to a future meeting of the Board, with regard to how they log / respond to any issues / queries / service requests from their customers. Members were in agreement that this might prove useful and agreed that an invitation be extended to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) to attend a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED

- a) that Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BHDT) be invited to attend a future meeting of the board;
- b) that the Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources to provide an update with regard to the Customer Services Team, as detailed in the pre-ambles above; and
- c) that the presentation be noted.

31/19

BUSINESS RATES RELIEF - SHORT SHARP REVIEW FINAL REPORT

The Board considered a report on the Business Rates Relief Short Sharp Review, which was carried out following a referral made by Council on 21st November 2018, when a Notice of Motion was put forward by Councillor M. Thompson. The amended and approved Motion is detailed below:-

“In 2017 the Chancellor committed a £435m business rate relief package intended on helping high street businesses. The Communities Secretary at that time, Sajid Javid, promised ‘absolutely no delay’ in allocating and using the money. However, a table of ‘worst offending councils’ shows that Bromsgrove District Council failed to spend almost 70% of their grant”.

Councillor Colella stated that it had been a really positive Task Group and that he would like to express his sincere thanks to Task Group Members and the Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources and officers who had supported the work of the Task Group.

RECOMMENDED

- a) that the Section 151 Officer uses her delegated powers to use the 2018/19 balance for business scheme and reflects this in the allocation for subsequent years.

32/19

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

It was noted that the next meeting of the Group was due to take place after the Overview & Scrutiny Board meeting on 2nd September 2019.

33/19

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Bromsgrove) informed Members that the next meeting of the Group had been put back; pending the approval of the new Council Plan strategic purposes, priorities and measures.

Therefore, it had been agreed that the next meeting of the Group would be scheduled for early 2020.

34/19

TASK GROUP UPDATES

Bromsgrove Sporting Task Group

The Chairman informed Members that the next meeting of the Group was scheduled for Wednesday 18th September 2019; and that Board Members from Bromsgrove Sporting had been invited to attend the meeting.

WCC LTP4 Task Group

The Chairman asked Councillor Colella if he was happy for this item to be considered by the Strategic Planning Steering Group.

In response Councillor Colella stated that he was of the opinion that it was still an essential Task Group proposal. The LPT4 document should be a dynamic document detailing how it was going to tackle the infrastructure needs of the future, it was not just about the A38. There was pressure for new developments in the district, so it merited having a Task Group and he felt that it would be positive for newly elected Members to be involved in this Task Group.

RESOLVED that the WCC LTP4 Task Group be included on the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2019/20.

35/19

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor J. Till, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), confirmed that there had not been another meeting since she had updated the Board on the last meeting, held on 27th June, 2019.

A brief discussion took place on the age criteria for bowel cancer screening, it was clarified that Worcestershire NHS currently invited men and women, aged 60 to 74, for bowel cancer screening.

36/19

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme from the 1st October 2019 to 31st January 2020.

RESOLVED

- a) that the Domestic Abuse Policy be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2019/2020; and
- b) that the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme from 1st October 2019 to 31st January 2020, be noted.

37/19

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2019/20.

The Chairman reiterated that, as stated earlier, he was frustrated that due to items being moved on the Cabinet Leaders Work Programme, this had created a rather large Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for October 2019, which would see an overloaded Overview & Scrutiny agenda for the meeting to be held on 21st October 2019.

Councillor Denaro commented that Cabinet Members had also expressed their frustration with items being moved on the Cabinet Leaders Work Programme. He had spoken with the Chief Executive with regard to this and the possibility of bringing more items forward.

The Chairman asked Members if they would consider holding an additional meeting early November 2019, for Scrutiny of the Crime and Disorder Partnership; and look at moving Speeding, Recycling and Dog Mess and Litter to the Overview & Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled for 2nd December 2019.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Bromsgrove) reminded Members that, as detailed on the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme, it was a statutory requirement for the Board to have a meeting dedicated to Scrutiny of the Crime and Disorder Partnership at least once a year.

In response to Councillor Colella, the Senior Democratic Services Officer (Bromsgrove) stated that she would liaise with the Community Safety Manager with regard to inviting relevant stakeholders / partners to the additional Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting to be scheduled early November 2019.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2019/20, be updated to include an additional meeting in November 2019, as detailed in the pre-amble above; and to include all of the items discussed and agreed during the course of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman