

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

31ST MARCH 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), A. D. Kent (Deputy Leader),
G. N. Denaro, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

Observers:

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, J Howse, Mr C. Forrester, Ms J. Willis and
Ms. J. Bayley

76/20 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

77/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

78/20 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS
OF THE CABINET HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY AND 24TH FEBRUARY
2021**

The minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 17th February 2021 and
24th February 2021 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 17th
February 2021 and 24th February 2021 be approved as a true and
correct record.

79/20 **FINANCE MONITORING 2021/22 - QUARTER 3 REPORT**

The Head of Finance and Customer Services presented the Financial
Monitoring Report for the third quarter of the 2020/21 financial year.

Members were advised that Officers were projecting an estimated
£1.093 million overspend by the end of the financial year. This was
primarily caused by lost income, particularly in relation to parking
charges, during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Government had
confirmed that the Council would be receiving a further £468,000 to help
cover lost income and that an additional contribution would be made to
the authority to cover any further losses.

Funding had been placed in reserves in respect of business rates payments. This fund was intended to help cover the costs arising from any appeals that might be submitted by eligible businesses and it was considered prudent to have a reserve to cover these costs if needed. However, should the appeals not materialise then this reserve could be released to help balance the Council's budget position moving forward.

The Council had agreed particular savings and additional income for inclusion in the budget in 2020/21. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council had made good progress in respect of delivering savings and this would help the authority to achieve a balanced position at the end of the financial year.

There was a significant underspend in the capital programme. This was primarily due to delays to project work caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Officers were reviewing the capital programme to ensure that the profile was accurate moving forward. This review would take into account the likely continuing impact of Covid-19.

RESOLVED that the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the financial period April 2020 – December 2020 be noted.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) an increase to the Capital programme 2020/21 of match funding from PCC for digital upgrade of CCTV £19k be approved;
- 2) the increase in the capital programme of £30k for 2021/22, £20k 2022/23 for Welfare and business improvements at Bromsgrove Sporting be approved;
- 3) an increase to the revenue budget by £4k, to be funded by reserves to help fund a school's financial literacy programme, be approved.

80/20

COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services presented a report which detailed proposals for a new Community Grants Scheme.

Cabinet was informed that the Council would receive £12,000 in New Home Bonus (NHB) funding that could be allocated to a community grants scheme. A decision had been taken by Members, when setting the budget in February 2021, to allocate an additional £68,000 to this figure in order to create a new Community Grants Scheme.

The new Community Grants Scheme would be slightly different to the previous NHB funding scheme. The report detailed how the scheme would work, including the application process. A timeline for the scheme had also been provided for Members' consideration.

During consideration of this item Members discussed the potential, through this grants scheme, to support community groups that had been negatively impacted by the Covid-9 pandemic. Members suggested that the impact of Covid-19 should be taken into account in respect of the eligibility criteria for grant funding.

RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the Head of Finance and Customer Service following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources in respect of the detail of the Community Grants Scheme, which will be based on the principles of the New Homes Bonus Community Grants Scheme.

81/20

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 15TH FEBRUARY 2021

Cabinet welcomed the recently appointed Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor C. Hotham.

Members were advised that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 15th February 2021 the Equalities Task Group's final report had been considered. The Board had endorsed the group's proposals.

82/20

EQUALITIES TASK GROUP

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services proposed that the Cabinet should postpone consideration of the Equalities Task Group's final report until the following meeting of Cabinet in June 2021. This delay had been proposed in order to provide time for further information to be gathered in relation to the proposals detailed in the report. The Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor P. McDonald, had been notified of this proposal prior to the meeting.

83/20

GREEN HOMES FUNDING

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing, Health and Wellbeing presented a report detailing the Green Homes Funding that was available to Bromsgrove District Council.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) had allocated £60 million to a green homes grant scheme. The allocations that had been made to local authorities as part of this process had been calculated based on the proportion of properties in each authority area that were listed as having energy efficiency ratings at bands E, F or G. In total, £474,000 green homes funding had been allocated to Bromsgrove District Council for this purpose.

The funding would need to be spent on improving the energy efficiency of eligible properties with energy efficiency ratings of bands E, F and G or for static mobile homes. In order to be eligible to receive funding for a

property the occupants needed to be at above average risk of fuel poverty. The deadline for completion of all works funded by the grant was 31st December 2021.

During consideration of this item Cabinet was advised that the report had been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday, 29th March 2021. At this meeting, Members had requested further information about the number of properties in Bromsgrove District that had energy efficiency ratings in bands E, F and G. Officers explained that data for the period encompassing the fourth quarter of 2008 to the second quarter of 2020 revealed that 20% of properties were in band E, 5% of properties were in band F and 1.4% of properties were in band G. This compared to 45% of properties that were in band D, which was the highest rating. However, Members were asked to note that not all properties had received an EPC rating and therefore the data could only be based on the information that was available but was inevitably incomplete.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor Hotham, was invited to speak in respect of the Board's discussion of the Green Homes Funding report. Councillor Hotham explained that the Board had broadly welcomed the proposals detailed in the report. In particular, Members had been pleased to learn that the first part of the scheme had already begun and that as part of this process residents in 40 (out of 120 eligible properties) had indicated that they were willing to take part. More residents would have an opportunity to take part in the scheme as it was rolled out across the District.

Cabinet was advised that during the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting Members had discussed the potential for the subject of green homes funding to be referred to the Climate Change Working Group for consideration. This proposal had not been agreed as a recommendation and Cabinet noted that there were tight timescales in which the decision on this matter needed to be taken as well as strict criteria for the distribution of the funding, which would make it difficult for Members to alter the arrangements through further discussion.

Reference was briefly made to the potential for properties that did not have an EPC rating to obtain one and then apply for support under the scheme. Officers confirmed that this would be possible and any residents in this position were urged to contact Officers for further information.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Capital and Revenue Budgets are increased to receive Bromsgrove District Council's Green Homes Grant scheme Local Authority Delivery Part 2 allocation of £476, 900.
- 2) delegated authority is granted to the Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with Portfolio Holders for

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Housing and Climate Change to administer the funding received in line with the grant conditions.

The meeting closed at 6.26 p.m.

Chairman