



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 7TH JULY 2021

AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

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

AGENDA

1. **To receive apologies for absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 31st March 2021 (Pages 1 - 6)**

4. **Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 29th March 2021 and 26th April 2021 (Pages 7 - 28)**

- (a) To receive and note the minutes
- (b) To consider any recommendations contained within the minutes

Cabinet is asked to note that the recommendations from the Board made on 29th March 2021 in respect of the Impact of Flooding Task Group and will be considered during the debate around that item, which is on the agenda for this meeting.

During that meeting of the Board, an amendment was made to recommendation 5 (c) of the Impact of Flooding Task Group. This amended wording has been incorporated into the version of the report that is attached for Cabinet's consideration.

The Libraries Task Group's final report was also considered at the meeting of the Board held on 29th March 2021. This report will be scheduled for Cabinet's consideration in September 2021.

There were no recommendations arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 26th April 2021 for Cabinet's consideration.

5. **Equalities Task Group - Final Report** (Pages 29 - 58)
6. **Impact of Flooding in the District Task Group** (Pages 59 - 84)
7. **Local Development Scheme - Bromsgrove District Council** (Pages 85 - 96)
8. **Members' ICT Policy** (Pages 97 - 108)
9. **To consider any urgent business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting**

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

29th June 2021

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Bromsgrove District Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant social distancing arrangements for holding face-to-face meetings at a local authority.

Please note that this is a public meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

GUIDANCE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS ATTENDING MEETINGS IN PERSON

In advance of the Cabinet meeting, Members are encouraged to consider taking a lateral flow test, which can be obtained for free from the NHS website. Should the test be positive for Covid-19 then the Member should not attend the Cabinet meeting, should provide their apologies to the Democratic Services team and should self-isolate in accordance with national rules.

Members and officers are encouraged to wear face masks during the Cabinet meeting, unless exempt. Face masks should only be removed temporarily if the Councillor / officer requires a sip of water and should be reapplied as soon as possible. Refreshments will not be provided by the venue, therefore Members and officers are encouraged to bring your own supply of water.

Hand sanitiser will be provided for Members to use throughout the meeting.

The meeting venue will be fully ventilated and Members and officers may need to consider wearing appropriate clothing in order to remain comfortable during proceedings.

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

Members of the public are able to access this meeting of Cabinet in person to observe proceedings. However, due to social distancing requirements to ensure the safety of participants during the Covid-19 pandemic, there will be limited capacity and members of the public will be allowed access on a first come, first served basis. Members of the public in attendance are encouraged to wear face-masks, to use the hand sanitiser that will be provided and will be required to sit in a socially distance manner at the meetings. It should be noted that members of the public who choose to attend in person do so at their own risk.

In line with Government guidelines, any member of the public who has received a positive result in a Covid-19 test on the day of a meeting should not attend in person and should self-isolate in accordance with the national rules.

Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded and for any such items the live stream will be suspended and that part of the meeting will not be recorded.



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- You can inspect minutes of the Council, Cabinet and its Committees/Boards for up to six years following a meeting.
- You can have access, upon request, to the background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to six years from the date of the meeting. These are listed at the end of each report.
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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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31st March 2021

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

The meeting closed at 6.26 p.m.

Chairman

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

29TH MARCH 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Cllr. K. May, Cllr. G. Denaro, Cllr. M. Sherrey and Cllr P. Thomas

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Ms. D Poole, Ms. B. Talbot, Mr. M. Bough, Mrs. J. Gresham and Ms K. Somers

82/20

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

No apologies for absence were received.

83/20

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor R. Hunter declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 6, Green Homes Funding, due to his employment with a not-for-profit housing organisation. It was decided that Councillor R. Hunter would not need to be exempt from the discussion (see item 6).

In respect of item 7 - Impact of Libraries Review Task Group - Final Report a general declaration was noted that any Council Member, either at County, District or Parish level where a library was situated would not need to be exempt from the discussion.

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

84/20

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

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 15th February 2021 were submitted for Members' consideration.

Councillors S. Baxter and S. Colella confirmed that they were present at the meeting and requested that an amendment to the minutes be made.

The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to make the amendment.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 15th February 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

85/20

STAFF SURVEY

The Head of Transformation & Organisational Development and the Human Resources & Development Manager presented the item in respect of the Staff Survey and in doing so highlighted the following points for Members' consideration:

- The report had been provided in order to update Members in respect of the Staff Survey and in particular the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had had on the ways of working in all areas of the Council. The timeline for the Staff Survey had inevitably changed due to the pandemic however it was planned that the formal Staff Survey was planned to take place in the future. However, a confirmed date was yet to be determined.
- Although the main Staff Survey had not yet been carried out there had been other surveys undertaken including Working Arrangements Survey, a Communication Survey and a Wellbeing Survey in order to better understand how the staff were coping with working from home arrangements.
- The response to the Working Arrangements survey was encouraging and the response rate was measured at 79%. Members were advised that this was a snapshot in time and was carried out during the height of the first lockdown but that the results were mainly positive. The Human Resources & Development Manager reported that 89% of staff reported that they were clear and had a good understanding of what was expected of them whilst working from home and 44.5% reported that working from home had impacted their work life balance and well-being in a positive way, 40.9% reported it had impacted them in a positive and negative way and only 5.5% indicated that working from home had affected them in a negative way.
- The Caring for the Workforce Audit was carried out in line with the 6 Management Standards from the Health and Safety Executive. It was reported that a 64% return rate was recorded which was

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considered a positive response in comparison to the previous Staff Survey which had only had a 54% return rate. Members were informed that the results were being analysed and in doing so would enable greater understanding of what was working well and not so well across all service areas.

Following the presentation of the report the Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling to comment on the report and he explained that there had been a large amount of work carried out in the background to ensure that the changes implemented at a difficult time had not impacted the staff adversely. He further commented that the staff had reacted to the pandemic positively to a huge amount of change.

Members questioned officers regarding the outcomes of the surveys and during detailed discussion the following was highlighted:

- If staff had indicated that they had been negatively impacted by working from home were there any measures in place to mitigate the impact and was support provided if necessary? Officers indicated that it was recognised that there had needed to be some adjustments made in some cases and that all staff had different experiences of working from home and various challenges were faced. Members were assured that it was of paramount importance that all staff were kept safe and had the opportunity to make provisions or work from Council premises if necessary in order to undertake their work effectively during the pandemic and associated lockdown.
- That the results and responses to the survey were to be commended and showed a high level of engagement across the Council from staff.
- The figures provided by officers in the report were queried as they did not total 100%. Officers undertook to check the figures and report back to Members in due course.
- It seemed from the responses contained within the report that there was a high number of managers in relation to other staff that had provided responses to the Working from Home survey. Officers clarified that all managers across all services had access to IT equipment and therefore were able to complete the surveys however not all staff, particularly staff who were not currently working from home including frontline staff, had access to the survey and therefore a larger proportion of responses provided were from managers. In addition to this some Members queried whether these figures

included responses from Redditch Borough Council along with Bromsgrove District Council. It was confirmed that it was difficult to extrapolate the figures for just Bromsgrove District Council as many of the staff worked across both Councils as part of the Shared Service arrangement. Some Members were interested whether it would be possible to identify a member of staff who had highlighted any significant issues within their survey response. Officers advised that as the surveys carried out were confidential it was not appropriate to ask for specific members of staff to confirm their name and location of work as asking for this kind of data might have an impact on the number of responses returned. Members enquired whether it would be possible for future surveys to separate the two Councils responses and officers confirmed that currently it was not possible. Some Members were confident that responses provided were clear and offered a good overview for all staff that working from home who were employed across both Councils.

- Access to IT – Members were interested whether the staff response regarding IT equipment and the capability to work effectively had been highlighted in a significant way in survey responses received. It was also queried as to whether the success of the new IT rollout had been measured in any way. Officers confirmed that there had been no particular issues highlighted and most staff felt that the technology provided was adequately supported. In fact, the response from the survey was that 76.3% of staff reported that they felt supported from a technology perspective. It was highlighted for Members' attention that there may have been intermittent issues with home broadband but that these were not issues that could be controlled by the Council. Officers confirmed that hardware equipment was rolled out very quickly to all those who needed to have access in order to work effectively from home. In addition to this hardware rollout, it was confirmed that the systems e.g., Skype was also available from the very beginning of the lockdown and therefore the Council meetings were able to be resumed in as short a time as possible.
- It might be helpful to carry out a 'temperature check' since the initial survey was carried out in order to continue to understand how staff were feeling and Members were advised that this was being planned in addition to further Working from Home surveys.

After a detailed discussion, Councillor K. May extended her thanks to the officers that had worked so hard during the pandemic in order to ensure that Council services were carried out with as little disruption as possible in such difficult circumstances.

RESOLVED that the Staff Survey report be noted.

86/20

MILEAGE - NOTICE OF MOTION

The Chairman invited Councillor P. McDonald to introduce the item regarding the Mileage Notice of Motion which had been referred from Full Council for consideration by the Board. During his presentation he indicated that he was unhappy with the figures that had been provided within the report and reported that they differed from figures that had been provided to him previously.

The Human Resources & Development Manager confirmed that the figures contained in the report had been provided from the Payroll system and undertook to clarify the data that had been provided. It was highlighted to Members that mileage costs had decreased during the pandemic, but that mileage was still being claimed due to the nature of some of the services and by staff who were unable to solely work from home.

The Chairman invited Councillor G. Denaro in his role as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling to comment on the report and he expressed that he had been pleased that the costs for mileage had decreased but was concerned in respect of the information that Councillor P. McDonald had previously received, which needed to be confirmed prior to any further discussion.

It was questioned whether the figures that had been provided to the Board by Officers as part of the main report were a combination of both Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils' mileage claims. Members decided, after detailed discussion, that in order to fully understand the discrepancies between the two sets of figures that the item be deferred to a future meeting for Members' further consideration. It was requested that in addition to an update of the figures that further context, detail and a breakdown be provided regarding the mileage policy.

RESOLVED that the Mileage – Notice of Motion item be deferred to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board early in the new municipal year for further consideration.

87/20

GREEN HOMES FUNDING

The Housing Development & Enabling Manager presented the Green Homes Funding report and in so doing informed Members that the report contained information regarding Phase 2 of the Green Homes Funding allocation which consisted of £476,900 worth of funding. It was reported that the Phase one allocation was currently being processed. The criteria for both phases were virtually the same with the exception that homes with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D, E, F and G would also be included. Members were informed that the maximum household income in order to meet the criteria was £30,000 and the allocation for funding could be up to £10,000.

Some Members queried whether there had been a reduction to the Green Homes Funding as per a Central Government announcement made earlier that day. However, Officers were unsure and undertook to find out if there had been any changes and circulate any information to Members.

At this point in the meeting there was a slight pause due to loss of connection for the live streamer. The Chairman was immediately informed, and the debate was paused until connection was re-established.

Members were interested in how much discretion there was in respect of the allocation of funding and whether there were any specific locations within the District that would be likely to receive funding. It was confirmed that initially the homes that would be prioritised were Park Homes and these had already been identified by Officers. It was agreed that Officers would provide some clarification on the number of houses that could potentially benefit from Green Homes Funding in the District.

Councillor R. Hunter stated that he understood there was a deadline on 15th April 2021 to agree the funding by Cabinet however, he was keen that the Climate Change Working Group be involved in consideration of allocations alongside the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services.

During a lengthy discussion, the following was highlighted by Members:

- Due to the tight deadlines and prescriptive requirements of the Green Homes funding there would be no time to consult with the Climate Change Working Group prior to the report

being considered at the Cabinet meeting due to be held on 31st March 2021.

- That the Climate Change Working Group was an appropriate place to consider the allocation of the funding and would be an opportunity for the Working Group to carry out some detailed work in respect of this area. However, it was felt by some Members that the Board was the appropriate place to scrutinise such an important area and further involvement by other Working Groups may make the process protracted and cumbersome. The Board was informed that they would be kept informed of the outcomes of any decisions by Cabinet in due course.
- How much funding had been allocated during Phase 1a of Green Homes Funding and what was the process to apply for funding? Officers informed Members that during the consultation period there had been 174 letters sent out to residents which had resulted in 40 applications being made which were currently being assessed for eligibility. It was thought that there would be a similar uptake for the second phase of the funding.

Following detailed debate, Councillor R. Hunter proposed the following:

That delegated authority is granted to the Head of Community & Housing Services in consultation with Portfolio Holders for Housing and Climate Change and the Climate Change Working Group to administer the funding received in line with the grant conditions.

On being put to the vote this recommendation was lost.

RESOLVED that the Green Homes Funding report be noted.

88/20

IMPACT OF LIBRARIES REVIEW TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor S. Colella introduced the Impact of Libraries Review Task Group Final Report for Members' consideration. He thanked Members and Officers from Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council for their involvement in the Task Group during such a difficult period and was pleased with the recommendations that had been proposed as a result of the investigation. He highlighted in particular that the Cabinet Member for Communities at Worcestershire County Council, Councillor L. Hodgson, had thanked members for

scrutinising the Library Strategy and that Bromsgrove had been the only Council in Worcestershire to do so.

After the discussion, the Chairman extended his best wishes on behalf of the Board to Councillor L. Hodgson who had recently been unwell.

Councillor K. May was invited to comment on the report in her capacity of Portfolio Holder for Strategic Partnerships. She informed the Board that much like the Wigan Deal, which had been considered as part of the investigation, Members were looking at a similar asset-based approach to library services going forward and that Members would be provided further information on this in due course.

Councillor P. Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety commented that Libraries were a very, useful resource within the District and thanked Members and Officers for a comprehensive report.

RECOMMENDED that the report and recommendations detailed within it be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 2nd June 2021.

89/20

IMPACT OF FLOODING TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor R. Hunter introduced the Impact of Flooding Task Group Final Report for Members' consideration and expressed that this was an important and interesting investigation particularly in light of Climate Change and the potential of more frequent extreme weather events affecting the District in the future. He thanked officers and Members for their hard-work and was pleased that there had been some bold and ambitious recommendations made as a result of the investigation.

Following presentation of the report Members raised that North Worcestershire Water Management (NWWM) currently promoted themselves effectively on social media and Members should be encouraged to perhaps share their work through their own communication channels. In addition to this it was felt by some Members that having a timetable available on the relevant websites might restrict the schedule of works and make it less flexible in cases where the works could not be carried out due to time, staffing and weather constraints. This was clarified by Councillor M Sherrey, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services who explained that some staff who would normally work in these areas had been redeployed during the pandemic due to illness. This issue had now been resolved and it was hoped that the service would resume as normal in the very near future. Councillor

R. Hunter explained that the recommendation regarding the publication of the gully and road sweeping had been included to provide residents with greater transparency with the hope that this would alleviate concerns by local residents that works were to be carried out on a regular basis.

Councillor J. Till proposed an amendment in respect of Recommendation 5(c) that *'consider'* be inserted into the recommendation in order to provide more flexibility within the recommendation should the Council not wish to adopt the land in all cases. Councillor R. Hunter expressed that caution needed to be applied in the area of adoption of land however it was felt that the inclusion of *'subject to S106 funding'* within the recommendation already provided enough of a caveat should the Council not be able to adopt the land.

It was noted by some Members that this was a very complex area and that the management charges and ownership of land in new developments was, in some cases, a cause for concern for local residents.

Another concern from some Members was the extra cost of the employment of two extra officers which was included as a recommendation within the report. However, it was noted that although there would be costs involved it was proposed that a business case be undertaken as part of the recommendation in order to fully understand all costs involved and the potential for recharges to be made if work was undertaken for other Authorities.

After lengthy debate the alternative recommendation was clarified and proposed again by Councillor J. Till as follows:

'the Council will consider, subject to S106 funding, adopting land featuring watercourses and SuDS features on new developments.'

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried.

RECOMMENDED that

a) Recommendation 5 (c) be amended to:

'the Council will consider, subject to S106 funding, adopting land featuring watercourses and SuDS features on new developments.'

- b) that the report and all other recommendations (noting the amendment of 5(c)) detailed within it be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 2nd June 2021.

90/20

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Finance and Budget Working Group update and informed Members that there had been no meeting of the group since the last meeting of the Board. He confirmed that there would be no further meetings until the new municipal year.

Councillor S. Colella queried whether there were any updates regarding the Budget position as at the end of Quarter 3. Councillor G. Denaro, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling confirmed that a report was to be considered at the next Cabinet meeting due to be held on 31st March 2021.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Budget Working Group update be noted.

91/20

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor J. Till presented the update from the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and advised Members that updates regarding Covid-19 data had been circulated prior to the meeting in order to keep them as relevant as possible as they presented a snapshot in time rather than data that remained static. She also confirmed that the minutes from the previous meeting of HOSC had been circulated to the Board.

It was noted that there would be no further meetings of HOSC until the new municipal year.

RESOLVED that the verbal update in respect of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

92/20

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work programme dated 1st April 2021 to 31st July 2021 was considered by the Board.

Members requested that the following items be included in the Board's Work Programme for future meetings:

Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board
29th March 2021

- Declaration of Land Surplus to Requirement - Marsh Way, Catshill South, Penshurst Road, Sideslow and Foxglove Way, Norton.
- Bromsgrove Town Centre Regeneration - Land at the Former Market Hall Site.

In addition to the items detailed above Councillor G. Denaro highlighted to Members that any reports in respect of Finance would be included in the Cabinet Work Programme once further planning work had been undertaken with the new Executive Director for Finance.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Work Programme be noted and that the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2020-21, be updated to include any items that had been discussed and agreed during the course of the meeting.

93/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

During consideration of this item Members confirmed the following items be included in the Board's Work Programme for future meetings:

- Update on the Open Spaces report (considered by Full Council in January 2020) – including how other Councils dealt with the management charges in new developments.
- Air Quality Around Schools.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme be noted and be updated to include any items that had been discussed and agreed during the course of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.54 p.m.

Chairman

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Agenda Item 4

Overview and Scrutiny Board
26th April 2021

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

26TH APRIL 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C.A. Hotham (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, A. J. B. Beaumont, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, R. J. Hunter, A. D. Kriss, M. Thompson and H. D. N. Rone-Clarke

Observers: Councillor G. Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling

Councillor P. Thomas – Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety

Officers: Mr. J. Howse, Ms J. Willis, Ms B. Houghton, Ms I. Karimi-Fini, Mrs. J. Gresham and Ms K. Somers

94/20

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Spencer and Councillor P. M. McDonald with Councillor H. Rone-Clarke as named substitute.

95/20

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor A. Kriss declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 4, the Community Safety Partnership – Presentation due to his responsibility as Head of the Security Community Trust for the West Midlands. It was decided that Councillor A. Kriss would not need to be exempt from the discussion (see item 4).

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

96/20

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 29TH MARCH 2021

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 29th March 2021 were submitted for Members' consideration.

Councillor A. D. Kriss requested clarification in respect of page 4 of the minutes where it was stated, "Members enquired whether it would be possible for future surveys to separate the two Councils responses and Officers confirmed that currently it was not possible". He explained that it was his understanding that it had been requested that Officers looked into whether the Councils' survey data could be separated. Members were in agreement that the statement be amended to 'although currently survey data could not be separated, work would be carried out to see if this could be rectified in the future'.

The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to make the amendment.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 29th March 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

97/20

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - PRESENTATION

The Community Safety Manager presented the item in respect of the Community Safety Partnership and in doing so highlighted the following to Members:

- The review of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership was an annual presentation to the Board.
- That, as of 26th June 2021, West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Service would no longer be a member of the Partnership and would once again become a part of the National Probation Service.
- The Partnership provided a three-year plan, that was updated on an annual basis and was based around the priorities of the Partnership. The priorities for 2021-2024 included violence and abuse, theft and acquisitive crime, ASB, damage and nuisance and protecting vulnerable communities. A detailed description was provided regarding the protecting vulnerable communities priority and the links between County Line drug activity and modern slavery. It was confirmed to Members that these priorities were operated at a District and County level.
- The Covid-19 pandemic had had a significant impact on the number of recorded offences in North Worcestershire. Members were informed that partners were preparing for the changes in lockdown restrictions which might result in an increase of offences.

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26th April 2021

- The delivery of Community Safety Partnership projects throughout the District had inevitably been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic however many had been adapted to ensure that delivery could take place online and some were able to take place face-to-face in a Covid safe environment. Members were informed that a wide range of projects had been carried out with young people both in group settings and in one-to-one sessions. The projects included a Listening Service, Youth Outreach Programmes and a Young Citizen's Challenge Programme.
- The Nominated Neighbour Scheme, an initiative which aimed to prevent cold-callers and rogue trader offences in the District, had been successful. Members were informed that during an evaluation process it was reported that all residents that had enrolled in the scheme had not received any cold callers since they had joined the initiative.
- The Community Safety Partnership also took part in National initiatives including the Hate Crime Awareness Week and a webinar for the 2020 Hate Crime Conference. It was confirmed that high profile guest speakers had attended the conference which included Kriss Akabusi MBE and the Rt. Hon. Stuart Lawrence, brother of Stephen Lawrence. In addition to this the Partnership had taken part in a White Ribbon Domestic Abuse Campaign, a social media campaign supported by local partners.

Following the presentation, the Chairman invited the Councillor P. Thomas, the Portfolio for Leisure and Culture to comment on the presentation and he thanked the Officers and the team for all of the work over the past year.

Some Members expressed that they were disappointed that the Community Safety Partnership presentation had not been circulated prior to the meeting. The Democratic Services Officer present explained that the scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership was a statutory function of the Board and needed to be presented before the end of the municipal year. It was reported that Officers had been given short notice to provide the presentation for this meeting and it was agreed that for future years more notice would be given in order that Members were provided with written information prior to the meeting.

During a detailed discussion the following was clarified for Members:

- Whether the progress of the Empowering Young People project was tracked as part of the evaluation process? – Members were informed that an evaluation took place at each step of the project.

This included a pre and post evaluation with tutors and young people. It was clarified that this was not only part of the funding criteria, but it was a powerful tool to understand the impact on the young people who took part.

- That the majority of the work that took place involving young people were through local schools and that Officers worked within the school environment to deliver the programmes. This meant that the projects were driven by need rather than geography within the District. It was confirmed that the Outreach team did travel to other areas within the District as needed. The Community Safety Manager stated that if any Members felt that there was a need in any particular area within the District then the team would be more than happy to look at it and provide support where necessary.
- How were young people included in the outreach programmes? – It was confirmed that Members could contact the Community Safety Team who would be able to pick up any referrals. Officers undertook to share the contact details for the team outside of the meeting. It was further clarified that for certain programmes e.g. the Respect Programme, a referral from a school was required due to the requirement of parental consent to take part in the programme.
- How were referrals made to the Nominated Neighbour Scheme? – Officers explained that materials were available to Members regarding the scheme and undertook to circulate them outside of the meeting.
- Could Ward Members be made aware of when Officers visited a specific ward? – The Community Safety Manager explained that this would not be possible to do beforehand due to the reactive nature of each request however it would be possible to provide Members with a report to inform what activity had been taken in specific wards.

The Chairman thanked the Community Safety Manager and the team for a detailed and informative presentation.

RESOLVED that the Community Safety Partnership Presentation be noted.

98/20

MOTION - FIREWORKS

The Cultural Services and Parks Manager presented the report regarding Councillor R. Hunter's Motion regarding the use of Fireworks, which had been referred from a previous Full Council meeting.

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26th April 2021

During consideration of this item the following Members' attention was drawn to the following:

- The types of fireworks used by the Council were being considered and a procurement process was underway to assess what products were available to provide alternative types of fireworks. The procurement process would include the consideration of quieter fireworks and understanding if their use would impact on the environment and climate change. In addition to this, different types of events were being considered such as light shows and were a possibility for future District events.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was still uncertain as to whether public events would take place in the District and it was dependent on the easing of lockdown restrictions.
- The Safety Advisory Group (SAG) were working alongside the Events team to mitigate any impact on residents and animals in respect of fireworks. Members were informed that all events were assessed on a monthly basis by SAG due to the impact of Covid-19 and the restrictions around holding large gatherings. It was reported to Members that the Communications Team were involved in the promotion of any Council-run event to ensure that residents were made aware in advance that an event was taking place.

Members queried whether there were any plans for a publicity campaign should any events take place during 2021. The Cultural Services and Parks Manager informed Members that there would certainly be a campaign to raise awareness of an event if and when it was to take place. Members expressed that an important part of any publicity campaign should be to raise awareness of the impact of the use of fireworks in a private setting. Officers assured Members that social media communication was a top priority in order to get messages out to as many residents as possible. It was also clarified that plans were always made to try to ensure that there were no other events taking place on the same day as a Council-run event to help mitigate the impact to residents.

Councillor S. Colella thanked Councillor R. Hunter for bringing the Motion regarding the use of fireworks and felt it important that the Council took a lead in promoting the use of quieter fireworks in both public and private settings. It was with this in mind that he suggested that a recommendation be made to Cabinet that Bromsgrove District Council support the use of lower noise impact fireworks in both public

and private displays across the District and encouraged other events, both public and private, to choose fireworks with a lower noise impact. The recommendation was seconded by Councillor R. Hunter and although Members were generally supportive of the recommendation it was felt it might be premature, particularly as the procurement process for the use of quieter fireworks was still not completed and the impact on the environment not yet fully understood. Members requested that they be updated to understand what fireworks were to be used by the Council going forward and, if appropriate, the recommendation would then be submitted to Cabinet. Officers confirmed that this would be possible, and Members agreed that the item be added to the Board's Work Programme for consideration later in the year once the procurement process was almost completed.

RESOLVED that the update regarding Fireworks Motion be noted.

99/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021 - REVIEW AND LESSONS LEARNT

The Chairman introduced the Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2020-2021 to Members and highlighted the important work that had been undertaken by the Board over the last municipal year. He particularly highlighted the work of the Task Groups that had been carried out and was keen to understand if there had been any lessons learnt throughout the year.

Some Members expressed that that there had been some successes regarding Task Groups, but that planning was imperative when undertaking groups like these to ensure that there were clear objectives and outcomes. In addition to this it was suggested that Task Groups should concentrate on subjects and areas where Bromsgrove District Council could influence change. During detailed debate there was discussion regarding Task Group attendance and quorum at the meetings and what the rules should be regarding this going forward. Although the example had been made regarding planning and objectives surrounding Task Groups it was clarified that these areas were also applicable to Working Groups currently in place.

It was mentioned that in previous years the Board had also been responsible for looking at performance within the Council, however it was noted that this had not been the case for the last year. Members were reminded that the Corporate Performance Working Group had been suspended to allow the Equalities Task Group to take place and

the plan was that Corporate Performance Working Group be reinstated in the new municipal year.

It was suggested that all future Task Groups and Working Group meetings be held online, and Members thought that this would certainly be something that was likely for future meetings of this type.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2020-2021 be noted.

100/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

The Chairman introduced the item regarding the Overview and Scrutiny Board Recommendation Tracker and in doing so explained that this item was regularly brought to the Board to provide an update regarding any recommendations made over previous municipal years. After consideration of the document Members agreed that all completed items (in green) be removed for the next version of the tracker. The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to do this following review of the Tracker by Members.

The Democratic Services Officer highlighted that the Apologies and Substitutes recommendation noted as Amber, had been agreed at the meeting of Full Council held 26th February 2020 and that this item would also be removed ahead of the next meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED that Overview and Scrutiny Board Recommendation Tracker be noted

101/20

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mr. J. Howse, the new Executive Director of Resources to the meeting and asked that he provide a brief overview of his role. Mr. J. Howse explained his responsibilities included Section 151 Officer and that he would be working closely with the Finance and Budget Working Group, particularly in Budget setting areas and financial sustainability of the Council. He stated that he looked forward to working with the main Board and the Finance and Budget Working Group in the future.

It was noted that the Finance and Budget Working Group had not met since the last meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED that Finance and Budget Working Group Update be noted.

102/20 **TASK GROUP UPDATES**

The Chairman explained to Members that it was likely that there would be new Task Groups established in the new municipal year and Members were invited to submit a Topic Proposal form for consideration by the Board if there were any particular areas of interest.

RESOLVED that the Task Group Update be noted.

103/20 **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE**

Councillor J. Till informed Members that there had been no meetings of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and therefore no update was available.

Councillor S. Colella requested that at the next meeting of HOSC a question be submitted to Members as to when non-Covid related medical treatment, such as operations were likely to be resumed. Councillor J. Till explained that this question would be better submitted once the Committee membership for HOSC had been agreed.

RESOLVED that Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update be noted.

104/20 **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The Cabinet Work programme dated 1st May 2021 to 31st August 2021 was considered by the Board.

Councillor S. Colella suggested that the Strategic Transport Assessment discussed at the Full Council meeting held on 21st April 2021 be scrutinised by the Board in order to better understand the process, timelines and what work was due to be undertaken in respect of the assessment. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling stated that this was Worcestershire County Council (WCC) led project and there had been long running discussions to get to this stage. Members raised questions regarding what had previously been reported to the Board and discussed whether officers should be asked to produce a report for the Board. The Executive Director of Resources undertook to clarify with Officers what the status of the assessment was and would report back to Board in due course.

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26th April 2021

Members requested that the Board's Work Programme be updated to include the Bromsgrove Centres Manager - 2021 Action Plan item due to be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 1st June 2021.

RESOLVED that Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

105/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

This item was discussed as part of the previous item.

The meeting closed at 8.04 p.m.

Chairman

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Cabinet
2021

7th July

Equalities Task Group Final Report

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor G Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Transformation, Organisational Development & Digital Strategy
Report Author	Senior Democratic Services Officer a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881443
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	An Effective and Sustainable Council
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- (a) **the report and the recommendations attached at Appendix 1 be approved;**

2. BACKGROUND

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Any financial implications are detailed within the main body of the report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any legal implications are detailed within the main body of the report.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 This report would come under An Effective and Sustainable Council, which relates to all things corporate.

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7th July

Climate Change Implications

5.2 There are no Climate Change Implications arising from this report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.1 The Policy Team have been involved in the Task Group and are aware of the recommendations arising from the final report.

Operational Implications

6.2 There would be some resource implications arising from approval of the recommendations which have been highlighted to the relevant Head of Service.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 Overview and scrutiny is a key part of the Council's democratic decision making process and enables non-executive Members of the Council to put forward recommendations for policy development, policy review and service improvement.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Equalities Task Group Report

(Background papers are listed within the main report.)

Cabinet
2021

7th July

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling is aware of the report.	February 2021
Lead Director / Head of Service	Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy	January 2021
Financial Services	No direct financial implications	
Legal Services	Rachel Martin – Team Leader, Contracts & Commercial	January 2021
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Rebecca Green – Policy Manager	January 2021
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	N/A	

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**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
BOARD**

**EQUALITIES TASK
GROUP**

FINAL REPORT

January 2021



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP



Councillor Peter McDonald (Chairman)



Councillor Andrew Beaumont



Councillor Malcolm Glass



Councillor Helen Jones



Councillor Adrian Kriss



Councillor Harrison Rone-Clarke



Councillor Caroline Spencer



Councillor Jo-Anne Till

SUPPORTING OFFICER DETAILS

Amanda Scarce – Senior Democratic Services Officer
a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Foreword from the Chairman

The aims of the Equalities Task Group were to ensure that every employee has access to the same opportunities and the same, fair treatment. That if you actively promote equality and diversity (and have a policy to match) then the Council will thrive, and people of all backgrounds can come together for the benefit of those they serve.

We feel the recommendations the Task Group are putting forward will enhance an inclusive culture to ensure that employees are valued and have the same access to all opportunities whatever their differences.

**Councillor Peter McDonald
Chairman, Equalities Task Group**

Summary of Recommendations

After consideration of the evidence available and interviewing witnesses the Task Group have proposed the following recommendations, supporting evidence can be found under the relevant chapters within the main body of this report.

Chapter 1 – The Council’s Equalities Strategy

Recommendation 1
That an annual Equalities Report be prepared for 2021 and annually thereafter.
Financial Implications for recommendations: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications for recommendations: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time in preparing the report.

Recommendation 2
That a question in respect of IOS certification (or equivalent) is included in the Contractors’ Questionnaire in respect of Equalities.
Financial Implications for recommendations: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications for recommendations: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time in checking the response.

Chapter 2 – Human Resources

Recommendation 3
That when the new ERP system is in use, the data collated by it in respect of HR issues be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time.

Recommendation 4
a) That clear guidelines are put in place in respect of the secondment process (which would include some sort of appeals process) and made accessible to all staff; and b) That a formal progression policy be put in place and made accessible to all staff.
Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time.

Chapter 3 – Community and Engagement Strategy

Recommendation 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) That a specific section on Equalities be included within the annual Community Survey; andb) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board (or Members of the Equalities Task Group) are involved in the preparation of the questions to be included.
Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time.

Background Information

Councillor H. Rone-Clarke, together with a representative from within the local community, presented a topic proposal form containing proposed terms of reference for a Task Group entitled Identifying and Addressing Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's operations. Councillor Rone-Clarke highlighted the importance of the authority, constantly looking within itself and identifying issues with regards to race and striving to make improvements. It was highlighted that this was not a political venture, but one of constant self-improvement.

Following consideration of the topic proposal at its meeting on 7th July 2020, the Board agreed that a Task Group should be set up and appointed Councillor P. McDonald as its Chairman at that meeting and requested that the Group report back with its findings within 6 months.

At the August meeting of the Board, the membership of the Task Group was confirmed. Due to the interest shown in the Task Group and recognising that it was sometimes difficult to organising ad hoc meetings that were convenient for everyone, it was agreed that there would be a quorum set to ensure that those who had put their names forward were committed to the work of the Task Group.

Following its initial meeting on 10th August, the Task Group also agreed to amend the Terms of Reference to include all those protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010. The changes were reported back to the main Board at its meeting in September, when it was agreed that the name of the Task Group would be updated to simply "the Equalities Task Group". At its initial meeting the Task Group also recognised that the scope of the Task Group was wide reaching and therefore it was agreed that it would concentrate on three particular areas within the Council and these are reflected in the chapters within this report.

The Task Group has held 8 meetings in total since that date and held discussions with a number of key witnesses. The Task Group has reviewed a number of the Council's policies and largely concentrated its investigation on issues which impacted on its staff. This was to ensure that everyone was treated fairly from an equalities perspective and that those policies were readily available for staff and reviewed on a regular basis. The Task Group also briefly looked at community engagement and how this could be improved to ensure that all residents had the opportunity to feel comfortable and be treated fairly, when dealing with the Council and when giving their views.

Chapter 1

The Council's Equalities Strategy

One of the first documents the Task Group reviewed was the Council's Equalities Strategy, as it was keen to ensure that this was both regularly reviewed and updated and easily accessible to everyone.

Following the review of that document the Task Group prepared a number of questions for the Policy Manager to respond to at its next meeting. Those questions covered a number of areas and are detailed below for information.

- a) You have provided data for those with protected characteristics and ethnicities working at the Council. Please advise how often this was updated and whether historic data was available for comparison purposes.
- b) How the Council gave due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in order to advance equal opportunities and foster good relations within the Council.
- c) How the Council ensures that any contractors it uses adhere to the Equalities Act.
- d) Whether the Council produced an Annual Equalities Report and if so when was this last produced and where can a copy be located.
- e) How the Equalities Policy was monitored to ensure that it was being adhered to.

The Policy Manager responded to each point that had been raised in detail and explained that employee data was collated annually but could be done more frequently if needed. Staff were encouraged to share this data; however, it was highlighted that there was no legal obligation for them to do so. It was also explained that it was important for staff to understand why the data was being collected and that it was not used to identify an individual. The Policy Manager explained that there was a new system being brought in to use in the Spring of 2021, which would allow for more useful data to be collated, unfortunately historic data would not be migrated to this system.

Details of the new system were provided – it was an Enterprise Resource System, which was initially for the Finance Team, but it was explained that there was an integrated suite of software which could be added on which covered Human Resources and Payroll systems. The system was used globally and for a variety of organisations.

Members were pleased to learn that the provision of this data was something which had been discussed at Corporate Management Team and that it was hoped to carry out a “drive” on collecting the data through attending team meetings and explaining why it was important and how the data was used, whilst still giving people the option not to provide it. It was further confirmed that, in respect of the recruitment of staff a form went out with all application forms, but again, there was no obligation for it to be completed and returned.

The Policy Manager confirmed that the collection of this type of data was something which lots of authorities struggled to gather, as it was something which came up regularly at area group meetings that she attended. Members agreed that it was useful to know that it was not just this Council that struggled to gather the data and that it was something which was taken seriously, and every effort was made to collect it where possible. The importance of having robust data was also discussed and again it was hoped that the new system would help to provide this going forward. Members were mindful of the need for the data to be sufficient to be used meaningfully and that some people were often cautious about sharing this information for a variety of reasons.

Members questioned whether there was any data in respect of the percentage of people who had or had not completed the information. The Policy Manager explained that this was different for each of the characteristics, so would be hard to extract the data. Again, if limited numbers had provided it, the data would also not necessarily be meaningful. However, it was confirmed that for gender and age it was nearly 100% but for the other protected characteristics (as detailed in the terms of reference for the Task Group) it was not so many. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to know how much of the data collected was accurate. The Policy Manager confirmed that this was very much the case in respect of disabilities, as it was often clear that people had a disability but chose, for whatever reason, not to disclose it. It was acknowledged by everyone that work needed to be done to get the message across that by collecting the data the Council was able to better support its staff.

The Policy Manager provided details of the dignity at work training which had been undertaken throughout the Council. This had been a bespoke session which had been interactive and designed specifically for the Council by an external company. It had been well received and work was being carried out to ensure this reached everyone, as due to sickness etc some people had not been able to attend. It was acknowledged that the planned “mop up” sessions had not yet taken place and a further delay in rectifying this had been caused by the pandemic. People also received updates via net consent, which was a format where a presentation or policy was delivered through staff IT and they were then unable to log in to other Council systems until they had read and agreed the policy, sometimes this was also followed up with a short test. It was however acknowledged that there was a need to find a balance in respect of things such as these being sent out without staff feeling as if they had been bombarded with information and the importance of their responsibilities.

Support was provided to staff in various ways and the Policy Manager gave an example where she had herself provided support to a member of staff. Her team also managed the translation and interpretation policy for the Council and Equality impact assessments were also carried out where needed, again with her team supported officers with these. It was also noted that a large piece of work was currently being undertaken in respect of accessibility following new legislation. This referred to all documents provided by the Council in all formats.

The Task Group was also keen to ensure that any contractors used by the organisation had the appropriate policies in place and met all statutory requirements. The Policy Manager explained that whilst contractors were asked whether they adhered to the Equalities Legislation, this was not monitored, and the onus was on the Contractor to ensure that it did so. Members raised concerns around this lack of monitoring and wanted to ensure that everyone, wherever possible was treated equally if they were working at or on behalf of the Council. In respect of the Equalities Questionnaire completed by Contractors the Task Group were aware that this was in the process of being reviewed and suggested that it may be more appropriate for it to include some reference to ISO or equivalent certification. The thinking behind this was that in order to achieve certification the contractor would need to ensure that it not only met the requirements of the certification but adhered to them also. The provision of such certification would remove the onus from the Council in having to check to ensure that the Contractor adhered to the relevant policies.

The Policy Manager explained that she was currently working on an Annual Report. Unfortunately, due to a number of reasons this had not been prepared in recent years. It was hoped that going forward this would be used as a template for future reports and updated and added to each year. It was however highlighted that, it was not a requirement within the Council's Equalities Strategy to prepare an annual report and there was no legal requirement to produce one, although it was acknowledged that the production of one was beneficial. The Equalities Strategy was regularly reviewed, and the next review would take place in March 2021. Again, in some areas there was still not sufficient data to make it meaningful and this was something which it was hoped would improve in the future. Members were keen for an annual report to be produced as it was felt that it sent a clear message to both staff and residents that the Council took the matter seriously and was also an opportunity to not only highlight areas where improvement was needed but to monitor improvements in the future and showcase the areas of achievement and the work the Council was undertaking to ensure it met the requirements of the Equalities Act.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 1

That an annual Equalities Report be prepared for 2021 and annually thereafter.
--

Recommendation 2

That a question in respect of IOS certification (or equivalent) is included in the Contractors' Questionnaire in respect of Equalities.

Chapter 2

Human Resources

The Task Group considered three areas, when looking at the Human Resources processes and policies that were currently in place at the Council. It was felt that these areas were the most important in order to ensure that all staff (and prospective employees) were being treated equally and fairly and given the same opportunities by the organisation, whilst also recognising that the needs of each member of staff were very different. The Task Group's recommendations therefore reflect those areas which it investigated in detail.

The Task Group interviewed the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager together with a Union Representative to ensure it had a balanced view of the position. Consideration was given to either inviting staff into a meeting or asking them to complete a short questionnaire, but after giving this matter due consideration it was decided that, due to the ongoing pandemic, it would not be practicable. A number of questions were prepared for discussion with the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager and these are included below for information purposes, as these highlight the particular areas that the Task Group concentrated on. These areas also formed the basis of the discussions with the Union Representative. As there were a number of responses from the Union Representative which Members felt needed further clarification from the officers, the officers were invited back to a further meeting of the Task Group in order to have the opportunity to respond to the comments which had been made. Whilst it was clear from the discussions held with both the officers and the Union Representative that there was a good working relationship between the two, Members acknowledged that there was always room for improvement, and it was important that all concerned continued to work together to ensure a positive outcome for both the organisation and its staff.

The information provided below is a summary of that provided by all those people that were interviewed. The areas discussed were:

Staff Recruitment

The Task Group concentrated on the following areas when considering the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy.

- a) Recruitment – the process for external vacancies and where these were advertised.
- b) All applicants with a disability who met the minimum criteria for the vacancy would be interviewed and considered on their abilities - clarification as to whether this was classed as positive discrimination.
- c) Whether the Council had short term contracts for staff and how these were managed and monitored.

The process for filling a vacancy was explained – starting with the initial discussion at Corporate Management Team, when the relevant Head of Service would put forward a case for the need for the new or vacant post to be filled, to the position being advertised usually on the West Midlands Jobs Portal, which was also used for internal vacancies as well as external. This was a platform used by all local authorities in the West Midlands. The link on the Portal would then take any prospective candidate through to the Council's specific pages and the job specification, description, and application form would be available at that stage. If it was a specialist role, perhaps an IT one for example, then it may also be advertised in a specific publication.

Members discussed how the ethnic make-up of the Council influenced the recruitment process and whether or if there was an in balance and how this could be addressed. Officers acknowledged that currently there were some gaps in the data available and therefore it would not be appropriate to use this for such purposes. Reference was again made to the introduction of the new ERP System and a specific area of that system which would cover HR matters (highlighted in the previous chapter of this report) which it was hoped would provide more accurate data that could be used to shape future recruitment as part of the wider strategy. Officers were urged to be more forward thinking within the recruitment process to ensure that the Council was able to recruit people from a wider range of communities. It needed to promote the availability of flexible working hours, the ability to work from home and childcare support, as these were areas which were now, more than ever, important to employees, following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members were provided with information in respect of fixed term contracts and it was noted that currently there were 41 in place, which were managed by the relevant service area. Such posts were arranged by the relevant area for a number of reasons, with the introduction of the new system it was hoped that these would be better managed and more detailed information made available. It was confirmed that if any of these fixed term contracts were replaced with a permanent post, the person currently in the role would still need to apply for it through the usual route and would not automatically be awarded the position. There was a clear recruitment process which should be followed throughout to ensure the process was open and transparent.

The importance of data being available in respect of all aspects of recruitment was discussed by the Task Group and it was keen to ensure that this data (which would hopefully be provided through the new ERP System) was monitored on a regular basis to ensure improvements were made and achievements highlighted.

Secondment to Other Departments

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager provided information as to what secondment meant and how this was handled at the Council. As it was apparent that there was not a set policy in respect of this the main area for discussion by the Task Group was the need for a clear

explanation of the process and how it was managed in order to ensure that there was a fair process in place for all staff.

It was explained to the Task Group that a secondment was a temporary transfer to another area, whilst the person's substantive role remained open to them to return to at the end of the set period of the secondment. The post would be advertised internally and if a person was interested in that secondment post then, after going through the recruitment process and with their current manager's agreement, they could be moved to that post, whilst retaining the ability to return to their main post in the future. It was seen as an opportunity for both the employee and the employer as it allowed someone from another team who may have transferrable skills to use those skills and expand their knowledge within the Council environment.

Whilst it was understood that secondment opportunities were advertised through the recruitment process, concerns were raised that some staff may not have easy access to this and were unaware or did not fully understand the meaning of secondment and the opportunities available to them. Concerns were also raised in respect of it being at the manager's discretion to allow a member of staff to be released for a secondment post. It was suggested that there should be a more formal process put in place with the opportunity for a member of staff to appeal against a manager's decision, or at least for a full and open discussion to take place in order for all those concerned to understand why a request for secondment had been turned down. It was felt that this would ensure that all staff members were treated equally and provided an open and transparent process for everyone concerned. There was also discussion around the length of time a secondment should and did actually last, as it was felt that if these went on for any length of time, it was not beneficial to the member of staff or the team that they had been seconded from, as it would leave a level of uncertainty for all concerned. If a secondment went on for any length of time, it was thought that a permanent post should be considered and not a secondment.

Staff Progression within the Organisation

Task Group Members were keen to ensure that all staff were given the opportunity to progress if they so wished within the Council. It was felt important to retain staff and encourage them to aim to continually improve their skills if they wished too. Concerns were raised that this was not always the case and that it often was dependant on the area that a member of staff worked in as to what support and training was available, which if this was the case, was not acceptable. The following three areas in respect of progression were those which the Task Group mainly concentrated on for the purposes of this investigation.

- a) Provide a clear definition of "progression".
- b) Progression Policy – as the Council did not have a specific policy what steps were in place to help staff progress. For example, what training opportunities were available.

- c) Whether a record of the number of staff who had progressed within the Council was kept.

The Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager explained that it was difficult to define progression, as each person had a different view on it, for example some people would be happy in the same job but want to get the most out of it and others would want to use a job to develop skills and move forward in a more career-based way. It was also noted that in the current fast-moving climate of employment, many roles that people were in had by the nature of them changed significantly from when they first started, so it could be said that they had technically “progressed”, albeit indirectly and not in the formal sense. It was also highlighted that people were much more flexible these days, so again roles would have developed in some particular areas, whilst in others those roles would be much more defined.

It was explained that these areas, together with others, would be discussed at the regular 1-2-1 meetings which managers carried out with each member of their team and again at an annual Personal Development Review (PDR) in more detail. There was a standard format for these meetings, but they could also be flexible to meet the needs of an individual and/or the requirements of the line manager. The format that was followed for each individual staff member would be discussed and agreed with them at the outset of these meetings. There would be an opportunity at those meetings to talk about transferrable skills and training opportunities, either at the request of the staff member or the line manager if an area where this was needed was identified. It was explained that the current HR system was not able to provide detailed data around cases where people had “progressed”, but it was anticipated that the new system would be able to do so. It was confirmed that the PDR would be held annually and reviewed six monthly with 1-2-1s taking place regularly, but again this was down to the staff member and line manager to agree an appropriate timescale.

Members generally agreed that progression had a different meaning for each individual, and it was also commented that in some cases people did not wish to progress but were happy within their role and it would be wrong to make them feel pressured into moving on if they did not wish to do so. Officers confirmed that it would be down to personal choice and a member of staff would not be put under any unnecessary pressure. It was therefore noted that whilst the Council’s policy of progression was embedded within the appraisal process, Members were keen to ensure that the appraisals were carried out and the appropriate opportunities made available to everyone. It was agreed therefore that a more formal approach should be taken in respect of progression, which provided staff with clear guidelines set out in a policy of how this worked, what they might expect from it and how they would be supported through the process.

Conflicting information was provided in respect of those staff members who regularly received 1-2-1s and PDRs and Members highlighted the importance of these taking place across the board to ensure all staff were given the same opportunities to progress if they so wished or to take part in any relevant training

to either support their current roles or to help them progress. It was acknowledged that there was always some room for improvement and that this was something which was reviewed on a regular basis. If a member of staff was not happy with the manner in which they were being supported by a manager there was always the opportunity for them to speak to a more senior manager or for them to speak to an HR Advisor – each service area had a designated HR Advisor who was available for anyone to speak to about concerns that they may have.

Concerns were also raised in respect of training that was provided and made available to staff, Members were keen to ensure that any training provided was appropriate for those receiving it and cost effective. They saw little benefit in providing sessions which people did not attend for whatever reason, particularly if an external training provider was being used as it was important for the Council to get value for money from any sessions it organised. They were also keen to ensure that staff were given the opportunity to attend training sessions where appropriate, as they were mindful that in some cases, for example refuse collectors, the release of them for say half a day, could impact on service delivery, so may deter them from attending such sessions.

It was suggested that progression added value to the Council and that currently there was no evidence to say how many staff had progressed and whether the policy was therefore inclusive of everyone. It was explained that whilst a member of staff could say they had progressed there was currently nothing on the current HR system used to support this, so any data would be anecdotal. Whilst this hard evidence was not present, Officers were satisfied through talking to people and from internal intelligence that this did happen in particular areas. However, it was accepted that there was not the definitive data available to support this. Again, it was hoped that with the new ERP System this would improve and allow a better monitoring process to be in place and it would be an area which was reviewed on a regular basis going forward.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 3

That when the new ERP system is in use, the data collated by it in respect of HR issues be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Recommendation 4

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) That clear guidelines are put in place in respect of the secondment process (which would include some sort of appeals process) and made accessible to all staff; andb) That a formal progression policy be put in place and made accessible to all staff. |
|---|

Chapter 3

Community and Engagement Strategy

During the interview with the Policy Manager Members asked about how community engagement influenced the Council's policies. The Policy Manager explained to the Task Group how community engagement was used to influence the Council Plan through the annual community survey. The results of these surveys were shared with the Corporate Management Team and also through Cabinet. They were used by Managers within reports and questions or smaller surveys could be used for a particular piece of work for a specific area. An example of this was when it was used within Leisure Services and helped to shape what services were provided to meet the needs of the residents. There had been a good return rate of nearly 1k for this particular survey.

The Task Group was provided with a brief overview of the results of the most recent Community Survey and, the three questions which had been included in respect of equalities. Members were pleased to see that there had also been a section provided for free text to allow residents to respond on a more general basis. It was noted that the majority of responses had been positive, with the Council being fair and inclusive.

Information was also provided in respect of a recent staff survey which was based around working from home. The Council had felt, that due to the current situation arising from the impact of the pandemic, it was important to ensure that all staff, who were working from home were being supported appropriately and given the opportunity to share any concerns or specific issues they faced. The Council was also mindful of the impact of working from home on staff's mental health and wellbeing and was keen to ensure that wherever possible this was addressed, and suitable mechanisms put in place for staff to be able to access any support that was needed. Members were provided with a number of outcomes which had been put in place following this survey.

The Task Group discussed the importance of hearing from residents about their experiences and how they felt the Council were meeting the needs of those from the protected characteristics groups and it was therefore suggested that more detailed questions around equalities could be included in the next community survey. Members of the Task Group would be happy to work with the Policy Manager in formulating these questions to ensure that they focused on the right areas and covered any specific areas which were highlighted to Members whilst working in their local communities.

It was also discussed as to how best the Community Survey could be promoted to ensure as many residents as possible completed it as it was acknowledged that robust data was needed in order for it to be used in a meaningful way. Members were keen to add their support to any campaign that was put in place to promote the survey and were happy to work with officers to get the best results for all concerned. It was vitally important that community groups

engaged with the Council to help make any necessary improvements in the future.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 5

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) That a specific section on Equalities be included within the annual Community Survey; andb) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board (or Members of the Equalities Task Group) are involved in the preparation of the questions to be included. |
|---|

Areas to Note

There was one particular area which the Task Group considered briefly at its final meeting and whilst they did not feel it appropriate to make any recommendation on this matter, they would like this to be looked at in more detail and action taken if felt appropriate. This was in respect of compliments and complaints received by the Council and there were two specific areas which the Task Group discussed and wished to be highlighted:

- Compliments and Complaints page and the Customer Care Pledge on the Council's website – it was suggested that these be in a more prominent position (in order to make them easier for residents to locate) and promoted through the Council's social media on a more regular basis.
- Members also discussed that it would be useful for them to receive regular updates on the number and type of compliments and complaints that were received. It was acknowledged that this was available through the Corporate Dashboard, but it was felt that this should be something which was received at a committee, such as the Overview and Scrutiny Board. It was noted that in previous years, this was a report which had been received by the Board on a quarterly basis, as part of its role of managing the Council's performance.

It should also be noted that as part of the investigation it carried out, the Task Group did also discuss and consider whether it was appropriate to "invite" in members of the public to one of its meeting or to set up a survey of its own to get the views of residents. However, after discussion it was agreed that in light of the current position and the impact of Covid-19 that logistically this would not be practicable and that in the current difficult times there may not be sufficient responses in order to provide meaningful data. Hence, the suggestion that future Community Surveys included more questions around equalities as detailed in the previous chapter of this report. There were a number of Members of the Task Group who had contacts with a number of community groups in their Wards and it was agreed that they would support the Policy Manager in making contact with those groups to encourage further community engagement. It was suggested that other Members may also have a number of contacts which could prove helpful to the Policy Manager and this should be explored further as the Covid-19 restrictions were reduced.

It was felt important that all Members played a part in improving and supporting community engagement in any way that they could.

Appendix 1

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

Equalities Task Group

Terms of Reference as at August 2020

The Identifying and Addressing Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations Task Group has been set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Board to carry out detailed scrutiny/pre-scrutiny of the above topic.

1. The Task Group be made up of 9 Members with a quorum of 5. The Task Group will meet throughout the next six months at intervals to be decided by the Group.
2. Meetings will be restricted to 1.5 hours in order for the Group to remain focused (with the option to extend should it be deemed necessary).
3. The Task Group agreed that if Members missed more than 2 meetings then they would no longer be on the Task Group.
4. The Task Group will be a standing item on the agenda of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and either a verbal or written report will be provided at each of the Board's meetings.
5. The Task Group is able to make recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Board who will then put forward its recommendations for consideration by Cabinet or directly to Cabinet/Council.
6. The Task group is expected to complete the investigation in six months and provide its findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in a written report at that time.
7. Should the Task Group not complete its work within that timescale, then an interim report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board with a request for further time to complete the investigations.

Aims and Objectives of the Task Group

The Task Group will undertake a scrutiny investigation into Identifying and Addressing Disparities of those who come under the protected characteristics communities (as detailed within the Equalities Act 2010) within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations and will cover the following areas, although this list is not exclusive:

Agenda Item 5

- Identify if any disparities exist within the Council's operations.
- How easy is it for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME), together with those groups included within the protected characteristics communities of the Equalities Act 2010, residents to access council support?
- Identify ways that these disparities, if any, can be addressed

For information, the protected characteristics communities within the Equalities Act 2010 are as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Appendix 2

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Documents

Equalities Strategy

Engagement Strategy

Recruitment and Selection Policy

Contractors Equalities Questionnaire

External Documents

Equalities Act 2010

Appendix 3

WITNESSES

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations:

Internal Witnesses:

Deb Poole – Head of Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy

Rebecca Green – Policy Manger

Becky Talbot – Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager

Laney Walsh – Unison Representative

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

Bromsgrove District Council, Parkside Offices, Market Street

Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 8DA

Telephone: (01527) 881443

Email: scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk

Cabinet
2021

7th July

Review of Services to Prevent Flooding Task Group Final Report

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Margaret Sherrey
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Guy Revans, Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services
Report Author Jo Gresham	Job Title: democratic Services Officer Contact email: joanne.gresham@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Communities which are safe, well-maintained and green
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- (a) the report and the recommendations attached at Appendix 1 be approved;

2. BACKGROUND

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Any financial implications are detailed within the main body of the report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any legal implications are detailed within the main body of the report.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 This report would come under Communities which are safe, well-maintained and green.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 Any Climate Change implications are detailed within the main body of the report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 There would be some resource implications arising from approval of the recommendations which have been highlighted to the relevant Head of Service.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Overview and scrutiny is a key part of the Council's democratic decision-making process and enables non-executive Members of the Council to put forward recommendations for policy development, policy review and service improvement.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Review of Services to Prevent Flooding Task Group – Final Report

(Background papers are listed within the main report.)

Cabinet
2021

7th July

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services is aware of the report	March 2021
Lead Director / Head of Service	Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services is aware of the report	March 2021
Financial Services		
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	N/A	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	N/A	

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

REVIEW OF SERVICES TO PREVENT FLOODING TASK GROUP

FINAL REPORT

March 2021



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK GROUP



Councillor Rob Hunter



Councillor Andrew Beaumont



Councillor Steve Colella



Councillor Harrison Rone-Clark



Councillor Caroline Spencer

Supporting Officer Details

Jo Gresham – Democratic Services Officer

joanne.gresham@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Foreword from the Chairman

Flooding can cause severe damage to homes and possessions and disrupt communities. It can also pollute the environment and threaten ecosystems. In the worst cases it can cause injury and even loss of life. With the onset of climate change, flooding events are becoming more frequent, more severe and less predictable. The importance of good mitigation and flood alleviation work is now widely recognised. We must do whatever we can to reduce the risk of harm to our residents, businesses and the natural environment.

Bromsgrove District Council is not the Lead Local Flood Authority, but we do have some responsibility for flood alleviation work and a strong history of working successfully with our partner agencies to minimise the risks faced by local communities. This Task Group was established to see how we can build on this to tackle the increasingly severe threat that flooding now presents. I am pleased to report that we have taken a pragmatic approach, examining the roles and functions that BDC already has, to see where our flood alleviation work might be strengthened.

I am extremely grateful to Councillors Beaumont, Colella, Rone-Clarke and Spencer for their commitment to this important work over the last six months. I am delighted to have been able to work cross party to agree a number of practical and realistic proposals that will go a long way to improve flooding prevention in Bromsgrove. Our proposals cover a broad range of functions from Environmental Services to Planning and I believe they have real potential to make a positive difference to our communities.

Of course, we could not have done any this without the expert advice and guidance of colleagues at Bromsgrove District Council, alongside those from North Worcestershire Water Management, Worcestershire County Council and Severn Trent Water. On behalf of the task group, I would like to thank all our dedicated Bromsgrove officers and those from partner agencies for advising and facilitating our group. I'm really looking forward to seeing the proposals we developed together being put into action.

Councillor Rob Hunter
Chairman, Impact of Flooding in the District Task Group

Summary of Recommendations

Chapter 1 – Staffing

Recommendation 1
That consideration be given to the appoint two full-time specialist land drainage operatives for Bromsgrove and that a business case be undertaken.
Financial Implications for recommendations: There will be financial implications for regarding the appointment. The approximate costs would be £100k. This is subject to confirmation from any business case undertaken.
Legal Implications for recommendations: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase in land drainage staff. 2. Officer time to undertake the business case

Chapter 2 – Information and Communications

Recommendation 2
That a publicity campaign within the local community to raise the profile of North Worcestershire Water Management be carried out.
Financial Implications for recommendations: There would be no financial implications if the campaign were carried out online but if campaign materials such as posters or leaflets were to be used then there would be a small cost involved.
Legal Implications for recommendations: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time

Recommendation 3
That the responsible authority(ies) publish a timetable of road sweeping and gully cleaning across the district.
Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time.

Recommendation 4
That an annual item in respect of flooding be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme.
Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications in relation to this recommendation.
Legal Implications: There are no direct legal implications in relation to this recommendation.
Resource Implications: Officer time.

Chapter 3 – Local Plan

Recommendation 5
1. RECOMMENDED that a) as part of the review of Bromsgrove’s local plan, adopt strict new planning policies requiring all new developments to consider the use of sustainable drainage facilities should be adopted; and b) this should include measures for watercourse enhancement and flood alleviation where necessary; and

c) the Council will consider, subject to S106 funding, adopt land featuring watercourses and SuDS features on new developments.

Financial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications in relation to a) and b) of this recommendation. In respect of recommendation c) if adoption of all the sites were agreed there would be financial implications, although these would currently be difficult to predict.

Legal Implications:

There are no direct legal implications in relation to a) and b) of this recommendation. In respect of recommendation c) if adoption of all the sites were agreed there would be legal implications, although these would currently be difficult to predict.

Resource Implications:

Officer time.

Background Information

In February 2020, Councillor R. Hunter presented a topic proposal form containing proposed objectives for a Task Group entitled Review of Services to Prevent Flooding Task Group. Councillor Hunter highlighted the severe flooding that many areas of Bromsgrove had experienced during Autumn 2019 and the difficulty in ascertaining who was responsible for remedying flooding events due to the number of agencies involved and their areas of responsibilities.

The key objectives of the proposed Task Group were as follows:

- Review key incidents of flooding in the district, their causes and the effectiveness of responses.
- Assess whether sufficient work is being undertaken to reduce the risk of flooding
- Assess whether sufficient resources are made available for this work
- Assess whether there is sufficient transparency over responsibilities for managing and reducing the risk of flooding

Following consideration of the topic proposal at its meeting on Monday 10th February 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed that a Task Group should be set up and appointed Councillor R. Hunter as its Chairman and requested that the Group report back with its findings within 12 months.

Due to the impact of Covid-19 there had been a delay in confirmation of the Members of the Task Group. However, at the June 2020 meeting of the Board, the Terms of Reference of the Task Group were confirmed. It was agreed that the work of the Task Group would begin as soon as possible. Councillor Hunter requested that Members be contacted again to see if there was any further interest in joining the Task Group.

Following its initial meeting on 16th July 2020, the Task Group agreed the work programme for the Task Group and key witnesses they would like to interview.

The Group has held 6 meetings in total since that date and carried out interviews with a number of key witnesses. The interviews were focussed on the following questions and the Task Group's recommendations reflect the areas that the Task Group investigated in detail:

1. What kind of work does the agency carry out with residents to mitigate flooding issues?
2. How do all the agencies work together?
3. What monitoring and flood alleviation projects are currently being undertaken?

Agenda Item 6

4. Are there any additional measures that this authority in partnership with the other agencies could be taking to reduce the risk of flooding in the key hot spots?
5. Are any more resources required?

Chapter 1 – Staffing

During the investigation, one of the main areas Members were interested in was understanding more fully the regularity of works undertaken by officers from all of the agencies involved. During their interview with Senior Water Management Officers from North Worcestershire Water Management (NWWM) it was reported that the Place Team from Environmental Services at Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) carried out minor maintenance of grids in advance of heavy rain, and watercourse maintenance when required. NWWM reported that the Place Team did a very good job of carrying out these works, however the approach was more reactive than proactive due to the limited resources.

When interviewing the Environmental Services Manager from BDC, Members were informed that currently Worcestershire County Council (WCC) worked to a schedule of clearing road drains using high level data gathered by GPS monitoring for each ward, with areas more prone to flooding and debris being visited for clearance more often. It was clarified to the Task Group that sometimes the schedule was not able to be carried out as planned due to inclement weather or needs in other areas of the District. Indeed, it was noted that WCC previously had a schedule of works for the Wythall area in respect of road gully clearance. It was noted that these works had decreased over time in order to deal with needs in other known sites in the District. Members were informed that the cycle of works could be every 18 months and it was felt by the Task Group that this length of time was not satisfactory particularly as the cleaning of gullies and watercourses could reduce the risk of future flooding events.

As a result of the information received from both Environmental Services Manager at BDC and the Senior Water Management Officer from NWWM the Task Group agreed that there seemed to be issues with the regularity of maintenance works and that this might be linked to staffing levels.

Currently there are no land drainage operatives that operate for Bromsgrove District Council. Work undertaken regarding the maintenance of water courses and culverts is currently carried out by the Place Team or Parks and Leisure Team in Bromsgrove. This does not occur as a part of a schedule of works but when there is capacity or if a need is identified. The group initially discussed the option to hire one drainage operative. However, it was clarified by the Environmental Services Manager that teams had to undertake work with water in pairs (at least) for Health and Safety reasons and that a team of two BDC operatives would be needed to monitor the water courses and culverts in the Bromsgrove region to provide proactive maintenance. Members agreed that a team would be beneficial and would go towards reducing the costs involved in restoring homes, businesses, and highways after a flooding event.

Agenda Item 6

The employment of two officers to join the team would enable regular maintenance of the 12.6km of Bromsgrove watercourses that were owned or maintained by BDC or that lacked maintenance due to unclear ownership. This would replace the current ad hoc approach which did not always provide enough resources to reduce the risk of serious flooding incidents from occurring. The Task Group agreed that where necessary, if flood alleviation work was undertaken on watercourses not owned by BDC a recharge policy would be pursued, bringing in additional revenue to the Council to help mitigate any costs from increased staffing levels.

A comparison to the cost of the Redditch Borough Council team was made and an estimate of approximately £100,000 was given, this included salaries, vehicles, maintenance and equipment for the drainage operatives. Officers advised that a business case would detail the exact costs and would be more appropriate given the costs involved.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 1
That consideration be given to appoint two full-time specialist land drainage officers for Bromsgrove and that a business case be undertaken.

Chapter 2 – Information and Communications

During the interview with the Environmental Services Manager, it was clear that many agencies were involved in dealing with flooding in the District, including Worcestershire County Council (WCC) as Lead Local Flood and Highway Authority, NWWM, Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency. In some areas it was reported that there were overlaps which caused complexity and roles were sometimes not as clearly defined as they might have been. This was confirmed at other interviews throughout the investigation and Members discovered that although the agencies involved knew their responsibilities it was not always so clear to members of the public when reporting a flooding event.

In addition to the clarity of roles there was evidence provided during the investigation that communication and engagement with local communities was a powerful tool in the prevention of flooding in the District. Evidence was presented by NWWM that closer working with local landowners had helped when enforcement was needed in cases of blocked culverts and ditches on their land which might result in a flood.

Severn Trent Water also suggested that Members should encourage residents to report flooding issues when experienced, as more notifications that were received resulted in greater leverage for agencies to investigate and reduce the risk of flooding and for future potential sources of funding. In addition to this, it was reported during the interview with Severn Trent Water that the majority of residential flooding issues were caused by wastewater misuse such as incorrect disposal of wet wipes, nappies and food waste and any communication by Members in respect of correct disposal of waste would be appreciated. Members thought this was useful information and that there needed to be heightened awareness within communities of the problems of water misuse. It was agreed that this was an area where Members could certainly provide assistance.

In respect of reporting a flood on the highway, the Task Group were informed by WCC officers that flood events could be reported through the portal on the WCC website. Signposts were also detailed on the portal for residents to report all types of flooding events including those on a main river, watercourse, surface water and sewer flooding. In fact, all agencies had mechanisms to report an incident and Members acknowledged that this was useful but agreed that residents who did not have a clear picture of the structure of flood management agencies would not necessarily always report to the most appropriate agency.

During the investigation Members were also keen to understand the schedule of works carried out regularly by agencies so that when residents contacted them regarding a flooding issue, they were able to refer them to information of when works were last carried out and when they would be carried out in the future.

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Although both BDC and WCC confirmed that works were cyclic and planned, there were times when there needed to be amendments to respond to unexpected events or adverse weather conditions which meant that the work could not be carried out as planned. Members felt that this was an area that needed to be addressed for the future.

Across all of the interviews that were carried out by the Task Group there was evidence that greater engagement with local communities and communication helped when dealing with flooding issues in local communities. It was also suggested that greater engagement resulted in more reporting of flooding, better relationships between communities and agencies which resulted in a more proactive approach from both parties.

Members were keen to have an online campaign that promoted the work of NWWM and highlighted the roles of Flood Management agencies. It was noted that previously campaigns such as these had been carried out on the Council's social media platforms and websites and that these might be an appropriate way to communicate with a larger number of residents. In addition to this, press releases and the provision of information to Members in order for them to distribute to their networks would also be an appropriate way of communicating to local communities.

During the discussion of potential recommendations, it was suggested that it might be useful for an annual report in respect of flooding to be prepared for 2021 and annually thereafter and provided to Members. It was queried what the purpose would be for this presentation of this report as it could potentially take up a lot of officer resource and might only be used to gather information that could be accessed in an alternative way. There was particular interest from some Members regarding flood plains and any reported changes to them. It was confirmed that the information regarding flood plains was the responsibility of The Environment Agency and that they were not updated annually as it was an expensive and detailed project and so it would not be possible to include this information as part of an annual report. It was agreed that the most effective way to monitor any flooding work being undertaken by the Council was the addition of an annual Flooding item to the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 2
Run a publicity campaign within the local community to raise the profile of North Worcestershire Water Management, the work it does and how the public can get in contact with the various flood risk management authorities if they are concerned about flooding or drainage issues

Recommendation 3

That the responsible authority(ies) publish a timetable of road sweeping and gully cleaning across the district.

Recommendation 4

That an annual item in respect of flooding be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme.

Chapter 3 – Local Plan

The Task Group discussed the importance of measures that were currently taken by BDC regarding Flood Management. All agencies that were interviewed by the Task Group provided information and evidence that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) were part of future flood risk management planning and, as the Council was responsible for contributing to their implementation, this was considered by Members as an important topic to look at as part of their investigation and that Water Management was a significant area for the Council going forward.

NWWM provided evidence during their interview with the Task Group that SuDS were designed to drain an area in a more sustainable fashion compared to some more conventional techniques. In addition to this, it was reported to Members that, SuDS aimed to improve water quality, biodiversity and the amenity of an area while managing the quantity of water. WCC had also provided evidence that one of its future challenges was the exploration of options for the future maintenance of SuDS.

The Task Group were provided with a copy of the current Local Plan and discussed in detail the inclusion of SuDS within it. Members acknowledged that SuDS were already included in the Local Plan as part of the Water Management policy. However, it was noted that currently a review of the Local Plan was underway, and the Task Group members were keen to ensure the inclusion and consideration of SuDS in any future iterations of the Local Plan, particularly as they were considered such an important area for future local developments. Members also agreed that this would ensure that Planning Officers could be supported to enforce sustainable and appropriate new developments. Members were all in agreement with this. It was agreed that clarification was required on whether SuDS features are being considered for all developments. The Chairman added that the recommendation would clarify the existing plans.

The Task Group therefore recommends the following:

Recommendation 5
<p>RECOMMENDED that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) as part of the review of Bromsgrove's Local Plan, adopt strict new planning policies requiring all new developments to consider the use of sustainable drainage facilities should be adopted; andb) this should include measures for watercourse enhancement and flood alleviation where necessary; andc) the Council will consider, subject to S106 funding, adopt land featuring watercourses and SuDS features on new developments.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD –Review of Services to Prevent Flooding Task Group

Terms of Reference as at July 2020

The Review of Services to Prevent Flooding Task Group has been set up by the Overview & Scrutiny Board to carry out detailed scrutiny/pre-scrutiny of the Review of Services to Prevent Flooding in the District.

1. The Task Group will be made up of 5 Members with a quorum of 3. The Task Group will meet throughout the next six months (with a caveat to extend, if necessary) at intervals to be decided by the Group.
2. The Task Group will be a standing item on the agenda of the Overview & Scrutiny Board and either a verbal or written report will be provided at each of the Board's meetings.
3. The Task Group is able to make recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Board who will then put forward its recommendations for consideration by Cabinet or directly to Cabinet/Council.
4. The Task group is expected to complete the investigation in six months (with a caveat to extend, if necessary) and provide its findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in a written report at that time.

Aims and Objectives of the Task Group

Scrutiny of the Review of Services to Prevent Flooding Task Group will cover the following areas, although this list is not exclusive:

- Review key incidents of flooding in the district, their causes and the effectiveness of responses.
- Assess whether sufficient work is being undertaken to prevent flooding
- Assess whether sufficient resources are made available for this work
- Assess whether there is sufficient transparency over responsibilities for managing and preventing flooding.

Appendix 2

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL

This form can be used for either a Task Group or a Short Sharp Review topic proposal.

Completed forms should be returned to scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk – Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council.

Name of Proposer: Rob Hunter
Email: r.hunter@bromsgrove.gov.uk
Date: 16/01/2020

Title of Proposed Topic (including specific subject areas to be investigate)	Review of services to prevent flooding
Background to the Proposal (Including reasons why this topic should be investigated and evidence to support the need for the investigation.)	Many areas across Bromsgrove experienced severe flooding during Autumn 2019. Anecdotally there is evidence to suggest the problems were exacerbated by a lack of prevention work such as keeping brooks, drains and culverts clear. Furthermore, as flood prevention transcends the remit of a number of authorities it can be difficult to establish which agency is responsible for remedying problems.
Links to national, regional and local priorities (including the Council's strategic purposes)	Bromsgrove District Council Plan strategic purpose: 'Communities which are safe, well-maintained and green'
Possible Key Objectives (these should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review key incidents of flooding in the district, their causes and the effectiveness of responses - Assess whether sufficient work is being undertaken to prevent flooding - Assess whether sufficient resources are made available for this work - Assess whether there is sufficient transparency over responsibilities for managing and preventing flooding
Anticipated Timescale for completion of the work.	One year
Would it be appropriate to hold a Short Sharp Inquiry or a Task Group? (please tick relevant box)	Task Group

Background Papers

External Documents

Bromsgrove Flood Risk Management Plan – Worcestershire County Council

Internal Documents

Bromsgrove District Plan – 2011 - 2030 (adopted January 2017)

Witnesses

The Task Group considered evidence from the following sources before making its recommendations:

Internal Witnesses:

Kevin Hirons – Environmental Services Manager, Bromsgrove District Council
Councillor Margaret Sherrey – Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services,
Bromsgrove District Council

External Witnesses

Fiona McIntosh, Senior Water Management Officer - North Worcestershire Water Management
Kristen Huizer, Senior Water Management Officer – North Worcestershire Water Management

Michael Green, Senior Flood Risk Consultant – Worcestershire County Council
Glen Lucitt - Worcestershire County Council

Tim Smith, Flooding and Partnerships Manager – Severn Trent Water
Jacqui Whitehead, Waste Network Asset Planning, Chief Engineer – Severn Trent Water
Mathew Jeynes, Waste Networks Operations Manager for Worcestershire - Severn Trent Water
Brandon Smith, Waste Catchment Lead - Severn Trent Water

Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

Bromsgrove District Council, Parkside Offices, Market Street

Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 8DA

Telephone: (01527) 881443

Email: scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk

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2021

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Bromsgrove District Plan – Local Development Scheme

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Adam Kent
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford
Report Author Mike Dunphy	Job Title: Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager Contact email: m.dunphy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881325
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run and Grow a Successful Business • Work and Financial Independence • Living Independent, Active and Healthy • Affordable and Sustainable Homes • Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained and Green • The Green Thread runs through the Council Plan
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet RECOMMEND that:-

That Appendix A: Bromsgrove District Council Local Development Scheme 2021 is approved as the Council’s programme for plan-making, effective as of 8th July 2021

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The previous Local Development Scheme (LDS) was adopted by the District Council in March 2018. This new LDS is required to update the programme of preparing and consulting on strategic planning documents, whilst continuing to reflect the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Since the previous LDS, the Bromsgrove District Plan Review (BDPR) has significantly progressed with the Issues and Options consultation being carried out in Autumn 2018, and a Review Update and Further Consultation and Call for Sites’ consultation taking place in Autumn 2019. **It must be stressed this report only addresses the timescales**

for the BDPR, the content of that review will be considered in subsequent reports.

- 2.2 A significant element of the LDS is the identification of the next stages in plan production. Unless some of the planning reforms identified in the 2020 'Planning for the Future' White Paper are brought forward more quickly than expected, the Preferred Option (PO) is the next significant stage in the BDPR development. The PO is the first version of the plan which looks and reads like a local plan with areas identified for development and policies drafted to guide that development. The PO is scheduled to be published for a full and wide-ranging consultation in summer 2022. The number of responses received to early consultations, in particular the Call for Sites element, and the level of analysis that has had to be done as a consequence, have lengthened the time that the plan will take to produce.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Whilst there are no immediate direct financial implications of adopting the revised Local Development Scheme, the costs to progress the District Plan Review through all stages of the plan-making process, including associated evidence gathering and ultimately independent examination will be considerable. The allocation of financial resources for progression of the District Plan Review has being considered though the budget setting process.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Local Development Scheme is produced under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The legislation states that Councils must prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme specifying:

- the Local Development Documents (LDDs) which are to be Development Plan Documents (DPDs);
- the subject matter and geographical area of each Development Plan Document;
- which Development Plan Documents (if any) are to be prepared jointly with one or more other local planning authorities;
- any matter or area in respect of which the authority has agreed (or propose to agree) to the constitution of a joint committee; and,
- the timetable for the preparation and revision of the Development Plan Documents.

- 4.2 The Localism Act 2011 removed the requirement to submit the LDS to the Secretary of State. It is however important for Councils to continue to publish up-to-date information on the progress of local development documents. The District Council thus has flexibility to decide how best to present this information to the public, although as a minimum Planning Practice Guidance states that the LDS should be published on the Council's website.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The publication of the LDS in itself does not have any direct implications for the strategic purposes. The BDPR will be a wide-ranging policy document which will likely impact on many if not all of the strategic purposes. These impacts will be covered fully in subsequent reports.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 The publication of a new LDS has no direct climate change implications although production of a new plan as soon as possible is critical in helping to meet new climate change targets. The BDPR will be prepared mindful of the need to meet the target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The publication of a new LDS has no Equality or Diversity implications. The BDPR will be accompanied by an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 There are no operational implications.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 A Local Development Scheme is essential to set the overall programme and identify how strategic planning documents will be managed and progressed.
- 7.2 Without an up to date Local Development Scheme, development plan documents at independent examination could be found unsound due to

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the Council failing to comply with a statutory duty contained in the Localism Act 2011.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Bromsgrove Local Development Scheme 2021

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Adam Kent	12 th May
Lead Director / Head of Service	Ruth Bamford	12 th May
Financial Services	James Howse	12 th May
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan	12 th May
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Rebecca Green	4 th May
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Kath Manning	28 th April

Local Development Scheme 2021

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Introduction

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a project plan, which sets out details of key planning policy documents which the local authority seeks to produce over the next three years. The LDS outlines opportunities for public and stakeholder involvement, as well as periods of evidence gathering and plan preparation. A Local Development Scheme is required under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). The legislation states that Councils must prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme specifying:

- the documents which are to be Local Development Documents (LDDs) and Development Plan Documents (DPDs);
- the subject matter and geographical area of each document;
- which documents (if any) are to be prepared jointly with one or more other local planning authorities;
- any matter or area in respect of which the authority have agreed (or propose to agree) to the constitution of a joint committee; and,
- the timetable for the preparation and revision of the documents.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that the LDS must specify (among other matters) the documents which, when prepared, will comprise the Local Plan for the area. It must be made available publically and kept up-to-date. It is important that local communities and interested parties can keep track of progress. Local planning authorities should publish the LDS on their website.

The LDS will come into effect on 16th June 2021. Figure 1 (see page 5) outlines an indicative timetable for the preparation of documents within the LDS.

Existing Policy Context

Major changes were made to the planning system through the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012, which was subsequently updated in February 2019. The NPPF sets out how local planning authorities should produce planning documents that will guide the development and use of land within a local authority area. The NPPF requires each local authority to produce a local plan for its area.

The Bromsgrove District Plan (2011-30) was formally adopted by Bromsgrove District Council in January 2017, following an independent examination in public and receipt of the Inspector's Report into the examination of the plan, concluding that the plan was judged to have been found 'sound'. The adoption of the District Plan superseded all policies contained within the previous Bromsgrove Local Plan 2004 and became the statutory development plan for the District.

The District Plan comprises: a vision and strategic objectives for the development of the District over the course of the plan period; strategic policies including site allocation policies to meet the development needs of Bromsgrove and, where relevant, adjacent authorities; and, development

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management policies which guide more detailed development proposals. The adopted plan also includes a Key Diagram and Policies Map, representing the policies and proposals in the plan visually.

Under the Localism Act 2011, Neighbourhood Plans can be produced by a Parish Council, or an organisation or body designated as a Neighbourhood Forum to provide more detailed guidance on specific local issues. Neighbourhood plans are subject to independent examination and a local referendum. If ultimately approved by referendum then the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' and the Council must bring the Neighbourhood Plan into force as part of the development plan for the local authority. As it is the decision of Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums to decide whether to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, it is not appropriate for the LDS to specify when or how they will be produced.

LDS 2021 – Proposed Development Plan Document

Bromsgrove District Plan Review

The adopted Bromsgrove District Plan (2011-30) provides a spatial strategy specific to the needs of Bromsgrove. It contains a set of policies for delivering the overall strategy and identifies strategic allocations for development through the production of a policies map. This map illustrates broad locations for strategic development and land-use designations.

The plan includes a requirement to undertake a Plan Review, to be completed by 2023 at the latest. It is imperative that the Plan Review is informed by an up-to-date evidence base, including further consideration of housing needs assessment in the context of not only Bromsgrove's local needs but also those arising from the adjacent West Midlands conurbation. As detailed in Policy BDP3 of the adopted District Plan, land is currently identified to provide for 4,700 dwellings of the overall 7,000 dwellings requirement for the plan period of 2011-30. A deficit of 2,300 dwellings therefore remains to be provided for to meet Bromsgrove's objectively assessed housing need under the adopted plan. The Plan Review will extend to a new time horizon, possibly up to 2040 and will plan for the new development requirements for that period. Significant progress has been made and it is still the aim to progress the Plan Review to adoption at the earliest opportunity.

Plan Preparation and Supporting Evidence

Progress on the Plan Review to date has comprised of two separate comprehensive consultation periods.

- September 2018 - Bromsgrove District Plan Review 'Issues and Options'
- September 2019 - Bromsgrove District Plan Review 'Review Update and Further Consultation' and Call for Sites.

The Call for Sites process has resulted in over 400 possible development sites across Bromsgrove District being brought to the Council's attention and understandably this has increased the time it will take to progress to a Preferred Option version of the Plan. As can be seen from the timetable the next significant stage is the Preferred Option which has been timetabled in for early 2022.

Work on the evidence base has also progressed significantly with key pieces of work underway, ready to inform the decisions taken when putting together the Preferred Option. It is hoped that this evidence will begin to be published over the autumn of 2021.

Timetable

The following chart (Figure 1) indicates the timetable for the production of the District Plan Review, including supporting evidence base documents, as referred to above. This chart identifies the key indicative dates in the process. A further summary profile of the Plan Review is contained in Appendix1.

Appendix 1 – Summary Profile of Bromsgrove District Plan Review

Bromsgrove District Plan Review		
Document Details	Role and Content	<p>Will review, update and extend the time horizon for the District Plan, setting out the vision, spatial strategy and core policies for the spatial development of the District. Will include strategic allocations to accommodate outstanding Bromsgrove local development needs to possibly 2040, additional needs for the extended time horizon of the Plan as well as potential unmet needs from adjoining local authority areas.</p> <p>A Policies Map will need to accompany the BDPR, which will illustrate geographically the policies in the plan and replace the current Policies Map associated with the existing BDP.</p>
	Status	Development Plan Document
	Position in chain of conformity	General conformity with National Planning Policy Framework
	Geographic coverage	District wide

Glossary

Adoption: The point at which the final agreed version of a document comes into force.

Local Development Scheme (LDS): Sets time-scales for the preparation of key documents including Local Development Documents and Development Plan Documents.

Local Plan: The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the Development Plan adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Development Plan Documents: The key planning documents at the local level subject to independent examination.

Examination in Public: Independent inquiry into the soundness of a draft Local Plan chaired by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

Inspectors Report: a report produced by the inspector following the Examination in Public which details the inspectors findings in relation to the plan.

Localism Act 2011: An Act to make provision about the functions and procedures of local and certain other authorities.

Local Development Scheme: This document is a project plan for the production of local planning policy documents.

National Planning Policy Framework: Document setting out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England, published February 2019.

National Planning Practice Guidance: The government launched its Planning Practice Guidance on 6 March 2014. The website brought together many areas of English planning guidance into a new online format, linked to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Neighbourhood plans: A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Policies Map: A map that shows the spatial extent of adopted planning policies and proposals affecting Bromsgrove District.

Publication: Point at which a draft Local Plan is published prior to its Submission to the Secretary of State for Examination. Also known as a 'Proposed Submission' stage.

Preferred Option Development / Evidence Publication: the element of local plan preparation where the Council prepares the preferred option or 'draft plan.' This involves the collection and analysis of technical evidence and previous consultation responses and call for sites submissions. As evidence becomes available the Council will publish it on the website.

Preferred Option Publication: Point at which the preferred option or draft plan is published for consultation.

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Submission Plan Development: the element of local plan preparation where the Council prepares the Submission This involves the collection and analysis of technical evidence and previous consultation responses.

Submission Plan Publication: The point at which the submission plan is published for its statutory period of representations / consultation.

Submission: The point at which a Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination along with representations received at Publication Stage.

Contact Details

Strategic Planning and Conservation Team

Email: strategicplanning@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Telephone: 01527 881325

Bromsgrove District Council
Parkside
Market Street
Bromsgrove
B61 8DA

For further information please visit the Strategic Planning section of the website:

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/strategicplanning

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Cllr Geoff Denaro
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Deb Poole – Head of Transformation, OD & Digital Services
Report Author	Job Title: ICT Transformation Manager Contact email: m.hanwell@bromsgrove.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881248	
Wards Affected		N/A
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		An effective & sustainable Council
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended		

1 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND

- 1.1 That the proposed Member ICT Policy be agreed and implemented for all Members and that the options within it be made available to Members.

2 **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The existing members ICT Policy is over 12 months old and requires updating to encompass the following :-
- 2.1.1 Two main options for device choice.
 - 2.1.2 Removal of reference to Blackberry Software for BYOD option.
 - 2.1.3 Emails, and Chats within Microsoft Teams, will be automatically deleted after 2 years.
 - 2.1.4 Reference to Microsoft Office 365 and Microsoft Teams instead of Skype.
 - 2.1.5 Added Asset Insurance provided by the council.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Equipment Options

3.1 **Option One**

The Council will provide Members with a choice of a standard Laptop or a lighter, portable, touch screen MS Surface Pro device.

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Date: July 2021

The cost for providing a standard Laptop is approximately £450. The cost of providing an MS Surface Pro device would be £680.

There are some options for additional equipment which can enhance the usability of these devices. In particular, docking stations which allow the device to be used like a desktop computer where an additional larger screen can be attached. These range in cost from £200 to £250 each.

3.3 Option Two

The option of Bring Your Own Device has no additional financial implications as this option, and the associated licenses for Members, are already available. There would be some potential ongoing savings if Councillors decided to use their own equipment, as the Council would not incur any costs to provide hardware.

4 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5 STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

An effective & sustainable Council

5.1 The ICT equipment proposed within the policy will allow Members to access corporate information to assist in supporting this, and other, strategic purposes.

Climate Change Implications

5.2 Using the ICT equipment proposed within the policy will enable less travel through the use of online meetings.

5.3 Any ICT equipment issued by Bromsgrove District Council will be sent for recycling at the end of its useful lifespan using an approved ISO-IEC27001, WEEE specialist or to a relevant charity once cleared down by the ICT department.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.1 None.

Operational Implications

6.2 The Members ICT Policy includes the removal of Blackberry Software and now includes the use of Microsoft Office 365 and Teams.

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7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 Insurance for equipment provided by the council, is provided by the Authority but Members are asked to ensure they store the device securely and take any appropriate measures to protect the device whilst in use. Insurance claims made will incur a £100 excess charge to the Democratic Services department.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

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Bromsgrove District Council

Members ICT Policy

July 2021

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1 Policy Statement

Bromsgrove Council Members require access to information that enables them to perform their duties as a councillor. Much of this information can be provided electronically via email, word processing and spreadsheet files. The Council's general presumption is for electronic provision of information / transaction of business.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Bromsgrove District Councillors can access Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities whilst maintaining compliance with Central Government's Public Service Network (PSN) and other related policies.

The Council holds large amounts of personal and restricted information. Information security is very important to help protect the interests and confidentiality of the Council and its customers. Information security cannot be achieved by technical means alone. Information security must also be enforced and applied by the people who use it and those who provide support for it.

3 Scope

This policy applies to any Councillor that requires access to Council information systems such as email or other documents, whether it is a temporary or permanent arrangement.

4 Definition

The Council understands that to reduce the risk of theft, fraud or inappropriate use of its information systems, anyone that is given access to Council information systems **must**:

- Be suitable for their roles.
- Fully understand their responsibilities for ensuring the security of the information.
- Only have access to the information they need.
- Request that this access be removed as soon as it is no longer required.
- Complete Data Protection training to ensure Members are clear on how information can be used when they are working on behalf of the council and when they are working on behalf of constituents, and how it should be stored.
- Ensure that no personal information that could be in breach of the data protection act, is stored on their laptop or other unencrypted device.

This policy must therefore be applied prior, during and after any user's access to information or information systems used to deliver Council business.

5 Provision for ICT equipment.

The Council recognises that individual Councillors have a requirement to access electronic information.

The governments zero tolerance approach to compliance with the PSN code of connection, has required the implementation of innovative methods of accessing ICT, whilst remaining within the budget and resource limitations of the Authority. Should the limits of the budget be reached, the Leader of the Council will revisit current ICT needs for the future.

The council will not automatically forward Council emails to personal email accounts such as Hotmail, Google mail etc. This is to ensure the authority complies with the Government's PSN code of connection.

Option One

The Authority will provide either a standard Laptop or a lighter, more portable, touch screen MS Surface Pro device. This will enable the Councillor to access the internet, corporate emails, corporate calendars, Microsoft Teams, Modern.Gov, MS Office suite and necessary documents. This option will include a security practice known as two factor authentication (2FA). This provides an additional security step using either a mobile phone or a physical token device. Members can choose which of these 2FA methods they wish to use and a token device will be provided if a mobile phone is either not available or not preferred.

Additional security may be added at a future date to keep in line with new PSN policy requirements.

Broadband services are to be provided by the Councillor and expenses for these claimed through the normal expenditure claim process at £100 per year (maximum 1 per household).

Support for the Laptop or Surface Pro Device will be provided by the authority's ICT department by telephoning 01527 881766 Mon-Fri 8:30 to 17:00.

All internet usage and electronic communication – including but not limited to emails and chat, sent and received via the corporate device, will be subject to automated scanning, monitoring and filtering to assist with ICT security and adherence to additional policies as described in section 9. This information can also be used to ensure relevant laws are adhered to.

Emails and Chat messages are automatically erased on a rolling 2 year basis but Members are requested to delete all information as soon as it becomes no longer needed.

It is the Councillor's responsibility to ensure their password for accessing any Corporate Information service is not shared with any other person and that connection to such services is ended by logging off the system, as soon as work is completed or the connection is left unattended. This is to prevent unauthorised access to information.

If it suspected that someone else may know their password, or any security problem has occurred, Councillors must report this to the helpdesk immediately so it can be rectified.

Insurance for equipment provided by the council, is provided by the Authority but Members are asked to ensure they store the device securely and take any appropriate measures to protect the device whilst in use. Insurance claims made will incur a £100 excess charge to the Democratic Services department

The Council provides the Laptop or Surface Pro device together with ancillary equipment and materials required, for the Councillor's functions as a Councillor. Use of this equipment for any other reason, including personal use or use by anyone other than a Councillor is not permitted.

All ICT equipment provided by the authority remains the property of the Council and must be returned at the end of the election term.

Option Two (can be in addition to Option One)

The Councillor provides their own Microsoft Laptop, Android or Apple device and the council provides technically secure software to enable the Councillor to access the internet, corporate emails, corporate calendars, Microsoft Teams, Modern.Gov, MS Office suite and necessary documents. This option will include a security practice known as two factor authentication (2FA). This provides an additional security step using either a mobile phone or a physical token device. Members can choose which of these 2FA methods they wish to use and a token device will be provided if a mobile phone is either not available or not preferred. The same 2FA can be used as per option1 if this option has already been selected.

Additional security may be added at a future date to keep in line with new PSN policy requirements.

Broadband services are to be provided by the Councillor and expenses for these claimed through the normal expenditure claim process at £100 per year (maximum 1 per household).

Support for the Councils Software, but not the device it is installed on, will be provided by the authority's ICT department by telephoning 01527 881766 Mon-Fri 8:30 to 17:00.

All internet usage and electronic communication sent via the councils login credentials – including but not limited to emails and chat, both sent and received, will be subject to automated scanning, monitoring and filtering to assist with ICT security and adherence to additional policies as described in section 9. This information can also be used to ensure relevant laws are adhered to.

It is the Councillor's responsibility to ensure their password for accessing any Corporate Information service is not shared with any other person and that connection to such services is ended by logging off the system, as soon as work is completed or the connection is left unattended. This is to prevent unauthorised access to information.

If it suspected that someone else may know their password, or any security problem has occurred, Councillors must report this to the helpdesk immediately so it can be rectified.

All ICT equipment (including software licenses) provided by the authority remains the property of the Council and must be returned at the end of the election term.

6 Policy Compliance

If any Member is found to have breached this policy, IT provision will be withdrawn. If a criminal offence is considered to have been committed further action may be taken to assist in the prosecution of the offender(s).

If you do not understand the implications of this policy or how it may apply to you, please seek advice from Members' Services or ICT.

7 Policy Governance

The following table identifies who within the council is Accountable, Responsible, Informed or Consulted with regards to this policy. The following definitions apply:

- **Responsible** – the person(s) responsible for developing and implementing the policy.
- **Accountable** – the person who has ultimate accountability and authority for the policy.
- **Consulted** – the person(s) or groups to be consulted prior to final policy implementation or amendment.
- **Informed** – the person(s) or groups to be informed after policy implementation or amendment.

Responsible	ICT Transformation Manager
Accountable	Head of Transformation, Organisational Development & Digital Services
Consulted	Corporate Management Team, Members' Services
Informed	All Councillors

8 Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed as it is deemed appropriate, but no less frequently than every twelve months.

Policy review will be undertaken by the ICT Transformation Manager.

9 References

The following Bromsgrove District Council policy documents are directly relevant to this policy.

- Central Government's PSN Policy
- Information Security Policy.
- Members' Code of Conduct and related Codes and Protocols.
- Social Media Policy.

10 Receipt and acceptance statement

I, Councillor _____ agree to comply with the policy items as stated within this document.

Signed _____ Date _____

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED STATEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO :

Democractic Services
Bromsgrove District Council
Parkside

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