

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.

- 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.

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.

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