

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

21ST NOVEMBER 2022, 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, H. J. Jones, P. J. Whittaker (as substitute) and C. J. Spencer

Observers: Councillor S. A. Webb and Councillor G. N. Denaro (on Microsoft Teams).

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. P. Carpenter (on Microsoft Teams), Mrs. D. Poole (on Microsoft Teams), Ms. J. Willis (on Microsoft Teams), Mrs. R. Nicholls (on Microsoft Teams), and Mr. M. Sliwinski.

45/2022

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Kriss and P. McDonald with Councillor P. Whittaker attending as a named substitute for Councillor A. Kriss.

Apologies were also submitted on behalf of the Leader of the Council, Councillor K. May, and the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety, Councillor M. Sherrey, who were invited to participate at the meeting in the capacity of observers.

46/2022

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor whipping arrangements on this occasion.

47/2022

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 11TH AND 24TH OCTOBER 2022

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings held on 11th October and 24th October 2022 were considered.

The Board took a short adjournment to allow for further inspection of the minutes of 24th October 2022 which were published in a supplementary agenda.

Councillor Spencer advised of a typographical error in the minutes of the meeting of 24th October 2022, whereby Councillor Spencer had not been recorded as present at the meeting when she had been in attendance. The Democratic Services Officer in attendance undertook to correct this error.

RESOLVED that subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 11th October and 24th October 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48/2022

CCTV DIGITALISATION UPGRADE

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented a report on CCTV digitalisation upgrade. It was reported that since the last update on the CCTV scheme in April 2022 a further six camera locations in the District had been upgraded to digital and all cameras within the scope of the CCTV scheme had been replaced.

It was noted that although most transmission lines were now digital and many analogue links had been replaced, three camera locations in the District remained on analogue transmission. It was underlined that these analogue transmission cameras still provided day and night surveillance capability. Members were informed that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had provided funding to the Council's CCTV project for the last five years and Officers recommended that decision on upgrading the remaining analogue cameras to digital be paused pending the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) grant funding becoming available.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the report in detail and commented on the viability of either funding the upgrades to the remaining analogue cameras from the capital budget or holding discussions with the PCC regarding provision of funding for this purpose. Officers responded that it was unlikely that the PCC would be in a position to provide funding for this in the next few years and that the Council would be prudent to be mindful of any additional capital and revenue costs given the current pressures. Most Members present expressed their preference for prioritising the upgrades of the remaining analogue cameras to digital and considered it pertinent that the PCC be approached on the issue of possible funding for these upgrade works. Members also felt that both the capital costs of these works and the annual revenue costs to maintain the new digital cameras were affordable for the Council and therefore it should be recommended to Cabinet that these upgrade works be carried out. Following the discussion, Members voted on the matter, and it was:

RECOMMENDED

- 1) that £48,600 be included in the Capital Programme and £6,030 per annum in the revenue budget as part of the review of the

Medium Term Financial Plan for the upgrade of CCTV cameras at Brook Road (Rubery), Wythall and Alverchurch, and;

- 2) that all options for obtaining external funding for CCTV system upgrades be pursued.

49/2022

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

Consideration of this item was deferred to a future meeting of the Board.

50/2022

UPDATE ON THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy presented an update on the development of the Corporate Performance Dashboard and in doing so reported that the dashboard was in the final stages of development and would soon be available to view by Members and the public via the Council's website.

It was noted that the public view of the dashboard would not incur licence costs that would otherwise need to be paid when issuing individual licences and this option also provided greater flexibility for Members in that the publicly available dashboard could be accessed from any PC that had an internet connection. It was highlighted that due to licensing policy for the Power BI suite, it would not be possible to provide access to the dashboard on a generic machine as licences were allocated to each named user.

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy reported that it was anticipated the ongoing cost of the dashboard would not exceed £3,000 in licence costs per year. In addition, the staff time needed to populate the system would be less than the time taken to populate the current alternative, which was less efficient. It was highlighted that this was on the assumption that Members agreed to using the dashboard in this format, that was by having access through the publicly available version of the dashboard.

It was highlighted that the use of automated processes to generate quarterly reports, for example, which was envisioned in the future would further reduce staff time costs. Members were informed that new measures would be added to the dashboard on an ongoing basis following the live release.

Following the presentation of the update, the following comments and answers were made:

- Officers clarified that the dashboard measures would be populated and updated on a regular basis to ensure the performance measures provided up-to-date performance status. It was noted that different measures were reported on a different time basis as data was collected monthly, quarterly or annually depending on the measure in question.

- Members expressed disappointment that the corporate performance dashboard had not yet been launched despite this matter being discussed in meetings for a number of years. In response, Officers reported that the project to replace the old system began in November 2020 and the performance dashboard would be available to view within the next two weeks.
- It was highlighted that in addition to the dashboard Members now receive a quarterly performance update report from Officers.
- It was explained that in the public view of the dashboard that would be available to Members there was an ability to filter data to allow for detailed analysis. The licensed users would have more functionality including the ability to input data and slightly more advanced filtering settings.
- It was noted that discussion would be held between the Leader of the Council and Officers on whether there was a need for Power BI licences to be obtained for Cabinet Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

51/2022

FUEL POVERTY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group, Councillor R. Hunter, presented the group's final report.

The Board was informed that at the start of the review there had already been 5,000 households living in fuel poverty in Bromsgrove and, based on reports from Act on Energy of recent increases in requests for help and support, it was likely that this number was growing. The Fuel Poverty Task Group had obtained evidence from a range of expert witnesses representing both the Council and external organisations and the group's recommendations were based on the evidence that had been gathered. These recommendations were ready to be implemented and this action would be timely.

The Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group took the opportunity to thank all the Task Group Members, witnesses and Officers for their contributions. He further commented that some of the actions outlined in the recommendations were already being undertaken, for example a leaflet on fuel poverty had already been introduced which contained useful information for the benefit of local residents. In addition, there was information already available on the Council webpages and links redirecting to the resources available on the Act of Energy website.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the work of the Task Group and the following responses were provided to questions asked:

- The Council and Act on Energy did a lot of work around publicity, to encourage people to come forward if they were struggling with energy costs or were in fuel poverty, and in addition sought to engage with those residents who were eligible but did not come forward.

- Some Members had also been distributing energy advice leaflets in their Wards, encouraging residents to seek support with energy and heating costs. The leaflets provided a list of all support services available locally.
- The Council also worked through Bromsgrove Partnership to coordinate the response across the District including the rural parts and encourage people to approach the Council without stigma.
- It was noted that Act on Energy had been receiving an unprecedented number of calls and they were hearing from many people who did not access their services before.
- Members discussed the support that was available through Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) including information about support with opening a bank account for people with poor credit rating and other financial tips through money advice section on the CAB's website.
- It was requested by Members that residents be signposted to Citizen Advice Bromsgrove (CAB) information on cost of living and fuel poverty through a full-page feature in the local newspapers and a feature in the local rural magazine.

During the discussion, Members expressed satisfaction with the report and the recommendations as proposed in the Fuel Poverty Task Group, subject to a minor change to recommendation 6, to require that the Cabinet should actively explore all external funding options available to the Council to support Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups.

On being put to the vote the Fuel Poverty Task Group report recommendations, subject to a minor change to recommendation 6, were endorsed to be recommended to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

- 1) The Council ensures its webpages are up to date and takes a proactive approach in promoting the various areas of support (including an up to date list of Warm Hubs/Spaces and support provided by local libraries in the District) available through as many different mediums as possible. For example, through its social media account and by learning from the best practice approaches used by other Councils;
- 2) A poster or booklet is created which includes a simple straight forward guide to all the various areas of support – this should be accessible in local buildings such as the libraries and Councillors provided with copies to hand out to residents or distribute for display on noticeboards;
- 3) Councillors are provided with the contact details of Act on Energy and encouraged to proactively liaise with the outreach workers to ensure access to support is readily available to residents within their Wards;

- 4) The Bromsgrove Partnership, supported by the Council, takes a lead role in the collection of high quality intelligence/data to ensure that the Council's partners can target their interventions where support is most needed;
- 5) The Bromsgrove Partnership (with input from all District Councillors and/or relevant Parish Councils) take a lead role in co-ordinating appropriate support, to ensure it is readily available for residents throughout the whole district, for example this could mean the provision of a Warm Hub/Space and the facilities offered by the local libraries;
- 6) The Cabinet actively explores all external funding options (for example the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) available to the Council in order to ensure that, if needed, it is able to provide financial support to VCS organisations throughout the district in providing the support detailed in recommendation 5 above.

52/2022

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman advised that there had been a meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group on 17th November 2022, with the following items discussed at that meeting:

- update on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023/24 to 2025/26;
- the Notice of Motion that was referred for consideration by the Finance and Budget Working Group at the meeting of Full Council held on 3rd November 2021;
- Finance and Performance Monitoring Report Q2 2022/23; and,
- An update on Fees and Charges 2023/24.

The Chairman reported that following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, it was announced that councils would be allowed to raise Council Tax by up to 2.99 per cent for the next financial year. It was also noted with respect to MTFP that the provisional local government financial settlement for 2023/24 was now expected to be announced in the week commencing 19th December 2022.

With respect to the Motion referred by the Full Council for consideration of the Finance and Budget Working Group, it was stated that it related to a proposal for the business case to be produced for providing free short term car parking for Blue Badge holders in all Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) owned car parks and subsequently considered as part of the budget setting process. The Chairman reported that although most Members considered the provision of this was considered prohibitively expensive for the Council at the current time, the Working Group asked Officers to first investigate if more up-to-date data could be provided from available sources, such as parking ticket machines, to determine the demand for Blue Badge parking spaces in Bromsgrove.

With regards to the Finance and Performance Monitoring Report for Q2, the Chairman reported that the Working Group was informed that the Council was forecasting a revenue overspend in the region of £342,000 for the 2022/23 financial year as of end of Q2. It was brought to the attention of Members that the staff pay award for 2022/23 had now been agreed, which presented an additional revenue cost of approximately £676,000 and which would need to be accounted for in the 2022/23 financial year.

With regards to Fees and Charges, the Chairman reported that at its 17th November meeting the Working Group considered those fees and charges that were for discretionary services provided by the Council and for which the Council was in direct competition with private sector organisations.

The Chairman announced that Councillor J. King had submitted a request to join the Finance and Budget Working Group for the remainder of this municipal year. During the discussion that followed, some Members argued in favour of holding a vote on the matter at this meeting. The majority of Members, however, put forward a proposal to defer making the decision on the matter to a future meeting to enable Officers to prepare a report detailing the constitutional implications of a Councillor who was not currently a Overview and Scrutiny Board Member joining the Finance and Budget Working Group.

This proposal was put to the vote and it was:

RESOLVED that a decision on the matter detailed in the pre-amble above be deferred to the next scheduled meeting of the Board when an Officer report is presented on the implications of a non- Overview and Scrutiny Board Councillor joining the Finance and Budget Working Group.

53/2022

TASK GROUP UPDATES

The Board received a final report on the Fuel Poverty Task Group earlier in the meeting under Minute No. 51/2022 (Fuel Poverty Task Group – Final Report). There were no other ongoing task groups to report before the Board.

54/2022

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor S. Baxter, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), reported that she submitted her apologies from the last meeting of that Committee. She reported that a considerable number of items had been added to the Worcestershire HOSC Work Programme.

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

55/2022

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

56/2022

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members were advised that an additional meeting of the Board would need to be scheduled in early February 2023 to consider the annual report of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership. The Democratic Services Officer would be in contact to agree on the exact date in due course.

Councillor Colella requested that data on the 'Exit Interviews' carried out with the Corporate Finance department staff who had left during 2020 until the end of 2021 be added to the Board's Work Programme for the February meeting, subject to any redactions necessary for protection of personal information.

The Chairman announced that items on the Levelling Up Fund projects (Windsor Street and Old Market Hall sites) and on climate change update from the Cabinet Portfolio Holder had also been added to the work programme for the January meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED that, subject to the preamble above, the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.14 p.m.

Chairman