

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

TUESDAY, 1ST JULY 2008 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors D. L. Pardoe (Chairman), A. N. Blagg, S. R. Colella and C. B. Taylor

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. P. Street, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. S. Sellers and Ms. D. McCarthy

9/08 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. M. Bunker and Dr. G. H. Lord.

10/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were made.

11/08 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Special Meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 22nd May 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record.

12/08 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY GUIDE**

Members considered the recently updated Overview and Scrutiny Guide for Bromsgrove District Council which was due to be uploaded on to the Council's website and the library section of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) website.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Guide be noted.

13/08 **ADDITIONAL TASK GROUP MEMBERS**

The Board considered the two additional completed membership forms for the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group from Councillors D. L. Pardoe and D. McGrath which had been submitted following a letter from the Board urging Members to consider joining the Task Group, particularly those not from the ruling group.

Councillor K. Taylor, Task Group Chairman, informed the Board that Councillor Miss D. Campbell had also indicated an interest in the subject matter and the Task Group would like her to participate in the scrutiny

investigation due to her role as Justice of the Peace (JP). It was explained that co-option was for those individuals who were not elected members, however, the Board could agree to an additional Councillor joining the Task Group, subject to a membership form being completed.

It was also clarified that in relation to the size of Task Groups, although the general rule was a maximum of seven, this did not prevent the Board in allowing a larger Task Group to continue, if it believed it could still carry out an effective scrutiny investigation. However, the Board was reminded that demand for such participation needed to be balanced against the need to maintain the small size of a Task Group.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Councillors D. L. Pardoe and D. McGrath join the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group; and
- (b) that, subject to the necessary membership form being completed, Councillor Miss D. Campbell be allowed to join the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group.

14/08 **SCRUTINY TASK GROUP UPDATE**

The Chairman of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group, Councillor K. Taylor, informed the other Members of the Board that the Task Group had met for the first time on 25th June 2008 where the terms of reference had been discussed at great length.

The Task Group Chairman raised his concerns over the large remit of the Task Group and questioned whether the Task Group could effectively scrutinise both Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones at the same time. He also raised concerns over the wording of the terms of reference in relation to anti-social behaviour as it related to scrutinising the "causes" of anti-social behaviour which could be an extremely large piece of work on its own.

A lengthy discussion ensued around the terms of reference of the Task Group, the timescale for the Task Group to complete its work, potential witnesses that could be called to assist the Task Group, differing interpretations of what could be classed as anti-social behaviour, usefulness and effectiveness of Alcohol Free Zones, enforcement issues in relation to Alcohol Free Zones and incidents of anti-social behaviour as a consequence of ineffective Alcohol Free Zones.

Possible alternative ways of working were considered briefly, including the option of the Task Group scrutinising the subject matter in two parts (over a slightly extended period of time) so as to ensure a link between scrutinising Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones remained.

The Scrutiny Steering Board was informed that the next meeting of the Task Group was scheduled to be held the following week.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the update on the progress of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group be noted;
- (b) that the Task Group continue as originally agreed (with the three additional Members as decided under the previous item) however, the Task Group's concerns be noted by the Board and the Task Group Chairman be requested to continue to report at every meeting on its progress and inform the Board of any issues and concerns the Task Group might have in the future; and
- (c) that when the Task Group invites representatives from West Mercia Police to give a presentation to the Task Group on issues surrounding anti-social behaviour and alcohol free zones, Members of the Scrutiny Steering Board be invited to attend as observers.

15/08 **RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker was considered by the Board and several questions were answered in relation to the Cabinet approved scrutiny recommendations from the public transport (bus) scrutiny investigation, the air quality investigation as well as general recommendations from the Board.

In relation to the first recommendation on the list, it was confirmed that concessionary parking would be considered by the Cabinet the following evening and if agreed, the Performance Management Board would be requested to include the item on its work programme.

There was some concern that no responses had been received from other bodies such as Worcestershire County Council. However, in relation to public transport recommendations, it was confirmed that the Assistant Chief Executive had received responses since the July recommendation tracker report had been finalised and more information would be available within the next report in September 2008. In the meantime, the Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects was also able to give a brief update to Members including the possibility of working with the County Council to look into the feasibility of developing a purpose built bus station in Bromsgrove and regarding the accessibility study involving transport modelling which was due to be completed by the County Council later in the year. It was also mentioned that the Assistant Chief Executive had attended a meeting with Network Rail in relation to progressing the redevelopment of Bromsgrove Railway Station.

Officers were requested to ensure that there was a link between the Transport Strategy, the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the Local Development Framework (LDF).

In relation to recommendations from the air quality scrutiny, it was stated that letters had been sent from the Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects to relevant external agencies but as responses had not been forthcoming, follow up telephone calls would be the next step.

It was clarified that the primary purpose of the Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker was to provide the Board with an opportunity to monitor the implementation of all Cabinet approved scrutiny recommendations which had originated from scrutiny task group investigations.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker be noted.

16/08 **FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan which included key and non-key decisions due to be taken over the next few months.

The Board focussed on the key decisions and considered each one in detail. Several questions were raised on each key decision and these were answered by the officers present.

It was understood that more information relating to the redevelopment of the Town Centre would be provided to the Board at its next meeting by the Executive Director – Partnerships and Projects. However, the Chairman did request that correct and clear information should be provided to the public to ensure there was not an adverse impact on Market Hall traders. The Chief Executive reassured the Board that there was a more detailed action plan in place which provided greater clarity and improved communication between interested parties.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

17/08 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board considered all the items listed on its Work Programme.

It was confirmed that an update regarding the Joint Countywide Flooding Scrutiny would be provided by the Board Chairman at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that Scrutiny Steering Board's Work Programme be noted and be updated accordingly.

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.

Chairman