



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to attend a MEETING of BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL to be held in the Council Chamber at The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 17th September, 2008, when the business referred to below will be brought under consideration:-

The meeting will be opened with a prayer.

- 1. To receive apologies for absence**
- 2. To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16th July 2008 (Pages 1 - 10)**
- 3. Declarations of Interest**

(Members are reminded that they need to keep their register of interest forms up to date)

- 4. To receive any announcements from the Chairman and/or Head of Paid Service**
- 5. To receive any announcements from the Leader**
- 6. Recommendations from the Cabinet (Pages 11 - 14)**

To consider the recommendations from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3rd September 2008.

In order to consider the recommendations in this item, Members will need to familiarise themselves with the background papers to the reports that are contained within the Cabinet agenda papers.

Members will also need to have the Cabinet agenda papers available to them at the meeting.

Members of the public can access these papers on-line at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/meetings, and follow the "Download agendas, reports and minutes" link.

7. **To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3rd September 2008** (Pages 15 - 20)
8. **Questions on Notice**

To deal with any questions on notice from Members of the Council, in the order in which they have been received.
9. **Comprehensive Performance Assessment - Self Assessment** (Pages 21 - 54)

To consider the report of the Assistant Chief Executive
10. **Recommendations from the Shared Services Board** (Pages 55 - 92)

To consider the report of the Acting Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council
11. **Changes to the Constitution** (Pages 93 - 98)

To consider the report of the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
12. **Appointments to the Independent Remuneration Panel (To Follow)**

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

The Council House
Burcot Lane
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B60 1AA

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 16TH JULY 2008, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs. C. J. Spencer (Chairman), C. R. Scurrrell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. J. M. Boswell, A. N. Blagg, Mrs. M. Bunker, Miss D. H. Campbell JP, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. A. E. Doyle, J. T. Duddy, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., D. Hancox, R. Hollingworth, Mrs. H. J. Jones, B. Lewis F.CMI, Dr. G. H. Lord, Ms. J. A. Marshall, Mrs. C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, D. McGrath, E. J. Murray, W. R. Newnes, D. L. Pardoe, S. R. Peters, S. P. Shannon, R. D. Smith, C. B. Taylor, E. C. Tibby, C. J. Tidmarsh, M. J. A. Webb, P. J. Whittaker and C. J. K. Wilson

23/08 **PRAYER**

At the request of the Chairman, the Reverend Wendy Moore opened the meeting with a prayer.

24/08 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, Mrs. J. D. Luck, Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP and L. J. Turner.

25/08 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 30th June 2008 be approved as a correct record.

(Note: Councillor D. McGrath referred to a question he had raised at that meeting with regard to capital and revenue reserves to which the Chief Executive undertook to provide a response outside the meeting.)

26/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

With regard to agenda item 13 (Appointment of Parish Council Representatives to the Standards Committee), the Monitoring Officer made an announcement to clarify the position with regard to those Members who were also Parish Councillors. No declarations of interest were received at this stage of the meeting.

At the commencement of agenda item 13, Councillors D. Hancox, P. J. Whittaker and Mrs. J. M. Boswell each declared a personal interest as they knew one of the proposed appointees.

27/08 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman referred to the Annual Civic Service to be held at All Saints Church on Sunday 21st September 2008 to which all Members were welcome to attend.

28/08 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

(a) Joint Chief Executive

The Leader confirmed that the Joint Chief Executive proposals had now been agreed by both Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council and that the Shared Services Board would meet shortly to agree the terms of reference for the Joint Chief Executive. Details of the press releases could be obtained from himself on request.

(b) Bromsgrove Museum

The Leader advised that a Members' Bulletin would be produced to present the facts of action taken by the Council in view of some incorrect information which had appeared in the press.

(c) Member Champions

The Leader reported that the following persons would be Member Champions for the area indicated to help drive the Council forward:

Promotions, Sponsorship and Public Events – Councillor Mrs J. M. Boswell;

Biodiversity – Councillor Miss D. H. Campbell JP;

Climate Change – Councillor C. R. Scurrall (to support Councillor P. J. Whittaker as Portfolio Holder);

Bromsgrove Town Centre – Councillors Mrs R. L. Dent and E. C. Tibby;

Longbridge – Councillor R. J. Deeming;

Transport – Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.

(d) Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

The Leader advised that the CPA inspectors would be on site week commencing 10th November 2008. It was hoped the results would be available around January/February 2009.

(e) Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The Leader advised that the priorities and objectives for the Worcestershire LAA had now been signed off by the Government. A related booklet was available to Members on request.

(f) Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Phase 2 Update

The Leader referred to the preferred option selected by the Regional Assembly and advised that the Regional Assembly had received a letter from Baroness Andrews to identify how the proposed housing allocation figures for the West Midlands could be increased. The Government had appointed consultants who had produced nine alternative options for growth which would be used to inform the Public

Examination to be held in spring 2009. Under these options Bromsgrove would not receive any further housing allocation in addition to that already contained within the preferred RSS option, but in general it was possible that a further 5,000 houses for south Birmingham may need to be accommodated within Bromsgrove District, with a further 5,000 houses for Redditch to possibly be accommodated in either the Bromsgrove or Stratford-upon Avon Districts. A summary report was available upon request.

(g) Post Office Closures

The Leader advised that details of any proposed Post Office closures affecting the Bromsgrove District would be announced on 27th August 2008. He had met with Post Office representatives who had indicated that they would not accept any petitions and also that if objections were made to a proposed closure, this would need to be evidenced and an alternative closure proposed.

29/08 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 2ND JULY 2008**

(i) **AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION**

RESOLVED that the Constitution be amended to permit any of the Council's boards to ask the Chief Executive to add an item of business to the agenda of any other board.

(ii) **NEW IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2008-09**

RESOLVED that the Improvement Plan 2008-09 be approved.

30/08 **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 30TH JUNE AND 2ND JULY 2008**

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 30th June 2008 and 2nd July 2008 were received for information.

The Leader responded to a number of points of clarification raised by Members.

31/08 **OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman announced that four questions remained unanswered from the last ordinary meeting of the Council on 23rd April 2008 which would be taken in the order received.

1. **Supplementary Question to the Leader from Councillor Mrs. R. L. Dent on the Use of Members' Pigeonholes**

"As the Senior Citizens Pledge was not a Council document and should not have been circulated through the Council's system, this was an

abuse of resources and should it not be reported to the Standards Committee?"

Councillor Hollingworth replied that he agreed there had been an improper use of the Members' pigeonholes as this was not a genuine Council document. Although he thought it was a reportable offence, this needed to be balanced against the resource implications of dealing with complaints to the Standards Committee. He felt that some matters which led to complaints being made were petty and could be resolved by other means. On this occasion he did not believe the matter should be reported and it should be accepted that the group who had circulated the document would behave honourably in future.

2. Question submitted by Councillor P. M. McDonald to the Chairman

"Does the Chair of the Council agree with me that in light of the way the senior citizens feel they have been treated by this Council that we should all reinforce our commitment towards the needs of the senior citizens of Bromsgrove by demonstrating that commitment by signing the Senior Citizen Pledge?"

The Chairman referred this question to the Leader.

Councillor Hollingworth replied that he thought it was a scandalous document and that all councillors had signed an undertaking to do their best for all residents of Bromsgrove and to treat everyone equally, and should not therefore sign the Pledge.

Councillor McDonald asked a supplementary question requesting the Leader to tell him where he had not treated senior citizens equally over the past year.

Councillor Hollingworth replied that older people had not received any better or worse treatment than anyone else. He also responded to comments made by Councillor McDonald with regard to funding for concessionary bus passes.

3. Question submitted by Councillor Mrs. C. M. McDonald to the Chairman

Councillor Mrs. C. M. McDonald stated that her question with regard to car parking charging had been dealt with.

4. Question submitted by Councillor E. J. Murray to the Leader

"Will the Leader of the Council agree to consult his Cabinet and seek agreement to write to the County Council urging them to take steps to create lay-bys and dropped kerbs in Sidemoor in an effort to preserve grass verges and to generally improve the environment within which residents live in this area?"

Councillor Hollingworth replied that he had spoken to his Cabinet colleagues and agreed to deal with the matter.

Councillor Murray asked a supplementary question with regard to light pollution in Sidemoor which was ruled out of order by the Chairman as a new question. Councillor Hollingworth undertook to speak to Councillor Murray on the matter outside the meeting.

32/08 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman announced that no questions had been received.

33/08 ACQUISITION AND DISCLOSURE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA

Members considered a report of the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services which referred to the powers available to local authorities to obtain and use communications data in the context of regulatory investigations and presented a proposed new Acquisition and Disclosure of Communications Data policy.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the updated policy on Acquisition and Disclosure of Communications Data, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved and adopted with effect from 1st September 2008;
- (b) that the scheme of delegation for Officers in the Council Constitution in respect of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 be extended to include the necessary delegations for both covert surveillance and communications data.

34/08 PLANNING APPLICATIONS - INFORMATION SHEET FOR THE PUBLIC

Further to a request made at the meeting of the Council on 23rd April 2008, Members considered a report of the Head of Planning and Environment on the proposed format of information to be provided to the public explaining how planning applications were dealt with, including the "call in" procedure.

During the debate it was commented that the Code of Practice - Planning Services within the Constitution needed to be amended to include reference to the "call in" procedure.

RESOLVED that option 1 as set out in the report be approved and adopted as the format for the provision of information to the public with regard to the "call in" procedure within the development control process.

35/08 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Members considered a report of the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services which set out recommendations from the Standards Committee on the process for the recruitment of independent members of that Committee and their term of office.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor G. N. Denaro and seconded by Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., subject to the inclusion of an additional recommendation on the action to be taken if only one suitable candidate was shortlisted, as referred to in paragraph 3.6 of the report.

An amendment was moved by Councillor P. M. McDonald and seconded by Councillor C. J. K. Wilson that the recommendations set out in 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 of the report with regard to the shortlisting and interview process be deleted and that a ballot of Members be undertaken instead.

On being put to the meeting the Chairman declared the amendment LOST.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee to compile a suitable recruitment pack for prospective independent members of the Standards Committee;
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee to undertake shortlisting of candidates for vacancies for independent members of the Standards Committee;
- (c) that in cases where there are two or more shortlisted candidates, that authority be delegated to the Appointments Panel to interview shortlisted candidates, with the assistance of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee who shall act in an advisory (but non-voting) capacity, and to make a recommendation to Council;
- (d) that the term of office of independent members shall be 4 years;
- (e) that independent members may seek reappointment only once;
- (f) that in cases where only one suitable candidate is shortlisted, the Monitoring Officer make a recommendation direct to the Council for that candidate to be appointed.

36/08 **APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The recommendations with regard to the appointment of Parish Council Representatives to serve on the Standards Committee were moved by Councillor G. N Denaro and seconded by Councillor E. C. Tibby.

On a requisition under Council Procedure Rule 17.5, the following details of voting on these recommendations were recorded:

For the recommendations: Councillors A. N. Blagg, Mrs. J. M. Boswell, Mrs. M. Bunker, Miss D. H. Campbell, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. R. L. Dent, J. T. Duddy, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., D. Hancox, R. Hollingworth, Mrs. H. J. Jones, B. Lewis, Dr. G. H. Lord, D. McGrath, W. R. Newnes, D. L. Pardoe, S. R. Peters, C. R. Scurrrell, R. D. Smith, C. B. Taylor, E. C. Tibby, C. J. Tidmarsh, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (26);

Against the recommendations: Councillors Ms. J. A. Marshall, Mrs. C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, S. P. Shannon and C. J. K. Wilson (6);

Abstention: Councillor Mrs. A. E. Doyle (1).

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Mr. J. Cypher and Mr. I. Hodgetts be appointed to serve as the Parish Council Representatives on the Standards Committee until July 2009;
- (b) that Mr. S. Malek be appointed to serve as the Deputy Parish Council Representative on the Standards Committee until July 2009.

37/08 **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

RESOLVED:

- (a) Worcestershire Local Access Forum
that Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths be appointed to serve on the Worcestershire Local Access Forum (term of office expiring May 2009);
- (b) Bromsgrove District Twinning Association
that Councillor Mrs. J. M. Boswell be appointed to fill the vacancy on the Bromsgrove District Twinning Association (term of office expiring May 2009);
- (c) West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA)/ Regional Assembly Bodies
that the following ex-officio appointments be noted:
 - (i) WMLGA Council Substitute Member
Deputy Leader (Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths)
 - (ii) Regional Planning Partnership Substitute Member
Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environment (Councillor P. J. Whittaker)
 - (iii) Regional Housing Partnership Substitute Member
Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy and Transportation (Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.).

38/08 **MOTION - GREEN WASTE**

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor P. M. McDonald:

“That a questionnaire be sent to every household in the District asking whether they agree with the Council’s decision to remove the Green Waste Collection – Yes or No.

The results be made public.”

The motion was moved and seconded.

Councillor R. Hollingworth suggested an alteration to the wording of the motion which was declined by Councillor P. M. McDonald.

It was moved by Councillor E. C. Tibby and seconded by Councillor R. Hollingworth that the question be now put to the vote, however, this procedural motion was ruled out of order as Councillor E. C. Tibby had spoken on the matter.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E. and seconded by Councillor Mrs. R. L. Dent that the question be now put to the vote and on being put to the meeting the Chairman declared the procedural motion CARRIED.

On a requisition under Council Procedure Rule 17.5 the following details of voting on the substantive motion were recorded:

For the motion: Councillors Mrs. A. E. Doyle, Ms. J. A. Marshall, Mrs. C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, D. McGrath, E. J. Murray, D. L. Pardoe, S. R. Peters, S. P. Shannon and C. J. K. Wilson (10);

Against the motion: Councillors A. N. Blagg, Mrs. J. M. Boswell, Mrs. M. Bunker, Miss D. H. Campbell, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. R. L. Dent, J. T. Duddy, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., D. Hancox, R. Hollingworth, Mrs. H. J. Jones, B. Lewis, Dr. G. H. Lord, W. R. Newnes, C. R. Scurrall, R. D. Smith, C. B. Taylor, E. C. Tibby, C. J. Tidmarsh, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (23).

Accordingly the Chairman declared the substantive motion LOST.

39/08 **MOTION - LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor S. R. Peters:

“As the Council is aware cross party working is a critical element in the effective administration of this Council, especially given our current status of voluntary engagement.

Part 25 of the Constitution defines the role expected from any person occupying the position of ‘Leader of the Opposition’.

Given that the current Leader of the Opposition is not fulfilling his role in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution, a role for which this Council provides him with an allowance, would the Chamber not agree that it is time that we insisted that he did.

It is therefore proposed

that the Council requires the Leader of the Opposition either to fulfil his roles and responsibilities as set out in this Council’s Constitution forthwith or that he is asked to resign.”

The motion was moved and seconded.

An amendment was moved by Councillor P. M. McDonald and seconded by Councillor C. J. K. Wilson that the contents of the motion be deleted after the after the first two paragraphs and replaced with the following:

“Given the acknowledged challenges of cross party working it is proposed that the Leader of the Opposition, together with the leaders of other groups (and Deputies) meets as a matter of urgency with the Chief Executive to ensure that all opposition members are enabled to play a full and appropriate part in democratic processes of Bromsgrove District Council. As part of this meeting consideration should be given to defining a ‘modus Vivendi’ for all group leaders and deputies, recognising of course the right of the controlling group to fulfill their obligations under the Constitution, to ensure that democracy and open governance is strengthened in the District so that services offered to the people of the District are further enhanced and more closely meets the needs of local people. The outcomes from this meeting (or meetings) to be reported to this Council when next we meet.”

On a requisition under Council Procedure Rule 17.5 the following details of voting on the amendment were recorded:

For the amendment: Councillors Ms. J. A. Marshall, Mrs. C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, S. P. Shannon and C. J. K. Wilson (6);

Against the amendment: Councillors A. N. Blagg, Mrs. J. M. Boswell, Mrs. M. Bunker, Miss D. H. Campbell, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. A. E. Doyle, J. T. Duddy, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., D. Hancox, R. Hollingworth, Mrs. H. J. Jones, B. Lewis, Dr. G. H. Lord, D. McGrath, W. R. Newnes, D. L. Pardoe, S. R. Peters, C. R. Scurrall, R. D. Smith, C. B. Taylor, E. C. Tibby, C. J. Tidmarsh, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (27).

Accordingly the Chairman declared the amendment LOST.

On a requisition under Council Procedure Rule 17.5 the following details of voting on the substantive motion were recorded:

For the motion: Councillors A. N. Blagg, Mrs. J. M. Boswell, Mrs. M. Bunker, Miss D. H. Campbell, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. A. E. Doyle, J. T. Duddy, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., D. Hancox, R. Hollingworth, Mrs. H. J. Jones, B. Lewis, Dr. G. H. Lord, D. McGrath, W. R. Newnes, D. L. Pardoe, S. R. Peters, C. R. Scurrall, R. D. Smith, C. B. Taylor, E. C. Tibby, C. J. Tidmarsh, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (27).

Against the motion: Councillors Ms. J. A. Marshall, Mrs. C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, S. P. Shannon and C. J. K. Wilson (6);

Accordingly the Chairman declared the substantive motion CARRIED.

Council
16th July 2008

The meeting closed at 8.10 p.m.

Chairman

CABINET - 5TH MARCH 2008

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL & SPECIAL URGENCY REPORT

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTEGRATED FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 1)

The Cabinet has considered a report on the Council's performance and financial position as at 30th June 2008. In doing so it noted that the £100,000 underspend mentioned in the strategic planning finance report did, in fact, relate to an underspend in relation to the Local Development Framework - Examination in Public, and that the funding for the Framework could be released back to balances as there was sufficient budget available to fund the project.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED:

that the Council approve a reduction in revenue budget and corresponding return to revenue balances of £100,000 in relation to the funding requirement for the Local Development Framework - Examination in Public.

2. REVIEW OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Cabinet has given consideration to a report which provided an update on the review of the Capital Programme, to ensure the funds were utilised to deliver projects as approved during the Medium Term Financial Plan.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Council approve the carry forward requests from 2007/08, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (b) that the Council approve a reduction to the Capital Programme 2008/09 of £3.935m, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, to reflect both the savings achieved through procurement efficiencies and the projects which due to the factors detailed in the report would not be delivered during 2008/09.

3. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - SELF ASSESSMENT

The Cabinet has considered the latest version of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Self Assessment.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the work in progress draft Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Self Assessment be noted;
- (b) that it be noted that an updated draft would go forward to the next meeting of the Council for consideration;

- (c) that it be noted that the deadline for submission to the Audit Commission of the final Self Assessment was 26th September 2008; and
- (d) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any necessary changes to the final document prior to its submission to the Audit Commission.

4. REFUSE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING OPERATION REVIEW

The Cabinet has given consideration to a report which sought approval to change the type of refuse collection vehicle fleet to a standard type of refuse collection vehicle.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that a migration away from the current side arm refuse collection fleet to a standard type of refuse collection vehicle similar to those operated by all other Local Authorities in this country be commenced;
- (b) that this be done on a phased basis commencing with 2 vehicles that will be part funded by the vehicle manufacturer in compensation for losses of bins that have occurred since commencement of the existing operation;
- (c) that it be noted that the negotiations for compensation have progressed and that agreement has now been reached;
- (d) that there be a virement of £63,500 from the capital budget relating to containers which will no longer be required for this purpose, which will be utilised in conjunction with the compensation arrangements to enable the Council to acquire two new vehicles; and
- (e) that approval be given to the wider vehicle replacement programme in accordance with the funding provision agreed within the capital programme, with a further report to be provided on how the capital programme is to be funded.

5. COUNCIL PLAN 2009-2012 PART 1

The Cabinet has considered a report on the Council Plan 2009-2012 Part 1 which asked Members to re-confirm the Council's Vision and Council Objectives and reduce the number of priorities from five to four.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Council's Vision and Council Objectives, as detailed at points 6.1 and 6.3 of Appendix 1 to the report, be reconfirmed;
- (b) that the analysis of the Council's national, regional and local context, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (c) that based on the context referred to at Recommendation (b) above, the definitions of the Council Objectives detailed at Addendum A to Appendix 1 of the report be agreed; and
- (d) that based on the context referred to at Recommendation (b) above, a reduction in the number of priorities, as detailed at point 3.5 of the report, be approved.

6. WORCESTERSHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2008-2013

The Cabinet has given consideration to the refreshed Worcestershire Community Strategy 2008-2013.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the progress to refresh the Worcestershire Sustainable Community Strategy be noted;
- (b) that formal approval be given to the refreshed Worcestershire Sustainable Strategy;
- (c) that it be noted that Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet formally endorsed the Bromsgrove Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy at its meeting on 17th July 2008;
- (d) that the action being taken by the District Council to ensure both the District Local Strategic Partnership and Council strategies are aligned to the countywide Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement be noted; and
- (e) that it be noted that this alignment is crucial to the Council achieving a good rating under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) inspection framework which starts in April 2009.

II. RECOMMENDATION & SPECIAL URGENCY REPORT

7. FREE SWIMMING SCHEME/GRANT - 2009/10 AND 2010/11

Urgent consideration was given to a report which outlined the Government's Free Swimming Scheme proposals for 2009/10 and 2010/11 and the Council's proposed response to this offer. The various funding implications of the proposals were noted and it was agreed that Members would review the position based on the Council's priorities after 2011.

(The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item as a matter of urgency as a recommendation on this was required prior to the next meeting of the Council. It was further noted that the recommendations of the Cabinet would be forwarded to the Department of Culture, Media & Sport by the required deadline of 15th September 2008, and that these would be subject to ratification by the Council at its meeting on 17th September 2008.)

It is therefore RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that officers be requested to implement the Government's Free Swimming Scheme including coaching/instruction sessions for over 60's for the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11;
- (b) that the availability of free swimming places for over 60's be restricted to Bromsgrove District Council residents only;

- (c) that agreement be given to limit the availability of free swimming places and based on the definition contained within 3.11 of the report;
- (d) that officers be requested to decline the offer of free swimming for under 16's for the reasons contained within the report and not express an interest to the Government;
- (e) that officers be requested to not put forward a bid for capital funding due to the limited life expectancy of its swimming pool stock; and
- (f) that the implementation and management of the scheme be delegated to the Head of Service for Finance and the Deputy Head of Street Scene & Community to ensure that the scheme is established in order to minimise risk and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER 2008 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, G. N. Denaro, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP, R. D. Smith and P. J. Whittaker (during Minute No.'s 47/08 to 59/08)

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mr. M. Bell, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. J. Godwin, Mr. D. Hammond, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. J. Pitman, Ms. D. Poole, Mr. A. Coel and Ms. D. Parker-Jones

45/08 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. J. A. Webb.

46/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

47/08 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 30th July 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

48/08 **SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 29th July 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

49/08 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Performance Management Board held on 19th August 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the minutes be noted; and
- (b) that the recommendations contained at Minute No. 33/08 (Minutes - Disabled Facilities Grants) be approved.

50/08 **INTEGRATED FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT (QUARTER 1)**

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council's performance and financial position as at 30th June 2008 (period 3, quarter 1). It was noted that the £100,000 underspend mentioned in the strategic planning finance report did, in fact, relate to the underspend in relation to the Local Development Framework - Examination in Public, and that the funding for the Framework could be released back to balances as there was now sufficient budget available to fund the project.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that it be noted that 67% of Performance Indicators for which data was available were Improving or Stable;
- (b) that it be noted that 86% of Performance Indicators for which data was available were achieving their Year to Date target;
- (c) that it be noted that 96% of Performance Indicators for which data was available were predicted to meet their target at year end;
- (d) that the £268,000 predicted outturn revenue spend variance and other financial information be noted; and
- (e) that the corrective actions being taken on both the Council's performance and finances be noted; and

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve a reduction in revenue budget and corresponding return to revenue balances of £100,000 in relation to the funding requirement for the Local Development Framework - Examination in Public.

51/08 **REVIEW OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to a report which updated Members on the review of the Capital Programme, to ensure the funds were utilised to deliver projects as approved during the Medium Term Financial Plan.

RESOLVED that officers review the Capital Programme with the aim of assessing the requirements of project delivery as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan; and

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Council approve the carry forward requests from 2007/08, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (b) that the Council approve a reduction to the Capital Programme 2008/09 of £3.935m, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, to reflect both the savings achieved through procurement efficiencies and the projects which due to the factors detailed in the report would not be delivered during 2008/09.

52/08 **COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - SELF ASSESSMENT**

The Cabinet considered the latest version of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Self Assessment, which it was noted was in

draft form and still had some elements to be completed. An updated draft of this would be referred to the next meeting of the Council.

Members specifically wished to place on record their thanks to officers for all of their hard work, which meant that the Council was now in a much better position than when it had previously been assessed.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the work in progress draft Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Self Assessment be noted;
- (b) that it be noted that an updated draft would go forward to the next meeting of the Council for consideration;
- (c) that it be noted that the deadline for submission to the Audit Commission of the final Self Assessment was 26th September 2008; and
- (d) that authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any necessary changes to the final document prior to its submission to the Audit Commission.

53/08 **IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXCEPTION REPORT (JUNE 2008)**

Consideration was given to the final updated Improvement Plan Exception Report for June 2008. As this was the final exception report of 2007-08 many of the actions scheduled throughout the preceding year had already been completed; hence the relatively low number of outturns for June. As such, the proportions of actions which were behind target or rescheduled were proportionally higher than might otherwise be expected. A change in the format of the report, to show the month's performance alongside that of the year to date, which had been requested by the Portfolio Holder for Customer Care and Service, was also noted.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the revisions to the Improvement Plan Exception Report and the corrective action being taken be noted;
- (b) that it be noted that this was the final exception report of the 2007-08 Improvement Plan; and
- (c) that it be noted that for the 96 actions highlighted for June within the Plan, 77.0 percent of the Plan was on target [green], 4.2 percent was one month behind [amber] and 6.3 percent was over one month behind [red]. 12.5 percent of actions had been rescheduled or suspended with approval.

54/08 **IMPLEMENTATION OF MODEL STANDARDS FOR MOBILE HOME SITE LICENSING**

The Cabinet considered a report on the adoption of the new revision to the model standards for mobile home sites that had been recommended by the Government. The report also sought Member support for officers to take appropriate enforcement action against site owners where non conformity against existing standards existed, and for officers to raise awareness with

owners on the new standards and to allow a reasonable period of notice to conform with the newly introduced changes.

In relation to the recommendation that site owners be given 12 months within which to confirm to the new elements of the Model Standards prior to enforcement action, it was felt that such discretion could not be afforded in the case of Fire Risk Assessments and that this element should be complied with immediately.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the newly revised Model Standards for Permanent Residential Homes Sites, as summarised at Section 4 of the report and detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for adoption;
- (b) that officers be permitted to take action in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Policy against site owners who continue to be in breach of existing model standards upon expiry of the originally set 5 year period of notice, subject to an additional 6 months period of grace;
- (c) that officers be permitted to phase in new model conditions (following consultation) where the current site licence conditions are inadequate in serving its purpose and where legislation has been superseded; and
- (d) that site owners be given a period of 12 months to conform to the newly introduced elements of the Model Standards before appropriate enforcement action is implemented, with the exception of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which must be completed with immediate effect.

55/08 **REFUSE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING OPERATION REVIEW**

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval to change the type of refuse collection vehicle fleet to a standard type of refuse collection vehicle.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that a migration away from the current side arm refuse collection fleet to a standard type of refuse collection vehicle similar to those operated by all other Local Authorities in this country be commenced;
- (b) that this be done on a phased basis commencing with 2 vehicles that will be part funded by the vehicle manufacturer in compensation for losses of bins that have occurred since commencement of the existing operation;
- (c) that it be noted that the negotiations for compensation have progressed and that agreement has now been reached;
- (d) that there be a virement of £63,500 from the capital budget relating to containers which will no longer be required for this purpose, which will be utilised in conjunction with the compensation arrangements to enable the Council to acquire two new vehicles; and
- (e) that approval be given to the wider vehicle replacement programme in accordance with the funding provision agreed within the capital programme, with a further report to be provided on how the capital programme is to be funded.

56/08 **COUNCIL PLAN 2009-2012 PART 1**

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council Plan 2009-2012 Part 1 which asked Members to re-confirm the Council's Vision and Council Objectives and reduce the number of priorities from five to four.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the Council's Vision and Council Objectives, as detailed at points 6.1 and 6.3 of Appendix 1 to the report, be reconfirmed;
- (b) that the analysis of the Council's national, regional and local context, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;
- (c) that based on the context referred to at Recommendation (b) above, the definitions of the Council Objectives detailed at Addendum A to Appendix 1 of the report be agreed; and
- (d) that based on the context referred to at Recommendation (b) above, a reduction in the number of priorities, as detailed at point 3.5 of the report, be approved.

57/08 **WORCESTERSHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2008-2013**

Consideration was given to the refreshed Worcestershire Community Strategy 2008-2013.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the progress to refresh the Worcestershire Sustainable Community Strategy be noted;
- (b) that formal approval be given to the refreshed Worcestershire Sustainable Strategy;
- (c) that it be noted that Worcestershire County Council's Cabinet formally endorsed the Bromsgrove Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy at its meeting on 17th July 2008;
- (d) that the action being taken by the District Council to ensure both the District Local Strategic Partnership and Council strategies are aligned to the countywide Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement be noted; and
- (e) that it be noted that this alignment is crucial to the Council achieving a good rating under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) inspection framework which starts in April 2009.

58/08 **CUSTOMER PANEL SURVEY (3) - SATISFACTION**

The Cabinet considered a report on the key findings of the third Customer Panel Survey which took place in May-June 2008.

RESOLVED that the report and its accompanying appendices, including the results for those questions which had been repeated from the previous year's Survey and which tracked the Council's progress since June 2007, be noted.

59/08 **FREE SWIMMING SCHEME/GRANT - 2009/10 AND 2010/11**

(The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item as a matter of urgency as a recommendation on this was required prior to the next meeting of the Council. It was further noted that the recommendations of the Cabinet would be forwarded to the Department of Culture, Media & Sport by the required deadline of 15th September 2008, and that these would be subject to ratification by the Council at its meeting on 17th September 2008.)

Consideration was given to a report which outlined the Government's Free Swimming Scheme proposals for 2009/10 and 2010/11 and the Council's proposed response to this offer. The various funding implications of the proposals were noted and it was agreed that Members would review the position based on the Council's priorities after 2011.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that officers be requested to implement the Government's Free Swimming Scheme including coaching/instruction sessions for over 60's for the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11;
- (b) that the availability of free swimming places for over 60's be restricted to Bromsgrove District Council residents only;
- (c) that agreement be given to limit the availability of free swimming places and based on the definition contained within 3.11 of the report;
- (d) that officers be requested to decline the offer of free swimming for under 16's for the reasons contained within the report and not express an interest to the Government;
- (e) that officers be requested to not put forward a bid for capital funding due to the limited life expectancy of its swimming pool stock; and
- (f) that the implementation and management of the scheme be delegated to the Head of Service for Finance and the Deputy Head of Street Scene & Community to ensure that the scheme is established in order to minimise risk and the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The meeting closed at 7.47 p.m.

Chairman

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

17TH SEPTEMBER 2008

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Responsible Member	Councillor - Roger Hollingworth, Leader of the Council
Responsible Head of Service	Hugh Bennett -Assistant Chief Executive
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report asks Full Council to approve the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) self assessment.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Full Council:
- i. Approves the self assessment.
 - ii. Notes that the self assessment is still work in progress, but no material amendments will be made on the version approved by Full Council, just proof reading checks and referencing.
 - iii. Notes that the deadline for submission to the Audit Commission is 26 September 2008.
 - iv. Notes that the site visit will take place on the week commencing 10 November.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council was assessed as Poor by the Audit Commission last year. This year, we have a much more positive story to tell and have self assessed the Council as Good. The Council has a realistic chance of achieving this. The CPA self assessment forms a crucial part of the CPA. The Audit Commission will use it to consider how they will focus their site visit. Draft copies have also been considered by Cabinet, the Scrutiny Steering Board and the Performance Management Board. The assessment is still in draft form, but there will be no material changes at this stage, only a final proof read and cross referencing. Copies have also been provided to the Lead Official, GOWM, the Audit Commission Relationship Manager and ex-Improvement Director, so that they can provide their input.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

6.1 This report applies to all the Council's objectives.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 CPA has its own risk register and is identified as a corporate risk.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Achieving the right rating will improve the Council's reputation with the public.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues N/A
Personnel Implications N/A
Governance/Performance Management N/A
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 N/A
Policy N/A
Environmental N/A
Equalities and Diversity N/A

10. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holders	At Leader's Group.
Chief Executive	At CMT.
Corporate Director (Services)	At CMT.
Assistant Chief Executive	At CMT.
Head of Service	At CMT.
Head of Financial Services	At CMT.
Head of Legal & Democratic Services	At CMT.
Head of Organisational Development & HR	At CMT.
Corporate Procurement Team	No

11. APPENDICES

Addendum 1 – CPA Self Assessment

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

CPA Self Assessment January 2007.

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Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

CPA Self Assessment

Bromsgrove District Council

September 2008



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Appendix 1

Self Assessment Score by Council

Appendix 2

References

1. Local Authority Context and Summary

Geography and Communities

Bromsgrove District is in north Worcestershire, covering a large district area of approximately 83.9 square miles. Whilst only 14 miles from the centre of Birmingham, the Lickey Hills country park provides an important dividing line between the urban West Midlands Conurbation and the rural landscape of north Worcestershire. Travel data indicates that 16,643 people travel into the District for work, with 26,112 of the population travelling out, a net commute out of 9,469. Our main communities are detailed in Table 1. The District has no wards in the top 20% most deprived in England

Table 1 – Map of Bromsgrove District



Population and Housing

The population of the District is 91,600 and the Office for National Statistics predicts that this will increase by 15.3% over the next 30 years to 105,615 in 2029. The review of the Regional Spatial Strategy Two (RSS2) has identified only 2,100 homes for the District over the next 20 years, with the possibility that the District may have to take some of Redditch Borough Council's housing allocation. The Council is currently engaging with the West Midlands Regional Assembly and Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) to increase this low allocation, as the District has the 11th highest owner occupation rate in England and Wales and the need for affordable housing far exceeds this allocation. The Council is working with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) on a district wide housing market assessment in order to provide more detailed evidence on the Bromsgrove housing market, which can then be fed into the RSS revision process.

The black and minority ethnic population (BME) is only 3.3%, which is low for the region and nationally. This BME percentage comprises 1% Irish, 0.8% Asian, 0.8% mixed, 0.4% black and 0.3% Chinese. There are 37,798 households in the District. Over 25% of households contain only one older person. An estimated 6,964 households in the District have one or more members in an identified special needs

group; this is 19.1% of all households in the District, well above the national average (of these 56.7% have a physical disability and 37% are frail elderly). The elderly population is predicted to expand as a proportion of the overall District population, with the over 80s population estimated to increase by 123.3% by 2029. These are important customer groups for the Council and we have community engagement arrangements in place to ensure we understand their concerns. Equally, it is important that we listen to our young people (who are statistically less likely to vote and engage in the political process); again, we have arrangements in place.

Economy

The economic picture of the District has generally been very positive. The mean household income is £36,906, which is the highest in the County (the County average is £34,737). There are three major areas of economic regeneration within the District: the Longbridge site, Bromsgrove town centre and Bromsgrove railway station. It is too early to predict the impact of the “credit crunch”, but it may affect these projects. A recent Labour Market survey identified a significant income gap between those who commute out to work and those who live and work in the District.

Sustainable Development

The new Local Area Agreement (LAA) has a number of challenging environment targets. The Council is a signatory of the Nottingham Agreement and Worcestershire Climate Pledge. The Local Strategic Partnership’s Better Environment Group has a number of projects underway aiming to reduce our carbon footprint, help conserve and enhance our biodiversity, and reduce pollution. Despite these initiatives the Council recognises that it will need to increase its focus on this area in order to meet the LAA targets, in particular, flood alleviation and carbon emissions.

Education, Deprivation and Health

GCSE results gained at local authority schools and colleges in Worcestershire in 2006 were amongst the highest in the country (56.3% achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-C). The District ranks 299th out of 354 councils on the national index of multiple deprivation 2007 (where one is the most deprived), making the District one of the least deprived nationally. Only 4,456 households are in receipt of housing or council tax benefits in the District, one of the lowest figures in Worcestershire. The District’s population is healthier than the regional average. The general affluence of the District makes identifying the more vulnerable in our communities difficult.

Crime and Fear of Crime

There has been a 31.9% reduction in headline comparator crime in the District over the last three years; however, our customers’ top priority is reducing the fear of crime.

Regulatory, Political, Managerial and Financial Context

The Council has a majority Conservative administration, with twenty-seven Conservatives, six Labour, four Independents, and two Wythall Residents’ Association. The Council operates a modernised political structure with the Leader/Cabinet model; supported by three non-Executive Boards. The Council has an Acting Joint Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council, Kevin Dicks. The Council has a net budget of £11.733m (2008/09) and a Government Grant of £4.858m. The Council employs 358 staff.

What is the Council, together with its partners trying to achieve?

2. Ambitions for the Community

- 2.1 The Council's ambition for the community reflects our customers, stakeholders and staff ambitions and is based on clear evidence. The Council's Vision is: "Working together to build a District where people are proud to live and work, through community leadership and excellent services". The Vision and the Values that underpin it; Leadership, Partnership, Equality and Customer First, were developed through our change programme "Building Pride" (staff were consulted about this strap line and 80% of staff supported it when surveyed). The programme recognised that the Council needed to re-build a sense of pride in living in the District and working for the Council, through the delivery of long term outcomes and excellent services.
- 2.2 The Council's objectives and priorities are:-
- (1) **Council Objective One: Regeneration** with A Thriving Market Town and Housing as its priorities.
 - (2) **Council Objective Two: Improvement** with Customer Service being a priority.
 - (3) **Council Objective Three: Sense of Community and Well Being**, with Sense of Community being a priority.
 - (4) **Council Objective Four: Environment**, with Clean Streets and the Recycling being a priority.
- 2.3 The Council has used a number of focus groups¹ and three high quality customer panels to help find out about residents' views and satisfaction. This consultation has been supported by a range of other community engagement mechanisms like the Disabled Users Group (DUG), Equalities and Diversity Forum, Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings, "Town Hall" meetings, Parish Forums and two pilot Local Neighbourhood Partnerships. The Council is confident that it understands its customers' ambitions.
- 2.4 Our customers' ambitions are now fully developed through a comprehensive Sustainable Community Strategy, with SMART high level action plans supporting each Theme. The Strategy was based on a detailed quantitative analysis of the District, undertaken by Mott McDonald, with the targets cross-referenced to the County Local Area Agreement.
- 2.5 Key strategies flow from the Community Strategy, in particular, the Council Plan, service business plans and a corporate improvement plan, produced annually, which underpins the delivery of the Council Plan. Besides setting its own strategic agenda within the District, the Council is increasingly working at a County level to support our customers' ambitions, for example, we are the lead district for affordable housing.
- 2.6 The Council has developed a shared purpose and leadership at the top of the organisation. Through the I&DeA Top Team Development Programme Cabinet and CMT have been able to work together on articulating our customers' ambitions. Similarly, the Leader of the Council has also established a Leader's Meeting, to which all Group Leaders are invited. Naturally, there are political differences, but increasingly there is common ground of issues like affordable housing, Longbridge, the train station, children and young people and working with our communities. These shared ambitions are underpinned by more formal mechanisms to support good governance, including; a Member/officer protocol⁷, a Member/Member protocol⁸, job descriptions for

key Member positions⁹, a Management Competency Framework¹⁰ (which in turn is planned to be cascaded to all staff within the Council) and a Modern Councillor training programme. Both the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council Plan go to Full Council for approval.

- 2.7 Getting residents to understand the difficult trade-offs that politicians need to make is a national political issue and one the Council recognises. The Council has developed a community bidding approach for the Equalities and Diversity Forum, has delegated £15,000 to each Local Neighbourhood Partnership (LNPs), is running a budget jury and ran its first Children and Young People's convention in 2007, with a follow up event planned for January 2009, which will see monies delegated to children and young people for them to decide how it should be spent.
- 2.8 The Council has worked hard and invested in listening to its customers. The Council would accept it needs to go further to develop customer intelligence in line with best practice, but it should be recognised that it already invests more in this area than most district councils. The Council has commissioned a ward level analysis for the Community Strategy and more recently has commissioned a Labour Market Survey. The Customer Panel provides a four way split (urban 1 and 2, rural 1 and 2) and this is further supplemented by ward level analysis by the County Council. As part of our developing approach to ICT integration between the front and back office, the Council has cleansed its current data and implemented a corporate gazetteer that will underpin 11 new ICT systems to support the work of departments. The Council is well placed to respond to the Audit Commission's customer insight agenda and has plans to consider customer insight software like Mosaic and Acorn.
- 2.9 Through these mechanisms, the Council has a strongly developed understanding of its customers and communities and the scale of the challenge it faces. The basic challenge for the Council are problems that come with affluence e.g. expensive housing, a town centre that does not reflect the wealth of the District and high customer expectations. The Council also understands the diversity issues that apply to the District. The Council has developed an Inclusive Equalities Scheme, supported by the Disabled Users Group and Equality and Diversity Forum. These provide Members and senior officers with specific examples of the issues residents face. The two groups have been involved in the formulation of the Council's priorities and customer standards. Key issues to emerge are; the regeneration of the town centre with suitable disabled access, extended hours of the shop mobility service (now addressed), the need for a community transport scheme (a bid will be made during the 2009/2010 budget process) and the redevelopment of the train station, which is currently not DDA compliant.
- 2.10 The Council understands the value the voluntary sector can add to delivering its customers' ambitions. The Council has established a service level agreement (SLA) and funding for the Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN), the local voluntary sector infrastructure organisation. BARN sits on the LSP Board and chairs the Older Persons Theme Group. The Council has a COMPACT with the voluntary sector, is currently working with the sector on the community transport project and was recently actively involved in national volunteer week.
- 2.12 The previous CPA identified external communications as an issue for the Council. The Council has invested in an experienced Communications and Customer First Manager and as a result improved its press coverage and updated its residents' magazine "Together Bromsgrove", which helps articulate the Council's (and our partners') ambitions. Recent customer feedback identified that 61% found "Together Bromsgrove" useful. Through the "Town Hall" meeting, "Chat with the Chief"; Parish

Forums and PACT meetings, the Council has also worked hard to ensure our customers have regular opportunities to meet senior Members and senior officers. Similarly, the Council has recognised the value of communications and dialogue with our staff; informed and engaged staff will provide better customer service, so the Council has communicated its Vision, Values, Objectives and Priorities to staff through a range of mechanisms including regular staff forums; a bi-weekly Core Brief, delivered by managers and cascaded via team meetings, team action plans as part of the service business planning process⁵, personal development reviews (PDRs), posters for each of its values and one for the Vision and a programme of attendance by senior management at team meetings.

3. Prioritisation

- 3.1 The Council has translated its customers', stakeholders' and staffs' ambitions into a clear set of priorities. The Council has achieved this through a very strong annual business cycle which ensures the right priorities are set and that these drive investment decisions. The strategic priorities are set out in the Council Plan (a rolling three year plan), which in turn drives the service business planning process and the annual improvement plan (a detailed Gantt chart). These reflect a three year and one year focus respectively and are underpinned by the 10 year focus of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Council has significantly improved its service delivery to its customers over the last two years and this reflects the effectiveness of the Council's prioritisation. Examples include; the town centre toilets, affordable housing units, customer feedback system, street theatre across the District and more street cleansing.
- 3.2 The Council starts the process of prioritisation by producing the annual Council Plan Part 1 report, which provides a "state of the district" position statement, which clearly evidences the link between proposed priorities and our customers' feedback from the Customer Panel, budget jury, equalities and diversity conference, as well as service delivery data. The report also defines the Council's Objectives in broad terms³ and links these to national policy and the Worcestershire Local Area Agreement. By providing a broad definition for each Objective, the Council's leadership can then select which aspects of each Objective is a priority, so for example, under Council Objective Three: A Sense of Community and Well Being, the Council has made Sense of Community a priority (this includes community events, community engagement, the Every Child Matters agenda and community safety), but has not made Well Being a priority i.e. the Choosing Health agenda because the health profile of the District is comparatively good. This does not mean that the Council does not contribute to this national objective or recognise that lifestyles are an issue just that it will attract less resourcing than other aspects of the national, regional and local agenda, which have been identified as priorities. .
- 3.3 The Council is as explicit as any political organisation can be about what are not its priorities. The Council has adopted a simple approach. Service areas that fall outside the delivery of the five priorities are the areas required to find the savings targets in any given year (subject to consideration of the impact any efficiencies or service cuts have on the wider workings of the Council). This approach has proved effective, with the movement of £1.6m of funding (2008/2009) behind our customers' priorities. This was not easy to achieve and resulted in 35 posts being deleted, the closure of the local museum, the transfer of one of the sports facilities to a school, charging for green waste, increased car parking charges, removing concessionary parking passes for the over 60s, whilst at the same time going through Single Status with staff. These have all been difficult political decisions, but by using the evidence available to the Council from our customer feedback systems, along with a proper consideration of national

and regional policy, the Council has been able to invest in what is most important to customers and disinvest in other areas. For example, through our Customer Panel we know that our customers were very concerned about the cleanliness of the District, so we have invested in more area cleaners and new equipment; similarly, we know that our customers are least satisfied with progress on regenerating the town centre, so while we undertake the longer term work on completing an area action plan, we are investing now in quick wins like new toilet facilities.

- 3.4 Our customers would rightly expect us to make connections between priorities and act in a joined up manner. The planned redevelopment of the town centre, includes not just a thriving market town (corporate priority 1), but also improved housing (corporate priority 2), improved customer access, through community transport and highways improvements (corporate priority 3) and designing out crime, ensuring a full programme of community events and encouraging an evening economy (corporate priority 4). A similar approach has been adopted for Longbridge and the proposed new train station. We have also actively involved our customers in the service delivery planning for these projects through site visits and through customers sitting on project groups, for example, the community transport project and railway station project.
- 3.5 The Council has invested considerable energy in communicating our priorities to our customers and stakeholders through “Together Bromsgrove”, “Chats with the Chief”, Parish Forums and “Town Hall” meetings, but we recognise that we need to work harder on increasing the political engagement and understand our customers (something that has been identified as a national issue in the recent White Paper: “Communities in Control”). Members, senior officers and staff are clear about the Council’s priorities. In the last Employee Survey 75% of staff said their manager helped them understand the Council’s priorities. Staff are consulted at the inception of the prioritisation process through Staff Forums (and the Managers’ Forum). As a result of feedback from staff (which was consistent with the feedback received from our budget jury with our customers) we are proposing to amend some of the priorities for the forthcoming budget round.
- 3.6 After the Council Plan Part 1 has been agreed by September’s Full Council, service business plans are produced with budget bids and savings aligned to the selected priorities. The recent housing inspection commented favourably on this process and the strong alignment between the Council’s priorities and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). Through the autumn and winter, the service business plans and financial information are considered in detail by both Members and senior officers, before the budget is agreed in January and the Council Plan published by the 31 March each year.
- 3.7 Finally, the Council has made extensive use of learning from other organisations in the development of its priorities. The development of the Improvement Plan was assisted by Walsall MBC (changes to the Planning Service and Communications Team originated from Walsall MBC). Improvements to the performance management regime have been adopted from the experiences of Rotherham (performance clinics) and Derby City council (Performance Management Strategy). The Council has: undertaken an emergency planning exercise with the support of other councils; researched Warwickshire County Council’s and Bracknell Forest’s approaches to town centre redevelopment; visited Northamptonshire County Council to learn about its approach to diversity; visited Wychavon District Council to find out about their sports trust; met with Watford Borough Council’s Chief Executive to find out about their change management programme and Kettering District Council to learn about their planning function. The Council has also worked with GOWM and BDHT on trying to develop innovative approaches to affordable housing.

4. Capacity

- 4.1 Member/officer relations have been a key issue for the Council. These relations have significantly improved over the last two years. Cabinet and CMT have worked together on two Top Team programmes, the introduction of new political structures has enabled non-executive Members to examine and scrutinise performance and policy through the Performance Management Board and Scrutiny Task Groups. Members and officers also work together at PACT meetings.
- 4.3 Relationships between corporate management and departments are good. Heads of Service attend the weekly corporate management team which helps build a one council culture. On occasions when there have been differences of opinion between departments, these are identified, escalated and the relevant Executive Director or Acting Joint Chief Executive involved to ensure a way forward is agreed.
- 4.5 The Council recognises its duty to demonstrate openness and transparency in its decision-making processes. The Council operates a Standards Committee with an independent chair, supported by the Monitoring Officer. To support this committee, the Council has invested in a new officer post to ensure each complaint is given a detailed consideration. The Council has also commissioned an independent ethical governance review and has implemented the recommendations of this review. All Members receive training, as part of their induction, on the ethical standards and procedures they must follow and existing Members have also been trained. The Council has also made changes to its Constitution¹⁷ and Scheme of Delegation¹⁸ to reflect a more modernised approach and is developing a robust process to ensure that the Constitution remains a live and relevant document that mirrors the way the Council conducts its affairs. Decision making is timely and supports the achievements of priorities. The Council operates a rolling Forward Plan⁸ of all decisions to be sought from the Cabinet over a four month period.
- 4.7 Risk management now forms a key part of the Council's strategic planning framework. The Council operates a corporate risk register, updated quarterly and reported to the Corporate Risk Management Steering Group and Audit Board. Each service business plan is supported by a service risk register, cross-referenced to the service's key deliverables; again, these are reported on quarterly.
- 4.8 The Council is self aware about its capacity. The Council requested a CPA in 2007 in order to test our plans for improvement (and self assessed itself as Poor). The Council was considered self aware by this assessment. The 2007 CPA identified the need for additional senior management capacity. As a result, a new Executive Director Services post was created; prior to this, the Council appointed a new permanent chief executive and has previously undertaken a Council wide restructure to build capacity within the organisation. The Council drew down £300,000 from reserves to pump prime improvement and has made extensive use of funding opportunities from the Capacity Building Fund, Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) and Intervention Fund. The Council has appointed a Procurement Officer and procurement practices and savings have improved as a result. The Council recognises that the appointment of its Chief Executive, to be Acting Joint Chief Executive of Bromsgrove and Redditch councils is a risk, but it is designed to increase the capacity of both organisations by developing a strategic approach to value for money. An independent feasibility study was conducted prior to the appointment and the Council operates a risk register for this project and the Acting Joint Chief Executive has specific terms to ensure a focus on the issues that can add most value to both councils, whilst retaining a focus on Bromsgrove through its CPA. The Council also operates a separate risk register for this high profile project and it is covered in the corporate risk register.

- 4.9 The need to invest in our customers' priorities and rapidly improve the Council's service delivery has provided a strong focus for improving the Council's value for money. The Council has a Value for Money (VFM) Strategy, supported by corporate and departmental action plans. Value for money improvements include: SLAs with BDHT, the Artrix and BARN, the imminent transfer of the payroll function, the merger of two departments, reduced paper costs through new printers and improvements to the reprographics section, improved procurement practices (including an annual savings target of £80,000), increased sponsorship and of course, the Joint Chief Executive project. The Council has also benchmarked its VFM approach with an 4 out of 4 Use of Resources council and concluded Bromsgrove has stronger processes in place to achieve VFM, but needs time to let these take effect. The Council expects to improve its Use of Resources VFM score to 2 out of 4 when it is next assessed. The Council recognises that its current VFM profile is mixed³ and the use of benchmarking profiles remains an area for improvement. The Council expects to address this through the forthcoming development of detailed joint service business cases for phase three of the Joint Chief Executive project.
- 4.10 The Council has a detailed and fully costed three year MTFP. The MTFP includes clear allocations for priorities requiring significant capital investment like the town centre and affordable housing. The Council has also recently identified the need for future capital allocations to modernise the collection methods at the depot and these will be built into the next update. The Council has appropriate working balances that have been enhanced by a strong performance in treasury management and £20m reserves.
- 4.11 The Council has invested significantly in organisational development, including an Organisational Development Manager and a corporate staff training budget of £200,000, a managers training programme, Top Team programme and Member Development programme. Improved management practices can be evidenced through the Employee Survey, the IIP re-accreditation and ultimately through the improved service delivery to our customers.
- 4.12 Similarly, the Council's People Strategy⁹ and practices effectively support the corporate priorities. Through the Strategy, the Council has introduced a significant range of people management techniques to improve capacity within its workforce. These include Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) for all staff (a corporately monitored target by Members), a skills audit, a new capability procedure¹³, new Sickness Absence Policy¹⁴, new disciplinary procedure and anti-bullying and harassment procedures. The Council monitors sickness absence, staff turnover, early retirements and a range of indicators to ensure its workforce is representative of the community¹⁵. Sickness levels are second quartile and falling and 100% of staff have received a PDR. Turnover levels did increase with the announcement of the job evaluation results, but the Council carefully monitors the impact of job vacancies on performance through monthly performance reporting to the Corporate Management Team. Because the Council is currently undergoing Single Status, it has re-programmed the launch of workforce planning to 2009/10.
- 4.13 The Council makes extensive use of Information Communications Technology (ICT) to support service delivery and improve customer service. During 2006/07 the Council started three ICT projects. The Internet project which has led to the overhaul and modernisation of the Council's website, the infrastructure project (£1.8m) and the Spatial project (£5.0m). The Spatial project, supported by the new infrastructure, will significantly reduce process times and lead to customer information being single-sourced avoiding duplication and error. As part of this work, the Council's data has been cleansed and the corporate gazetteer has now been launched. The Council is

now in the process of implementing 11 software solutions, primarily in the Planning and Environment Department that will eventually link into the Council's Customer Service Centre. The Council has also invested in a customer feedback system (complaints and compliments) and a queue management system for the CSC, in addition to the customer relationship management system that is already in place at the CSC. Future developments are likely to focus on improving customer access through self service on the Internet, obtaining customer insight data through systems like Mosaic and vehicle cab technology to reduce missed bins.

- 4.14 The Council has a clear project management methodology. The Council operates a Programme Board, chaired by the Acting Joint Chief Executive, which supplements the work of the Corporate Management Team and provides a setting for a more detailed consideration of the various project documents required, using the Council's project management methodology.
- 4.15 Finally, the Council is prepared to use long term partnerships and joint working with other local authorities and organisations to deliver service improvements to our customers. The Council successfully transferred its housing stock to BDHT in 2004. Relations with the Trust are now good, with the BDHT Chief Executive sitting on the LSP Board and Chairing the Housing Theme Group. BDHT is the preferred RSL partner for the Council and we have a joint priority of affordable housing. In 2005, the Council opened its one stop shop, the CSC in partnership with the County Council. The Council has a track record of working with (and funding) the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) to improve services to the homeless and through the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (and in partnership with BDHT and Supporting People) and has developed a new Floating Support and Preventative Service for clients over 25 (younger people are catered for through the Baseline Service). The Council provides £120,000 per annum to the Artrix, with a SLA that links back to the findings from the Council's Customer Panel. The Council has a Compact with the voluntary sector and a SLA with BARN, the voluntary sector infrastructure organisation.

5. Performance Management

- 5.1 The Council can demonstrate that it understands its customers' priorities, has prioritised these and invested in them, but to deliver real improvements on the ground, that our customers will notice, the Council has needed to invest in a robust performance management framework, so that it can manage the process of improvement.
- 5.2 The basic framework consists of the Council Plan, service business plans, team action plans and PDRs. Challenge is provided through the Performance Management Board, monthly meetings between each portfolio holder and head of service(s) and through a "star chamber" by senior officers of each service business plan, in addition to the routine monitoring at Corporate Management Team each month. The Council has significantly reduced the number of indicators reported (to provide focus) and improved the format of all the performance management documentation.
- 5.3 The Council has used the learning from these improvements to help develop performance management for its key strategic partnerships through the development of a performance management framework for the LSP. This includes: high level action plans (cross-referenced to the County LAA) for each theme in the Sustainable Community Strategy, a community improvement plan which expands on the detail of these actions, regular reporting of key performance indicators, challenge at the LSP Board and use of performance clinics, for example on affordable housing. More

detailed arrangements for monitoring each partnership sit underneath these, which have been previously referred to e.g. SLAs etc.

- 5.5 Performance management is fully integrated with the management of resources through the production of the Council Plan Part 1 report, which summarises the performance issues from the previous outturn and their impact on future years' corporate priorities. As a result housing, a clean district and customer service were all made priorities.
- 5.6 Customer focus is understood and is a central driver for the Council's performance. The CSC is the main customer interface for the Council and receives over 7,000 calls per month. The CSC produces a detailed monthly report, which is considered each month by the Customer First Board, with key measures being reported to CMT and Members. The CSC also has data on the performance of neighbouring CSCs, so it can compare its performance. The Council now consistently answers calls to the CSC in less than 30 seconds, with the customer going straight through to a customer service adviser and over 90% of calls being resolved at the CSC. This is a very high quality service and the CSC has been identified as an example of best practice between both tiers of local government. More importantly our customers recognise this, with 73% of the Customer Panel being prepared to recommend the CSC to a friend. The Council has worked hard to ensure that its Customer First value is embedded across all of its departments. All staff have received Customer First Training, both in 2007 and 2008 (with more planned in 2009). The Council has published customer standards, which are currently being subject to review through customer research and has recently updated the Customer First Strategy to include a stronger focus on customer access, having benchmarked with Shropshire County Council (excellent and improving). The Acting Joint Chief Executive meets regularly with the County Council to resolve more difficult customer issues which require cross tier working.
- 5.7 In addition to the CSC the Council is making use of other customer performance management techniques to drive improved service delivery. The Council is beginning to use mystery shopping exercises. The Council also operates a Customer Panel and is now tracking customer satisfaction every year. In January 2008 the Council launched its Customer Feedback System. The system is available to all staff to take complaints or compliments from our customers. The system is monitored daily by the Customer First officer and complaint figures are supplied monthly to CMT, Cabinet and the Performance Management Board. A more detailed report is produced quarterly which analyses trends in the data. The role of the 68 annual PACT meetings in improving the performance of the Council and increasing customer satisfaction should not be underestimated. PACT is a form of customer performance management; residents vote on their top three concerns, which are then allocated to a police officer or Council officer (attached to each PACT). Progress on the three priorities is then reported back to residents at the next meeting. The evidence from PACT meetings is anecdotal, but it strongly suggests this process is working. Staff also have clear mechanisms for feeding back to senior management through "ConnectWithKev" "back to the floor" and Staff Forums. These were particularly useful during Single Status and the IIP assessor commented very favourably on the state of senior manager/staff relations given the Council's context. The Council also operates a clear and publicised grievance procedure for more formal matters.
- 5.9 In order to embed both the customer and performance culture across the Council, Core Brief regularly reports to staff on our performance figures and the Improvement Plan¹¹, the Acting Joint Chief Executive writes the lead article in the staff magazine "Connect"¹² which updates staff on key developments and the Assistant Chief

Executive writes a regular column "Performance Matters". The Council has an established Performance Champions Group, to develop the reporting of performance information and has introduced a staff suggestion scheme "Bright Ideas"¹³. Every team produces a team action plan, with team managers meeting with the relevant Executive Director and Assistant Chief Executive to examine their plans and every member of staff receives a PDR and six month review. The Council believes its approach to performance management is now embedded.

- 5.10 Finally, the Council formally reports its performance to its customers through its Annual Report (integrated with financial reporting) which is published on the Internet and reported in more detail through a "wrap around" in the local press. The Council publishes performance information as part of the Council Tax leaflet¹⁶. The Council also reports on its performance through the Together Bromsgrove residents' magazine. The LSP Board also produces an Annual Report on the Community Strategy and holds an annual "Town Hall" meeting to update residents on progress on the big issues like the town centre regeneration and train station redevelopment.

6. Achievement and Improvement

Overall Performance

- 6.1 The Council's Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) provide the main mechanism by which service delivery to the customer can be compared with other councils and nationally. The 2007/2008 outturn figures show that 72% of BVPI's improved during the year, building on the 59% increase the year before. 60% of the BVPIs are now above the local authority median (compared to 2006/07 quartile positions) with only 17% in the bottom quartile, continuing the significant improvement trend. This performance has been sustained into 2008/2009. The tables below set out the 2007/2008 performance:-.

	BVPIs		Local Pls	
PI Improvement	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
Performance improving	59%	72%	59%	76%
Performance steady	13%	10%	9%	12%
Performance declining	28%	18%	32%	12%

PIs meeting target				
Meeting or exceeding target	65%	74%	76%	78%
Missing target but within 10%	19%	16%	6%	10.5%
Missing target by more than 10%	16%	10%	18%	10.5%

BVPI Quartile spread		
Top quartile	20%	31%
2 nd quartile	18%	29%
3 rd quartile	36%	23%
Bottom quartile	26%	17%

Council Priority One – A Thriving Town Centre

- 6.2 The Council is taking a strategic approach to regenerating the town centre and is currently working through the statutory planning requirements to develop an area action plan for the town centre. Key achievements to date include:-

- The establishment of a joint County Council/District Council Project Board for the town centre and joint appointment of a town centre project manager.
- Agreement by the County Council to set aside a net £5m for asset investment in the town centre and also the agreement to fund a full accessibility study of the town centre, which should lead to a new town centre layout with reduced through traffic and increased footfall.
- A £12m funding package for the redevelopment of the Bromsgrove railway station should be agreed this autumn (the Council has previously financially contributed to the feasibility study for the station).
- Funding of a new toilet block in the town centre, including a high dependency unit for adults and children with disabilities (£174,000).
- A major retailer is currently being sought for the market hall site.
- An Issues and Options paper is currently out to consultation. This consultation is the pre-cursor to the production of an Area Action Plan for the town centre which will provide a blueprint for its future design.
- An events programme for the town centre has been agreed and is being implemented, with some sponsorship of the programme through the development of a Marketing Strategy. The programme included a "Showcase" sports event in the town centre in August.
- The Customer Service Centre is located in the town centre, including Saturday opening.
- Extended opening of the Shop mobility centre (first opened in November 2005) in response to recent customer feedback. The Scheme is very successful, with over 260 registered users and on average 8 to 10 vehicles being on loan at any one time.
- Improved lighting and a spruce up of the town centre multi-story car park after problems with teenage drivers. Achievement of the Safer Parking award and free car parking in Bromsgrove town centre, in the two weekends prior to Christmas.
- The securing of £15,000 of sponsorship from the private sector for community events, through the work of the Celebratory Group.

Council Priority Two – Housing

- 6.3 The Council has moved from a nil star, uncertain prospects service to a one star, promising prospects housing service in only 18 months. The delivery of affordable housing units has significantly improved since 2004/05 (26 units), to 75 units in 2005/2006 and a planned completion of 96 units in 2007/2008, although due to unforeseeable environmental concerns on one site, 26 of these completions will now be finalised in 2008/2009. The Council effectively supports the delivery of new affordable homes by contributing its own resources. It discounts or gifts land to support development, and commits £350,000 annually to grant fund BDHT, our primary partner.

- 6.4 The Council is engaging with the West Midlands Regional Assembly and GOWM in an attempt to address the low allocation within the RSS2 housing figures and is increasing its evidence base through undertaking a Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The Council also chairs the South Housing Market Area Partnership. The Council has delivered the Government's 2010 target for reducing the number of households living in temporary accommodation and has no families staying in B&B accommodation.
- 6.5 Through the Private Tenancy Scheme over 10 applicants have found suitable housing. The scheme helps financially support home seekers. The Council is second quartile in returning the level of private sector dwellings returned to occupation. There has been a significant improvement to disabled facilities grant performance. The Council has also introduced a choice based lettings scheme.
- 6.6 The Council and BDHT have a joint commitment to phase out the use of hostels as temporary accommodation and replace them with self contained units. Wythall Hostel has been closed¹⁶ and 21 units of self contained accommodation are currently available.
- 6.7 Whilst the housing moratorium has impacted on affordable housing provision it has led to a very high proportion of new developments being on brownfield sites, 92% (2005/06)²⁷, compared to a target of 75% (2004) and 40% by 2011. With a limited amount of brownfield sites and the pressure for affordable housing, the use of Area Development Restraints may mean some greenfield sites may need to be released in the near future.

Council Priority Three – Customer Service

- 6.8 The CSC is consistently resolving over 95% of customer calls at the first point of contact and is answering calls in less than 30 seconds. 73% of customers would recommend the service to a friend.
- 6.9 We do have periods of higher call volume, particularly during April with Council Tax. In the first year of opening, the average call waiting time in this month was 88 seconds - for April 2008 it was 34 seconds. The Council has recently invested in a queue management system for the CSC to improve the service to our walk-in customers.
- 6.10 Customer culture across the whole of the Council has been a key area for improvement. All staff have attended 'Customer First' courses and an IT system to manage and analyse complaints, comments and compliments system has recently been introduced across the Council. The corporate performance indicator set now includes performance measures about complaints and their resolution. The Council has updated its website and has a new DDA compliant Members' entrance.
- 6.11 The Council is investing £5.0m in the Spatial Project, which will see the roll out of 11 software packages including a land and property gazetteer. The Council had suffered from years of underinvestment in its ICT infrastructure and software, both of which are now being addressed. These improvements will enable residents to view and submit planning applications on-line, ensure information is up to date, provide customer histories, share information between systems and link to the CSC.

- 6.12 “Chats with the Chief” sessions have been popular, with take up from Parish Councils, Rotary, resident associations etc. The Council has introduced a Council SMS alert messaging service. This year 83% of our customer panel found it easy to contact the Council, compared to 54% the previous year. The Council is updating its Customer First Strategy to further improve access to services. 61% of residents found the resident magazine useful.
- 6.13 Finally, the Council has, in partnership with SCOPE, undertaken an accessibility audit of all Council buildings³⁰ and polling stations in order to ensure that its services can be accessed and that all members of the community are able to participate fully in the democratic process. Other access improvements include: the modification of the Council’s waste collection services offering aid and assistance to people with specific assistance requirements; the launch of a telephone translation service; the increased provision and use of hearing induction loops at the Council House and the Hub; the provision of all literature in alternative formats on request and the inclusion of a yellow information sheet explaining the equality services available with every piece of correspondence sent out.

Council Priority Four – Sense of Community (community events, community engagement, children and young people and crime and disorder)

Community Events

- 6.14 The Council provides an excellent cultural offer, with an extensive range of community events designed to help maintain a sense of community. Over 17,000 people attend the events each year. Events include the bonfire night, street theatre and bandstand programme. As a result of feedback from our Customer Panel, we now take street theatre out across the whole District and whilst we introduced a small charge for last year’s bonfire night, almost 10,000 people turned up. The bandstand programme includes not only an extensive music programme, but also youth arts, puppets in the park, clowns and magic, story telling and youth bands. The Council also has a very active civic calendar which helps provide a sense of civic pride and raises money for local charities. The Spadesborne Suite at the Council House is also used for a range of events like tea dances, International Women’s Day, games sessions for people with learning disabilities, weddings and the Equalities and Diversity Forum. The Forum recently successfully bid for Council funding to support Black History Month, Diwali and the Padstone Day Care Centre theatre event for people with learning disabilities. The Council also actively supported: the Holocaust Memorial Day with a service held in Sanders Park in January 2008, “Veterans’ Day” with a special bandstand programme and Democracy Week, with a range of events. Through our Together Bromsgrove magazine, we are also bringing news about the District and a special focus on a particular area in each edition.
- 6.15 The Council has underpinned this active civic calendar with the establishment of a Standards Committee and complaints procedure to ensure the proper conduct of public life in the District.
- 6.16 The Council has a lead role in the Artrix, Bromsgrove’s theatre, cinema and live music venue and facilitated both its conception and delivery. The Council funded the building of the Artrix arts centre and currently underwrites the revenue of the Artrix to the value of £120,000 per annum, supported by an SLA. The Centre provides a wide range of entertainment and an excellent facility for New College (used 14 hours a week). The facility opened in April 2005 and in 2006/2007 for example, provided: 389 performances and screenings, 12

exhibitions and over 350 creative workshop sessions. Over 26,000 people attended the Artrix in 2006/07.

- 6.17 Finally, the Council recently supported National Volunteer Week, with up to 20 staff, including the Acting Joint Chief Executive and Executive Director Partnerships and Projects going “back to the floor” with local charities to experience the significant contribution the voluntary sector makes to the District.

Feeling Safe

- 6.18 The Council operates a highly successful Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership with the Police. The last three years have seen a 31.9% reduction in crime levels across the District (target was 17.5%) and a 47% reduction in car crime. There were only three violent incidents in the town centre over the Christmas period due to high visibility policing, better licensing and improvements to taxi pick up points. The Council's Quality of Life Survey found that only 5% of residents said that crime and anti social behaviour affect their lives a great deal. Only 7% of residents disagreed that their local area is somewhere where people from different backgrounds do not get on well. The Council has made a substantial investment in CCTV in the town centre and around the District, with another £450,000 worth of programmed upgrades due over the next three years. CCTV is clearly effective; in 3 years and 6,000,000 car parking tickets, there have only been 20 reported vehicle crime incidents in the town centre. The Council has made careful use of Alcohol Free Zones in areas like Alvechurch and Rubery and we are currently looking at increasing the powers of our Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police's community support officers, so that they can issue fixed penalty notices. A key aspect of the improvement in crime reduction has been the close working relationship with the Police through the 68 PACT meetings, which address the priorities raised by local residents. For example, Waseley, which has traditionally been an area of higher crime, has seen vehicle crime drop by 47% since 2005/06, domestic burglary by 17% and criminal damage offences have reduced by almost 20%. The Council is very unusual in the level of support it provides to the PACT meetings, compared to the rest of the County and nationally. For example, a nearby excellent rated council does not support PACT, due to a lack of management capacity. We have an excellent working relationship with the Police that reflects this level of support. The Council has also worked in partnership on the “adopt the box” scheme, a joint initiative between the Council and Virgin Media, with residents being provided with an unlimited supply of cable box paint, to cover up graffiti; and we have also worked in partnership with the Police on marking people's property with SmartWater. The Council has also actively worked with its partners to develop a Hate Crime Procedure³¹, which has been rolled out to 22 reporting centres across the District and covers all six equality strands including race.
- 6.19 The Council also offers an extensive range of diversionary activities, including an angling project, free football coaching sessions, delivered by an FA qualified coach; the mainstream funding of the Neighbourhood Warden Scheme who engage with local residents, particularly young people; and the Charford Multi Agency Resource Centre has set up a youth group, with activities like arts, crafts, cooking, sports or just socialising with friends in a safe environment.

- 6.20 Finally, the Council also helps older and vulnerable residents feel safer in their own homes through its externally accredited Lifeline Service (98.85% of Lifeline calls answered within 30 seconds).

Community Engagement

- 6.21 The Council is offering an increasing range of mechanisms for the public to influence the Council's strategy and services. The Council can track focus group feedback into the selection of its corporate priorities¹⁷. In direct response to comments from PACT meetings, dedicated mobile area cleaners have been introduced in Charford, Sidemoor and Catshill. The recent Customer Panel results show a 16 percentage point increase in positive satisfaction with street cleanliness.
- 6.22 As a result of its two Local Neighbourhood Partnerships, the Council has introduced hanging baskets and a new welcome sign in Rubery and developed a bandstand programme and special event at the Artrix Theatre for Veterans' Day; and through Section 106 monies available in Alvechurch young people have agreed how this money is to be spent.
- 6.23 We have previously mentioned that the Council is now using a budget jury to support its budget deliberations, staff have been consulted on the priorities and key deliverables (many of whom live in the District) and the Equalities and Diversity Forum on made a number of successful community bids which have included money for Black History Month, Diwali and a play by people with learning disabilities. Through the LSP, the Council also supports an annual "town hall" meeting. The Council has a Community Engagement Strategy to help it respond to the two White Papers and will be supporting a participatory budgeting event for children and young people, in partnership with the County Council, in April 2009.

Children and Young People

- 6.24 The Council is concerned about the increasing demonisation of young people. It has been recognised at County level that district councils have struggled to engage with the "Every Child Matters" agenda; however, through the LSP, the Council has established a Children and Young People Board²⁸ and the Council is the District representative on the County thematic group. As mentioned above, the Council is seeking to involve children and young people in the democratic process. The involvement of young people in Alvechurch in the decision on how to use section 106 monies is another example of the Council's developing approach. The Council already provides an extensive range of activities for children and young people including: street theatre, the bonfire night, diversionary activities e.g. the Majors Green Football Scheme, boxing, Sanders Park and St Chads skate parks and play areas. The Council also works with voluntary organisations, for example, re-planting Chestnut Walk, working with the Scouts; and has provided training to nurseries on health and safety issues. The Council also facilitates the Primary Sports Project. This provides high quality physical education in first schools which in turn has led to increased contact and membership of local sports clubs and helps schools meet their Healthy Schools targets. Other activities include: a swimming gala for primary and second school children; a very successful sports award evening, with sponsorship for each award; the introduction of multi-skills sessions across the District for 5 to 9 year olds to improve their fundamental skills of agility and balance (this also included a multi-skills festival with an excellent turnout); a junior cricket programme, in partnership with Bromsgrove

Junior Boars, with qualified coaches; a Children and Young People's Convention to find out what youngsters want in the District; a football tournament at Bromsgrove's Ryland Centre, which kicked off a series of sporting projects across the District, delivered by the Sports Development Team, in partnership with the County Council and the voluntary sector and the setting up of a Gymnastics Club by the Sports Development Team, in partnership with the Wyre Forest Gymnastics Club and North Worcestershire School Sports Partnership. Through the 2008/2009 budget cycle the Council has invested in a further two sports development officers.

- 6.25 The Council is also working hard to improve the physical play areas for young people. The Council has recently opened the Lickey and Blackwell playground (£40,000 funding from Council). The Council was also recently successful in winning £200,000 from the Big Lottery Fund to improve play facilities across the District. The money will be spent on £50,000 for multi-use games areas at Callowbrook Park, £40,000 towards teenager adventure play area at Wythall Park, £40,000 towards expanding and improving existing equipment at the Wythall Hollywood Lane play area, £35,000 to improve existing play facilities in Sidemoor and £35,000 to revamp the Infants' play area at Mayfarm Close.
- 6.26 As a result of this priority, only 10% of residents felt they did not belong to their local area and 64% felt it was a nice place to live.

Council Priority Five - Clean District and Recycling

Clean District

- 6.27 89% of our streets now meet the Government's standards for cleanliness compared to 65% a year ago. This improvement is also reflected in improving customer perception (see 6.21 above). To achieve these results the Council has invested in the employment of additional street cleansing staff, new sweepers, graffiti removal systems, area cleaners and hit squads. The Council's Community Safety Team has also worked in partnership with the Probation Service on local area improvements like the clearing of alleys in Rubery. In 2007, the Council won a Green Apple Award for its street cleansing service.
- 6.28 100% of abandoned vehicle reports are investigated within 24 hours of notification (top quartile) and almost 100% removed within 24 hours of the Council being able to do so (top quartile). Similarly, the Council removes all animal debris within agreed timescales and deals with almost all fly tips within our response times.

Recycling

- 6.29 Recycling rates are amongst the most improved in England with the levels of recycling being in the top 50 in the country at over 40% and satisfaction data being top quartile. The Council has supported this improved delivery through a collection policy, the introduction of a clearer Christmas calendar (as a result of customer feedback) and a green waste collection. We have also set up four new bring banks, especially for Tetra Pak beverage cartons, in partnership with Tetra Pak Ltd. The majority of residual waste that is collected is diverted to Combined Heat and Power plants reducing the amount of waste required for landfill.

- 6.30 The Council actively supports public education on recycling. We run a “Recycle Now” week with drop-in sessions; “Waste Stop Shops” so that residents can find out more about recycling; the design and delivery by young people of a green scheme post card to encourage recycling, Recycler the hip hop Rapping Robot visited 10 schools in the District to encourage the three Rs of recycling and a Recycling Bus tour has visited the District’s villages to give advice and guidance on the best way to recycle.
- 6.31 Our focus and investment means that 81% of residents now use one of the Council’s recycling facilities and 84% are satisfied with the recycling service.

Other Achievements

- 6.32 Not all of our services are covered by the priorities, but improvement is a Council wide objective and staff have worked very hard over the last few years to turn around the customer service and performance of the Council across all of our services. Other achievements that Council has made include:-
- The Council is a partner with Advantage West Midlands on the Bromsgrove Technology Park. Basepoint PLC has a building there. Basepoint is a technology centre with “incubator” units to grow new businesses.
 - The Council runs a farmers market in Bromsgrove town centre and a Christmas market.
 - The Council, in partnership with NEW College operates a successful business start up programme with 90 start ups over the last three years and a 70% survival rate.
 - Satisfaction with parks and open spaces is high and improving and Sanders Park has achieved Green Flag status.
 - The Council is refurbishing the gym facilities (£850,000) at the Dolphin Centre and is in the process of transferring the Centre to a Charitable Trust.
 - A number of teams in the Culture and Communities Department are QUEST accredited. The Planning and Environment Department Building Control Service is ISO9000 accredited and the Environment Health section achieved the highest average score for enforcement practices in a county wide audit. The Council is one of a very few local authorities nationally to have served Noise Abatement Notices in order to prevent nuisance trains (squealing train wheels) from travelling through the District. The Council’s Environmental Health Commercial Team and Legal Services have undertaken a number of high profile prosecutions of local businesses which have received local and regional press coverage, with two cases featuring in a national journal.
 - Domestic energy efficiency is up to 22.68% (2005/06) from a 2003 baseline of 5% and is on target to achieve 2011 target of 30%²⁶.
 - The Planning Service has seen a significant improvement in its performance. Performance is top quartile and should place the Council well within the top 50 performing authorities, compared to being one of the worst performing councils in 2005/06.

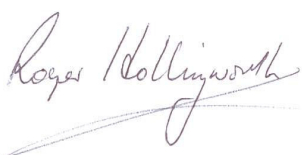
- An extensive consultation on the options for the future of the Longbridge site has been undertaken.
- The average number of days taken for processing new claims and the average number of days taken to process a change of circumstance have dramatically improved, falling from 37.81 days in 2005/06 to 26.33 days in 2007/08 and 11.88 days in 2005/06 to 6 days in 2007/08.
- A significant reduction in benefits payment error rate, which has meant the payment of more subsidies by Central Government (£200,000). Achieved 100% for last quarter (quarter 4 2007/2008).
- Sales advertising for Together Bromsgrove has increased by £14,000.
- The Council is half way through registering all Council's land, which is significantly ahead of other councils and means we are now selling this service to other councils.
- Procurement savings achieved of over £80,000 per annum.
- Introduction of the "Scores on the Doors" food establishment rating service.
- Development of a County wide Air Quality Strategy aimed at reducing emissions, better planning, transport and controlled areas.
- External funding secured for Improvement Manager to help deliver spatial project, programme management etc.
- Merger of Culture and Communities and StreetScene and Waste Management Department and savings delivered.
- A new reprographics service, including new printers and reduced costs of printing.
- Installation of new land and property gazetteer which will underpin all the spatial systems and significantly improve the service to customers, by providing a single database for updating change of address details.
- 27,000 households pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit which contributes to our very high collection rates (second quartile). There are 37,000 properties.
- Investors in People (IIP) re-accreditation achieved and examples of best practice cited.
- "Winning Business" seminars for private sector companies who want to get contracts with the public sector, with over 100 delegates attending.
- Development of a "Flooding Matters" leaflet with top tips for homes affected by the recent floods.
- Introduction of a new way of calculating housing benefit, through the Local Housing Allowance, introduced in April 2008.

- £1,612,000 savings target agreed for 2008/2009 in order to release money into priority areas.
- Introduction of a new Licensing Policy which is short and simple to use and has been praised by the British Beer and Pub Association for its ease of use.
- Sickness absence has dropped to 9.35 days per FTE for 2007/2008, compared to 10.66 in the previous year. The estimated outturn for 2008/2009 will see sickness levels drop below the local authority average.
- The Council is in the top quartile for paying invoices within 30 days.
- 100% of the Environmental Health best practice list achieved.
- Positive feedback from the recent Food Standards Agency inspection.

7. Conclusions

7.1 This self assessment demonstrates that the Council has made a dramatic improvement to the manner and effectiveness of provision of local services since the 2007 CPA. In the last CPA it was too early to evidence the impact on our customers of this improved performance, but through our recent customer satisfaction survey, the customer feedback system and anecdotal evidence from community meetings like PACT, we are now seeing a rise in customer satisfaction. As a result, the Council has self assessed itself as “Good” and is ambitious to achieve excellence. In writing the self assessment, the Council is aware that:-

- the District is a relatively affluent one and the societal problems it faces are ones that come with affluence, for example, affordable housing, very high customer expectations and a town centre that does not reflect the general wealth of the District;
- to achieve excellence the Council now needs to address these longer term outcomes;
- in order to deliver this agenda the Council needs to further develop its capacity. The joint chief executive project with Redditch BC is key to developing this capacity; and
- tackling all of the above is dependent on stable and sustainable political leadership from all parties. The Council recognises this and will continue to pay close attention to this agenda to ensure the governance of the Council is sound and enables officers to deliver a District where people are proud to live and work.



Roger Hollingworth
Leader of the Council



Kevin Dicks
Acting Joint Chief Executive

Self Assessment Score by Council

Theme	Self Assessed Score
Ambition	2
Prioritisation	2
Capacity	2
Performance Management	3
Achievement and Improvement	3

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

17th SEPTEMBER 2008

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek approval to a concordat for joint working between Bromsgrove and Redditch Borough Councils (which includes the terms of reference and decision making powers of the Shared Services Board).
- 1.2 In this regard members will note that a meeting of the Shared Services Board took place on 1st September 2008 at which the following documents were considered;
 - The draft Concordat for Joint Working
 - The report of the Acting Joint Chief Executive on Targets and Objectives
 - The report of the Acting Joint Chief Executive on Quick Wins
- 1.3 These documents are referred to throughout this report and can be found at Appendix 1, 2 and 3 respectively to this report. For members information and completeness the minutes of the Shared Services Board are attached to this report at Appendix 4.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that members approve:
 - 2.1.1 the terms of reference and governance arrangements detailed within the draft Concordat document attached at Appendix 1 subject to the recommended arrangements proposed by the Shared Service Board;
 - 2.1.2 that the six month review process be undertaken by the respective Cabinets of each Council in accordance with the criteria detailed at 4.3 within the draft Concordat (attached at Appendix 1).
 - 2.1.3 that authority be delegated to the Bromsgrove District Council's Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader the power to determine appropriate arrangements to resolve any issue that may arise from a conflict of interest during the arrangement of Acting Joint Chief Executive in respect of matters that relate to Bromsgrove District Council; and that
 - 2.1.4 the quick wins for further joint working / shared services between Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils as recommended by the Shared Services Board and outlined in the Quick Wins report (attached at Appendix 3), namely in respect of

- Elections
- Community Safety
- Performance and financial management
- Equality and Diversity
- Member Development
- Head of Financial Services

2.1.5 that an offer of membership on the Shared Services Board be offered to the Leader of the Council's respective Labour Groups and that this be a conditional offer based on the written agreement of the respective Labour Group Leaders to the principal of the Joint Chief Executive arrangements.

3. BACKGROUND

Concordat for joint working

3.1 Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council agreed at their respective full Council meetings in June 2008 to the appointment of an Acting Joint Chief Executive for the 2 Councils for a period of 12 months.

3.2 As part of the decision to appoint an Acting Joint Chief Executive both Councils agreed that:

“a Shared services Board be established with 3 members from each authority to oversee progress and that a further report be brought back to the Council as soon as practicably possible determining the detailed remit of this Group and any other proposed Governance arrangements”

3.3 In order to address the above a Concordat for Joint Working has been prepared. This includes:

- A vision for joint working
- Underlying principles and values
- The terms of reference for the Shared Services Board
- Governance arrangements

3.4 The draft Concordat document also identifies the need for the Shared Services Board to set targets for the delivery of services and this can be found at paragraph 4.3 in the draft Concordat.

3.5 In this regard the Shared Services Board considered in some detail at their meeting on 1st September 2008 the targets and objectives report prepared by the Acting Joint Chief Executive attached at appendix 2.

- 3.6 Members are asked to consider and approve the draft concordat attached at Appendix 1 and that the process for undertaking the 6 month review in respect of the working arrangements be undertaken by the respective Cabinets of each Councils.
- 3.7 In addition members are asked to consider the detailed targets and objectives detailed in the report of the Acting Joint Chief Executive at appendix 2.

Secondment Arrangements

- 3.8 Members will recall that the meeting of the Full Council in June delegated authority to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and the Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Leader the power to determine any detailed arrangements in relation to the establishment of the Acting Joint Chief Executive.
- 3.9 The secondment arrangements have now been finalised and the documentation to support this arrangement is now in place.
- 3.10 As part of this process it has been necessary for both Councils to determine a process for managing any occasion where the Acting Joint Chief Executive may be subject to a conflict of interest. Accordingly both Councils will need to make a provision that will govern this eventuality. Members are therefore requested to delegate the power to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Leader to determine, within the context of the issue, the most appropriate officer to act should the circumstances apply.

Quick Wins

- 3.11 Members will note that the draft Concordat document recommended for approval within this report sets as a target the need for the Shared Services Board to identify quick wins as a consequence of the joint arrangement by the 30th September 2008.
- 3.12 At their meeting on the 1st September 2008 the Shared Services Board considered and agreed in principle to the shared service proposals identified by the Acting Joint Chief Executive as quick wins and these are detailed in the report at Appendix 3.
- 3.13 Members are asked to approve the quick wins for further joint working / shared services between Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils as outlined in the Quick Wins report (attached at Appendix 3), subject to a proper process of consultation with affected staff and trade unions.

Shared Services Board

- 3.14 Members will note that the minutes of the Shared Services Board meeting have been attached to this report at Appendix 4 in order to detail the recommendations made by the Board to this Council in relation to the shared services options. Members will note that not all of the options identified by the Acting Joint Chief Executive are being recommended for progression at this stage and that those that are will be subject to a proper process of consultation with affected staff and trade unions.
- 3.15 Members will note that the minutes of the Shared Services Board meeting have been attached to this report at Appendix 4 in order to detail the recommendations made by the Board to this Council in relation to the shared services options. Members will note that not all of the options identified by the Acting Joint Chief Executive are being recommended for progression at this stage and that those that are will be subject to a proper process of consultation with affected staff and trade unions.
- 3.16 Members at the Shared Services Board felt that excellent working relationships between all members was essential in order to maximise the potential benefits of this project and that in order for this to be possible it would be necessary to extend an invitation to the Leaders of the respective Labour Groups on the Shared Services Board. It was agreed that an offer of membership on the Shared Services Board be offered to the Leader of the Council's respective Labour Groups and that this be a conditional offer based on the written agreement of the respective Labour Group Leaders to the principal of the Joint Chief Executive arrangements and that this be recommended to both Council's.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None arising directly from this report

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report – these will be addressed as each proposal is brought forward for consideration.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The proposals support the Council Objective of improvement.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 None arising directly from this report – these will be addressed as each proposal is brought forward for consideration.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 No direct impact on the Customer.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None arising directly from this report – these will be addressed as each proposal is brought forward for consideration.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Value for Money and delivery of efficiencies is the driving force behind these proposals.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues
None
Personnel Implications
None directly associated with this report.
Governance/Performance Management
None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998
None
Policy
None
Environmental
None

12. WARDS AFFECTED

All

13. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – draft Concordat

Appendix 2 – The report of the Acting Joint Chief Executive on Targets and Objectives

Appendix 3 – The report of the Acting Joint Chief Executive on Quick Wins

Appendix 4 – Shared Services Board Minutes 1st September 2008

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Shared Services Papers

Kevin Dicks

Acting Joint Chief Executive

Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

Concordat between Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council

1. Purpose

1.1. This Concordat establishes an agreed framework for future work between Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC) in developing a strategic alliance between both Councils. It builds on the decision already taken by both Councils to develop such an alliance by appointing an Acting Joint Chief Executive.

1.2. The vision for this alliance is as follows:

Under the management of a single Chief Executive, to identify and establish joint working arrangements and a shared approach to the delivery of services that will improve the quality of people's lives in the two authorities and deliver greater value for money.

1.3. This vision will be realised by delivery of the agreed set of general aims for the strategic alliance, to:-

- increase the levels of customer satisfaction through the improvement of services;
- produce realistic cash savings in order to deliver improved services and limit Council Tax increases;
- strengthen and share skills, expertise and learning in order to deliver better services;
- preserve and enhance the special and distinctive characteristics within each local authority area; and

- increase our influence locally, regionally and nationally in order to secure a 'better deal' for all our communities.

1.4. The terms of this Concordat may be varied at any time upon the agreement of both Councils.

2. Steps taken to date

2.1 The Councils engaged external experts, WMLGA and I&DeA, to provide a feasibility study for the appointment of a Joint Chief Executive.

2.2 On the basis of the advice given by WMLGA and I&DeA, and following political consultation, both Councils have agreed to the principle of a strategic alliance being established and to the appointment of a Joint Chief Executive, shared by the two authorities.

2.3 In terms of decision making to date both Councils have agreed at their respective meetings on 30th June 2008 to the appointment of an Acting Joint Chief Executive, on a trial basis for 12 months – subject to a review after 6 months.

3. Underlying Principles and Values

3.1 The general principles upon which this Concordat is based are the maintenance of excellent working relations between members and officers for the mutual benefit of both Councils, underpinned by effective and open communication. All work undertaken in accordance with this Concordat will be based on mutual trust between both Councils, and will be approached from a positive standpoint, with an

emphasis on problem solving to overcome barriers, rather than letting any barriers become obstacles to progress.

- 3.2 This Concordat is not intended to constitute a legally enforceable contract or to create any rights or obligations which are legally enforceable. The Councils intend that suitable contractual arrangements will be put in place for each agreed area of joint working, with a presumption towards minimum bureaucracy consistent with meeting legal requirements.
- 3.3 Accountability for services delivered through joint working will remain with the Council with whom the relevant statutory responsibility rests. Day to day managerial responsibility for services delivered through joint working should rest with the Council providing the service.

4. Shared Services Board

- 4.1 A Shared Services Board has been established comprising 6 members (3 nominated by each Council, this may include both Cabinet/Executive and Non-Cabinet/Executive members). The Board will meet bi-monthly (more frequently if required), the meeting venues alternating between the Councils' civic offices. The Board shall include the Leaders of both Councils, and the Leader of the host Council will chair each meeting.
- 4.2 The Board will have no decision making power. Its meetings will not be formal meetings of the Councils but will be open to the public, unless the Board is considering exempt items. The meetings of the Board will be minuted and the minutes will be made available to all members of both Councils.

4.3 The following terms of reference are agreed for the Board:-

(a) In respect of future joint working arrangements and/or a shared approach to the delivery of a service or services:

(i) to set targets and objectives for the development of future joint working arrangements and a shared approach to the delivery of services, to include:

- by 30 September 2008 targets and objectives for joint working arrangements and/or a shared approach to the delivery of a service or services for implementation by 31 December 2008;
- by 31 December 2008 targets and objectives for joint working arrangements and/or a shared approach to the delivery of services for implementation by 31 July 2009; and
- by 30 June 2009 targets and objectives for long-term joint working arrangements and/or a shared approach to the delivery of services to be prepared in the form of a business case.

(ii) to consider proposals from the Acting Joint Chief Executive and the business case for joint working arrangements and a shared approach to the delivery of services .

(iii) to make recommendations to each Council in respect of any proposals under consideration based on a consensus of the meeting; where consensus cannot be reached recommendations will be based on at least 2 Councillors from each authority being in support of the proposals.

- (b) In respect of joint working arrangements and/or a shared approach to the delivery of any service or services which have been agreed by both Councils:
 - (i) To establish and monitor appropriate performance indicators for services provided under joint arrangements;
 - (ii) To monitor financial performance / savings arising;
 - (iii) To recommend to each Council any amendments to established joint working arrangements following monitoring of the same.
- (c) To report to each authority on a quarterly basis on the Board's activities, including the monitoring of performance indicators and financial performance / savings, with a formal review of all activities produced prior to the end of the initial 12 month period, and thereafter, if the Councils decide to continue their strategic alliance, on an annual basis.
- (d) To ensure that all members of both Councils are regularly updated.

4.4 Each Council will ensure effective arrangements for the scrutiny of recommendations from the Board.

5. Acting Joint Chief Executive

- 5.1 An agreement has been reached between both Councils for the appointment of the Acting Joint Chief Executive.
- 5.2 The Acting Joint Chief Executive will ensure an equal commitment to each Council .

- 5.3 The Acting Joint Chief Executive will be the principal officer responsible for delivery of the aims of the strategic alliance.
- 5.4 The Acting Joint Chief Executive will at all times act in the best interests of each Council. In the event of any conflict of interest or potential or perceived conflict of interest arising between the Councils the Acting Joint Chief Executive shall immediately inform the Monitoring Officer at each Council. Each Council will ensure it has appropriate procedures and safeguards in place to identify such potential conflicts at an early stage and establish arrangements to deal with them, including procedures to appoint a designated senior officer to act as a deputy in the event that the Acting Joint Chief Executive is unable to act.
- 5.5 The Acting Joint Chief Executive will ensure that staff and trade union representatives are involved, as appropriate, in service reviews and are kept informed as work progresses.
- 5.6 Such support as is reasonably required by the Acting Joint Chief Executive will be provided from both within the Councils, and externally, as is appropriate.

6. Financial Considerations

- 6.1 It is recognised by both Councils that the strategic alliance will realise cash savings and efficiency gains. As a general principle, the Councils agree that any savings resulting from the strategic alliance will be shared equitably but these will be determined on a case by case basis.

6.2 The Councils agree to share equally the costs associated with the investigation and implementation of the agreed areas of joint working. Further, both Councils will seek to use the innovative nature of the strategic alliance to seek external funding to support its development.

7. Termination of this Concordat

7.1 The Councils may agree to bring to an end the vision for the strategic alliance between both Councils and any decision to do so will be handled in a fair manner and with the overriding intention to minimise any resulting disruption to both Councils.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SHARED SERVICES BOARD

1st September 2008

TARGETS AND OBJECTIVES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek approval of the targets and objectives for the Acting Joint Chief Executive in so far as they relate to further shared services / joint working between Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that:

- 2.1.1 Members agree in principle the targets and objectives for the project as:

2.1.1.1 Phase 1 – By 30th September 2008 identify the “quick wins” for shared services / joint working (for implementation before 31st December 2008);

2.1.1.2 Phase 2 – By 31st December 2008 identify some medium term opportunities (for implementation by 31 July 2009);

2.1.1.3 Phase 3 – By 30th June 2009 review all services of the Council and develop a business case outlining the opportunities for shared services / joint working;

- 2.1.2 The Targets and Objectives are recommended to both Council's for agreement;

- 2.1.3 The specification for external support attached at Appendix 1 is noted;

- 2.1.4 Each Council provide match funding from of £40,000 balances to support the production of the business case; and that

- 2.1.5 Redditch Borough Council are requested to release £40,000 from revenue balances.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.17 Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council agreed at their respective full Council meetings in June to the appointment of a Joint Chief Executive between the 2 Councils for a trial period of 12 months.

3.18 As part of the decision to appoint a Joint Chief Executive both Councils agreed that:

“a Shared services Board be established with 3 members from each authority to oversee progress and that a report be brought back to the Council as soon as practically possible determining the detailed remit of this Group and any proposed Governance arrangements”.

3.19 The Terms of Reference and role of for the Board are dealt with separately on the agenda.

3.20 In order for members to be assured that the Acting Joint Chief Executive is fulfilling what is required of him there is a need for each council to set targets and objectives which are specific to that Council. This will be the matter for each Council to agree, however, in addition to this there is a need to set broad targets and objectives relating to further shared services / joint working – this is the purpose of this report.

4. TARGETS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 It is suggested that the project is broken down into 3 main phases:

2.1.5.1 Phase 1 – By 30th September 2008 identify the targets and objectives for joint working that will achieve “quick wins” for shared services / joint working (that can be delivered within 6 months);

2.1.5.2 Phase 2 – By 31st December 2008 to establish the targets and objectives for joint working arrangements that will identify some medium term opportunities (that can be delivered with 12 months);

2.1.5.3 Phase 3 – By 30th June 2009 identify the targets and objectives for long – term joint working arrangements and/or a shared approach to the delivery of services to be presented in the form of a business case.

4.2 The reasoning behind the 3 main objectives is as follows:

a. Phase 1

It is felt to be important to quickly demonstrate the benefits that this initiative will bring that are over and above what can be delivered by the two Councils continuing to work separately. The end of September is felt to be a realistic timescale for the Acting Joint Chief Executive to get to know Redditch Borough Council and to identify some opportunities that will help support the vision for joint working as outlined in the concordat.

b. Phase 2

Rather than simply have 2 phases to the project (quick wins and the full business case for joint working / shared services) it is important that further opportunities are identified as and when they arise. However in order to ensure that these are being pursued it is suggested that by the end of December 2008 the Acting Joint Chief Executive brings forward to the Board some further proposals for consideration. It is further suggested that these proposals should be capable of being implemented before end of July 2009.

c. Phase 3

It is felt that in order to ensure that a robust business case is developed that the full 12 months of the trial for the Acting Joint Chief Executive is taken to develop it. The broad timeline is suggested as follows:

- Recruitment of external resource to undertake analysis of performance levels / costs – September 2008
- Completion of analytical work completed and identification of areas to be targeted – November 2008
- Specification produced for external resource to produce business case – November 2008
- Procurement of external resource to complete business case – December 2008
- External resource to start work on business case – January 2009
- Completion of draft business case for presentation to Acting Joint Chief Executive by April 2009
- Presentation of business case to Shared Services Board by May 2009
- Consideration of business case by each Council by June 2009

At the time of producing the original business case (into the Joint Chief Executive proposals) there was a lack of clarity over the performance information at Redditch. It is essential that this is clarified before any further work is undertaken. This has the added benefit that there is little / no distraction for Bromsgrove in preparing for and undergoing their CPA inspection (on site phase in November) and also help satisfy the Government Monitoring

Board that the Acting Joint Chief Executive and Management Team at Bromsgrove are not losing focus.

- 4.3 It is clear that neither Bromsgrove or Redditch have the capacity to develop the full business case for shared services without additional support and as such the Acting Joint Chief Executive has discussed this matter with Colin Williams (Director of Local Government Services, West Midlands LGA) who has identified that he has between £30,000 - £40,000 to support this initiative from the West Midland Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (WMRIEP). This will fund the initial work required before procuring someone to complete the business case – the draft specification for this work is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.4 Following the completion of the analytical work outlined in the draft specification as outlined in Appendix 1 the Councils will need to procure additional external support to complete the Business Case. It is suggested that match funding of £40,000 per Council is released. Note: Bromsgrove District Council released £40,000 to fund this initiative at its Council meeting in June.
- 4.5 Whilst the capacity to complete the business case doesn't exist within either Council it is important that it is "owned" by each Council and as such whoever is appointed, whilst working directly to the Acting Joint Chief Executive, will need to work closely with each Management Team.
- 4.6 If the specification for the external support is supported a detailed project plan will be developed and will be presented to the Board for their consideration at the next meeting.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Overall the Acting Joint Chief Executive will save both Councils money however as demonstrated in the report there is a need to supplement the capacity to complete the business case. There is between £30,000 to £40,000 available from the West Midlands LGA to fund the initial work however it is likely that each Council will need to supplement this with additional resources to produce the business case. It is therefore recommended that each Council release £40,000 from revenue balances to progress this..

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report – these will be addressed as each proposal is brought forward for consideration.

7. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 Each Council will need to ensure the proposals support the Council Objectives.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report however it is envisaged that the approach to Risk Management will operate at 2 levels:
- a. Risk mitigation/controls for respective proposals/services
 - b. Ongoing assessment of the short/long term risks contained within the original feasibility report

9. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 No direct impact on the Customer.

10. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None arising directly from this report – these will be addressed as each proposal is brought forward for consideration.

11. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Value for Money and delivery of efficiencies is the driving force behind these proposals.

12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues
None
Personnel Implications
None arising directly from this report – these will be addressed as each proposal is brought forward for consideration.
There will undoubtedly be some implications for the staff involved in services proposed for sharing in terms of the business case however any capacity issues will be managed by the appropriate management teams.
Governance/Performance Management
Outlined in the report

Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998
None
Policy
None
Environmental
None

14. WARDS AFFECTED

All

15. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Specification for external support

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Shared Services Papers

Kevin Dicks
Acting Joint Chief Executive
Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council

Joint Working / Shared Services Review - Specification

Background

Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council have agreed to trial, for a period of 12 months, a Joint Chief Executive arrangement. Part of the role of the Joint Chief Executive is to identify and establish joint working arrangements and a shared approach to the delivery of key services that will improve the quality of people's lives in the two authorities and deliver greater value for money.

A Shared Services Board has been established comprising 3 members from each authority. The group has agreed the broad targets and objectives for the Acting Joint Chief Executive which are as follows:

- Phase 1 – By 30th September 2008 identify the “quick wins” for shared services / joint working (for implementation before 31st December 2008);
- Phase 2 – By 31st December 2008 identify some medium term opportunities (for implementation by 31 July 2009);
- Phase 3 – By 30th June 2009 review all services of the Council and develop a business case outlining the opportunities for shared services / joint working. The Business case should include financial and performance implications and a risk assessment.

Support Required

The Councils are looking for support in order to progress delivery of Phase 3 of the project. The appointed person(s) will be working directly for the Acting Joint Chief Executive but working with the Management Teams of each authority and in particular with the Deputy Chief Executive at Redditch and the Executive Director of Services at Bromsgrove.

Before the production of the business case it is felt that the following work is necessary and it is for this that we are looking for the external support:

- Initial work at Redditch to establish some clarity on their current performance levels in order to provide the latest baseline data and bring the systems up to date and common. This is a pre-requisite to the next stage;
- Comparing performance and cost information for both Councils and identifying those service areas that could / should be targeted within the subsequent ‘business case’;

- Developing the specification and go to the market to recruit competitively for a consultancy to prepare and develop the business case. This work will be undertaken by the external resource working closely with the Acting Joint Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive (RBC) and Executive Director (Services).

We need someone who can understand the context in which local government works but who is not constrained by it and who can look at:

- Key service improvements required
- Corporate service improvements – someone who can map current performance levels and current costs and identify areas that should be targeted in the subsequent business case

Skills required:

- Excellent analytical skills
- Experience of working in local government and who understands the context of District Councils
- Experience of effective performance and financial management
- Effective Project Management
- Writing of project specifications

Timeline

The key stages for this project are envisaged as follows:

- Recruitment of external resource to undertake analysis of performance levels / costs – September 2008
- Completion of analytical work completed and identification of areas to be targeted – November 2008
- Specification produced for external resource to produce business case – November 2008
- Procurement of external resource to complete business case – December 2008
- External resource to start work on business case – January 2009

- Completion of draft business case for presentation to Acting Joint Chief Executive by April 2009
- Presentation of business case to Shared Services Board by May 2009
- Consideration of business case by each Council by June 2009

Kevin Dicks
Acting Joint Chief Executive
Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council
18th August 2008

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SHARED SERVICES BOARD

1st September 2008

QUICK WINS

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek in principle approval of the “quick wins” for further shared services / joint working between Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils, subject to a proper process of consultation with affected staff and trade unions where necessary.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
- 2.1.1 Members note the benefits already realised from the Acting Joint Chief Executive initiative as outlined at Section 4;
 - 2.1.2 Members agree in principle the quick wins for further joint working / shared services between Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils as outlined in Section 5, subject to a proper process of consultation with affected staff and trade unions;
 - 2.1.3 Members comment upon the Other Opportunities as identified at Section 6.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils have been working together for approximately 12 to 18 months trying to pursue opportunities for joint working / shared services to either improve service performance / resilience or reduce costs, however it is acknowledged that there has been limited progress with the exception of the arrangements to transfer the payroll function and the appointment of the Acting Joint Chief Executive.

- 3.2 The areas that have been considered thus far, together with a brief update are as follows:

- Procurement

Alex Haslam started working on a shared basis between Bromsgrove & Redditch in November 2007. His focus is on ensuring the contract procedure rules and procurement strategies are robust for each Authority

together with working on joint arrangements for framework contracts including Disabled Facilities Grants. Supplier seminars have been held at both Councils which are felt to have gone well and some joint procurement is now being pursued (e.g. abandoned vehicles removal and disposal – across northern district). Member training/seminars have been booked.

- Payroll

Agreement as part of report on BDC Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to transfer service to RBC. Target date for first payroll run September. First parallel run conducted with no major issues of concern. Second parallel run will have been completed prior to this Board meeting. The system in use at RBC is also a HR system which also means that there could potentially be additional savings on the procurement of a HR system. This shared service will generate £40k savings per annum going forward.

- Elections

Bromsgrove recruited the election manager from Redditch last year following numerous unsuccessful attempts to recruit to the post. Redditch covered the gap by internal temporary acting up arrangements but decided that they would look to recruit to the vacant post and evaluate again if they were unsuccessful. Two applications have been received – one applicant from Redditch and one from Bromsgrove. The recruitment process has stopped pending consideration by the Board of the opportunity for shared working in this area.

- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

The North Worcestershire Responsible Authorities Group has changed to the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership. The purpose of the Partnership is to engage at a more strategic level and to identify areas / issues that could be addressed across the area. It is still intended to merge the officer structure by April 2009 however work on this has slowed due to the need for RBC and Wyre Forest to concentrate on achieving LAA Reward Grant targets.

- Worcestershire Hub

Both Councils are working alongside other districts in the formulation of the business case for shared services / joint working across the County.

- Leisure

Bromsgrove have agreed in principle to transfer their Leisure Facilities to Wychavon Leisure Trust. Target for transfer is September 2008.

- Equalities and Diversity

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services at Bromsgrove supported Redditch through Being Different Together project (formerly the TEDS project). Bromsgrove is providing some training for parish councils across the County. This is an area where it is accepted by Redditch that there is a need for it to improve. The possibility of working across North Worcestershire has been raised between Chief Executives.

- Legal

Bromsgrove undertaking large scale voluntary registration work for Redditch. Litigation – Councils are sharing resource – RBC do some work for BDC and vice versa whenever there are capacity issues on an ad hoc basis. The SLA with Bromsgrove and BDHT is still continuing. BDC is working with a couple of councils to do conveyancing work.

- Property

The County Council is providing an Asset Management service to BDC. This will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service and help to improve the Council's position with regard to Use of Resources. The County Council is also providing support for the Bromsgrove Town Centre redevelopment.

- ICT

BDC helped RBC with the production of the TGOV strategy. Responsible Heads of Service in discussion in respect of opportunities for BDC/RBC working together / joint posts although nothing has been agreed as yet.

- Internal Audit

Bromsgrove Council is currently holding the position of Internal Audit Manager vacant following the departure of the former postholder earlier this year. Worcestershire Treasurers have asked audit managers to look at one audit team for Worcestershire.

- Vehicle acquisition

Officers are looking to procure vehicles jointly in order to facilitate sharing services. BDC need to change the collection method in order to progress.

- Economic Development

Initial discussions held with regard to the possibility of doing something across North Worcestershire.

- Enforcement

Initial discussions held but not progressed due to both authorities facing staffing shortages.

- Licensing

Initial discussions being held to explore opportunities.

- Print

RBC have implemented the outcomes of a recent service review however it is considered that there are still opportunities for future sharing

4. BENEFITS ALREADY REALISED

- 4.1 In addition to the financial saving arising from the appointment of an Acting Joint Chief Executive it is worth the Board noting some of the other benefits that are already felt to have been achieved:

- Improvements in Performance Management – sharing expertise. An identified area for improvement at Redditch is performance management and the Acting Joint Chief Executive has been able to advise on the performance management framework including the process for the development of the Corporate Plan as well as identifying improvements in regular performance management (including financial management) as this has been an area of particular focus at Bromsgrove.
- Savings in officer time by not duplicating attendance at key meetings – e.g. Chief Executives panel.
- Increased awareness of the work of the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (WMRIEP) within both Councils
- Accessing funding from WMLGA – to fund progression of shared services work
- Equalities – sharing expertise particularly with regard to the outcomes from the Being Different Together project. Another identified area for improvement at RBC which can benefit from the work undertaken at BDC.
- Communications – improvements to communications to RBC based upon the approach adopted at BDC including:
 - Communications planner – to identify key communication issues over the next 6 – 12 months
 - Launch of a members bulletin

- Launch of fortnightly Core Brief for staff (following each Corporate Management Team meeting)
- Launch of Core Brief Extra for staff (emailing of urgent communication issues)
- Launch of “Ask the Chief Executive” question and answer session on the staff intranet

It is felt that some of these actions have mitigated the risks that were identified in the original business case.

- Member development – development of a suggested programme for member development some of which can be undertaken jointly by members at both authorities
- Job evaluation / single status – learning from experience and new case law encountered at BDC.
- Ability to take more strategic decisions that affect both Councils – e.g. the decision to put a hold on recruitment for an elections post in order to investigate the opportunities that a shared service may provide (see later in the report).
- Consideration of a staff suggestion scheme.
- Willingness of Senior Management to embrace the change – it should be acknowledged that the Senior Management Team at RBC have been very willing to accept the new regime and the early signs are that the team will work well together – this it is believed has again mitigated some of the risks identified in the original business case.

- 4.2 Whilst most of the areas outlined above are primarily to the benefit of Redditch it should be noted that there have been benefits accruing to BDC from this work. The most obvious example being the draft Economic Priorities for RBC and the County funding £15,000 that may not have been identified if the Acting Joint Chief Executive wasn't in post.

5. QUICK WINS

- 5.1 Whilst progress on all of the areas outlined above (and indeed other opportunities) as and when they arise will be pursued it is recommended that the following are given priority as quick wins:

- Elections
Historically Bromsgrove have struggled to appoint to its Elections Manager post (at least 3 failed appointment processes), however last year the Council managed to recruit to the post from a member of staff from Redditch. Redditch have covered the vacancy by an internal acting up arrangement up until now however they recently went out to advert for the post and received 2 applications – 1 internally and 1 from BDC. Whilst it may have been possible for RBC to recruit it is felt that this was an opportunity missed in terms of joint working / shared services and as

such it was agreed that the recruitment be stopped and options for sharing the service be explored.

It is therefore recommended that a business case be developed for a single elections team to provide full electoral services to both councils. This may not deliver significant financial savings however it is felt that one team would offer better service resilience in this critical area and also allow opportunities to pursue more modern ways of democratic participation. It is proposed that Bromsgrove should lead on this.

- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP's)

The work to merge the CDRP's across Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest has been ongoing for the last 12 months or so. This had been put on hold because of concerns about grant funding and the need to focus on delivery of LAA targets for which Redditch would receive a reward grant. It is felt however that given the initial work undertaken that this could be progressed quite quickly in order to have a single Community Safety Team for Redditch and Bromsgrove. It is proposed that Redditch should lead on this.

- Performance Management

This is an area where BDC have improved significantly over the last 2 years and it is also an area that has been acknowledged within RBC as being in need of improvement – it has also been an area where it has been highlighted that additional resource may be required.

It is suggested that initially the Acting Joint Chief Executive works with officers at RBC to develop the Performance Management Framework and to identify and implement the improvements needed. This can be supplemented by officers at BDC as and when required which may mitigate the need for significant additional investment.

Another area that could potentially be undertaken jointly in the future, which is aligned to the performance management agenda, is the interpretation of Government Policy.

- Equalities and Diversity

This is an area where BDC have improved significantly over the last 2 years and have been recognised regionally for its work. It is also an area that has been acknowledged within RBC as being in need of improvement. It is suggested that staff at BDC initially work with colleagues at RBC to identify where the gaps are (in terms of approach), what needs to be done to address the gaps and to provide training to

both members and officers. There may need to be additional funding input into this area from RBC however it will be more cost effective to look at this collectively across the two councils rather than individually.

This work may then result in another opportunity for a shared service.

- Member development

It is suggested that the work with regard to this is concentrated on identifying areas where development can be undertaken jointly in order to save both Councils money.

6. OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 In addition to the three phases identified within the project it is important that the Board is advised of other opportunities as and when they arise. These are most likely to arise from staff vacancies at each Council. Since the start of the Acting Joint Chief Executive initiative there have been 2 vacancies that have arisen at Bromsgrove District Council that are worthy of consideration for joint working / shared services, they are:

- Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer)

The current post holder (at BDC) is leaving. This is a key post for the Council however before the decision is taken to go out to recruit members are asked to consider whether there are any opportunities to review the role and to consider whether this affords an opportunity for joint working/shared services.

- Benefits Services Manager

The current post holder (at BDC) is leaving. Before the decision is taken to go out to recruit members are asked to consider whether there are any opportunities to review the role and to consider whether this affords another opportunity for joint working / shared services.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None arising directly from this report

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report – these will be addressed as each proposal is brought forward for consideration. The Board should however note that where any of the “quick wins” have staffing implications these

should be supported by a process of consultation with staff and trade unions in order to avoid the potential for claims of unfair/constructive dismissal

9. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 9.1 Each Council will need to ensure the proposals support its own Council Objectives.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 None arising directly from this report however it is envisaged that the approach to Risk Management will operate at 2 levels:
- a. Risk mitigation/controls for respective proposals/services
 - b. Ongoing assessment of the short/long term risks contained within the original feasibility report

11. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 No direct impact on the Customer arising from this report, although indirectly the intention of each “quick win” is to deliver efficiencies/savings to the ultimate benefit of the customer.

12. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None arising directly from this report – these will be addressed as each proposal is brought forward for consideration.

13. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 Value for Money and delivery of efficiencies is the driving force behind these proposals.

14. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues
None
Personnel Implications
Staff and trade union consultation would need to be undertaken with the service areas identified as “quick wins” as soon as possible following the in principle agreement from the Shared Services Board.
The Acting Joint Chief Executive has extended an invitation to meet with Unison, UCATT and GMB at Bromsgrove Council in order to discuss the principle and implications of the Acting Joint Chief

Executive generally.
Governance/Performance Management
None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998
None
Policy
None
Environmental
None

15. WARDS AFFECTED

All

16. APPENDICES

None

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Shared Services Papers

Kevin Dicks
Acting Joint Chief Executive
Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils

SHARED SERVICES BOARD

Monday, 1st September 2008 at 5.30pm

Present – Councillors R. Hollingworth (Chairman), C. Gandy, M Hall, J. Luck and C. McMillan

Apologies – Councillor M. Webb

Election of Chairman

Councillor McMillan proposed that Councillor Hollingworth be elected Chairman for the first meeting of the Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council Shared Services Board.

Councillor Gandy seconded the proposal

All were in favour and Councillor Hollingworth was duly elected Chairman for the meeting.

Draft Concordat

KD introduced the Draft Concordat Document and apologised to the Board for the late production of papers. He confirmed that he would ensure that the papers for future Board meetings would be available in good time for all members to have an opportunity to read through and that he would where possible adhere to the access to information timescales for the production of papers.

RH stated that in future he felt that all papers for meetings of the Shared Services Board should be distributed to all elected members at both Councils in advance of the meetings

KD confirmed that all papers being considered by the board would need to go to the respective Full Council Meetings for agreement. He further confirmed that the Draft Concordat Document represented a vision for the strategic alliance between the two Council's and that it gave an overview of the steps that have been taken towards the delivery of shared services to date.

KD said that both Council's would continue to actively pursue a number of shared service opportunities both between Redditch and Bromsgrove but also beyond to other organisations. The Board would receive reports in relation to all shared service activity and any future shared service proposals.

KD confirmed that it was his intention to spend 2 days a week at each Council with a floating day, although this would need to be flexible and that he intended to attend key meetings for each Council, most particularly the Cabinet and Full Council Meetings although he recognised that this was not always possible given the time and date clashes that may occur.

MH – Suggested that both Council's may want to consider changing the date and time of meeting to enable KD to attend more easily.

After a discussion it was agreed that whilst this was something to consider in respect of meetings next year that those already scheduled should not be changed and that KD would attend where possible with substitutes attending in his place if he were unable to attend for any reason.

KD referred to the performance information and the financial implications associated with the Acting Joint Chief Executive arrangements and stated that it was his intention to bring the detail of the costs / savings associated with shared services / joint working to the next meeting of the Shared Services Board in order that the process be open and transparent.

This was noted and accepted by the Board

KD further advised the Board that they would need to make a recommendation to their respective Full Council's in relation to discharging the 6 month review process.

This matter was discussed and it was agreed that it would be appropriate for the respective Cabinets to undertake the 6 month review in accordance with the Draft Concordat Document and that this be recommended for approval by both Councils.

RH suggested that it may be appropriate for both Cabinets to undertake the review process collectively.

KD said that this would need to be a matter for the Board to determine

The point was debated and it was agreed that it would be more productive for each Cabinet to undertake a 6 month review independently and that they report the findings in relation to that review to the Board who could in turn make their recommendations to their respective Council's

It was also agreed that there would be merit in both Cabinets meeting in the event that there was a consensus for continuing with the Acting Joint Chief Executive arrangement as a result of the 6 month review to agree a vision for the remaining 6 months

CM made the following comments in relation to the Draft Concordat Document;

- that the targets and objectives within the Concordat were unnecessarily detailed given that they were identified in yet more detail in the targets and objectives document - **It was agreed that this be altered to reflect that the Board would be responsible for determining the targets and objectives and that all other detail be deleted from the concordat document.**
- that the words 'service quality' be added to section 4.3 (a) (ii) – **This was agreed**
- that the agreement needed to be amended to reflect the start date in relation to the Acting Joint Chief Executive – **this point was agreed**
- that where possible suitable Heads of Terms be agreed as common in relation to all shared service arrangements to avoid unnecessary duplication and to ensure consistency – **It was agreed that both Council's would work together to ensure that where possible the Legal Departments ensure that the shared service arrangements were simplified and uniform in their approach**

CG expressed a concern that whilst the Draft Concordat Document referred specifically to Excellent Working Relationships that in order for this to be possible it would be necessary to extend an invitation to the Leaders of the respective Labour Groups on the Shared Services Board. **It was agreed that an offer of membership on the Shared Services Board be offered to the Leader of the Council's respective Labour Groups and that this be a conditional offer based on the written agreement of the respective Labour Group Leaders to the principal of the Joint Chief Executive arrangements and that the Monitoring Officers of both Council's be charged with the responsibility for determining the administrative arrangements associated with this proposal in relation to the Board and that this be recommended to both Council's.**

RH asked whether substitutes should be permitted to sit on the Shared Services Board – **It was agreed that substitutes would not be appropriate.**

CM suggested that both Council's would need to detail an account manager for each service area identified as being appropriate for shared services / joint working and that this post be independent from the day to day operation of the service.

KD confirmed that for the foreseeable future the relationship would be one of client and contractor to ensure that each Council maintained this split and that this would be particularly important in relation to shared service proposals in respect of statutory functions.

RH raised the point that whilst KD had indicated that where possible he would attempt to spend 2 days at Redditch, 2 days at Bromsgrove with a floating day that it would be more appropriate for KD to determine the division of his time in accordance with the requirement within the Draft Concordat Document for the Acting Joint Chief Executive to be equally committed to both Council's – **This was discussed and it was agreed that KD should make his arrangements based on the needs and requirements of each Council at any given time within the overall principle that he be committed equally to both Councils.**

RH suggested that the termination clause be amended to make reference to the secondment arrangement – **this was agreed**

Targets and Objectives

KD distributed a revised targets and objectives report and explained that the original report has been revised to reflect further discussion around the support available from the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (WMRIEP).

KD explained that the WMLGA had noted when they did their original feasibility study into the Joint Chief Executive proposal that the performance management Information would need to be reviewed at Redditch Borough Council before the business case for the longer term objectives of the Joint Chief Executive arrangements could be established. Colin Williams from the WMLGA had confirmed to KD that the WMRIEP would fund support to establish the performance information at Redditch which was the prerequisite of the development of the business case. It was envisaged that this external resource would help write the specification for the support needed to progress the development of the business case. This support would equate to £30,000 to £40,000 and would be funded by the WMRIEP.

KD felt that there were capacity issues in both Council's that would make it difficult to produce the business case required and that there was also a need for a level of independence required given the potential outcomes of this exercise. KD did however stress that it was important for both management teams to be involved in the process but that the impartiality and objectivity that a third party would bring to the process would be necessary for these reasons.

In order to fund the production of the business case both Councils needed to release a maximum of £40,000 from balances. It was noted that Bromsgrove had already done this at their meeting in June.

CM suggested that KD may want to revisit the timescales in light of their coinciding with annual holiday dates.

KD agreed that in 4.1.(a) and (b) 31st December needed to be altered to 31st January and in 4.1 (c) 30th June needed to be altered to 31st July. – **This was agreed**

MH said that he felt that the Financial situation between both Council's was going to become complex as a result of the joint working environment and wondered what arrangements were in place for managing this process in an open and transparent way.

KD confirmed that coding arrangements were in place at both Council's to record the costs and savings associated with the Joint Chief Executive arrangements

This was discussed and it was further suggested that the additional management costs associated with the interim management arrangements at Redditch be coded separately as these were costs that would have been incurred notwithstanding the Joint Chief Executive arrangements.

Quick Wins

KD explained the purpose of the document and the details of works that had been achieved over the last 12 months.

He further explained the need for both organisations to capture any benefits to both organisations not just in a shared working environment but also in a shared learning environment as there was a capacity issue in both organisations that could benefit from shared learning.

KD also explained the need for Bromsgrove District Council to be mindful of the views of the Government Monitoring Board.

KD detailed a proposal for a shared Elections Service – **This was discussed and it was agreed that the Board would be recommending the production of a business case to support this proposal to their respective Full Council's.**

KD detailed a proposal for a shared Community Safety Team – **This was discussed and it was agreed that the Board would be recommending the production of a business case to support this proposal to their respective Full Council's although it was noted that this would not include CCTV and lifeline at this stage.**

KD outlined the following as further proposals for shared working to the Shared Services Board:

- The provision of support to Redditch for the development of their performance and financial management framework

- The provision of advice and guidance to Redditch Borough Council on their equalities and diversity agenda drawing on the skills and expertise of the officers at Bromsgrove and the progress that they had made within the Local Government Equality Standard
- That Bromsgrove and Redditch work together where appropriate to deliver the requirements of each authority's member development programme maximising training and development opportunities where appropriate.

These items were debated and it was agreed that a recommendation be made to the respective authorities Full Council's that these joint working opportunities be realised by both Council's.

KD stated that in future he would advise the Board of opportunities that may arise as a result of vacant posts. Two such opportunities had arisen as a consequence of posts becoming available at Bromsgrove District Council.

The first was in relation the Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer.

The Board agreed that it would be appropriate for Bromsgrove to recommend to its Full Council that the post be filled on an interim basis and that both Council's be recommended to request the Joint Chief Executive to produce a business case over the next 12 months to determine the options available to both Councils and whether this post was appropriate for shared service/joint working.

The second was in relation to the post of Benefits Services Manager

The Board agreed that this post was critical within a high profile service area that was already challenged by capacity and resource implications in both organisations. As a result it was agreed that it would not be an area that would benefit from joint working at this stage and that both Council's be recommended not to pursue a joint working environment and that Bromsgrove continue to move to recruit to this post.

JL made an observation that the Enforcement Service may benefit from a shared working environment given the challenges that both organisations face in the recruitment and retention of staff in this field.

KD confirmed that whilst this was not a service area that was currently being considered for shared working given the capacity issues facing both Council's he was actively pursuing any wider shared service opportunity that may be available in relation to the wider enforcement agenda and more particularly in the short term the issuing of fixed penalty notices.

CM suggested that both HR departments should liaise over amended Job Descriptions where possible to ensure that new appointments were aware of the

joint arrangements and that their JDs reflected the need for flexible working between the two organisations.

CM asked whether there were any opportunities for shared working in the IT departments. KD stated that although he felt that the main opportunity may have been missed the Heads of Service from both councils were continuing to discuss the potential of joint posts.

KD raised the possibility of a shared audit service although he pointed out that there were capacity issues that were evident at both Council's that may prevent this from happening in the short term. It was agreed that the work being currently undertaken across Worcestershire be progressed as quickly as possible but that in the short term Bromsgrove recruit additional temporary support as necessary.

KD – referred the Board to section 3 of the 'Quick Wins' report and said that at all times both Council would be focusing on shared working opportunities and that were these became apparent he would feed them into the Board.

The Board briefly discussed Economic Development and the need for both Councils to look at the strategic overview in relation to any shared service opportunities that may be available in the future.

The Board decided that meetings should be bi monthly and the next one would be circulated at a later date.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

17 SEPTEMBER 2008

REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Roger Smith
Responsible Head of Service	Claire Felton, Monitoring Officer

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Part of the Constitution has been reviewed and members are asked to adopt the revisions.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are requested to consider and approve the proposal that the Constitution be amended to insert a mandatory provision that the role of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Audit Board and Scrutiny Steering Board be occupied by members of the oppositions groups.
- 2.2 That authority be delegated to the Head of Legal Equalities and Democratic Services in consultation with the Leaders of the Opposition groups to determine a protocol that would detail the process through which the positions would be allocated.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members will recall that in November 2007 the Council received a Report from the Head of Legal Equalities and Democratic Services detailing the initial review of and principal changes to the Constitution made in April 2007. A period of consultation was then agreed to capture Members' views on these changes and any others Members were minded to suggest within the context of a wider Constitution review. This review was completed and all proposed changes made to the Constitution at the beginning of the current municipal year.

As Members will recall, it was agreed and accepted throughout the review process that the Constitution should remain a live and working document that would accurately reflect the way that decisions were made at Bromsgrove District Council.

As an organisation that is committed to the provision of an open and transparent decision making environment it has been focusing on the procedural arrangements in relation to the Scrutiny Steering Board, the

Performance Management Board and the Audit Board as part of a wider review process over the last 12 months.

Scrutiny Steering Board

Members will note that there have been a number of development opportunities in relation to the positions on the Scrutiny Steering Board over the last 12 months and that the scrutiny task groups have received specialist training and mentoring support.

The Council has appointed the Scrutiny Steering Board to discharge the functions conferred by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the regulations made under section 32 of the Local Government Act 2000.

As a result the Scrutiny Steering Board has powers that are conferred on it by virtue of statute.

Scrutiny is by its nature a challenge Board. For it to undertake its role effectively the Board needs to look closely at the decisions being made by the Cabinet and it needs on occasions to enlist the views of the community to effectively gauge public opinion for the decisions that will effect them.

In order for this to work the Board needs to have the trust and confidence within the community that the process is robust and that the decisions are open and transparent.

During the course of the constitutional review last year members decided that it would be beneficial to the Council if the role of Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board was occupied by a member of an opposition group.

This would enable the powers conferred on it to be undertaken in a more open and transparent way and it would send a clear message to the community that the Cabinet welcomed constructive and well informed contributions to the process of decision making from members of opposition groups, the community and leading group back bench members.

Over the last 12 months the Scrutiny Steering Board Chairman has been a member of the opposition group and it is proposed that this should continue and that it be extended to include the position of Vice Chairman and that this be enshrined as a requirement in the Council's Constitution.

Audit Board

Members are aware that the Council has appointed an Audit Board.

The ultimate responsibility for the audit function rests with the Portfolio Holder responsible for Finance and the Section 151 Officer.

The function of the Audit Board is one of monitoring and compliance and it is therefore able to make informed recommendations in relation to this function.

The Audit Board does not have the power to make decisions with regard to internal audit or to direct the officers with regard to internal audit but it is recognised that the audit function is one that centres on monitoring and compliance and for the reasons identified above the Council decided in the process of reviewing Board arrangements that the role of Chairman would benefit by being occupied by a member from an opposition group.

This has been operating for over 12 months and it is proposed that this be extended to include the role of Vice Chairman and that it be further enshrined within the constitution as a requirement.

Performance Management Board

Members are aware that the Council has appointed a Performance Management Board.

The Performance Management Board works in partnership with the Cabinet.

This Board has overall responsibility for driving performance improvement and making recommendations to the Cabinet where it feels that performance is not progressing in accordance with the Council's overall priorities and the requirements of the Cabinet.

The function of the Board is therefore one of drive and improvement and seeks always to support and enable the Cabinet. The Board works in partnership with the Cabinet and it has been at the centre of the Council's journey of improvement.

Members who sit on this Board must be trained in accordance with the Constitution review and a programme of development for members wishing to sit on this Board has been identified and built into the Modern Member Development Programme.

Members determined during the Constitution review that the role of this Board was fundamentally different to the roles of the Scrutiny Steering Board and the Audit Board and that this was because the functions undertaken by the Performance Management Board were more of drive and improvement.

As a consequence it was not felt that the Constitution need determine the political group from which the role of Chairman or Vice Chairman should be drawn.

Members are requested to approve that the role of Chairman and Vice Chairman in relation to the Performance Management Board remain a matter for the Board itself to determine for the reasons outlined above.

Process for Selection of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Members are also requested to approve the proposed change to the Constitution and the associated changes to the Scrutiny Procedure Rules and Audit Board Procedure Rules.

In order to establish a process for enabling the opposition groups to fairly determine the members who should occupy these roles it will be necessary for a protocol to be developed that will fairly enable selection.

In any event the protocol will deal only with the process of selection as the numbers and political balance are determined elsewhere as a matter of fact.

This report proposes that authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the leaders of the opposition groups to establish a protocol that will govern the process for determining the position of Chairman and Vice Chairman to the Scrutiny Steering Board and the Audit Board.

Members will appreciate that this is an arrangement that will require effective cross party working and the need for all elected members to undertake these roles with professionalism.

In any event the protocol will need to allow for the management of this process in the event that it does not operate effectively.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report has no financial implications

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 1972 as amended and the Local Government Act 2000 as amended set out the statutory framework for local authority constitutions.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 This report does not link directly to Council objectives and priorities. However, sound ethical governance is the foundation of the Council's ability to carry out its functions, objectives and priorities.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The main risk associated with the details included in this report is:

- *Risk of challenge to Council decisions*

7.2 This risk is being managed as follows:

- Risk Register: *Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services*
Key Objective Ref No: 3
Key Objective: *Effective ethical governance*

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Any changes to the Constitution agreed by members will be displayed on the Council's internet.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues	None
Personnel Implications	None
Governance/Performance Management	Improved and effective ethical governance
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998	None
Policy	None
Environmental	None

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	Yes

Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	N/a
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	N/a
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	<u>No</u>

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

14. APPENDICES

None

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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