

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY BOARD

TUESDAY, 23RD MARCH 2010, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillor D. L. Pardoe (Chairman), Councillor R. J. Deeming, Councillor S. R. Peters, Councillor C. R. Scurrall and Councillor C. J. Tidmarsh

Observers: Councillor S. R. Colella

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. J. Godwin, Mr. M. Carr and Ms. A. Scarce

71/08 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A. N. Blagg.

72/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were received.

73/08 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 25th February 2010 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

74/08 **ARTS AND EVENTS STRATEGY**

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services to the meeting and thanked him for briefing the Board on this item in the absence of the Arts Development and Special Events Officer.

The document before Members was the first draft of the Council's Arts and Events Strategy. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services explained that the aim of the document was to build on the original Arts Strategy, which expired this year. The emphasis of the Strategy had moved away from solely Arts, to incorporate events. This was due to the Arts Development Team having moved away from Arts in its purest sense and moved towards community events, such as street theatre and bandstands. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services informed Members that there was a county wide Arts Strategy which had been delayed several times for reasons outside the Council's control. The County Arts Strategy was now out for public consultation and from the Council's perspective several points had been made, most importantly that the Council intended to produce its own Strategy to fit with the County Strategy.

The aim of the Arts and Events Strategy was to include the objectives and priorities of the Council in order to reflect the local issues and communities across the Bromsgrove district. One of the Council's main concerns with the County Strategy was the level at which it was pitched. Some of the wording implied that the County Strategy would take precedence over local strategies and the bigger corporate county picture was more important than that of the local community. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services was of the view that the delivery of local arts projects and events should be directed by the Council's own strategy to suit local needs, but if the Council could draw linkages and support in respect of the County Strategy and overall national indicators it would do so. However, the overall objectives and priorities must be set locally by the Council.

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services informed Members that National Indicator, NI11 was used to measure performance and included in the Place Survey. Members commented that it would be helpful to include a more detailed explanation as to the relevance of NI11. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services advised that other more challenging targets, in order to start to measure progress during the life of the Strategy, would also be added. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services reminded Members that the Strategy was not the action plan, its purpose was to set the overall direction and outcomes for what the Council was trying to achieve, and it was underpinned by other documents such as, the annual work programme, leisure and cultural services business plan and the arts development team action plan.

Members made the following comments on the Arts and Events Strategy:

- Bromsgrove Festival should be included in the list of events.
- Reference should be made to sponsorship and partnerships with local businesses.
- Inclusion of a section on promotion and communication to take account of the need to improve resident satisfaction with services.
- A positive policy involving social inclusion of minorities in order to involve as many people as possible in the Arts.
- Inclusion of further national indicators and local indicators that the Strategy could relate to
- Review representation of Parish Councils on Arts Alive Partnership

Members noted that the Council had hosted the 3rd Anniversary of Bromsgrove Arts Alive! and enquired whether a 4th Anniversary event had been held in 2010. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services agreed to make further enquiries and report back to Members.

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services informed Members that the next stage would be to complete work on the Strategy. It would then go out for consultation to the Arts Alive Partnership and other partner organisations the Council worked with for their comments and finally, through the Portfolio Holder for endorsement at Cabinet in June 2010. The intention was to take the County and local Strategies together and in order for Members to see the relevance between the two documents. If the County Strategy was delayed further, this would have a knock on effect.

RESOLVED that the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services takes on board the comments made by the Scrutiny Board in respect of the drafts Arts and Events Strategy 2010-2013.

75/08 **REPORT ON ANNUAL CIVIC BONFIRE EVENT**

The Chairman reminded the Board that this item had arisen from the completion of an Overview and Scrutiny Proposal form, which had been considered at the meeting on 25th February 2010. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services gave a presentation on the Civic Bonfire Event and covered the following areas:

- The history of the event
- Aims and Objectives
- An overview of the 2009 event
- Comparison between the 2008 and 2009 event including ticket sales, marketing, promotion and impact of the weather.
- The infrastructure and external partners
- Key considerations including layout and position of event activities and cash auditing requirements
- A review of the 2009 event and lessons learnt
- Plans for 2010 event

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services also answered Members enquiries in respect of the potential for increased sponsorship, the involvement of the Primrose Hospice, the maximum attendance figure, and a longer term plan in order to mitigate the effects of bad weather. The Board also considered alternative ways to increase revenue and minimise losses.

The Board also discussed an alternative event being held in the summer and asked if any arrangements had been made for events to be held to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2011 and the Olympics in 2012. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services advised Members that the Events Team were looking at holding events at the Dolphin Centre and Ryland Centre in conjunction with the Olympics in 2012, and would report back to Members in respect of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Members were reminded that there was a limited budget available and therefore it was difficult to add additional events without jeopardising existing services.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services for providing such a comprehensive report and it was

RESOLVED that the Civic Bonfire Event be referred for inclusion in the work programme for 2010/11 for consideration and review after the 2010 event had taken place.

76/08 **VERBAL UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE IMPROVING RESIDENTS SATISFACTION TASK GROUP (TASK GROUP CHAIRMAN: COUNCILLOR S. R. COLELLA)**

The Chairman thanked Councillor S. R. Colella, Chairman of the Task Group for attending the meeting and asked him to give a brief update on the progress of the Improving Residents' Satisfaction Task Group.

Councillor Colella advised that at the meeting of the task group on 10th March 2010 the following witnesses had attended and the Portfolio Holders had been invited to attend the meeting, but had been unable to do so. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services had discussed improving residents' satisfaction through the services provided by his team. The Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships had discussed Customer Service and had provided the Task Group with three key points to customer satisfaction. Mr. R. Poston, the Chairman of the Rubery PACT had given an insight into how valuable he felt the meetings were and the importance of face to face contact with residents from both Councillors and officers.

The Board were informed that the final meeting of the task group was scheduled for 31st March 2010.

77/08 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PROPOSAL - ALMSHOUSES**

The Board considered the report relating to an Overview and Scrutiny Proposal form completed by a member of the public in respect of the rights of residents living in Almshouses. Officers explained to Members that although the Council could accept proposals from members of the public and consider whether to investigate a matter further, the Board could not consider an individual case or complaint.

Members discussed the number of almshouses within the district and queried the involvement the Council had with these almshouses, together with any legal implications arising from the Board's involvement. The Board understood that Mrs. M. W. V. Firminger was a member of the Trustee Body of White's Cottage Homes Charity, which were the relevant almshouses in this particular case. After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that further information be requested from the Legal Team as to the Council's legal responsibilities, for re-consideration and if appropriate, Mrs. M. W. V Firminger be invited to the Scrutiny Board meeting, to be held on 22nd April 2010.

78/08 **TRAVEL CONCESSIONS PROPOSAL**

The Board considered the report on Travel Concessions, which had been referred to the Scrutiny Board from the Council meeting held on 24th February 2010. Members were advised that with effect from 1st April 2011 responsibility for administering the scheme would be transferred to the County Council. The Government's Pre-Budget report in December 2009 had included a package of reforms to concessionary bus travel in England and a report to update Members on the new arrangements would be available from the Head of Community Services in the new municipal year.

Members queried the changes in eligibility for free concessionary bus travel in England, which had also been included in the Pre-Budget report reforms. The Board was advised that the Government's intention was to re-establish the link between the age of eligibility for free England wide local bus travel and the state pension age. Members were concerned that information on these changes should be available to the public, for example through the Customer Service Centre and the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources agreed to follow this up. Members were also advised that the public could check their eligibility online on the State Pension Age Checker provided by the Department of Works and Pension at www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk.

RESOLVED that no further action be taken.

79/08 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered the Work Programme and discussed the number of items which were to be considered at the next meeting to be held on 22nd April 2010.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be agreed and updated to show that the Corporate Safeguarding Policy (Children and Vulnerable Adults) be deferred to the 2010/11 Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman