

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

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

PRESENT: Councillors S. R. Colella (Chairman), D. L. Pardoe (Vice-Chairman),
R. J. Deeming, C. R. Scurrall, Mrs. C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor,
C. J. Tidmarsh and L. J. Turner

Officers: Ms. A. De Warr, Mr. M. Carr and Ms. A. Scarce

31/10 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. N. Blagg,
Mrs. M. Bunker and Mrs. R. L. Dent

32/10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

No declarations of interest were received.

33/10 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board held on
5th October 2010 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

34/10 **CABINET RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE ALVECHURCH MULTI
USE GAMES AREA (MUGA)**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr M. Webb, Portfolio Holder for
Community, who was to present the Cabinet Response to the Inquiry on the
Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area.

RESOLVED that the consideration of the Cabinet Response to the Inquiry on
the Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area be deferred to the next meeting of the
Board.

35/10 **WORCESTERSHIRE HUB JOINT SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - FINAL
REPORT**

The Board received a report from Worcestershire County Council Overview
and Scrutiny Performance Board on the Worcestershire Hub. The report
outlined the review of the Worcestershire Hub and made 22 recommendations
to Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Cabinet, including some which
related to the County's statutory partners, including Bromsgrove District
Council.

The Chairman asked the Head of Customer Services for a succinct definition of what the “Worcestershire Hub” was and its relationship to Bromsgrove District Council. She defined the Hub as “the partnership through which we provide joint access to council services”. It was the “umbrella” under which the County Council and district councils within the Worcestershire area provided access to their services. Within this umbrella, Bromsgrove District Council managed its own Customer Services Centre, at the Dolphin Centre.

Malvern Hills, Worcester City and WCC had shared customer services accessed through the Hub. It was explained that the Worcestershire Hub call centre at Perry Wood dealt with customer enquires for those local authorities that had a shared services agreement; this did not include Bromsgrove District Council (BDC).

Overview and scrutiny committees throughout the County had been invited to participate in the WCC Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board Task Group investigation, by nominating a representative to be co-opted onto the Task Group. Participating local authorities were: WCC, BDC, Malvern Hills District Council, Redditch Borough Council, Worcester City Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council.

Councillor Taylor was the BDC co-optee and gave a presentation on the investigation and commented on its effectiveness.

The terms of reference for the Task Group were:

- the development of the Worcestershire Hub, including the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service,
- how to make the Worcestershire Hub fit for purpose in the future,
- differences in provision across Worcestershire, what they are and why they exist,
- what are the gaps in provision and what are the opportunities?

The Task Group ran from 5th November 2009 and was due to report to WCC Cabinet on 25th November 2010. Evidence hearings had been held between January and July 2010, with 9 Task Group meetings and site visits.

Overall the Task Group report had concluded that:

- there was a need for clear evidence about the benefits to encourage the remaining district councils to join the Hub,
- service transformation was essential and that the Hub should be at the heart of service transformation, and
- a co-ordinated approach to customer service across the county to enable savings and minimise duplication should be encouraged.

The Chairman asked the Head of Customer Services the cost to BDC of being part of the Hub umbrella, considering that it managed its own customer services. She said that it did not cost the Council anything and that it paid for its own call centre. WCC contributed to the running costs and some of the

staffing costs of the Bromsgrove Customer Services Centre, as the centre dealt with customer enquiries relating to County services.

Councillor Taylor commented that the governance of the Worcestershire Hub was very complicated and that there was some confusion. He commented also that the scrutiny process had been very difficult, that there had been difficulties in obtaining key information and that some of the members of the Task Group were members of the Hub Shared Services governance board, which would seem to be a conflict of interest. It was felt that, as a joint scrutiny, the process should not be followed again in the future.

It was enquired as to whether the report and recommendations were implicitly seeking greater integration of district councils towards the shared services model under the Hub. Councillor Taylor was of the opinion that it was and Recommendation 3 of the report specifically asked each authority and the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service to review governance arrangements across the Worcestershire Hub Partnership with the aim of moving towards a single governance structure. There was a consensus against Bromsgrove District Council being part of the shared customer services within the Hub, particularly in view of the much higher performance of the Council's customer services compared with the Worcestershire Hub. It was also commented that it was desirable to keep things as local as possible, as customer services benefited from local knowledge.

The Scrutiny Officer clarified the proper process for the consideration of scrutiny reports and recommendations from external scrutiny committees, but stressed that it was not clear what process was expected by WCC in this case, as no process had been provided or was available. He said that a Joint Scrutiny Protocol was in the process of being drafted and agreed by WCC and that this was due to be considered at the informal meeting of the Worcestershire Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Network. He clarified that it was most usual that when external scrutiny committees made recommendations to executive bodies other than their own executive, these would be referred from the scrutiny committee directly to the partner agency executives and not through the scrutiny committees of each organisation. In this case it would be possible for WCC to write to BDC's Cabinet and other district councils to ask them to consider the report and recommendations and provide an Executive Response.

The Chairman undertook to raise the concerns about the scrutiny process followed in respect of joint overview and scrutiny committees at the forthcoming Worcestershire Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Network meeting.

RESOLVED that the report and recommendations of the Worcestershire County Council Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny Task Group be noted.

36/10 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board considered the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme. It was noted that the consideration of the Core Strategy as part

of the planning topic may be delayed from 4th January 2011. The consideration of the Council Budget may also be deferred from that meeting.

The Chairman reminded the Board there was an informal Budget briefing on 30th November 2010 at 6pm.

37/10 **QUESTIONS TO WITNESSES 4TH JANUARY 2011**

The Board considered questions to witnesses for the next meeting on 4th January 2011. It was requested that a question be put on planning enforcement; to provide a summary outline of the process for enforcement and the performance of enforcement, for the consideration of the planning topic. It was also requested that any capital bids and revenue expenditure for Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport (BURT) be considered within the consideration of the Budget.

The meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.

Chairman