

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

**TUESDAY, 3RD JULY 2007**

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), J. T. Duddy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker, R. J. Deeming, B. Lewis F.CMI, D. L. Pardoe and C. B. Taylor

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

9/07 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were made.

10/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 12th June 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

11/07 **NEW TASK GROUPS**

Refuse and Recycling Task Group

There was a discussion on when this particular Task Group should commence and clarification was sought on what other groups had been set up to examine similar issues in the past. It was explained that the Cabinet had set up an Advisory Group which was chaired by the Portfolio Holder but it was no longer in existence. Before the Advisory Group, there had been a Task Group which had been set up under the old scrutiny system which looked at issues surrounding the refuse and recycling collections at that time. It was suggested that rather than delaying the newly established task group, members of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group be requested to ensure they take on board what had been achieved by the previous scrutiny Task Group and Advisory Group.

The four membership forms which had been submitted were considered and Councillor Mrs. Bunker also expressed her wish to become part of the Task Group.

The scrutiny exercise scoping checklist which had been completed by the Chairman of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group, Councillor Taylor, was discussed. Members were urged to incorporate the original wording which had previously been agreed by the scrutiny proposers.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the Refuse and Recycling Task Group be comprised of Councillors C. B. Taylor (Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker, Mrs. A. E. Doyle, C. R. Scurrall, S. P. Shannon and C. J. Tidmarsh;
- (b) that additional wording be included to the scrutiny exercise scoping checklist so that it read as follows: "Identifying issues affecting the efficiency and performance of the service since the introduction of two weekly collections, highlighting the promotional aspirations of the workforce as a means of strengthening the service and make general recommendations for strengthening the service";
- (c) that subject to the additional wording in (b) above being included, the scrutiny exercise scoping checklist, which would act as the Task Group's terms of reference, be approved; and
- (d) that the Task Group be given 4 months to complete its scrutiny investigation from the date of the Task Group's first meeting.

Air Quality

The four membership forms which had been submitted and the scrutiny exercise scoping checklist which had been completed by the Chairman of the Air Quality Task Group, Councillor McDonald, was considered.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the Air Quality Task Group be comprised of Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), E. J. Murray, D. L. Pardoe, C. R. Scurrall and S. P. Shannon;
- (b) that the following wording be added to the scrutiny exercise scoping checklist: "To carry out a scrutiny exercise to examine air quality issues in Bromsgrove District and to identify actions which can be taken to address the issues";
- (c) that subject to the additional wording in (b) above being included, the scrutiny exercise scoping checklist, which would act as the Task Group's terms of reference, be approved; and
- (d) that the Task Group be given 4 months to complete its scrutiny investigation from the date of the Task Group's first meeting.

Public Transport - Buses

The Board was informed that a late membership form for the Public Transport - Buses Task Group had been received from Councillor Hancox which was considered with the other two membership forms received. The Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor Lewis, was concerned there were not enough members on the Task Group to ensure proper scrutiny of the issue, therefore, Councillor McDonald volunteered to become a member.

The scrutiny exercise scoping checklist, completed by the Task Group Chairman, was discussed and members were reminded that at the previous meeting of the Board, members had wanted accessibility of the bus service for disabled users to be included as an area to investigate. It was also mentioned that at a recent Disabled Users Forum, accessibility issues surrounding the taxi service for disabled users had been raised.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the Public Transport - Buses Task Group be comprised of Councillors B. Lewis F.CMI (Chairman), D. Hancox, Mrs. J. D. Luck, P. M. McDonald and C. R. Scurrall;
- (b) that the following wording be added to the scrutiny exercise scoping checklist as a specific area to be scrutinised: "Accessibility and suitability of the bus service for disabled users";
- (c) that subject to the additional wording in (b) above being included, the scrutiny exercise scoping checklist, which would act as the Task Group's terms of reference, be approved;
- (d) that the Task Group be given 4 months to complete its scrutiny investigation from the date of the Task Group's first meeting; and
- (e) that all other accessibility issues for disabled users be considered as a separate issue for possible future scrutiny at the next Scrutiny Steering Board meeting on 31st July 2007.

General

It was clarified that all non-cabinet members, including members of the Scrutiny Steering Board, would need to submit a membership form if they were interested in joining a particular Task Group.

There was also a discussion relating to co-opting and it was stated that the Scrutiny Steering Board could co-opt members on to particular Task Groups if they so wished. Members were informed that this had been done previously and had worked well. It was stated that members would need to decide when it was appropriate to co-opt members on to a Task Group and when it would be more fitting to call someone as a witness. It was confirmed that witnesses could claim for expenses incurred.

Members were reminded that to try and encourage public participation in scrutiny, after any Task Group was established and its terms of reference and membership agreed, a press release would be issued requesting that anyone with any comments or suggestions for the Task Group could contact the scrutiny team.

Training

The Scrutiny Steering Board were informed that training on how to lead a Scrutiny Task Group was planned and it was recommended that the appointed Chairmen of the new Task Groups did not arrange their first meeting until the date of the training was known. Members were also informed that a facilitator would attend the first (and possibly second) meeting of the Task Groups to assist members with their scrutiny work. Newly elected Councillors were asked to liaise with the committee services officer for this Board when arranging their first Task Group meetings.

12/07 **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY PROPOSALS**

Consideration was given to the report relating to suggestions from officers for possible future scrutiny. The three suggestions given were: Older People; Climate Change; and Sense of Community and Well-being.

The report also informed members that the Council was reviewing its Community Strategy and that the ongoing consultation would conclude at the end of August. It was proposed that in order for members of the Scrutiny Steering Board to be consulted, the item be included on the agenda for the next meeting on 31st July 2007. (It was stated that if any member could not attend on that date, it might be possible for them to attend a different meeting where the Community Strategy would be discussed.)

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that an agenda item on the Community Strategy be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board on 31st July 2007; and
- (b) that, as the suggestions put forward for scrutiny by officers were included in the Community Strategy, consideration of those suggestions be deferred until after the Scrutiny Steering Board had discussed the Community Strategy at the next meeting.

13/07 **CABINET'S FORWARD PLAN**

Members were informed that the purpose of the Forward Plan being included as an item on the Scrutiny Steering Board was to notify the Board of key decisions which were scheduled to be made over the next few months. This enabled the Board to monitor the key decisions being taken and ensure correct policy and procedure were being followed. Members were reminded that they needed to take the Forward Plan into consideration when setting their own work programme.

Clarification was sought on a couple of items on the Forward Plan. Members were also informed that if they needed to find out further details on any item, they could contact the relevant Portfolio Holder and Head of Service.

**RESOLVED:** that the Forward Plan be noted.

14/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Work Programme for the Scrutiny Steering Board was considered, specifically the scrutiny Task Group reviews scheduled.

Members were informed that since the work programme had been printed, the Culture and Community Task Group had arranged a review meeting to be held on Monday 9th July 2007 and the Consultants Task Group review meeting would be organised shortly. Other Task Groups were not due to reconvene to carry out a review until later in the municipal year.

It was clarified that only those Task Groups which had been set up under the new scrutiny system had been included, although it was known that at least three Task Groups set up prior to March 2006 had carried out a review.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that it be reported to the next meeting whether any Task Groups set up under the old ways of working had not held a review meeting; and
- (b) that the work programme be noted.

15/07 **NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE CABINET**

Consideration was given to the non-confidential items on the Agenda for the Cabinet Meeting which was scheduled to be held on 10th July 2007.

Questions were asked regarding the audit of overview and scrutiny referred to in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Improvement Plan 2007/08 Report.

It was explained that the IDeA had been commissioned to work with the Council to carry out an audit on scrutiny as part of the ethical governance tool kit and this had taken place prior to the elections. It resulted in various scrutiny training sessions for members being arranged, including the general training for non-Cabinet members which had taken place at the end of May 2007. Further training was planned which included training for Scrutiny Steering Board Members on how to lead a Scrutiny Task Group and scrutiny training for the Cabinet. For the benefit of newly elected members, it was stated that the scrutiny arrangements had been altered for 2007/08 and there had been a reduction of Scrutiny Steering Board members (as recommended by the Improvement Director). It was also pointed out that for the first time the elected Chairman was a member of the opposition (which was good practice).

Questions were raised on the Department for Communities Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities which made proposals to strengthen overview and scrutiny, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill which was expected to put some of the proposals into effect. It was stated that guidance was not expected until the end of 2007 at the earliest which made it difficult for officers to advise the Board on the implications. It was stated that an updated version of the report on the Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities which was considered by the Board in December 2006, would be resubmitted to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board. It was also suggested that a seminar covering key courses of action, such as partnership working, be held later on in the year when there was less uncertainty surrounding the impact on the work of overview and scrutiny committees.

A discussion ensued regarding the report outlining amendments to the Car Parking Order. It was suggested that officers could be requested to look at other areas which had increased the car parking charges for those who drive high polluting vehicles. However, there was concern that Bromsgrove needed to encourage people into the town centre and that an extra car parking charge

would not be useful. It was pointed out that owners of high polluting vehicles were penalised in other ways.

Members were assured that in future officers would be requested to explain all abbreviations contained within their reports to ensure clarity.

**RESOLVED:** that the non-confidential reports be noted.

16/07 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**RESOLVED:** that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the Meeting during the consideration of the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below:-

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Paragraph(s)</u>
16	3
17	1

17/07 **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED BY EXECUTIVE CABINET**

Members considered in detail the two confidential reports and in particular, the report relating to the Senior Management Restructure.

(NOTE: The Corporate Director (Services) and Head of Legal Services left the room while the Senior Management Restructure report was discussed.)

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that, on behalf of the Scrutiny Steering Board, the Chairman put forward comments made regarding the Improvement Director post referred to in the Senior Management Restructure report to members of the Government Monitoring Board at its next meeting on 17th July 2007; and
- (b) that the confidential reports be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm

Chairman