

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM

MONDAY, 21ST MARCH 2011

AT 6.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillor G. N. Denaro (Chairman)

Representative(s)	Parish
Mr. J. Cypher (Chairman)	Alvechurch
Miss P. Harrison (Clerk)	Beoley
Mrs. K. May (Chairman)	Bournheath
Mr. G. Witcomb (Chairman)	Catshill and North Marlbrook
Mrs. G. Lungley (Clerk)	
Mr. I. Hodgetts (Chairman)	Romsley
Mrs. S. J. Baxter (Chairman)	Wythall
Miss P. Harrison (Executive Officer)	
Mrs. J. Maturi	County Association of Local Councils

Officers: Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. S. Mould and Mr. A. C. Stephens

38/11 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:-

- Mr. J. M. Bradley (Chairman), Mrs. C. Limm (Clerk) and Mr. C. R. Scurrall - Belbroughton Parish Council
- Mr. S. Malek (Chairman) and Mrs. Ruth Mullett (Clerk)[†] - Clent Parish Council
- Mrs. A. Pulsford - Feckenham Parish Council
- Mr. J. Ellis (Chairman), Mr. P. D. Callaway (Clerk) and Mr. K. Strawbridge - Stoke Parish Council
- Mrs. H. Davies - Tutnall and Cobley Parish Council
- Mrs. H. Cleaver - Wythall Parish Council

([†] also Clerk to Hunnington Parish Council and Romsley Parish Council)

39/11 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM HELD ON 25TH JANUARY 2011 AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum held on 25th January 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED that, subject to the addition of Mr. I. A. Hodgetts (Chairman of Romsley Parish Council) in the list of those present at the meeting, the minutes be approved as a correct record.

40/11 **PARISH COUNCILLOR DATABASE, REGISTER OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS, PARISH CODES OF CONDUCT AND ASSOCIATED TRAINING**

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services - Mrs. C. Felton - referred to the report enclosed with the agenda for the meeting and informed the Forum of the Monitoring Officer's Liaison Meetings which had taken place with Parish Council Clerks / Executive Officers, together with the arrangements being made for parish councils after the District / Parish Elections in May 2011. These include the creation of a Parish Councillor database and matters relating to individual parishes Codes of Conduct.

She also stressed that, following the Elections, Parish Councillors had 28 days to complete and return their Register of Interests Form, as failure to do so was considered to be a breach of the Code of Conduct and that this was a serious issue which would be investigated prior to any action being taken. Mrs. Felton added that copies of each Parish Councils Code of Conduct would be held by the Council in order that the Standards Committee would be aware of the provisions each Parish Council had adopted from the Model Code of Conduct.

Finally, she stated that the District Council were eager to work with the parish councils in terms of the provision of training and development for parish councillors and that it would be of more assistance to arrange for Code of Conduct training during June / July 2011; that is, as soon as possible after the May Elections.

Mr. J. Cypher, Chairman of Alvechurch Parish Council and an Independent Parish representative on the District Council's Standards Committee, backed up Mrs. Felton's comments and emphasised the importance of Parish Councillors' Register of Interests submission and adherence to their Parish Council's Code of Conduct. He added that the Standards Committee take adherence to Codes of Conduct very seriously and referred to cases where action has been taken where, for example, a Register of Interests Form had repeatedly not been submitted.

Mrs. Felton then responded to several additional comments and questions from Members of the Forum.

41/11 **REFERENDUM / LOCAL ELECTIONS - THURSDAY, 5TH MAY 2011**

Mrs. S. Mould, Electoral Services Manager, gave a brief presentation in respect of the forthcoming District and Parish Elections, and the Referendum. She outlined the significant dates relating to the publication of the Notice of Election, submission of Nomination Papers, statement of persons nominated and publication of the Notice of Poll. She also explained the arrangements for registration to vote, postal and proxy voting and the final few days leading up to the day of the Election. She added that these important dates had to take

into account the Bank Holidays during the two weeks before the 5th May 2011.

Mrs. Mould clarified the procedures for the completion of Nomination Papers and stressed the need for both accuracy and use of up-to-date information. She also gave an explanation of processes and procedures on the day of Election, together with the arrangements being made for the verification and counting of votes.

Finally, Mrs. Mould informed the Forum that she was only responsible for the administration of the return of expenses and would not therefore be checking them. However, she warned that failure to return the completed expenses form before the specified deadline would be a reportable offence to the Crown Prosecution Service. The Electoral Commission also carry out random checks, contacting Returning Officers who are obliged to provide full details.

Mrs. Mould then responded to a number of questions from Members of the Forum, mainly relating to the District Councils charge to the Parish Councils for conducting the elections on their behalf.

42/11 **UPDATE ON CORE STRATEGY DRAFT 2, WITH REFERENCE TO SUGGESTED ADRS FOR LARGER SETTLEMENTS WITHIN THE DISTRICT**

(This item had been requested to be added to the Agenda at the request of the Area Committee of the County Association of Local Councils).

It was reported that Mr. M. Dunphy, Strategic Planning Manager, was unable to attend the meeting, but had prepared a statement to be read out to the Forum:

"There is nothing with which to update Members of the Forum because the Draft Core Strategy 2 is still out for consultation until 15th April 2011. Once the consultation closes, the process of reporting the results to the Council will begin and the plan is likely to be re-drafted which, inevitably, will take some time to complete.

"A further update will be reported to the next meeting of the Forum."

43/11 **LITTER COLLECTION PROGRAMME FOR DISTRICT AREAS AWAY FROM THE TOWN**

(This item had been requested to be added to the Agenda at the request of the Area Committee of the County Association of Local Councils).

It was reported that Mr. G. Revans, Head of Environmental Services, was unable to attend the meeting, but had prepared a statement to be read out to the Forum:

"The street cleansing service staffing and service delivery is currently under review, with the aim of improving the over-all quality and consistency of the

service, both in Bromsgrove Town and across the District as a whole. It would be very useful if the Parish Councils could contact Ian Roberts via email to i.roberts@bromsgrove.gov.uk in order to let him know about any ongoing issues they may have or particular hot spots, so that these can be considered as part of the review.

"In addition the Cabinet, in June, will consider a proposal for the District Council to employ an Environmental Enforcement Officer who will be able to deal with fly-tipping, littering, dog fouling and other environmental crime within the District, including the issuing of fixed penalty notices and taking out prosecutions where necessary. Again, it would be useful to know of any areas that cause an ongoing problem, where environmental enforcement might help to improve an ongoing problem."

44/11 **COUNCIL TAX / PARISH COUNCIL'S PRECEPTS**

(The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this matter under Agenda Item 6 - "Any Other Business").

Mrs. G. Lungley raised a question concerning the booklet which had been enclosed with the Council Tax bills issued recently across the District. Specifically, she was concerned at the fact that only the parish council precepts had been provided, and how it may be taken as confusing in the context in which it had been produced.

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services responded by saying that there may be a reason for the information to be produced in the way that it was and would address this issue with Ms. J. Pickering as the Section 151 Officer. Furthermore, she stated that further discussion on this matter could be dealt with at the next Monitoring Officers Liaison Meeting with a view to amending how the Parish Council Precept information is reproduced in the literature accompanying the Council Tax bills.

The meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.

Chairman