

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

**TUESDAY, 31ST JULY 2007**

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), J. T. Duddy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker, R. J. Deeming, B. Lewis F.CMI (during Minute Nos. 18/07 to 26/07 and part of 27/07) and D. L. Pardoe

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. P. Street, Mrs. S. Sellers, Mrs. L. Berry and Ms. D. McCarthy

18/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C. B. Taylor.

18/07 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor R. J. Deeming declared a personal interest in relation to item 10 on the Scrutiny Steering Board Agenda and specifically item 7 on the Cabinet Agenda (relating to Hamilton House Supported Housing Scheme, Sidemoor) as he owned flats and business premises.

No whipping arrangements were made.

19/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 3rd July 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

20/07 **DRAFT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

Mrs. Berry, Senior Policy and Performance Officer, gave a brief presentation on the draft Sustainable Community Strategy which was an overarching strategic document for the future direction of the Council based on statistical information. It was explained that the "Glad or Grumpy" postcard campaign was developed to find out residents' views. The consultation period had commenced at the end of June 2007 and would continue until 31st August 2007. Key facts were put to the Board as well as examples of what made residents glad and grumpy which had been received so far. It was stated that following the consultation, it was expected that there would be some minor changes, such as including Transport as a priority.

A question was raised relating to the image on the glad or grumpy postcards. It was confirmed that officers had not received any complaints but had contacted the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) regarding the postcards. Although the CRE did not believe the glad or grumpy postcards were offensive, Bromsgrove District Council had taken on board comments received

by Members and had recently amended the postcard. Members were informed that the draft Strategy would be presented to the Equalities and Diversity Forum on 2nd August 2007 for comments.

It was confirmed that there had been procurement implications associated with the report as the graphics had been obtained externally.

Several questions were asked on various aspects of the report such as housing, crime and funding of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). It was requested that clarification be given on the income figure stated on page 7 of the Strategy under the subtitle "Housing" as it was different to the average income figure of £36,000 for the District stated in the presentation. With regard to the "Economy" section on page 8 where it stated 29% of people commuted out of the District to work, it was asked that it be looked into as to whether that was a high or low percentage compared to other local authorities.

Members of the Board put forward their views on what they felt had been omitted which included:

- ♦ A suggestion that a provision for homes for older people be located on the Longbridge site with affordable housing; and
- ♦ Mental health issues and learning disabilities be addressed within the Strategy under "Health and Wellbeing".

It was explained that if Members had any further points they wished to raise before the end of the consultation period on 31st August 2007 they could do so by contacting Mrs. Berry directly or the Committee Services Officer. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked Mrs. Berry for her presentation.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that suggestions put forward by Members be taken on board regarding:
  - (i) a provision for homes for older people be located on the Longbridge site; and
  - (ii) learning disabilities and mental health issues be addressed and incorporated into the Strategy;
- (b) that two suggestions for scrutiny topics put forward by officers, in relation to older people and climate change, be included on the Board's work programme (subject to the outcome of discussions by the Cabinet on a report relating to climate change due to be considered at its meeting on 5th September 2007); and
- (c) that the report and presentation be noted.

21/07 **THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH BILL**

(Please Note: This item and the next item were discussed together)

It was explained that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2006 was currently being debated in the House of Lords and it was anticipated that the new provisions set out in the Bill would come into effect around April 2008 at the earliest. It was clarified that the enhanced scrutiny powers, for example the ability to compel the co-operation of named partners in the scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement (LAA), would be exercised by

District Councils in partnership with County Councils through joint scrutiny committees.

It was reported that the main issues around overview and scrutiny, in terms of new developments, were the introduction of Community Calls for Action and the new powers for overview and scrutiny committees to review and scrutinise the actions of local partners in regard to targets within the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

It was stated that the representative from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) who attended the Worcestershire Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen meeting on 19th July 2007 had given an update on the issues surrounding the Community Calls for Action. It was explained that the Home Office might be considering not bringing into force the Community Calls for Action mechanism under the Police and Justice Act 2006 which would leave the one version of the same process under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2006.

Concern was expressed on the impact on Members' workloads with regards to scrutiny following the implementation of the new legislation, particularly in relation to the Community Calls for Action. In this regard there was also a concern about potential resource implications.

Members were reminded that there was a possibility of further changes to the draft legislation.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that at the next meeting of the Group Leaders, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board put forward the Board's concerns regarding the impact on Members' workloads and potential resource implications relating to the new scrutiny legislation (specifically the Community Calls for Action) anticipated to come into force in April 2008; and
- (b) that the report be noted.

22/07 **WORCESTERSHIRE SCRUTINY CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN**

(Please Note: This item and the previous item were discussed together)

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Duddy, reported back to Members on what had been discussed at the Worcestershire Chairman and Vice-Chairman meeting held on 19th July 2007. It was explained that all Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen from Worcestershire County Council and the six District Councils had been invited to attend and all were represented at the meeting in July with the exception of Wychavon District Council.

It was stated that how Worcestershire might respond to the new scrutiny powers contained in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill and the Police and Justice Act 2006, joint scrutiny working and the scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) were all discussed. Councillor Duddy stated that he felt that joint working could have many benefits for Bromsgrove District Council but pointed out that it should not be carried out just for the sake of it.

Members were informed that at the meeting it was agreed that each authority would consider their own priorities for scrutiny and decide if there were any common to all authorities, or any that would be better done on a countywide basis. The next meeting was due to be held later in the year.

**RESOLVED** that the verbal report and minutes of the meeting be noted.

23/07 **TASK GROUP REVIEW MEETINGS**

Members considered the report (that had been requested at the previous Scrutiny Steering Board meeting) which gave details on task group review meetings for those task groups which had been set up under the previous scrutiny structure between 2001 and 2005.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

24/07 **CABINET'S FORWARD PLAN**

Members considered the Cabinet's Forward Plan which contained the key decisions scheduled to be made over the next few months.

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet's Forward Plan be noted.

25/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Work Programme for the Scrutiny Steering Board was considered.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the additional items being added to the work programme as agreed under Minute Number 21/07, the work programme be noted.

26/07 **ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE CABINET**

Members discussed the items on the Cabinet agenda for the meeting scheduled to be held the following evening on 1st August 2007. Questions were raised specifically on two items, namely the Hamilton House Supported Housing Scheme in Sidemoor and the Future of Bromsgrove Museum report.

**RESOLVED** that the Vice-Chairman, on behalf of the Board, inform the Cabinet of Members' concerns regarding the number of times the issue of the future of the Bromsgrove Museum had been deferred and, therefore, it be requested that the dates stated in the report as deadlines be adhered to and no extension be given in the future.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

Chairman