

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 5TH OCTOBER 2011 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, M. A. Bullivant, C. B. Taylor and M. J. A. Webb (during Minute No. 49/11 to Minute No. 57/11)

Observers: Councillor C. J. Bloore and C. R. Scurrall

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Ms. J. Pickering, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. A. Coel and Ms. R. Cole.

49/11 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

50/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

51/11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th September 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the minutes be approved as a correct record;
- (b) that in relation to minute no 34/11 (the Car Parking Task Group), timings be included relating to implementation of the Car Parking Task Group recommendations if this has not already been done.

52/11 **SHARED SERVICES BOARD**

It was noted that this meeting had been cancelled.

53/11 **WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 29th September 2011 would be considered at the next meeting of the Cabinet.

54/11 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 27th September 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the minutes be noted;
- (b) that the recommendation contained at minute no. 35/11 relating to an ethical framework be approved; and
- (c) that the recommendation contained at minute no. 36/11 relating to consultancy fees be approved and that it be noted that agency fees will also be detailed separately within the financial monitoring reports.

55/11 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT - REDUCTION IN BUS SERVICES**

The Leader welcomed the Chairman of the Reduction in Bus Services Task Group, Councillor C. J. Bloore to the meeting and invited him to present the report of the Task Group.

Councillor Bloore gave the background on the reasons for establishing the Task Group and the sequence of events subsequent to this. It was reported that the County Council had scaled down the proposed cuts to bus services before the Task Group had first met.

The Task Group had determined that following the revised proposals from the County Council, two services in particular were worthy of further representations, the 204 service covering Cofton Hackett which had been withdrawn and the X50 covering Wythall which was now guaranteed for the next 12 months.

Councillor Bloore referred to the recent debate at full Council on the County Council proposals to reduce funding of Youth Services, which had resulted in a united response from the District Council being sent to the County Council. The Task Group had felt that by responding as a District Council to Consultation Documents in future it was probable that the response would carry more weight.

There was a detailed discussion on the recommendations and Members referred to representations which had been made to local County Councillors in order to address the original cutbacks proposed. Councillor Bloore acknowledged that work had been done by individual Councillors which had resulted in the cuts being reduced.

The Leader thanked Councillor Bloore for presenting the report and acknowledged the time Members and officers had put into the exercise.

RESOLVED that the response to each of the recommendations within the report of the Reduction in Bus Services Task Group be as set out below:

Recommendation 1

That within the Council Constitution, the Corporate Delegations in respect of Consultation Documents be amended as follows:

“Detail - To respond to Consultations by the County Council

Delegated to: That consultations routinely go to full Council for debate. However when there are timescale or other issues which would prevent this then the Chief Executive responds in consultation with the relevant Ward Members.”

Cabinet Response

- (a) that the spirit of the recommendation be approved but that officers be requested to report back to Overview and Scrutiny Board with suitable wording in order to amend the Constitution; and
- (b) that it be ensured that the amendment to the Constitution recognises that there may be occasions when this Council is not consulted formally by the County Council on proposals but which Members may still wish to debate at Council by way of a Notice of Motion.

Recommendation 2

That the Council support Worcestershire County Council by contacting the bus operators, Black Diamond and Johnson’s Coaches to make representations for the 204 service to be reinstated and for clarification on the future of the X50 service.

Cabinet Response

That the recommendation be supported but that in order that there is a specific point of contact on this matter, the letter be sent to the Portfolio Holder for Transport at the County Council rather than the bus operators.

56/11

VERBAL UPDATES FROM THE LEADER AND/OR OTHER CABINET MEMBERS ON ANY RECENT MEETINGS ATTENDED IN AN EX-OFFICIO CAPACITY

The Leader reported that he had attended a meeting of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership.

Councillor M. J. A. Webb reported that he had attended a meeting with Bromsgrove Rugby Club.

Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey reported that she had attended a meeting at the Ryland Centre.

Councillor M. A. Bullivant reported that he had attended a meeting of the Equality and Diversity Forum and the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee.

57/11 **AFFORDABLE HOUSING - SUPPORT TO PRINCIPAL PREFERRED PARTNER REGISTERED PROVIDERS**

Members considered a report relating to:

- (a) the transfer of a small piece of land at Housman Close, Charford, which had previously been used for recreation purposes, to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) for the development of affordable housing for older people; and
- (b) the future application of the additional payment of £350 per annum (payable for six years) which Local Authorities will receive upon the completion of each unit of affordable housing developed to be known as “enhancement for affordable homes” under the New Homes Bonus on newly developed affordable housing units.

It was noted that in 2006 the Cabinet had agreed to the disposal of the land at Housman Close at less than market value for the development of affordable housing for older people. This proposal had been delayed because of negotiations with the National Playing Fields Association (known as “Fields in Trust”) and it now appeared these were reaching a satisfactory conclusion.

It was reported that following discussions, BDHT had included in their recent bid for funding to the Homes and Communities Agency a scheme for the provision of six bungalows on the land for older people. This was on the basis that the land be conveyed for a nil capital receipt which would demonstrate the commitment of the Authority to a joint commissioning approach to the delivery of affordable housing.

Information had been received from the County Council Principal Valuation Officer that the cost of developing the bungalows would equate to the value of the land. The land would have no value if sold for the purpose of social housing to let. Members felt it was important to have a detailed audit trail in respect of any disposal of land at less than market value.

It was reported that because of reductions in funding received, the amount of affordable housing units which BDHT would be able to build was likely to be severely reduced from the original bid which was to develop 200 units.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the disposal of the recreation ground site at Housman Close, Charford to BDHT for a nil capital receipt be approved subject to (i) agreement being reached for the release of the covenant over the land in favour of Fields in Trust; and (ii) clarification being received in relation to the valuation of the land undertaken by the County Council Principal Valuation Officer to ensure the audit trail is complete;
- (b) that subject to consideration as part of the budget process and on an in principle basis, the additional payments for affordable homes under the New Homes Bonus be ring fenced for re-investment into the provision of affordable homes in the District; and

- (c) that (b) above be achieved by donating to each registered provider concerned, grant funding to be used for the provision of specific affordable housing schemes, the amounts received under the “enhancement for affordable homes” New Homes Bonus payment in accordance with the number of affordable homes built by each provider.

58/11 **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY - REVISION OF POLICY**

The Cabinet considered a report on the updated Private Sector Housing Strategy Policy in relation to the award of Home Repair Assistance Grants.

It was reported that a previous amendment to the Policy which had resulted in the repayment of grants being index linked rather than based on the original amount of grant awarded, had proved to be impractical and had appeared to be a disincentive to applicants.

It was noted that the repayment due to the Authority under the new policy would be payable whenever the property was sold rather than being limited to within ten years as previously agreed.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the reasons why the previously proposed introduction of an index linked grant repayment policy would be inappropriate as set out in the report be noted; and
- (b) that the Home Repair Assistance Policy as contained at appendix 1 to the report, including the requirement for repayment of the original grant awarded whenever the property is sold, be approved.

59/11 **DRAFT NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK - RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION**

Members considered the detailed report on and proposed response to the consultation document on the draft National Planning Policy Framework.

It was noted that the basis of the proposed response was that greater detail was needed together with clarification of many aspects of the document.

Members appreciated the work undertaken by the Strategic Planning Manager in drafting the response within the confines of the questionnaire format required by the Department for Communities and Local Government. It was felt however that it would be appropriate to also include a separate letter from the Leader requesting clarification on issues specific to Bromsgrove District such as the Green Belt and the cross boundary issues. It was also felt appropriate to seek the support of the Leader of the Opposition on this matter in order to add weight to the representations.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the report together with the implications of the draft National Planning Policy Framework be noted;

- (b) that the response as contained at appendix A to the report be approved and submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government as part of the Council's formal response to the consultation; and
- (c) that in addition to (b) above, a separate letter be sent by the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition if he is in agreement, relating to Bromsgrove's specific circumstances in respect of the Green Belt and cross boundary issues.

60/11 **SALE OF FREEHOLD 76 - 88 SHERWOOD ROAD BROMSGROVE**

The Cabinet considered a report on the proposed sale of the freehold interest of land at 76-88 Sherwood Road, Bromsgrove with a view to generating a significant capital receipt for use on projects within the community.

Members noted the background to this site together with the proposed arrangements for achieving the best market value for the site. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the sale of the freehold interest of 76-88 Sherwood Road, Bromsgrove be approved and that the sale be undertaken by auction in order to achieve best market value; and
- (b) that in view of the urgency of the matter the decision be not subject to the Council's call in procedure.

The meeting closed at 7.55 p.m.

Chairman