

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD
MONDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2011 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. J. Whittaker (Chairman), P. Lammas (Vice-Chairman), C. J. Bloore, J. S. Brogan, Dr. B. T. Cooper, Mrs. R. L. Dent, K. A. Grant-Pearce, Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, R. J. Laight, Mrs. C. J. Spencer and L. J. Turner

Observers: Councillor S. R. Colella

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mrs. A. Heighway, Mr. C. Santoriello-Smith and Ms. A. Scarce

52/11 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S. P. Shannon.

53/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

54/11 **MINUTES - 27TH SEPTEMBER 2011**

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

Officers informed Members that in respect of Minute No. 36/11, the Cabinet had approved the Board's recommendation that the costs of consultancy fees be detailed separately for future monitoring reports.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

55/11 **MINUTES - 12TH OCTOBER 2011**

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12th October 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

56/11 **BURGLARY AND VEHICLE CRIME IN BROMSGROVE - REPORT FROM WEST MERCIA POLICE**

Officers gave a summary of a report on Burglary and Vehicle Crime in the District based on figures provided by West Mercia Police. The report had been

requested following receipt of a topic proposal form from Councillor S. R. Colella at its meeting held on 11th July 2011.

- Members heard that dwelling burglary figures tended to vary considerably on a month to month basis. This was attributed to various factors, including a historical tendency for increased burglary during longer nights in autumn and winter. Burglaries that took place in garages not connected to a house were no longer classed as dwelling burglaries.
- Burglary rates tended to be higher in Bromsgrove compared to other local authority areas in Worcestershire. It was explained that the area was particularly vulnerable to cross border crimes due to its close proximity to the Birmingham conurbation and motorway networks. Members also heard that a very small number of prolific offenders could account for a spike in offences. However, it was reported that West Mercia Police and West Midlands Police were in constant dialogue to help mitigate cross border crime.
- Members suggested that detection rates for dwelling burglary and vehicle crime appeared to be significantly low in Bromsgrove between April and October 2011. Officers confirmed that the detection rates were currently lower than most other areas in Worcestershire, however it was commented that there had been fewer offences to detect.
- Members discussed the possibility of any reduction in the number of frontline police officers and were advised by Officers that if the Board wished to take this issue further it should do so through its Police Authority representative.

Officers informed Members that it was difficult to accurately compare crime figures in Bromsgrove against that of other areas, as the district's close proximity to motorway networks made it easily accessible. It was not, however, thought that Bromsgrove could be classed as a hotspot crime area when compared to areas of high conurbations.

The Board was concerned that members of the public were increasingly being targeted for theft in popular retail areas. Officers informed the Board that local police were educating residents on this issue to make them more mindful of this particular crime. The police were also encouraging local superstores to take a more pro-active approach in tackling this. However, there was no evidence to suggest that this crime was common in Bromsgrove.

The Chairman invited Councillor Colella to comment on the Board's discussions and he thanked the Board for taking the issue forward, and relevant Officers for providing the report. He welcomed greater transparency through the availability of relevant data and suggested that a comparison of Bromsgrove's crime figures to other areas with similar characteristics could be suitable for further scrutiny.

Members commended Officers on their work and welcomed regular updates.

RESOLVED that an updated report be provided to the Board in six months.

57/11 **CABINET RESPONSE TO THE REDUCTION IN BUS SERVICES TASK GROUP REPORT**

The Chairman invited Councillor C. J. Bloore to introduce this item as Chairman of the Task Group. Councillor Bloore informed the Board that the Cabinet at its meeting on 5th October 2011 had approved the recommendations of the Reduction in Bus Services Task Group, subject to a revision of the wording regarding Corporate Delegations within the Constitution.

RECOMMENDED that the Constitution with regard to Corporate Delegations be amended to read as follows:

- “1.1 Where the Council is asked to respond to a consultation on a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or where it affects the District of Bromsgrove and where the time scales for responding permit then they shall be a matter for the Full Council to consider.
- 1.2 In any event all consultations will pass automatically upon receipt to the Chief Executives Department and will either be managed in accordance with 1.1 above or where 1.1 does not apply will be passed to the Leader of the Council for comment and the relevant Head of Service or Director to provide a response as appropriate.

For the purposes of this delegation a consultation shall not be regarded as affecting the District of Bromsgrove if it relates to a national issue and would have no more effect on the District of Bromsgrove than it would on any other area; or

If it relates to actions taken by or statements made by a body or individual connected with the District, but those actions or statements are not specifically related to the District of Bromsgrove.”

58/11 **PLANNING POLICY TASK GROUP**

The Board was informed that the first meeting of the Planning Policy Task Group had been scheduled for 1st November 2011. Appointed Members would be required to agree the terms of reference of the Task Group, identify potential witnesses and areas to be investigated and set a timescale for completion of the investigation. Regular reports on the progress of the Task Group would be provided to the Board.

59/11 **WORCESTERSHIRE SCRUTINY CHAIRMEN/VICE CHAIRMEN NETWORK MEETING 3RD OCTOBER 2011**

The Chairman invited Councillor P. Lammas to introduce this item as he had attended the meeting. Councillor Lammas provided a verbal summary of the Worcestershire Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen Network meeting held at Malvern District Council on 3rd October 2011. It was reported that the meeting had been well attended, with representatives present from the

majority of Worcestershire local authorities. The network had discussed the following areas:

- The current effectiveness of crime and disorder scrutiny
- The Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, of which Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths was the Bromsgrove District Council representative.
- Potential issues for joint scrutiny working.

Members were invited to suggest possible agenda items ahead of the next network meeting, due to be held at Bromsgrove District Council in the New Year.

60/11 **QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

Officers provided a summary of the quarterly recommendation tracker. Members were advised that only outstanding actions were included in the tracker document.

A progress report on the recommendations of the Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Inquiry (MUGA) would be considered at the Board's next meeting on 21st November 2011. An update report on the issue of Fly Posting would be considered at the Board meeting on 23rd January 2012 as agreed by Members at the Board meeting held on 27th September 2011.

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources confirmed that actions that had been allocated to the Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships regarding the Older People's Task Group would be re-allocated due to his period of continued absence.

RESOLVED that the quarterly recommendation tracker be noted.

61/11 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was considered by the Board. Members made reference to the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy that was due to be considered by Cabinet on 2nd November 2011, and suggested that it would be beneficial if training that had been made available to Worcestershire County Councillors to give them a greater understanding of the issue could also be made available to Bromsgrove Councillors, especially given the issue's significance. Officers agreed to raise the suggestion with the relevant County Council Officers.

RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be noted.

62/11 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, informed Members that they would be provided with information on the Council's budget position and any budget bids submitted by senior Officers for inclusion in its 2012/13 budget ahead of the special Board meeting on 5th December 2011.

This would give Members the opportunity to consider the reports ahead of the meeting and to request further information if necessary.

It was explained that the Cabinet would start considering the budget bids at its meeting on 2nd November 2011. The information would therefore be publicly available. However, any sensitive information might need to be considered in confidential session at the meeting of the Board on 5th December 2011.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.45 p.m.

Chairman