

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 7TH DECEMBER 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 and C. B. Taylor

Observers: Councillors S. R. Colella and E. J. Murray

Officers: Ms. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. J. Godwin, Mrs. S. Sellers, Mr. A. Coel, Ms. A. Glennie, Ms. C. John and Ms. R. Cole.

78/11 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M. J. A. Webb.

79/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

80/11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 2nd November 2011 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

81/11 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 24th October 2011 and 21st November 2011 were submitted.

In respect of the minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2011 it was

RECOMMENDED that the recommendation contained in minute 57/11 relating to changes to the Constitution with regard to Corporate Delegations in respect of consultations be approved; and accordingly the wording 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.”

RESOLVED:

- (a) that further to minute 61/11, the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to check the position regarding availability of training on the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and whether this could be offered to Bromsgrove District Councillors; and
- (b) that the remainder of the minutes be noted.

In respect of the minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2011 it was

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

82/11 **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 an Executive meeting of the District Councils' Network.

83/11 **HOME CHOICE PLUS ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW**

The Cabinet considered a report on a review undertaken by the Home Choice Plus Steering Group into the Social Housing Allocations Policy. The review had been required following the publication by the Government in December 2009 of “Fair and Flexible: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities”.

It was noted that the review had been undertaken jointly with other Authorities and that users of the service had been invited to participate in the review process. The Policy would need to be submitted for external legal review to ensure it was legally compliant and sufficiently robust.

Members received a presentation which illustrated how the changes proposed would alter the present situation and make the best use of the social housing available whilst ensuring compliance with the new legislation. The presentation also clarified the position regarding local connection and the use of special circumstances within the allocation process.

It was noted that further amendments would be required at a later stage in view of welfare reform, the Localism agenda and the objectives of the Tenancy Strategy which the Council would be required to develop. A further report would therefore be submitted at a later stage.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the draft Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy be approved and that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing, to approve any final amendments necessary following legal review; and
- (b) that the position in relation to local connection and the use of special circumstances be noted.

84/11 **SOLAR PANELS SCHEME AT THE DEPOT - INFORMATION REPORT ON URGENT ACTION**

Members considered a report on urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive under delegated powers in relation to the scheme previously approved by the Council to install solar panels at the Council Depot.

It was reported that the decisions taken by the Chief Executive related to changes announced by Government to the Solar Photo Voltaic Feed-in Tariff Scheme and to the opportunity to respond to Government consultation on the proposed changes. The decision had been required urgently in order for the procurement and installation process to proceed and for a consultation response to be prepared prior to the deadline.

It was noted that if the proposed changes to the tariffs were implemented the return on the investment would still be approximately between 5% and 6%. In addition the benefits of a reduction in carbon emissions and savings in electricity costs would remain.

RESOLVED that the action of the Chief Executive in determining the matters set out below, in accordance with his delegated powers in relation to urgent matters, be noted.

- (a) that authority be granted to the Climate Change Manager to respond to the Government consultation on Proposed Changes to the Solar Photo Voltaic Feed-in Tariff Scheme including any comments from the Portfolio Holder and the Cabinet; and
- (b) that officers be authorised to continue with the current project plan as approved by the Cabinet and Council on 22nd June 2011, taking into account the revised financial projections as set out in the appendices to the report and on the basis that the figure invested remain at the previously agreed figure of £68,000.

85/11 **COUNCIL TAX BASE CALCULATION 2012/13**

The Cabinet considered the report on the requirement for the Authority to determine a Council Tax Base for the forthcoming financial year.

RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the Council's Tax Base for 2012/2013 assuming a collection rate of 99% be calculated at £36,643.86 for the area as a whole and that the calculation for each Parish be as set out in appendix 1 to the report.

86/11 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2012/13 - 2014/15**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources gave a presentation on the latest position on the Authority's financial position 2012/13 – 2014/15.

In particular reference was made to the list of potential Revenue and Capital Bids which had had been designated by officers and through the Budget Jury process as high or high to medium priority. It was stressed that Members would be making decisions on the budget in forthcoming meetings.

It was also noted that the Equalities and Diversity Forum had put forward a number of proposals for Members' consideration within the total budget of £5,000 allocated for Equality and Diversity projects.

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources reported that officers were still working to address any budget gap for 2012/13.

RESOLVED that the current position be noted.

87/11 **VICTORIA GROUND CAPITAL WORKS**

Consideration was given to a report on capital works required at the Victoria Ground, Bromsgrove.

It was reported that the works required had been revealed as a result of a dilapidation survey undertaken in late 2010 and related mainly to the condition of the building fabric including the roof, electrical system and internal fittings. The cost of the required works was £42,000. It was noted that the cost of developing the building as a community facility would be met by the occupiers Bromsgrove Sporting in accordance with the original Business Case and Lease arrangements.

It was noted that officers had identified that the cost of the works could be met from within the existing 2011/2012 Capital Programme by way of virement of £42,000 from the Bridge Maintenance budget allocation which had recently been reviewed by officers.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the required works to the Victoria Ground as set out in the report be approved; and
- (b) that the cost of £42,000 be met from within the existing 2011/2012 Capital Programme by way of a virement from the Bridge Maintenance budget allocation.

88/11 **FUTURE ENGAGEMENT WITH PARISH COUNCILS**

The Cabinet considered a report on the future of the Parish Forum and subsequent arrangements for future engagement with Parish Councils in view of the need for the Council to consider how its resources, including officer time could best be utilised.

The need to maintain good links with the Parish Councils was recognised in the report including the on-going provision of training opportunities and regular meetings between the Monitoring Officer and Parish Council Clerks. In addition it was suggested that when appropriate, officers could attend for part of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of the Worcestershire County Association of Local Council (CALC) meetings to give presentations or interact with Parish Council representatives on specific issues.

Members noted the suggestions put forward by CALC as a result of the consultation exercise on the proposal to discontinue the present quarterly Parish Forum meetings.

Members were not minded to approve the proposals put forward by CALC for a specific Portfolio Holder to be given the responsibility for managing the relationship with Parish Councils and for twice yearly meetings to be held between the District and Parish Councils. As an alternative however, the Leader undertook to discuss with the Chairman of CALC other possible arrangements which could achieve a similar result. Members also referred to the opportunities for links between the Parishes and the District to be maintained and strengthened through Members who were both District and Parish Councillors and by District Councillors attending for part of Parish Council meetings if appropriate.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Parish Council Forum be discontinued with immediate effect;
- (b) that, as an alternative arrangement, meetings of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC be used as a vehicle for presentations and interaction between the Council and Parish Councils by way of a slot at the start of such meetings;
- (c) that the Leader discuss with the Chairman of the Bromsgrove Area Committee of CALC the feasibility of any additional means by which the links between the District and Parish Councils could be maintained; and
- (d) that the effectiveness of the changed arrangements be subject to review within twelve months.

89/11 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2 2011/12**

The Cabinet considered the 2011/2012 Quarter 2 Corporate Performance Report together with a number of options for methods of performance reporting for the remainder of 2011/2012, in view of the proposed changes to strategic and performance reporting which would evolve through Systems Thinking and the Transformation agenda which would come into effect in 2012/2013.

Members felt that there was little value in continuing to report formally on all of the existing performance indicators in view of the move towards developing performance measures as part of the transformation process.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Heads of Service together with their Portfolio Holder(s) select key performance indicators to be reported formally on a quarterly basis until the end of 2011/2012;
- (b) that the way in which performance reporting will change as the Transformation agenda progresses be noted; and
- (c) that the update on key performance indicators for the period ended 30th September 2011 be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.10 p.m.

Chairman