

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY, 26TH MARCH 2012 AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillors M. A. Bullivant and C. B. Taylor

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. A. De Warr, Mr. A. Coel, Mr. M. Dunphy, Ms. R. Dunne and Ms. A. Scarce

103/11 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. S. Brogan, K. A. Grant-Pearce and P. M. McDonald.

104/11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor Mrs. C. J. Spencer declared a personal interest as a member of the board of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) and Councillor S. P. Shannon declared a personal interest as a member of the board of B. H. I. (a subsidiary of BDHT), in respect of item 4 Pre-scrutiny Longbridge Statement of Principles Affordable Housing Provision Report.

105/11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 27th February 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

106/11 **Longbridge Statement of Principles Affordable Housing Provision Report**

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Core Strategy, Regulatory Services and Strategic Housing together with the Strategic Housing Manager and Strategic Planning Manager to introduce the report.

The Strategic Housing Manager provided Members with background information on the Statement of Principles which covered such issues as the proportion of affordable housing to be provided, the expected size, type and

tenure and the way in which the properties would be allocated under nomination arrangements. Members discussed the following areas in detail:

- The allocation of properties and the Choice Based Letting Scheme
- The methodology used to calculate the 35% affordable housing target
- The condition of the site and the infrastructure needed to support its development.
- The Area Action Plan and Core Strategy
- The commitment of Birmingham City Council to the Statement of Principles.
- The allocation of the first phase of units which were expected to be delivered shortly.

Whilst Members recognised the need for such a Statement it was concerned that insufficient time and information had been provided to enable the Board to contribute to the decision making process. After further discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet delay the approval of the Statement of Principles regarding the Provision of Affordable Housing at Longbridge pending a more detailed report being received.

RESOLVED that the Board receive a more detailed report on the Statement of Principles regarding the Provision of Affordable Housing at Longbridge, to enable a detailed pre-scrutiny exercise to be carried out.

107/11 **QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Policy, Performance, Communications, Customer Services, Legal, Equalities, Democratic Services and Human Resources together with the Policy Manager to introduce the report. The Policy Manager provided Members with background information on the report and explained that future Performance Reports would concentrate more on “measures” rather than performance indicators which would span a time period and be produced in a chart format. An example of this format would be provided to the Board for comment at a future meeting. This format would provide Members with a more responsive view at any one particular time and each department would be responsible for its own data and be able to access this on a daily basis.

Members noted the indicators which had improved, in particular the time taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Claims. This service area had recently been subject to transformation/intervention and it was anticipated that this would lead to further improvements. The indicator which was giving some concern was the number of households living in temporary accommodation and Members were informed that work was being carried out to closely monitor this as future legislative changes could impact further on it.

The Policy Manager provided the Board with the figures in respect of the number of British Crime Survey comparator crimes reported. For the period 1st April 2010 to 31st December 2010 the total amounted to 2,034 and for 2011 these had decreased to 1,838. The Board discussed the following areas

of performance in more detail and the Policy Manager agreed to pass on the Board's concerns to the relevant Heads of Service and noted that if no improvement was shown in Quarter 4 the Board would request further detailed information.

- Residual waste per household
- The percentage of household waste re-used, recycled or composted (Members discussed the possibility that this could be a seasonal decline).
- Processing of planning applications within specified timescales and how a small number of applications could dramatically change these figures. Members agreed that it would be helpful if details of actual numbers of applications were provided to give a more contextual view.
- Number of households living in temporary accommodation and the cost implications for the Council.

The Board discussed in detail the complaints procedure, the number of complaints reported and the Council's improvement in responding to complaints within the agreed timescales. Members also commented on the Satisfaction Poll on the opening page of the Council's website and improvements which could be made in order to make the website more accessible. The Head of Customer Service informed Members that this was being addressed, although currently the Council was in a partnership with other authorities and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and largely funded by WCC which made it difficult to make major changes. After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring Report be noted.

108/11 **PLANNING POLICY TASK GROUP REPORT (CHAIRMAN COUNCILLOR S. R. COLELLA)**

Councillor S. R. Colella, as Chairman of the Planning Policy Task Group, introduced the report and provided Members with background information on the reasons for the Task Group being set up and its terms of reference. The Chairman also took the opportunity to formally thank Members of the Task Group, residents and officers for their support and co-operation throughout the investigation and with the preparation of the report.

The Board discussed the following areas in more detail:

- The scope of the Task Group's investigations and make up of membership.
- The role of monitoring groups
- Mistakes which had been made by the Council in respect of the Marlbrook Tip site.
- The reports provided by Faber Maunsell.
- The role of individual officers
- The lack of clarity in respect of service requests and customer complaints.

The Board acknowledged the difficulties which had been and continued to be faced by the residents of the Marlbrook Tip site and supported the work of the Head of Planning and Regeneration in bring this matter to a satisfactory conclusion for everyone concerned.

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the Planning Policy Task Group Report and recommendations be submitted to the Cabinet for approval.

109/11 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was considered by the Board. Members discussed the items in respect of the Countywide Homelessness Strategy and the Tenancy Strategy and accepted that the preparation of these reports was in the early stages and not expected to be considered by Cabinet until July 2012. However, in order for the Board to provide the Cabinet with its comments, at the earliest opportunity, details of the work to date on both strategies were requested.

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that a report in respect of the current position on the Countywide Homelessness Strategy be provided to the meeting to be held on 23rd April 2012 for pre-scrutiny purposes; and
- (b) that a report in respect of the current position on the Tenancy Strategy be provided to the meeting to be held on 23rd April 2012 for pre-scrutiny purposes.

110/11 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board discussed the Work Programme and officers confirmed that all reports as detailed were expected to be received at the meeting to be held on 23rd April 2012 with the exception of the Annual Review of Call In.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

111/11 **WCC HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (FOR INFORMATION)**

Councillor Dr. B. T. Cooper the Council's representative on the Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) informed Members that he had attended its meeting on 13th March 2012. The main focus of the work of HOSC was the strategic service review of the Acute Services in Worcestershire, a timetable had been formulated and the consultation period was expected to begin in July 2012. However, there had already been delays so it was anticipated that some slippage would occur

within the timetable. Members of HOSC had also received presentations on the role of both Clinical Commissioning Groups and Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board and the relationship of these bodies with HOSC moving forward.

Members discussed the funding of services and a recent presentation on the Joint Service Review which had been hosted by WCC in the Council Chamber on 29th February 2012. Members commented that this presentation had not been well publicised which had resulted in poor attendance. Councillor Dr. Cooper confirmed that there were cost pressures and the financial support of the delivery of the services and quality of care would be the main drivers of the strategic service review.

The meeting closed at 7.38 p.m.

Chairman