

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 5TH DECEMBER 2012 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP (Deputy Leader in the Chair),
Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, M. A. Bullivant, C. B. Taylor and M. J. A. Webb
(Minute nod. 88/12 to 92/12)

Observers: Councillor E. J. Murray.

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. J. Godwin, Mrs S. Sellers and Ms. R. Cole.

83/12 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R. Hollingworth. An apology for late arrival was received from Councillor M. J. A. Webb.

84/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

85/12 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th November 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

86/12 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 19th November 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

87/12 **WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 22nd November 2012 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

88/12 **CROWN CLOSE OPEN SPACE - REPAIRS TO SURROUNDING ROADS AND FOOTPATHS**

The Cabinet considered a report on a proposal to undertake repairs and resurfacing work to the footpaths and road around Crown Close Public Open Space, Bromsgrove.

It was noted that the footpaths and road which lead to Amphlett Hall and St. John's Church and which were used by both pedestrians and vehicles had deteriorated and were in danger of becoming a liability in terms both the escalating costs of temporary repairs and a risk of claims resulting from possible accidents.

Officers had reviewed the position and had identified that the cost of up to £40,000 could be met from S.106 funds available for the provision of Public Open Space enhancement. As part of the proposed works, the provision of a trench would be undertaken to facilitate planned lighting replacement in a co-ordinated way.

Members noted the present unsatisfactory condition of the footpaths and roads together with the opportunity to improve the area through the use of S.106 funding. Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that the Capital Programme 2012/2013 be increased by £40,000 to enable the resurfacing of footpaths and the road at Crown Close Open Space, Bromsgrove to be undertaken and that this work be funded by way of S.106 monies.

89/12 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013/2014 - 2015/2016**

The Executive Director (Finance and Resources) gave a presentation on the current position in respect of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2013/2014 to 2015/2016, including reference to particular issues which would be likely to impact upon the Authority's financial position.

It was reported that a major uncertainty at this stage was that details of the financial settlement from central government had not been received and that it seemed likely that details would not be available until 19th December 2012.

A number of issues which would affect the budget were highlighted by the Executive Director (Finance and Resources), including a projected staff pay award of 1%, a rise in utility bills of 10% and additional fuel costs. In addition it was felt likely that the general economic situation would result in an increase in pressure from the public on Council services.

It was explained that if there was a further freeze on Council Tax, whilst there was likely to be a government grant to partially cover this, the freeze would have an adverse impact on the Council Tax Base in future years.

Other issues highlighted included the potential cost of Welfare Reform, the cost of the introduction of Universal Credit and the introduction of the Community Right to Challenge.

It was reported that officers were working to address a potential budget gap of around £1,000,000 and Heads of Service had been advised that no budget bids would be accepted without full funding plans. In addition a great deal of work was on-going in relation to the re-design of services to reduce costs whilst maintaining or improving service to the customer. Further reports would be submitted to Members in January 2013.

RESOLVED that the current situation be noted.

90/12 **FINANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 2 2012/2013**

Members considered a report on the Council's financial position for April to September 2012.

It was noted that in respect of the revenue budget, at the end of the financial year there was at present a projected overspend of £59,000. The Executive Director (Finance and Resources) referred to specific areas where there had either been an overspend or a failure to meet projected income targets and explained that Heads of Service would be working with their teams and Portfolio Holders in order to address these issues.

It was noted that there was a request for the release of funding from reserves held for specific purposes relating to the Town Centre and Clinical Commission Group funded projects. The Executive Director (Finance and Resources) undertook to circulate details of the Clinical Commission Group funded projects to Members.

It was also noted that additional capital funding had been received from the Football Foundation and from Stoke Parish Council in respect of sports and play schemes at Braces lane, Barnsley Hall and Stoke Heath.

It was reported that there would be a need to carry forward to the 2013/2014 Capital Programme expenditure on capital schemes in relation to the Parkside development and the Public Realm works in Bromsgrove Town Centre. In addition it was proposed that the capital expenditure on the IDOX system would be split over two years.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the current financial position in respect of revenue and capital expenditure as set out in the report be noted;
- (b) that the following funding be released from approved reserves:
 - £52,000 in relation to the Town Centre Redevelopment
 - £65,000 in relation to Clinical Commissioning Group funded projects

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the 2012/2013 Capital Programme be increased by £108,000 to reflect additional funding received from the Football Foundation and Stoke Parish Council in respect of the following sports and play schemes:
- Braces Lane (Football Foundation) - £50,000
 - Barnsley Hall (Football Foundation) - £48,000
 - Stoke Heath (Stoke Parish Council) - £10,000
- (b) that the following capital funding be carried forward to 2013/2014 in respect of capital schemes which will not be undertaken in 2012/2014:
- Parkside development and Public Realm improvements - £1,400,000
 - Regulatory Services - £58,000

91/12 **QUARTERLY MONITORING OF WRITE OFF OF DEBTS - QUARTER 2 2012/2013**

The Cabinet considered a report on the action taken in respect of the write off of debts during April to September 2012 and noted the profile and level of outstanding debt.

Members received clarification on a number of points and requested that in future reports, in relation to Council Tax Arrears and NNDR Arrears, the previous quarter figures be included so a comparison could be made.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

92/12 **KICKSTART PARTNERSHIP CLOSURE**

(The Deputy Leader agreed to the consideration of this item as a matter of urgency as a decision was required thereon prior to the next meeting of the Cabinet).

Members considered a report on the closure of the national Kickstart Programme together with the implications of the closure of the scheme for the Authority and for residents who had benefitted from the scheme.

It was reported that the national Kickstart Programme had been established by the Government in 2004 to provide loans to residents on low incomes who were otherwise unable to access finance for home improvements which would enable them to live independently. In the West Midlands region a Partnership of Local Authorities had been established with Birmingham City Council hosting a Programme Management Team and Bromsgrove had joined the partnership in 2009. Since that time five households in Bromsgrove had benefitted from the scheme.

It was noted that following the decision of the Government to cease financing the scheme the Partnership was in the process of winding up and there was a proposal for the remaining secured and unsecured loans to be assigned to the

relevant Local Authority. The loan portfolio would become the responsibility of the Local Authority to administer. It was noted that confirmation had been received that there would be no claw back of capital to the Government and the funds released as loans would not be ring fenced. Bromsgrove would therefore be taking responsibility for the administration of five secured loans with a value of £71,762.

There would be a number of tasks involved in administering the loans but in principle the Authority had the expertise to deal with these although the detailed arrangements would need to be agreed between the relevant officers. There would be no additional cost to the Authority other than the administrative costs.

It was noted that other Authorities in the West Midlands region had taken on the responsibility for administering the loans benefitting residents within their areas and in the circumstances it was felt to be appropriate that this Authority also undertook this.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the position in respect of the closure of the Kickstart scheme be noted and the re-assignment to Bromsgrove District Council of the loans granted to Bromsgrove District Council residents (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report) be approved in order that the Authority is able to manage the loans in future; and
- (b) that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to enter into a Deed of Assignment in this regard on behalf of the Authority.

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman