

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

TUESDAY, 2ND OCTOBER 2007

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), J. T. Duddy (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker, B. Lewis F.CMI, D. L. Pardoe and C. B. Taylor (during Minute Nos. 40/07(ii) to 45/07)

Observers: Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. P. Street, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. S. Sellers and Ms. D. McCarthy.

37/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

38/07 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were made.

39/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 4th September 2007 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

40/07 **SCRUTINY TASK GROUP UPDATES**

(i) Air Quality Task Group

Councillor McDonald, as Chairman of the Task Group, provided the Members of the Board with an update of the progress the Air Quality Task Group had made. The Board was reminded that the Task Group had concentrated on known areas within the District with poor air quality.

It was stated that the last meeting had been particularly interesting as representatives from the Highways Agency, Worcestershire County Council Highway's, Worcestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT) as well as members of the public had attended.

It was hoped that the next meeting would be the last meeting where Members would be investigating the issue and the subsequent meetings would be deciding upon recommendations to put forward and finalising a report.

(ii) Public Transport – Buses Task Group

The Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor Lewis, informed the Board of a survey the Task Group had planned to carry out after the next meeting on 10th October 2007 with representatives from Worcestershire County Council.

Members were informed that a representative from Worcestershire County Council had attended the last meeting and the Task Group were told that there was likely to be a reduction in funding which might impact on bus subsidies. It was explained that Bromsgrove District Council had signed up to the Worcestershire County Council Concessionary Fares Scheme but in April 2008 a National Scheme would come into effect and it was likely the Council would receive a grant.

It was stated that the Task Group had found out about services local taxi companies offered to people with a disability. Members were reminded that the Task Group's terms of reference did not include taxi services and that it had been agreed that with regard to disabled users, the Task Group would investigate accessibility and suitability of the bus service.

The Draft Local Transport Bill was also mentioned which suggested that local authorities could have more powers on transport issues such as bus services.

It was confirmed that the Task Group Chairman had received an invite to the District Council's Transport Strategy Meetings due to be held on 6th and 29th November 2007.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates given on the progress of each of the Scrutiny Task Groups be noted.

41/07 **REFUSE AND RECYCLING TASK GROUP**

The Board considered the report relating to the Refuse and Recycling Task Group which informed Members that the appointed Chairman, Councillor Taylor, had resigned and therefore the Board had to decide who they would like to appoint as the new Chairman of the Task Group.

Councillor Taylor stated that after receiving some information due to be considered at a Task Group Meeting, he realised that he had an interest and therefore felt he had no choice but to resign from the Task Group to ensure future scrutiny work of the Task Group would not be undermined. He apologised for any inconvenience he had caused, particularly to Members of the Task Group.

RESOLVED that Councillor Scurrall be appointed as the new Chairman of the Refuse and Recycling Task Group.

42/07 **CABINET'S FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Cabinet's Forward Plan which contained the key decisions scheduled to be made over the next few months.

Councillor Mrs. Dyer, as Portfolio Holder for Planning, had been invited by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Board to attend and was welcomed to the meeting.

It was asked if Councillor Mrs. Dyer could explain the reason why the Cabinet had delayed consideration of the Longbridge Area Action Plan. Councillor Mrs. Dyer responded that Bromsgrove District Council and Birmingham City Council had done all they could and they were now both waiting on Halcrow, an engineering consultancy firm, commissioned by the property developers, to complete certain projects.

The Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects, informed the Board that both Bromsgrove District Council and Birmingham City Council were dissatisfied with information provided by Halcrow. It was explained that the Council required certain baseline information from Halcrow before the Council could move forward.

The Chairman commented that the property developers had not referred to any problems during the Longbridge Regeneration Meetings he had attended.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet's Forward Plan and the comments received from Councillor Mrs. Dyer, Portfolio Holder for Planning, in relation to item 26 on the Forward Plan be noted.

43/07 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The work programme for the Scrutiny Steering Board was considered.

The Chairman informed the Board that in future it would be made clear to all non-Cabinet Members that all Task Group meetings would commence at 6pm, unless it was unanimously agreed by all Members of the Task Group that meetings could start at an earlier time. It was hoped that this would encourage more non-Cabinet Members who worked during the day to join future Task Groups.

RESOLVED that the possibility of scrutinising 'Climate Change' and 'Older People' be considered at the next Scrutiny Steering Board Meeting.

44/07 **ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT CABINET**

Members considered the items on the Cabinet agenda for the meeting scheduled to be held the following evening on 3rd October 2007. The Chief Executive and Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects answered all questions put forward by Members which related to the Bromsgrove Play Action Plan Report.

There was concern over the methodology of the Council's contractors, Snap, who had been commissioned to carry out the Customer Survey. It was stated that Members of the Senior Management Team (The Chief Executive, Executive Director - Partnerships and Projects and Assistant Chief Executive)

had already voiced their concerns over how the survey was conducted and agreed that it was not statistically valid.

RESOLVED that the items on the Cabinet agenda be noted and that no comments be put forward to Cabinet from the Scrutiny Steering Board.

45/07 **TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS**

A letter from Councillor Buckley, Chairman of Worcestershire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Steering Committee, which related to the proposal of a joint countywide scrutiny on flooding issues was circulated to Members of the Board. It was explained that it was suggested that each authority nominate two Scrutiny Members by 16th October 2007. A meeting would then be arranged early November to discuss the proposal and a scoping exercise would be carried out at the same meeting, if it was agreed a joint scrutiny on flooding should be taken forward.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Councillor McDonald, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board, and Councillor Lewis, as a Member of the Scrutiny Steering Board who would be interested in being this Council's representative on a joint scrutiny task group, be nominated; and
- (b) that it be suggested that the joint meeting be held mid November 2007 and Councillor McDonald contact Councillor Buckley direct.

The meeting closed at 6.50 pm

Chairman