

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY, 15TH JULY 2013 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. Lammas (Chairman), R. J. Laight (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Dudley, J. M. L. A. Griffiths, L. C. R. Mallett (Present from Minute No. 1/13 to Minute No. 12/13), J. A. Ruck, C. R. Scurrall (Substituting for R. L. Dent), R. J. Shannon (Substituting for C. J. Bloore), S. P. Shannon, L. J. Turner and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor M. A. Bullivant and Councillor M. A. Sherrey

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. A. De Warr, Ms. L. Jones and Ms. A. Scarce

1/13 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Nominations for Chairman were received in respect of Councillors P. Lammas and L. C. R. Mallett.

RESOLVED that Councillor P. Lammas be elected as Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

2/13 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Nominations for Vice Chairman were received in respect of Councillors R. J. Laight and L. C. R. Mallett.

RESOLVED that Councillor R. J. Laight be elected as Vice Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

3/13 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. J. Bloore, B. T. Cooper, R. L. Dent and C. J. Spencer.

4/13 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor J. M. L. A. Griffiths declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest as a Member of Bromsgrove Arts Centre Trust in respect of item No. 12. As such Councillor Griffiths withdrew from the meeting and was not present and took no part in its consideration and voting thereon.

5/13 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 22nd April 2013 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

6/13 **MAKING EXPERIENCES COUNT QUARTER 4 REPORT**

The Head of Customer Services introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The number of days taken to respond to complaints and comparable data for the previous year and how the slight slippage in this was being addressed.
- Outstanding issues being dealt with by the Ombudsman (there had been a total of 6 over the year, which compared relatively well against other authorities).
- A slight decrease in the number of complaints in respect of refuse and recycling due to the ongoing trial of a new system where the operational staff were dealing directly with enquiries.
- The downward trend in customer contact and the increase in payments online and by phone.
- The Every Customer, Every Time – Everybody Matters Action Plan. Members were informed that there had been considerable progress with much of the action plan having been completed.
- The review of the process and the current trial to cut out steps in the complaints system by Managers discussing directly with complainants issues in order to establish the real problem at an earlier stage and how the customer would like it to be resolved.

Members discussed the use of the free press and the Council's web pages to advertise such things as the Christmas refuse collections and the Head of Customer Services agreed to report Members concerns that not everyone had access to either of these forms of advertisement to the relevant Head of Service..

The Head of Customer Services confirmed that compliments and complaints in respect of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) were not included within this report and were reported on an annual basis to the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee. Officers informed Members that this was an area which would be considered under the WRS Joint Scrutiny Exercise.

The Board discussed the following areas in detail:

- The use of telephone answer machines and out of date messages on these. (New guidance was being developed in respect of this, which would apply to all staff.)
- The importance of the Board receiving the report on a regular basis, despite it being available through the Orb and in the Members' Room.

- The public's interest in the information provided and its availability on the Council website via the Customer Service pages.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the report be noted; and
- (b) that the Overview & Scrutiny Board continue to receive the report.

7/13 **YOUTH PROVISIONAL TASK GROUP DRAFT FINAL REPORT**

The Chairman of the Task Group introduced the report and informed Members that the Task Group had taken the opportunity to visit youth groups throughout the district in order to get a better understanding of what was available and to hear the views, first hand, of the young people.

The Board discussed the inclusion of a further recommendation which would enable the Council to take responsibility for youth provision following the changes which had taken place at Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and the introduction of the Positive Activities Scheme. The Chairman of the Task Group explained that within the terms of reference of the Task Group the aim had been to ascertain what was currently available, not only through the Scheme but also through the voluntary sector or privately run activities. The Task Group acknowledged that cutbacks had been made at all levels, including WCC, but it had been pleasantly surprised by the number of activities which were still available and the innovative way in which these were carried out. Although it appeared that there was a reduction in the number of paid youth workers, a great deal of the activities were being provided by volunteers, which in many cases had shown a great community spirit and the Task Group wished to highlight this good work.

Members discussed each recommendation and raised concerns over the changes which had taken place at the Ryland Centre, requesting that recommendation 3 be amended to highlight the need for the funding from Sandwell Leisure Trust to be allocated to activities within the Bromsgrove Town Centre area. Recommendation 10 was discussed in detail as Members were concerned that there was clearly a specific need for youth provision for the disaffected young people and those not in education, employment or training within the District and it was this group in particular that would benefit greatly from that provision.

The Board also discussed the information which had been provided by Members and the Chairman of the Task Group confirmed that not all Members had responded, hence recommendation 4. The Board asked that the information provided be made available in some way on the Council's website. Officers explained that this had been discussed with the Communications Manager who had intimated that the difficulty with such information was that it quickly became out of date and was therefore difficult to maintain. However, officers agreed to discuss this further with the Communications Manager with the possibility of attaching some sort of disclaimer to the document.

The Chairman of the Task Group gave her thanks to both Members and Officers for the work carried out in bringing the report to the Board.

RESOLVED that the Youth Provision Task Group Report and Recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for approval subject to the amendment of recommendation 3 as detailed in the preamble above.

8/13 **QUARTER 4 SICKNESS ABSENCE PERFORMANCE AND HEALTH REPORT**

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources informed Members that a written report for Quarter 4 Sickness Absence Performance and Health would be available at the meeting to be held on 16th September 2013 and that the Board would be given the opportunity at that meeting to discuss how it would like to receive the sickness performance and absence data in future.

9/13 **THE LIVING WAGE REPORT - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources informed Members that this was the third report received by the Board and that it contained information on the challenges and impact of ensuring that the Living Wage was paid to contractors of the Council. The report also highlighted issues which could have an impact on the implementation and monitoring the payment of the Living Wage going forward. Members discussed the following areas in detail:

- Clarification as to members of staff receiving the Living Wage.
- the mechanism which could be put in place to encourage contractors to pay the Living Wage.
- any finance cost to the Council in monitoring contractors.
- What duty, if any, the Council had to ensure it's contractors paid the Living Wage.

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that no further action be taken in respect of the Living Wage.

10/13 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2012/13**

The Board considered the Draft Annual Report and was reminded that previous reports had been submitted to Council for information.

RESOLVED that the Overview & Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2012-13 be submitted to the Council meeting to be held on 25th September 2013 for information.

11/13 **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES TASK GROUP**

The Board was reminded that at the meeting held on 26th March 2013 it had agreed the terms of reference for the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Task Group, subject to the appointment of representatives. The

nominated representatives should include either the Chairman or Vice Chairman together with a substitute member. Following discussion it was

RESOLVED that Councillor P. Lammas be lead representative and Councillor R. J. Laight be substitute representative.

12/13 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL - OUTREACH PROVISION AT THE ARTRIX ARTS CENTRE**

Members discussed the proposal which had been put forward by Councillor P. McDonald and agreed that this was a valid topic which covered a specific service. The Board was informed that during the course of the Youth Provision Task Group's investigations the Outreach Co-ordinator had been interviewed and had provided information on the work which was carried out and details of funding streams. The Group had also discussed the work of the Outreach Co-ordinator with the Artistic Director whilst visiting the Centre. Members discussed the possibility of setting up a task group and Officers advised that capacity for this would be available from September, upon completion of the Air Quality Task Group. After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the topic be included within the work programme and a task group established with Councillor S. P. Shannon as Chairman.

13/13 **AIR QUALITY TASK GROUP**

The Chairman of the Task Group was invited to provide Members with an update of the work of the Task Group.

The Chairman informed Members that the subject of air quality was particularly topical at the moment as a significant amount of press coverage had been received in respect of both the UK's continued breach of air pollutant levels (it was not anticipated to reach acceptable levels for a number of years) and recent medical evidence which linked poor air quality to heart failure and shortening of life.

The Group had held four meetings since the last update and witnesses had included representatives from Worcestershire Regulatory Services, the Hagley Parish Air Quality Group and the Public Health Consultant from Worcestershire County Council. The Task Group had also sent a response to the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Air Quality Action Plan consultation. A further meeting of the Task Group would take place on 18th July which would be attended by the Strategic Planning Manager and the Network Control Manager from Worcestershire County Council.

The Chairman confirmed that the Task Group remained on schedule to bring its final report before the Board at its meeting to be held on 16th September 2013.

14/13 **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

As Councillor Cooper had given his apologies for this evening's meeting a written update had been received which would be provided to all Members by email. Officers confirmed that the main item on the agenda for the meeting on 25th June 2013 of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) had been an update on the state of the Acute Hospitals reconfiguration and that the Committee had been told that the Joint Service Review was now completed and that two broad options were left for consideration.

15/13 **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME 1ST AUGUST TO 30TH NOVEMBER 2013**

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources explained to the Board that this was an opportunity to pre scrutinise any appropriate items from the Cabinet Work Programme if it so wished. The Members discussed the Capital Programme in respect of the Bromsgrove Town Centre, Public Realm Improvements and although this was expected to go to Cabinet on 4th September, which would not allow the Board the opportunity to pre-scrutinise it, Members were in agreement that it would be useful to receive an update on the current position.

RESOLVED that the Senior Project Manager give a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on the Bromsgrove Town Centre, Public Realm Improvements at the meeting to be held on 16th September 2013.

16/13 **ACTION LIST**

Members noted the outstanding actions and that where appropriate further information would be provided as soon as possible.

17/13 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board considered the Work Programme and discussed the length of both this evening's meeting and the meeting to be held on 16th September, following the addition of 2 items as detailed in the preamble above and considered the option of holding a further meeting in September to allow the Board to debate the items in more detail. Officers informed Members that the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Joint Scrutiny verbal update would not be a significant item, as it was unlikely that the initial meeting would be set up prior to this. The option was also available to move the Planning Policy Task Group 12 month review to the October meeting. After further discussion it was

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be noted subject to the amendments noted above.

The meeting closed at 8.10 p.m.

Chairman