

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

25TH FEBRUARY 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Chairman), J. A. Ruck (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, M. T. Buxton, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. L. Dent, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, C. R. Scurrrell, E. M. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor, L. J. Turner, M. J. A. Webb, P. J. Whittaker and C. J. K. Wilson

72\14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. J. Deeming, S.J. Dudley, K.A. Grant-Pearce, R. Hollingworth and R. J. Shannon.

73\14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were made:

Item 12 – Notice of Motion on Alexandra Hospital

Councillor P. Lammas declared an other disclosable interest as a Member of the Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (?)

Councillor J. S. Brogan declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as he was employed by the West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust.

Councillor J. R. Boulter declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as he was employed by the University Hospitals of Birmingham NHS foundation Trust.

Councillor D. W. P. Booth declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as his partner was employed by the Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust.

74\14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19th January 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

75\14 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, THE CIVIC HEAD AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Civic Head referred to the recent Holocaust Memorial event which had taken place in Bromsgrove and thanked the Deputy Civic Head for her attendance, together with those Members who had supported the event.

The Civic Head also reminded Members that the Civic Dinner would be taking place at Hagley Hall on 30th April 2015 and invited all Members to attend.

76\14 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader referred to the recent march through the Town of the Mercian Regiment to commemorate the regiment being granted the Freedom of the District.

The Leader drew attention to:

- The on going work with Worcestershire County Council in relation to improvements to the A38 infrastructure;
- the improved facilities for the market within the High Street; and
- the good progress made in relation to a number of town centre development sites

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett sought information on the progress of attracting additional stall holders and the Farmers Market to the High Street. The Leader gave updated information on this.

77\14 **MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

It was noted that Councillor C. R. Scurrall had replaced Councillor H. J. Jones as a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and that Councillor R. J. Laight had replaced Councillor Jones as Vice-Chairman of the Board.

78\14 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 - 2017/18**

The Portfolio for Finance, Councillor M. J. A. Webb referred to the recommendations in respect of the Medium Term Financial Plan arising from the meetings of the Cabinet held on 4th and 25th February 2015. Councillor Webb proposed the recommendations from the two Cabinet meetings jointly. The recommendations were seconded by Councillor C. B. Taylor.

Councillor Webb referred to the background to the Medium Term Financial Plan process, including the significant reduction in the grant settlement received from central government over the past four years. He stated that despite this it had been possible to deliver a balanced budget, including the freezing of the Council Tax precept for the District, but which also protected the delivery of frontline services. This had been facilitated by budgeted

savings and through savings made through Shared Services and transformation work.

Councillor Webb welcomed the submission by the Labour and the Independent Alliance Groups of alternative Medium Term Financial Plans and he drew attention to the significant areas of agreement between the Controlling Group's budget and those budget proposals put forward by the two opposition Groups.

In proposing the recommendations from the Cabinet Councillor Webb referred to the significant investment which was on going within the Town Centre, together with the Parkside development and the Dolphin Centre replacement which would be of benefit to the District as a whole. In addition it had been possible to retain the existing level of car parking charges and to introduce free parking after 7.00pm.

Councillor Webb drew attention to the proposals arising from the work undertaken by the New Homes Bonus Working Group, to allocate £87,000 of the New Homes Bonus Grant to the New Homes Bonus Scheme.

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett responded to the recommendations and moved an amendment to the Medium Term Financial Plan (as attached to these Minutes) in the form of an alternative budget on behalf of the Labour Group, this was seconded by Councillor C. J. Bloore.

During the debate on the amendment Councillor Mallett made reference to proposed reduction in car parking charges and the introduction of free swimming for those under 16 or over 65, together with additional investments in Community projects and investment in the Arts and Tourism. It was the intention to fund the investment through a number of measures including reduction of expenditure on IT and Consultants and drawing down from balances.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the amendment.

For the amendment: Councillors C. J. Bloore, M. T. Buxton, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, E. M. Shannon, S. P. Shannon and C. J. K. Wilson (9)

Against the amendment: Councillors S. J. Baxter, D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. L. Dent, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, B. Lewis, J. A. Ruck, C. R. Scurrrell, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor L. J. Turner, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (23)

The Chairman declared the amendment to be lost.

Councillor S. R. Colella then moved a further amendment to the Medium Term Financial Plan (as attached to these Minutes) in the form of an alternative

budget on behalf of the Independent Alliance Group, this was seconded by Councillor S. J. Baxter.

During the debate on the amendment Councillor Colella in particular drew attention to the proposals to suspend the redevelopment of the Dolphin Centre pending a review and investigation by the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The amendment also included a reduction in the Arts and Events budget and a review of engagement of consultants, agency and temporary staff. The amendment also proposed the extension of the New Homes Bonus Scheme.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the amendment.

For the amendment: Councillors S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, B. Lewis and L. J. Turner. (4)

Against the amendment: Councillors D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, R. A. Clarke, B. T. Cooper, R. L. Dent, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, J. A. Ruck, C. R. Scurrill, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (19)

Abstentions: Councillors C. J. Bloore ,M. T. Buxton, L.C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, E. M. Shannon, S. P. Shannon and C. J. K. Wilson (9)

The Chairman declared the amendment to be lost.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 - 2017/18.

For the recommendations: Councillors D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, R. A. Clarke, B. T. Cooper, R. L. Dent P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, J. A. Ruck, C. R. Scurrill, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor, M. J. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker (19)

Against the recommendations: Councillors S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, B. Lewis and L. J. Turner (4).

Abstentions: Councillors C. J. Bloore, M. T. Buxton, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, E. M. Shannon, S. P. Shannon and C. J. K. Wilson (9)

RESOLVED:

(a) that the following revenue bids be approved:

2015/16 – 2017/18

£30,000 in relation to providing financial support under the Essential Living Fund Framework

2015/16

£23,000 in relation to providing support to economic development projects to be funded from the income received from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Business Rates Pool;

- (b) that the unavoidable pressures as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved as follows:

2015/16 - £380,000
2016/17 – Nil
2017/18 - £45,000;

- (c) that the savings as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report be approved as follows:

2015/16 - £547,000
2016/17 - £222,000
2017/18 - £25,000;

- (d) that the Council Tax be frozen for 2015/16 and the net position of £63,000 be released from balances in 2015/16;

- (e) that 25% of the New Homes Bonus Grant be allocated to the NHB Scheme, with the 25% to be based on the District Council grant which will be received in 2015/16 which is attributable solely to the increase in funding from that received in 2014/15. This will equate to £87,000;

- (f) that £87,000 be released from balances to fund the New Homes Bonus Community Scheme; and

- (g) that the following be released from balances:

2016/17 - £59,000
2017/18 - £582,000

- (h) that in relation to the freeze in Council Tax the following be released from balances:

2016/17 - £136,000
2017/18 - £137,000

- (i) that the Capital Programme be approved as follows:

2015/16 - £712,000
2016/17 - £573,000
2017/18 - £822,000

- (j) that the Pay Policy as attached at Appendix 2 to the report (dated 25th February 2015) be approved.

79\14 **TO SET THE COUNCIL TAX FOR 2015/16**

Members received a report of the Executive Director , Finance and Corporate Resources with regard to the setting of the Council Tax for 2015/16.

Having been moved by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor D. W. P. Booth, it was

RESOLVED that the recommendations as set out as an appendix to these minutes, setting a Council tax for 2015/16 of £200.24 for a Band D unparished property be approved.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) regulations 2014, a named vote was taken on the setting of the Council Tax for 2015/16.

For the recommendations: Councillors S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, M. T. Buxton, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. L. Dent, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, J. A. Ruck, C. R. Scurrrell, E. M. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor, L. J. Turner, M. J. A. Webb, P. J. Whittaker and C. J. K. Wilson (32)

80\14 **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 3RD DECEMBER 2014, 7TH JANUARY 2015 AND 4TH FEBRUARY 2015**

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 3rd December 2014, 7th January 2015 and 4th February 2015 were received for information.

81\14 **REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

Members attention was drawn to a report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for Worcestershire District Councils setting out its recommendations to Bromsgrove District Council arising from its review of Members Allowances for 2015/16.

The Leader reported that the issues had been discussed with other Group Leaders and it was proposed by Councillor M. A. Sherrey and seconded by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Council has regard to the report and Recommendations of the IRP and accepts the recommendations relating to travel, subsistence and dependent carer's allowances (paragraphs 3-5 of the Panel's recommendations);
- (b) that the recommendation relating to Parish Councils in the District be noted;

- (c) that the recommendation relating to Basic allowances be not agreed and that the Council continues to pay a basic allowance of £4,326 per annum for 2015-16;
- (d) that the recommendations relating to Special Responsibility allowances be not agreed , but continue at the current level for 2015-16, with the following exceptions:
 - (i) that having considered carefully the recommendations of the IRP, the Special Responsibility allowance for the Chairman of Licensing Committee be based on the multiplier recommended by the Panel but using the current basic allowance for the Council. This results in an allowance of £1,298, a reduction of £4,326;
 - (ii) that a new Special Responsibility allowance be introduced from the 2015-16 financial year for Leaders of political groups with 4 or more Members. This allowance to be based on the IRP's proposed multiplier and using the current basic allowance as a basis. This would result in a payment of £1, 082 per annum per leader. The current allowance for the Leader of the largest Opposition Party elected at the ballot box to remain. The Leader of this party and the Leader of the Council will not be entitled to claim both allowances for the Group Leader positions.
- (e) that the Council's Members Allowances Scheme for 2015-16 be updated to take account of the changes referred to above.

82\14 **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

There were no questions on notice.

83\14 **MOTION - TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP**

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor C. J. Bloore:

“ Council recognises that the future of the town centre and its regeneration is one of the most important challenges facing this Council.

Council recognises the important role of local small and medium sized businesses play in the future of our town centre and the economic development of Bromsgrove.

Council believes that a successful town centre and improved local economic activity can only be achieved by working together with local businesses and the public.

Council resolves to establish a Town Centre Partnership with immediate effect including a voting membership made up of elected members, the relevant Portfolio Holder and at least four representatives from local business and community organisations. The Council members forming part of the Town

Centre Partnership will be representative of the political balance of the Council.

Council further resolves that the remit of the Town Centre Partnership will be to recommend, consider and monitor the strategy, plans and progress of the Council in respect of all matters relating to the Town Centre economy and regeneration.

Council agrees to make the necessary delegations to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Group Leaders and Portfolio Holder to implement the required constitutional and/or democratic changes to bring about the Town Centre Partnership as set out.”

The motion was moved by Councillor Bloore and seconded by Councillor E. J. Murray.

In proposing the motion Councillor Bloore referred to the importance of small and medium businesses to the local economy and of the need for good communication between this Council and representatives of those businesses and community organisations within the Town Centre. This approach was supported by other Members and reference was made of a similar Town Centre group which had existed previously.

Councillor R. L. Dent as Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre reported that there was a significant level of interest in the various development sites within the Town Centre and that a report with options for the future would be considered by the Cabinet shortly.

A number of Members expressed the view that whilst there was some merit in the idea behind the Notice of Motion, without clear terms of reference such a Group would be likely to be ineffective and may result in delays to the Town Centre project as a whole.

On a requisition under Council procedure 17.7, the following details of the voting were recorded:

For the motion: Councillors S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, M. T. Buxton, S. R. Colella, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, E. M. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, L. J. Turner and C. J. K. Wilson (13)

Against the motion: Councillors D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, R. A. Clarke, R. L. Dent, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, C. R. Scurrall, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor and M. J. A. Webb (16)

Abstentions: Councillors B. T. Cooper and J. A. Ruck (2)

The Chairman declared the Motion to be lost.

84\14 **MOTION - PLANNING**

Members considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett:

“Council is deeply concerned about the state of planning operations and strategy at Bromsgrove District Council.

Council calls on Cabinet to urgently review the steps and measures in place to improve the performance of our planning responsibilities and to put in place and share with all Members key milestones and actions to redress the present issues.”

The motion was moved by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett and seconded by Councillor C. J. Bloore.

In proposing the motion Councillor Mallett referred to the recent performance of the Council’s Planning Department in failing to meet planning decision target dates, which had resulted in the action of the Department of Communities and Local Government to place the Department into “special measures”. Councillor Mallett stated this would impact upon the Council’s ability to determine major planning applications within the District. During debate Members referred to perceived issues in respect of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan. There was concern expressed at arrangements for accommodating Planning officers which meant the majority were not based at Bromsgrove.

Councillor C. B. Taylor acknowledged that there had been some difficulties and that whilst an overall better service was being delivered to the public, the revised working procedures had unfortunately resulted in some target dates not being achieved.

Councillor Taylor refuted comments made in respect of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan which was going through the normal process as required by the Local Plan Inspector. He also confirmed that there were Planning Department staff based in Bromsgrove every day.

On a requisition under Council procedure 17.5, the following details of the voting were recorded:

For the motion: Councillors S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, M. T. Buxton, S. R. Colella, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, E. M. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, L. J. Turner and C. J.K. Wilson (13)

Against the motion: Councillors D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, R. A. Clarke, B. T. Cooper, R. L. Dent, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, J. A. Ruck, C. R. Scurrall, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor, and M. J. A. Webb (18)

The Chairman declared the motion to be lost.

85\14

MOTION - WORCESTERSHIRE ACUTE HOSPITALS TRUST

(Councillors, D. W. P. Booth, J. R. Boulter, J.S. Brogan and P. Lammas left the room during the consideration of this Notice of Motion)

Members considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor P. Lammas.

In the event the motion was proposed by Councillor R. J. Laight and seconded by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett.

The Council is becoming increasingly concerned at the recent events at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust including:

- the mass resignation of all the consultants in the Accident and Emergency Department at the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch;
- the Trust declaring “a level four “ – one down from a major incident;
- an expected £28 million deficit in January; and
- reports of bullying

Council endorses the action taken by the Leader of the Council in writing to the NHS Trust Development Authority in requesting they carry out an independent investigation into these recent developments as described above at the Alexandra Hospital.

In view of the importance of the Alexandra Hospital to the communities represented by Bromsgrove District council and given the above concerns it is requested that an urgent meeting is held with the Secretary of State for Health to discuss the option for University Hospitals Birmingham Foundation Trust or other Trust being allowed to deliver services from the Alex be investigated.

Following a debate the Chairman declared the Motion to be carried.

The meeting closed at 9.15 p.m.

Chairman