

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 2ND APRIL 2008, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP (during Minute No's 166/07 to 170/07), G. N. Denaro, Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E., R. D. Smith, Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP, M. J. A. Webb (during Minute No's 162/07 to 170/07) and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor C. R. Scurrall.

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mr. H. Bennett, Mr. M. Bell, Mrs C. Felton, Mr. J. Godwin, Mr. D. Hammond, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. J. Pitman and Ms. R. Cole.

159/07 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

160/07 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor G. N. Denaro declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 (Parish Plans) as a member of Wythall Parish Council.

Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E. declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 (Parish Plans) as a member of Wythall Parish Council.

Councillor Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 as a member of Alvechurch Parish Council.

Councillor R. Hollingworth declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 as a member of Alvechurch Parish Council.

Councillor Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 as a member of Clent Parish Council

Councillor P. J. Whittaker declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 as a member of Tutnall and Cobley Parish Council.

The above declarations were made immediately prior to discussion on the relevant agenda item.

161/07 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 5th March 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved and adopted as a correct record.

162/07 **AUDIT COMMISSION - ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER**

The Leader welcomed the Council's Audit Commission Relationship Manager Gary Stevens to the meeting. Mr Stevens then presented the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.

The report included a summary of all audit work undertaken throughout the year together with the Council's Direction of Travel assessment which had taken place in November 2007. Mr Stevens acknowledged that because of the reporting timescales it was inevitable that the report could not fully reflect the latest situation. It was felt that the report did however fairly reflect the improvement which had been made and reinforced the issues which still required to be fully addressed.

The Leader thanked Mr. Stevens for the work undertaken and the helpful and positive approach adopted which had been of assistance to officers and members.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the report be received and the contents noted;
- (b) that the recommendations from the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter be incorporated into the updated Improvement Plan to be considered in July 2008.

163/07 **SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 4th March 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

164/07 **AUDIT BOARD**

The minutes of the Audit Board held on 17th March 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be noted.

165/07 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The minutes of the Performance Management board held on 18th March 2008 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the minutes of the meeting be noted;
- (b) that the recommendation in relation to the inclusion of Disabled Facilities Grants as one of the Council's Corporate Indicators be approved but that the Board be requested to suggest how performance on this could be measured;
- (c) that it be noted that it was intended that further consideration would be given to identifying "key " issues.

166/07 **REFUSE AND RECYCLING SCRUTINY REPORT**

The Cabinet considered recommendations made by the Scrutiny Steering Board based on the report of the Task Group set up to scrutinise issues relating to Refuse and Recycling. The Leader welcomed the Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor C. R. Scurrrell to the meeting. Councillor Scurrrell briefly introduced the report and highlighted some key points. He also thanked all officers and members who had contributed to the scrutiny process.

There was detailed discussion on the recommendations contained within the report and on some general principles in relation to the production of Task Group reports. There was also discussion on some additional work which it was hoped that the Task Group would be willing to undertake. The report was welcomed as a very good report and the Leader thanked Councillor Scurrrell and the Task Group members together with the officers for their hard work.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that in relation to Recommendation 1 (NVQ Training for the Existing Workforce), NVQ Training in Waste Management from the Waste Management Industry Training Advisory Board via NEW College be given to all refuse and recycling staff over a two year period commencing in September 2008 with the following conditions:
 - Standards for "performance criteria" and "knowledge requirements" specific to this Council be built into the awards;
 - The preferred primary assessment method being observation (rather than witness testimonies or personal statements);and
 - Performance criteria being observed consistently over a certain time period rather than as a one-off;
- (b) that in relation to Recommendation 2 (NVQ Training for New Employees), it be made a requirement for all new employees to either hold the NVQ in Waste Management or to achieve it within an agreed timeframe;
- (c) that in relation to Recommendation 3 (NVQ Training for Team Leaders), the following NVQ training be given to the three Refuse and Recycling Team Leaders
 - Team Leading in Refuse and Recycling via NEW College
 - Business Improvement Techniques via Resource Development International

(It was understood that items (a), (b) and (c) above would be referred to the Head of Human Resources and the Portfolio Holder for Street Scene and Waste Management for discussions on how the training could be best included in the Training Plan)

- (d) that in relation to Recommendation 4 (Commingled Recycling Service), the Street Scene and Waste Management officers be requested to monitor the progress which Worcestershire County Council is making in relation to building their own sorting plant by 2009, as this will enable a commingled recycling service to be launched (making it easier to recycle and likely to encourage more recycling) and therefore significantly improve this Council's recycling rates;
- (e) that in relation to Recommendation 5 (Recycling Additional Materials), Street Scene and Waste Management officers be requested to continue to encourage Worcestershire County Council Officers to investigate recycling more materials through the Waste Management Forum);
- (f) that in relation to Recommendation 6 (Benchmarking), Street Scene and Waste Management officers be requested to continue to regularly and systematically benchmark against the top 10-15 local authorities in the recycling league table which are achieving higher recycling rates, with a view to adapting any parts of their services to Bromsgrove which may prove successful in helping to increase recycling rates;
- (g) that in relation to Recommendation 7 (Expanding the Recycling Service), Street Scene and Waste Management officers be requested to continually investigate ways in which the Council can expand the recycling service to reach the remaining 6% of the District;
- (h) that in relation to Recommendation 8 (Eco-School Programme), in order to educate as many children as possible to take responsibility for the future of their own environment and encourage more recycling throughout the District, Street Scene and Waste Management officers be requested to continue to encourage all schools to join the Eco-School programme, particularly primary schools;
- (i) that in relation to Recommendation 9 (Incentive Schemes), Street Scene and Waste Management officers be requested to keep up to date with developments of the Defra pilot incentive scheme and when the results are known, the option of introducing such a scheme be investigated further;
- (j) that in relation to Recommendation 10 (Consultation), the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be requested to make certain there is through consultation with local residents with regard to the green bin charging arrangements due to be put in place. Effective communication will help ensure smooth implementation of the charging system which should avoid a reduction in customer service standards;
- (k) that in relation to Recommendation 11 (Communication with Local Residents), communication with local residents should be increased wherever possible to encourage reducing, reusing and recycling. For example, ensuring local residents are aware they can request more recycling boxes free of charge;
- (l) that in relation to Recommendation 12 (Collection Arrangements) the Task Group be requested to reconsider the proposal to request officers to consider trialling wheelie bin stickers instead of calendars as it was

- felt that the calendars were very popular with residents as an easily accessible source of information on dates of collections and there appeared to be little evidence that a change to wheelie bin stickers would be welcomed;
- (m) that in relation to Recommendation 13 (Member and Parish Council Training), training/information sessions be arranged to inform Members of the history of the service, where the Council is at present and plans to progress the service in future, to ensure members have a sound knowledge of Street Scene and Waste Management Services to pass on to local residents and that Members of Parish Councils also be invited to attend these sessions;
 - (n) that in relation to Recommendation 14 (Member Updates), updates relating to the refuse and recycling service be included in Members' Bulletins;
 - (o) that in relation to Recommendation 15 (Vehicle Tracking and Communication System), the Head of Street Scene and Waste Management be requested to further investigate the effectiveness of various vehicle tracking and communications systems with a view to trialling a model in the future;
 - (p) that the Scrutiny Steering Board be requested to ask the Task Group to undertake further work in more depth on a value for money analysis of the whole service. This work should also include the current situation of the service in relation to where it was intended to be at this stage and how any gaps identified in the service can be met;
 - (q) that the Scrutiny Steering Board be requested to ensure that in future, Scrutiny recommendations are prioritised as being of low, medium or high priority as it will often be impossible for officers to implement all recommendations at the same time;
 - (r) that the Scrutiny Steering Board be requested to ensure that sections are included in Scrutiny reports setting out (i) recommendations involving officer actions which are already being undertaken but which the Task Group wishes to see continued and (ii) issues which were considered by the Task Group but which did not form part of the final recommendations;
 - (s) that the Scrutiny Steering Board be requested to ensure that account is taken of the opportunity costs of certain recommendations which may not appear to have a direct cost but may have a significant cost in terms of officer time and may therefore result in work on other issues being delayed particularly when a large number of recommendations are involved;
 - (t) that officers be requested to consider further how "key" scrutiny recommendations can be defined and then possibly included within the Improvement Planning process so that progress can be monitored in line with Council priorities.

167/07 **ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2006/07**

Consideration was given to the Annual External Audit Report 2006/07 issued by the Council's former External Auditor (KPMG LLP). The report related to

the findings from work undertaken by the External Auditors as part of the 2006/07 Audit and Inspection Plan. The report acknowledged clear improvements in a number of areas including the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget monitoring arrangements. The report also contained recommendations for further actions and a management response had been included for each of the recommendations. Following Discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Annual External Audit Report for 2006/07 be noted; and
- (b) that the management responses to the recommendations in the Annual External Audit Report for 2006/07 be endorsed and that officers be requested to include these issues in the new Improvement Plan as appropriate; and
- (c) that thanks be expressed to KPMG LLP and in particular to Mr. A. Cardoza for the assistance they had provided.

168/07 **IMPROVEMENT PLAN EXCEPTION REPORT (JANUARY 2008)**

Consideration was given to the updated Improvement Plan Exception Report for January 2008 together with the corrective action being taken.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the revisions to the Improvement Plan Exception Report and the corrective action being taken be noted;
- (b) that it be noted that of the 140 actions highlighted within the Plan for January 2008, 84.3% of the Plan was on target (green), 11.4% was one month behind (amber) and 1.4% was over one month behind (red). 2.9% of actions had been rescheduled or suspended with approval.

169/07 **COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT RE-CATEGORISATION REQUEST**

Consideration was given to a report on the possibility of the Council submitting a request for a further Comprehensive Performance Assessment to be undertaken in November 2008 with the aim of achieving a rating of either Fair or Good. The draft letter attached as an appendix to the report set out the reasons for making such a request but it was reported that this required slight updating. Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that a request be submitted to the Audit Commission for a further Comprehensive Performance Assessment to be undertaken in November 2008 and that the letter attached as an appendix to the report be updated to form the basis of this request.

170/07 **PARISH PLANS**

Consideration was given to a report on the methodology to be used for the integration and adoption of Parish Plans within the district wide Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Development Framework. Reference was also made to discussions on this issue which had taken place at a recent meeting of the Parish Council Forum. It was recognised that Parish Plans could

provide a valuable source of local information that could inform the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and integrate with or supplement the Local Development Framework. It was felt however that further consideration may be required in relation to the procedure to be followed in relation to formally recognising Parish Plans and it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that authority to finalise the methodology for the integration of Parish Plans within the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Development Framework be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder; and
- (b) that following the finalisation of the process referred to above, a twelve week period of consultation be undertaken within this Authority, the Local Strategic Partnership, Community First/County Association of Local Councils and the County Council.

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

Chairman