

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 5TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. A. Sherrey (Leader), C. B. Taylor (Deputy Leader),
M. A. Bullivant, R. L. Dent and M. J. A. Webb

Observers: Councillors H. J. Jones, E. J. Murray and L. C. R. Mallett

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Ms. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. J. Willis, Ms.
A. De Warr, Mrs. S. Sellers, Mr. D. Allen, Mr. I. Roberts and Ms. R. Cole.

41/14 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D. W. P. Booth.

42/14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

43/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1st October 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1st October 2014 be approved as a correct record.

44/14 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 13th October 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 14th October 2014 be noted.

45/14 **WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the Worcestershire Shared Services Committee held on 2nd October 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

(a) that Recommendation 11 of the of the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services Scrutiny Task Group be approved as recommended by the

Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee in Minute No. 16/14;
and

- (b) that the remainder of the minutes be noted.

46/14

DODFORD, HAGLEY AND BEOLEY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

The Cabinet considered a report on the consultation which had been undertaken in respect of draft Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in respect of Dodford, Hagley and Beoley. It was reported that in respect of Dodford and Beoley boundary extensions had also been included within the consultation process.

Members felt that the report and accompanying detailed documents were clear and well presented and when in place would be a helpful tool to protect and enhance these areas.

It was noted that responses to the consultations had revealed broad support for all three of the Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. It was suggested that revisions to boundaries of both Dodford and Beoley had produced sufficient comment to warrant a further review of the proposed boundaries followed by a further consultation to consider the outcome.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the Hagley Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be approved and its contents be noted as a material consideration for planning purposes; and
- (b) that further reviews be undertaken of the boundaries of the Dodford and Beoley Conservation Areas and that should the reviews suggest further alterations to the boundaries of Dodford or Beoley, then further public consultation be carried out.

47/14

DISPOSAL OF COUNCIL OWNED LAND - AINTREE CLOSE/LINGFIELD WALK CATSHILL

The Cabinet considered a report on the proposed transfer of Council-owned land at Lingfield Walk/Aintree Close, Catshill, which was currently leased to a local Scouts Group, to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust. It was reported that BDHT would intend to develop a proposal for the erection of 14 one bedroom flats using this land and other adjacent land in the Trust's ownership.

It was noted that in exchange for the land at Lingfield Walk/Aintree Close it was proposed that BDHT would transfer to this Council an alternative local site at Woodrow Lane, Catshill and before transfer would fund the cost of a new Scout Hut to be constructed on the land, which this Council would then lease to the Scout Group.

There was detailed discussion on the proposal and Members noted that it was the intention that the new facility, which had been welcomed by the Scouts both locally and regionally, would be available to other local groups and

organisations within the Community. It was also noted that officers felt that best value was being achieved in respect of the proposal.

It was recognised that if successful, the proposal would enable BDHT to deliver additional affordable housing to meet locally identified priorities and would provide a new building to meet the needs of the Scouts.

It was noted that the proposal had direct links to the Council's Strategic purposes:

- Help me to find somewhere to live in my locality;
- Provide good things for me to see, do and visit;
- Help me to run a successful business

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the transfer of land at Lingfield Walk/Aintree Close to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust in exchange for land at Woodrow Lane together with a new Scout Hut building to be constructed on the site by Bromsgrove District Housing Trust be approved;
- (b) that delegated authority be given to the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources and the Head of Legal, Equality and Democratic Services, to undertake all necessary financial and legal steps to implement the land exchange, terminate the existing lease with the Scouts and enter into a new lease for the new Scout Hut.

48/14

GATEWAY SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - PROVISION OF HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT

Members considered a report on the receipt of £11,200 from Worcestershire County Council to be used for the purposes of funding, at District level, a service for young people who approach the Authority with housing needs. It was noted that the funding was on a one year basis at present subject to further review.

It was reported that officers had worked with the County Council, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust and St Basils to develop a proposed Gateway Service for young people which would provide crisis and emergency support to 16 - 23 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The proposal involved supplementing the County Council funding with funding from this Council (£3,000 to be met from existing budgets) and St Basils (£6,000) to meet the cost of a Gateway officer for one year at this stage who would operate within the BDHT Housing Options Team and work closely with Children's Services and other referring agencies.

Members welcomed the proposal and the partnership working, which it was felt would make the best use of the funding available and provide an opportunity to prevent homelessness and improve housing options for young people.

RECOMMENDED that this Council accepts the sum of £11,200 from Worcestershire County Council and that this funding be utilised to meet part of the cost of the provision of a Gateway Service for 16 – 23 year olds as set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that this Council supports the provision of a Gateway Service with the allocation of funding from existing budgets of up to £3,000; and
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Head of Community Services to finalise negotiations with St Basils in respect of the establishment of the Gateway Service and to enter into any related agreements.

49/14

**COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME - DRAFT REGULATIONS
CONSIDERED FOR FURTHER CONSULTATION**

The Cabinet considered a report which gave details of the outcome of the recent public consultation on possible changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and requested Members to consider any subsequent changes to the Scheme.

Officers and Members referred briefly to the background to this matter which was set out fully within the report and the need to address the potential funding gap for this Council of approximately £45,000 for 2015/16. It was noted that Worcestershire County Council had indicated their intention, if necessary, to again “claw back” from this Council any shortfall to cover their funding gap through reductions in funding for the Essential Living Fund and other services as they had done in the previous year.

Members were reminded that Local Council Tax Schemes are required to protect pensionable age claimants and to incentivise work for working age claimants.

Details were given of the preliminary public consultation which had been undertaken between 1st September and 10th October 2014. This had included statutory consultation with major preceptors and other stakeholders and a full public consultation setting out possible options for change and requesting views on the various options.

The public consultation had included an online survey open to all residents and a direct mailshot to 6,352 households. Checks had been made to ensure that the proportion of Local Council Tax Claimants within the sample was representative of the District as a whole. It was noted that 491 responses had been received from members of the public.

Officers also drew attention to responses received from Worcestershire County Council, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust and the Chair of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust’s Tenants Panel.

The full results of the public consultation as included within Appendix 1 of the report were noted.

Members attention was also drawn to the recent Supreme Court Judgement given on 29th October 2014 which considered the manner and nature of statutory consultation regarding changes to Council Tax Support Schemes. Full details had been included in the supplementary report to Cabinet. It was reported that as a result of the judgement, the statutory consultation with interested parties referred to in section 3.42 of the report, would now include a mailshot to all current working age Council Tax Support Scheme claimants.

In addition, it was proposed that the consultation include possible alternative options for the Council to absorb the shortfall in its budgets, such as raising Council Tax, reducing Council services and using the compensatory savings to fund Council Tax Support or a combination of the two options.

Cabinet welcomed the receipt of the Supreme Court judgement which had helped to clarify a complex legal situation and would enable this Council to amend details of the proposed statutory consultation process in respect of the Draft Scheme accordingly.

Members then considered the options for change to the Council Tax Support Scheme as set out in Appendix 3 to the report and recognised the potential impact of changes on those working age residents who are on a low income. It was noted that officers would be working to use a range of options available to provide transitional support including the setting up of a small Hardship Fund.

Members also noted the tight timetable for consideration of the Scheme which had to be finalised and published by 31st January 2015. Due to the work required to prepare the regulations and guidance, the Scheme was required to be agreed in early January 2015.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the outcome of the initial statutory consultation on options for changes to the Local Council Tax Scheme be noted;
- (b) that the current Scheme be amended as follows:
 - (i) entitlement to Council Tax Support be capped at 80% of Council Tax liability so that all working age claimants will pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax liability;
 - (ii) the provision of second adult rebate be removed; and
 - (iii) non-dependents' income be taken into account
- (c) that authority be delegated to the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support to carry out the next phase of consultation on the Draft Scheme;
- (d) that authority be delegated to the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support to develop a Hardship Fund Policy to provide transitional support for liable persons assessed to be in financial hardship as a result of the changes to Local Tax Support; and

- (e) that in relation to uprating, it be noted that this will apply regardless of any other changes made under (b) above, and that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support to incorporate the necessary changes to bring uprating into effect into the Scheme.

(In view of the response of the Worcestershire County Council which was included as an Appendix to the report Councillor C. B. Taylor requested that it be noted that he was also a Member of that Authority.)

50/14

FEES AND CHARGES 2015/2016

The Cabinet considered a report on proposed Fees and Charges in respect of a variety of Council Services for 2015/16. It was noted that in general the overall increase was 3% although this did vary between services and some charges such as for Licensing were set at a national level. It was noted that it was proposed that some charges, such as those for Car Parks, remained at the current level.

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor M. J. A. Webb drew attention to the current proposal to increase the Garden Waste Collection Service to £38 per annum. As part of the previous Medium Term Financial Plan it had been agreed to increase the cost to £45 per annum as from March 2015. Councillor Webb referred to charges made by neighbouring Authorities for a similar service which were significantly higher in some cases.

It was reported that officers had subsequently given further consideration to the significant number of additional customers who had taken up the service with the current level of 19,700 increasing by 2,400 from previous years, together with an appropriate fee level to be met by customers and therefore the proposed fee had been revised to £38 per annum. It was noted that this would result in a shortfall of estimated income projected in the current financial year of £7,000 which could be met from existing budgets within Environmental Services. The full year effect of the reduction in 2015/16 was estimated at £63,000 and this would need to be addressed as part of the savings to be delivered during the budget process for 2015/16.

The Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources referred to the proposal within the report that the increases in fees and charges be implemented from 1st January 2015. On further reflection officers felt it was more appropriate and more beneficial to the Community as a whole for the implementation date to be 1st April 2015.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the fees and charges as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved and be implemented from 1st April 2015;

- (b) that the shortfall in income for 2014/15 of £7,000 as a result of the reduction in the Garden Waste Collection charge, be met from existing budgets within Environmental Services; and
- (c) that officers be requested to address any resulting shortfall in income from the Garden Waste Collection service for 2015/16 – 2017/18, estimated at £63,000 per annum, when considering the levels of savings to be made as part of the budget process.

51/14

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2015/16 - 2017/18

Members considered a report containing the current summary budget position for 2015/16 – 2017/18 which was at present showing a shortfall of £676,000 for 2015/16. The report also contained details of the costs associated with the Council's strategic purposes.

The Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources informed Members that information on costs associated with each of the Council's strategic purposes together with costs for enabling services had been included in the appendices to the report. Officers would be using this type of information to suggest alternative ways of delivering savings.

It was reported that this was part of the continuing process of Transformation and would enable both the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board to look at the costs associated with meeting a strategic purpose across a number of Council Services. The relevant measures would be brought to Members so that these could inform the value of the expenditure against the demand for the service by the community. It was intended to focus on the purpose of services to the community and to realise savings whilst protecting those services that create value for residents.

The Cabinet were requested to determine any areas which they wished to consider in more detail over the forthcoming months, and to raise these with the Chief Executive or the Executive Directors in the first instance .

Members appreciated that this was a more transparent and effective approach to examining costs and determining the value provided by services.

RESOLVED that the costs associated with delivery of strategic purposes be noted and that officers be requested to work on the Medium Term Financial Plan to realise savings and additional income to meet the projected shortfall.

The meeting closed at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman

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