

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**25TH SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), C. J. Bloore, B. T. Cooper, R. J. Laight (Present from Minute No. 43/14 to Minute No 45/14), P. Lammas, R. J. Shannon, C. J. Spencer, C. J. Tidmarsh and L. J. Turner (Substituting for Councillor S. R. Colella)

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. R. Savory, Ms L. Jones, Mr M. Ashcroft, Ms. J. Bayley and Ms. A. Scarce

43/14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors J. S. Brogan, S. R. Colella, H. J. Jones and S. P. Shannon.

Councillor L. Turner confirmed that he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Colella.

44/14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

45/14 **TOWN CENTRE - UPDATE PRESENTATION**

The Town Centre Regeneration Programme Manager presented an update on the second phase of the town centre redevelopment (Appendix 1).

During presentation of this update the following key points were discussed:

- The impact of The Co-operative's lease of a unit in the Birmingham Road Retail Park on the future introduction of a Sainsbury's supermarket at that location and the significant role of Sainsbury's in the overall redevelopment of the town centre.
- The inclusion of break clauses in the leases for The Co-operative and new What store. Members were advised that break clauses would have to have been negotiated between parties, though the content of those clauses were private.
- The completion of High Street works using sources of funding not derived from the Section 106 for the Sainsbury's development.
- The impact of development on the Birmingham Road / Stourbridge Road junction. Members were advised that the works required at the junction would depend on the scale of the development that eventually took place.

- The impact of the opening of Parkside on traffic at the same junction. Officers explained that the majority of staff would be required to park in external car parks and this would help to limit traffic at the junction. However, concerns were expressed about the safety of increasing numbers of pedestrians at that junction.
- The deadline for use of Section 106 funding provided by the health centre at Parkside.
- The sale of the car park on Birmingham Road, the potential loss of car parking revenue and the impact on the value of the property. Officers assured Members that the Council took advice from the District Valuer and would require their support to proceed with any proposals.
- The Area Action Plan permitted a mixed use development on Windsor Street, comprising both retail and residential units. The site was being advertised for development and decisions would be made on the exact mix based on the proposals received from developers though the Council was obliged to achieve best value in any final outcome.
- The commitment of the Council to a move to Parkside, with the majority of shared services based at Redditch Town Hall. Officers confirmed that as the agreement had been reached with partners and significant progress made developing the site it would not be appropriate to withdraw from Parkside at this stage.
- There was a covenant on Parkside which required the building to be used as office space and for other services provided by partners, such as the library. Alternative uses of the site were therefore unlikely to be acceptable. Officers suggested that further information about Parkside could be circulated by email after the meeting if required.
- The changes to the recreation ground, which would comprise enhancement works rather than redevelopment. The ground was recognised as being a useful community asset, though significant investment was required to make it more appealing to the public.
- Progress with the development at the Recreation Road site. Officers confirmed that all of the significant milestones had been met and that planning permission would be required to progress further.
- The withdrawal of OPUS from the development of Hanover Street Car Park. The potential tenants and end users remained committed to the development.
- The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had approved the bid from OPUS for £700,000 towards the development on Hanover Street. It had been intended that this funding would be used to support the costs associated with a cinema build and fit out. The cinema operator remained committed to introducing a cinema in Bromsgrove.
- Members were advised that OPUS did not have exclusive rights in relation to any of the potential tenants and that the food retailer did not require the cinema to proceed.
- The introduction of a cinema would have positive implications for the night time economy in particular.
- Officers were in the process of meeting with representatives of the Council's procurement and legal teams to discuss future development options at the site. However, the timeframes for the options could not be confirmed.

- Officers had been formally advised by OPUS that they intended to withdraw on Friday 12th September. However, there had been a delay in communicating this information to elected Members until the return of the Chief Executive from annual leave to enable officers to start to work through the options that could be explored in the future.
- A new housing development had previously been considered for the Hanover Street site. Officers confirmed that this option could be reconsidered alongside other options.
- Options for the rerouting of the brook would also be considered.
- The plans for George House, which remained to be clarified.
- Deliveries in the town centre and the introduction of a gate to restrict access. The gate would be operated remotely once it was connected to the system.
- Use of the High Street as a thoroughfare by cyclists, despite the fact that cycling was not permitted, and the safety implications for pedestrians.
- Snagging works would continue, particularly on the highways, to complete any outstanding works or works which appeared to be unfinished.
- The intention not to undertake any treatment of the natural stone used on paving on the advice of contractors and the equipment available to clean the paving surfaces.
- Officers confirmed that the item had been removed from the Cabinet Work Programme. Further approval from Cabinet was not be required until a later stage.

The Chairman suggested that it would be useful for the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre and Regeneration to attend the next meeting of the Board to comment on the proposals and to answer any questions from Members on the subject. The Board could also discuss progress with the procurement process for the Hanover Street development at the same time.

**RESOLVED** that

1. the procurement process for the Hanover Street development be discussed at the following meeting of the Board;
2. the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre and Regulatory Services be invited to attend the following meeting of the Board; and
3. the report be noted.

46/14

**MAKING EXPERIENCES COUNT QUARTER 1 REPORT**

The Customer Services Manager presented the Making Experiences Count Quarterly Complaints Report covering the period 1st April – 30th June 2014. Members were advised that during the period 25 compliments had been received and 17 complaints. 82 per cent of complaints had been resolved in 15 days or less but 3 cases had taken longer to resolve because they related to complicated issues.

During consideration of the report the following matters were highlighted:

- The number of complaints that had been received about planning applications and whether these had been recorded as complaints about Development Control.
- The type of complaints classified as “other”, which generally consisted of questions.
- The need for compliments and complaints to be logged onto the Council’s complaints management system in order to be reflected in the Council’s official complaints statistics.

**RESOLVED** that

1. the Making Experiences Count report be presented for the Board’s consideration every 6 months in future; and
2. the report be noted.

47/14

**FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 REPORT**

The Executive Director for Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Finance Monitoring Report for the period 1st April – 30th June 2014. The following points were raised during presentation of the report:

- Officers were anticipating that there would be an underspend of £124,000 by the end of 2014/15.
- Estimates for both revenue and capital expenditure were provided to the Finance teams by Heads of Service.
- There had been a decline in revenue from Civil Parking Enforcement as there appeared to be decreasing use of car parking facilities in Bromsgrove town centre.
- There was a projected overspend on refuse and recycling due to major vehicle repairs. The Head of Environmental Services had been asked to determine whether more savings could be achieved in the long-term if the fleets were to be replaced.
- Additional staff had been recruited to work in the Planning Department. Some of the posts were supported by funding that had been obtained from a portion of Council reserves, valued at approximately £180,000 – £200,000, which had been allocated a few years previously to Planning Transformation and shared services costs.
- This reserve had also been used to fund other areas, including additional staff in the Benefits Service and redundancy costs.

Members discussed residents’ preferences when parking in Bromsgrove district. It was noted that residents appeared to prefer to park in car parks where a pay on foot arrangement was in place. This arrangement had not been introduced at every car park in the district, though the Cabinet had agreed the Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group’s recommendation for more pay on foot charging arrangements to be made available in local car parks in the future. Further analysis was needed of parking charges to enable Officers to assess whether certain parking arrangements were appealing more to residents than others. It was suggested that more information could be

recorded in future financial monitoring reports. To ensure that car parking arrangements remained fit for purpose Members agreed that the contents of the Task Group's final report should be revisited as part of a Short Sharp Inquiry exercise.

The Board discussed the style in which the report was presented for Members' consideration. It was noted that the way in which net figures were presented in the report could be confusing for people who were not trained accountants. In order to clarify the content of the reports it was suggested that a similar practice could be adopted to other public sector organisations, including the NHS, which presented both income and expenditure figures in these types of reports. Furthermore, Members suggested that the data provided in the reports would be more meaningful if comparative figures were also provided for the same quarter in previous years.

The report monitored service budgets in relation to predicted expenditure. These predictions were provided by Heads of Services in their profiles for their services for the year ahead. However, their predictions were not always accurate and in some cases significant underspends could arise. A consequence of these inaccurate predictions could include the Council not allocating funding to services or activities that might otherwise have been delivered during the year. There was a risk that there could be consistent underspends for some services within the remit of the same Head of Service year on year. Members agreed that where applicable Heads of Service in future should be invited to attend future meetings of the Board to investigate any reasons for and patterns in underspending on budgets.

The impact of an underspend on the future budget allocated to a service was also discussed. Officers advised that in previous years an underspend would not necessarily result in a reduction in the budget allocated to that service in the following year. However, Finance Officers were in the process of undertaking a line by line review of each budget and it was possible that in future this could lead to a reduction in the budget allocated to a service where underspends had previously been reported.

Members noted that they were considering the report after both Cabinet and Council had already discussed the matter in detail. It was suggested that by that stage the potential for the Board to make a constructive contribution by scrutinising the report was limited. To ensure that Overview and Scrutiny could make a useful contribution to management of the Council's budget in future Members concurred that financial monitoring reports should be presented for the Board's consideration prior to Cabinet.

**RECOMMENDED** that

1. income and expenditure figures should be provided in future Financial Monitoring Reports to provide greater clarity about the Council's budget position in each quarter; and
2. comparative budget data should be provided in the Financial Monitoring Reports for previous years.

**RESOLVED** that

1. the Overview and Scrutiny board receive Finance Monitoring Reports in advance of the Cabinet in future;
2. Heads of Service with services that have consistently reported an underspend over consecutive years should be invited to attend future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board;
3. a Short Sharp Review of car parking arrangements in the district, made up of Members of and taking into account the findings of the Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group; and
4. that the report be noted.

48/14

**WRITE OFF OF DEBTS QUARTER 1 REPORT**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Quarterly Monitoring of Write Offs report for the period 1st April to 30th June 2014. Members were advised that current bad debt provisions were £471,337. There appeared to be higher levels of outstanding debt than during the same period the previous year. However, in part this was due to the fact that invoices for garden waste payments had been issued later in the year than in 2013/14.

Members noted that the Board had previously requested that Appendix 3 to the report, detailing Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates arrears, should be presented in a slightly different format. In particular, Members had been keen for comparable data for previous years and percentages to be provided in the report. Unfortunately these amendments had not been made for this edition of the report.

**RESOLVED** that

1. percentages in respect of unrecoverable debts and comparative data for the same quarter in previous years should be included in future editions of the Quarterly Write Offs report; and
2. the report be noted.

49/14

**YOUTH PROVISION TASK GROUP FINAL REPORT - 12 MONTH REVIEW**

The Board considered the 12 month review of progress that had been made delivering the recommendations that had been made by the Youth Provision Task Group in September 2013. Members noted that, as suggested by the Task Group, a possible investigation of services available to young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) had been added to the Board's Work Programme, though no decision had been taken as to whether to undertake a review of this subject. It was suggested that as this would be touched on by the Leisure Provision Task Group no decision should be taken until the group's report had been considered by the Board.

The youth club at Stoke Prior was also briefly discussed. Members noted that the club was relatively popular and parents had confidence that their children

would be safe. Traditional activities could be accessed at the youth club and these encouraged young people to be active in their community. Members were advised that the Youth Provision Task Group had recognised the value of the youth club in Stoke Prior and had visited the club as part of their investigation.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

50/14

**TASK GROUP PROCEDURE GUIDELINES - REVIEW**

The Chairman explained that following discussion of Task Group procedures at a previous meeting of the Board the guidelines had been updated. Officers had incorporated into the guidelines points raised by Members at that meeting which were designed to improve the procedures. As part of this process the following changes were highlighted:

- The scoping document and checklist for Task Group exercises had been combined.
- Membership requirements for Task Groups, in terms of the number of Members who could sit on any Task Group and how membership would be determined in the event that a topic proved to be popular, had also been addressed.
- An application form had been introduced for Members to complete in order to participate in a Task Group exercise. This form required Members to briefly outline what skills they could bring to a review of the subject and the reasons why they wanted to participate.

Following discussion it was suggested that the guidelines for a Short, Sharp Inquiry should also include that this type of inquiry could also be used following the completion of a Topic Proposal Form should the Board feel that this was more appropriate.

Members were advised that the guidelines did not currently form part of the Council's constitution. It was suggested that the guidelines should be incorporated into the constitution as part of the review of the constitution being carried out by the Constitutional Review Working Party which was due to be completed before the end of the municipal year.

**RESOVLED** that the revised Overview and Scrutiny Task Group and Short, Sharp Inquiry Procedure Guidelines be noted and endorsed subject to the amendments as detailed in the preamble above.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Constitutional Review Working Party that the Task Group / Short, Sharp Inquiry Procedure Guidelines be incorporated into the Council's constitution.

51/14

**WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor B. T. Cooper, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), provided an update on the latest work of the Committee. He explained that he had not been able to

attend the meeting but was aware that two key items had been on the agenda for discussion:

- The Wyre Forest Integrated and Intermediate Care Programme.
- Community Stroke Services in North Worcestershire.

The second key item had clear implications for residents in Bromsgrove district. Since 2013 all stroke services in the county had been concentrated at Worcestershire Royal Hospital. It had emerged that stroke patients living in the south of the county were better served by this arrangement than patients living in the north of the county. For this reason the health service was keen to investigate how services and outcomes could be improved for patients living in North Worcestershire. As part of this process capacity was being monitored to enable the service to determine how many beds were required. This information would be used when installing specialist beds in the Princess of Wales Community Hospital in Bromsgrove.

The current position with regard to the provision of incontinence pads to patients was briefly debated. Councillor Cooper explained that there had been no further updates on this matter. However, he agreed to request an update on behalf of the Board at the following meeting of HOSC.

The future of Acute Hospital services in the county was also discussed. Members noted that a meeting of the Bromsgrove and Redditch Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had taken place that day. A number of proposals were being made and this would be subject to public consultation. HOSC Members from all parties had been critical of the previous consultation process relating to the Acute Hospital Services and they were hoping that improvements would be made during the latest consultation period.

**RESOLVED** that

1. an update be requested regarding the Acute Hospital Services Review and consultation process at the next meeting of HOSC; and
2. the minutes of the previous meeting of HOSC be circulated for the Board's consideration.

52/14

### **ACTION LIST**

The Board considered the latest version of the Overview and Scrutiny Action List. Members were advised that the changes requested to the Write Offs report, as discussed under Minute No. 48/14, would be implemented in time for the second quarter update to the Board. Following her attendance at a meeting of the Board on 15th September the Head of Planning and Regeneration had been asked to provide the further information about Development Control that Members had requested.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.



53/14

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Members noted that, following discussions about the town centre, the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre and Regulatory Services would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Board in October. The Chairman suggested that if they were not available to attend this meeting of the Board an additional meeting might need to be arranged to take place in late October.

Officers advised Members that scrutiny of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership had been postponed until March 2015.

**RESOVLED** that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.

Chairman

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**Town Centre Update Overview and Scrutiny Committee 25 September 2014**

| <b>AAP Ref.</b> | <b>Site</b>                           | <b>Development Site Status</b>  |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| N/A             | New Health Centre                     | Complete  |
| N/A             | New Police Station                    | Complete  |
| TC15            | Birmingham Road /<br>Stourbridge Road | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market testing of interest in Car Park</li> <li>• May present opportunity for comprehensive redevelopment of site</li> <li>• Various developers and end users expressed interest for range of proposals/uses</li> <li>• Impact on Stourbridge Road crossroads would be established and resolved during planning process based on net gain/loss of trips generated</li> </ul>   |
| TC14            | Birmingham Road<br>Retail Park        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-op exercised legal rights under 'Landlord and Tenant Act' and so were granted a 5 year lease, at their request. The new lease has break clauses in it.</li> <li>• Sainsbury cannot start works until Co-op have provided vacant possession or it is facilitated by the break points.</li> <li>• 'The application for the Local has minimal effect on the main store as they provide different customer offers and therefore serve different requirements.'</li> <li>• New What Store creating 40-50 jobs granted similar lease in old Focus store.</li> </ul> |
| TC13            | Windsor Street                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County Council have appointed CBRE to market the site with immediate effect</li> <li>• Marketing will be in line with the Area Action Plan</li> </ul>  |
| TC12            | School Drive                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A development site will be made available following completion of the new Leisure Centre. The exact size and footprint of this resulting site is not yet known</li> <li>• Policy allows for small scale residential, commercial or retail</li> </ul>   |
| TC11            | Parkside                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Library, Council Hub, Register Office, Job Centre and County/District Council offices under construction</li> </ul>  |
| TC10            | Recreation Road                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developer has attended pre-application meeting and is currently working up its full planning submission for a Care Village to include Extra Care, Affordable Retirement Homes in partnership with BDHT, Nursing Home and Dementia Centre</li> </ul>  |
| TC9             | Recreation Ground                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developer will display indicative proposals for upgrade of Recreation Ground as part of public consultation on Recreation Road development</li> </ul>  |
| TC8             | Hanover Street                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet gave approval in March 2014 for Opus to develop Hanover Street Car Park</li> <li>• OPUS have recently advised that they are no longer able to deliver the scheme as originally agreed</li> <li>• Officers are in the process of considering the options for the site going forward</li> <li>• Based on comments received officers believe that there is still a high level of interest on the part of the potential tenants for the development</li> </ul>   |

| <b>TC 4 -Public Realm:</b>                              | <b>Completed Works</b>   |
|---|--|
| High Street<br>(Stratford Road to New Street)           | Drainage repair and redesign to alleviate long standing flooding issues. Complete excavation and reconstruction of High Street, finished with York Stone and Granite Setts, complete with ambient lighting, granite planters and ornamental trees.   |
| High Street South<br>(West Side – New Rd to Hanover St) | Repair of collapsed storm drain and redesign and reinstall of surface drainage to alleviate long standing flooding issues. Lifting old worn setts, laying new sub-base to pavement, finished with new 'Saxon' paving slabs and bollards  |
| Worcester Road<br>(Market Place to Hanover Street)      | Lifting old and worn setts, redefining kerb lines to provide additional street parking. New proud kerbs together with removal of raised carriageway section and new drains to alleviate long standing flooding issues. Laying new sub-base to pavement, finished with new 'Perfecta' paving slabs and bollards   |
| Cleggs Entry  | Lifting old and worn out paving slabs and replacing with new 'Saxon' paving slabs. Cleaned out contaminated tarmac area. Installing new fence to prevent access to recess to eliminate anti-social behaviour, installing additional lighting fittings, upgrading lighting.   |
| Crown Close   | Reconstruction of carriageway and footway to Amphlett Hall and St. John's Church. Installation of new Burma Star memorial. New benches. Soft landscaping and specimen tree planting.   |
| Market Street   | Digging out unsafe terrain outside ASDA Store along Market Street to remove mud and roots. Reconstitution of area with hard landscaping to provide safe pedestrian route. Tree enhancement works. Benches.   |
| ASDA / Market Street Plaza                              | Removal of old unsafe planters and hard landscaping of area to provide open plaza paved with York Stone to improve disabled and general access and line of sight to ASDA, Churchfields Car Pak and Shop Mobility. Installation of Benches and ornamental trees. Landscaping to Car Park boundary wall.   |
| Bus Station   | Landscaping and installation of benches to bus station area. Tree/shrub & bulb planting. Brook enhancements. Drop kerbs.   |
| School Drive  | Complete reconstruction of pavements from Dolphin Centre to North Bromsgrove High School. Carriageway improvements.  |
| School Drive Cycle Path                                 | To improve public safety, removal of hedges and undergrowth, raising of tree canopy. Resurfacing. New LED lighting. Improved signage.  |
| Spadesbourne Brook                                      | Brook clearance/dredging of water course to enhance habitat, improve water flow and mitigate flooding issues Burcot Lane to rear of B'ham Rd Retail Park   |
| Churchfields  | New black top and drop kerbs   |
| Rock Hill   | New black top and reconstructed pavements  |
| New Road  | New black top and drop kerbs   |
| Strand/Stourbridge Road                                 | New black top. Removal of trip hazard broken paving and installation of grassed area with tree planting.   |
| Old Market Street                                       | New black top  |
| <b>TC 4 -Public Realm:</b>                              | <b>Works yet to be done</b>  |
| High Street South                                       | Reconstruction of High Street South (East Side) pavements  |
| High Street Side Streets                                | Reconstruction / resurfacing of streets adjoining High Street – Mill Lane, Church Street, Chapel Walk  |
| Soft landscaping & Public Art                           | In conjunction with Environmental Services identify small areas across town for soft/hard landscaping to create new or enhanced mini green and/or garden areas for seating and tree planting. Seek opportunities to install public art pieces across the Town Centre as part of new Public Art policy; to be drafted as part of Townscape Heritage Initiative. |

Richard Savory 25/09/2014