

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER 2014 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, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, R. L. Dent, S. J. Dudley, K. A. Grant-Pearce, P. A. Harrison, R. Hollingworth, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, E. J. Murray, C. R. Scurrall, E. M. Shannon, R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, C. B. Taylor, C. J. Tidmarsh, L. J. Turner, M. J. A. Webb, P. J. Whittaker and C. J. K. Wilson

47\14 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. A. Clarke, B. T. Cooper and P. Lammas.

48\14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were made:

Item 6 – Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 5th November 2014 (Disposal of Council Owned Land – Aintree Close/Lingfield Walk, Catshill)

Councillor H. J. Jones declared an other disclosable interest as a member of the Executive Committee of the Catshill Scouts Group.

Councillor R. J. Laight declared an other disclosable interest as Chairman of the Bromsgrove Scouts Association.

49\14 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL**

The Chairman referred to the resignation of Councillor R. J. Laight as Vice-Chairman of the Council. The Chairman thanked Councillor Laight for the work he had undertaken in the role of Vice-Chairman and for the support which he had provided to her as Chairman over the past three years.

It was proposed by Councillor H. J. Jones and seconded by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett and

RESOLVED that Councillor J. A. Ruck be elected Vice-Chairman of the Council for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Councillor J. A. Ruck signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members of the Council for electing him to the office of Vice – Chairman of the Council.

50\14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24th September 2014 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

51\14 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, THE CIVIC HEAD AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Chairman paid tribute to the excellent service which the Princess of Wales Community Hospital was providing to residents of the District.

The Civic Head drew the attention of Members to forthcoming events around the District and requested that Members support these events where possible.

52\14 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader stated that she was standing down from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and from the Transport Board. The matter of this Council's representation on these bodies would be brought back to the Chamber for consideration. In response to a query the Leader confirmed she would be attending meetings as an observer until a new representative was appointed.

The Leader drew the attention of Members to the provision of free Car Parking in Council car parks on the weekends of 6th and 7th December and 20th and 21st December 2015.

The Leader referred to on-going discussions with Worcestershire County Council with regard to Highways issues and the expenditure which may be made available to improve the highway infrastructure within the District.

The Leader reported that the next meeting of the New Homes Bonus Group would take the form of a Public Forum to take place on 1st December 2015.

The Leader responded as far as she could to questions raised regarding the Sainsbury's development. It was understood that, together with other national chains, Sainsbury's were reviewing their development plans on a national basis as a result of changes in the shopping habits of consumers. It was not possible to pre judge the outcome of that review as far as Bromsgrove was concerned. In response to a query the Leader stated she did not meet direct with Developers but with their agents.

The Leader referred to other projects where re-generation of the Town Centre was well underway such as the new Library and the Health Centre.

53\14

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

(i) **Gateway Service for Young People – Provision of Homelessness Support**

The recommendation from the Cabinet was proposed by Councillor C. B. Taylor and seconded by Councillor M. J. A. Webb.

In proposing the recommendation Councillor Taylor referred to the importance of ensuring the continuation of a service which would provide crisis and emergency support to young people threatened with or experiencing homelessness. By accepting the funding of £11,200 from Worcestershire County Council and then working in partnership with the County Council, St Basil's and Bromsgrove District Housing Trust, this Council could enable the service to continue for at least another year.

Whilst Members expressed support for the recommendation, there were some concerns that the funding to be made available was inadequate to address the issue of homelessness prevention amongst young people.

RESOLVED 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.

54\14

MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 2014, 1ST OCTOBER 2014 AND 5TH NOVEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24th September 2014, 1st October 2014 and 5th November 2014 were received for information.

5th November 2014

Further to Minute No. 49/14 Councillor L. C. R. Mallett queried whether the proposed changes would impact on the Local Valuation Tribunal and referred to the outcome of the recent Supreme Court Judgement which had resulted in the proposal to consult all current working age Council Tax Support Scheme claimants.

Councillor M. J. A. Webb responded that there were proposals to develop an appropriate Hardship Fund to provide transitional support. Councillor Webb welcomed the clarity which the recent Judgement had now provided in terms of the already extensive consultation process.

Further to Minute 50/14 relating to Fees and Charges Members raised issues in relation to the following:

- Bulky Waste Collection Charges – it was confirmed that it was the intention to give officers some flexibility in determining some of these charges which may be on a “one –off” basis;
- Charges for some Cemetery services - it was confirmed that some charges were being re-considered;
- Charge for Garden Waste Collection Service - due to an expansion in use of the service there was an opportunity to restrict the proposed increase in the charge for the service .

55\14

WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Council considered the appointment of a representative and substitute to the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel. The appointments would be in place until the local elections in May 2015.

It was proposed by Councillor C. B. Taylor and seconded by Councillor M. J. A. Webb that Councillor M. A. Sherrey be appointed as the Council's representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel.

It was proposed by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett and seconded by Councillor M. T. Buxton that Councillor M. A. Bullivant be appointed as the Council's representative on the Panel. Councillor Bullivant declined the nomination and it was

RESOLVED that Councillor M. A. Sherrey be appointed as the Council's representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel.

It was proposed by Councillor M. A. Sherrey and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant that Councillor C. B. Taylor be appointed as substitute representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel.

It was proposed by Councillor R. J. Shannon and seconded by Councillor S. P. Shannon that Councillor M. A. Bullivant be appointed as substitute representative on the panel. Councillor Bullivant declined the nomination and it was

RESOLVED that Councillor C. B. Taylor be appointed as the Council's representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel.

56\14

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Question submitted by Councillor R. J. Laight

Will the Portfolio Holder for Finance please confirm that Bromsgrove District Council only pays 50% of the Senior Management's salaries, with the other 50% being paid by Redditch Borough Council? The reason I ask this is

because when at the last Full Council meeting Members opposite discussed salaries, they failed to mention this. Therefore if I am correct with the 50% cost, Bromsgrove residents may have been misinformed and were wrongly advised that stated salaries were double the actual cost to this Authority.

Councillor M. J. A. Webb responded that the costs associated with the Senior Management Team referred to at the last Full Council meeting were shared 50% with Redditch BC. In addition any other staff who were providing a service across Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils had costs shared.

Question submitted by Councillor H. J. Jones

As Councillor for the Catshill Ward I would like to know about the Conservative Council's initiative of "Place Teams" . This initiative I believe was started in other Wards and I have heard that it has been very successful.

I would like to ask the Portfolio Holder responsible about it and if other areas will receive the benefit.

Councillor M. A. Bullivant referred to the principles of the operation of the "Place Teams" which were working very well in areas such as Wythall and Alvechurch. It was anticipated that the initiative would be rolled out across the District by the end of the Spring period in 2015.

Question submitted by Councillor R. J. Shannon

With the official opening of the High Street now some time ago, please can the Portfolio Holder let the people of Bromsgrove know when the newly installed electric gate will be operational and have/if the relevant Traffic Orders been granted that will put a stop to the continued use by cars, vans and lorries which are damaging the new stonework?

Councillor R. L. Dent responded that the new electric gate had been installed and tested. Councillor Dent stated that the existing Traffic Regulation Order remained in force and restricted vehicles entering the High Street between 10.30am and 4.00pm. An order had been placed with BT to install a line at the CCTV Control Room to enable them to operate the gate remotely. Once the line was in place the gate would become operational with the aim being that it would be closed during the restricted hours and opened via the CCTV Control Room to allow access in accordance with the Traffic regulation Order.

Councillor Dent stated that she had been advised that the new High Street had been designed by County Highways to cater for all vehicles and as such she was not aware of any damage to the stonework other than some marks from oil from vehicles which would be addressed through regular cleaning.

Question submitted by Councillor P. M. McDonald

How much has this Council spent on the Spatial programme and costs since related to it?

Councillor D. W. P. Booth responded that the project costs were £4.9m. The project was approved in 2006 and closed in 2008. The project was a fixed price to ensure the Council's IT system was fit for purpose and future proof.

Question submitted by Councillor M. T. Buxton

How many officers currently work on behalf of Bromsgrove residents and how many officers will be permanently based in the new Parkside hub?

Councillor M. J. A. Webb responded that there were currently 422 staff on the Bromsgrove payroll of whom 121 were solely working for Bromsgrove and the majority of these were based at the Depot. The remainder were working within a shared service environment with salaries apportioned accordingly.

Councillor Webb stated there would be 55 officers permanently based at Parkside with up to 10 other officers there on a rota basis to ensure the presence of teams at the facility. There would be a further 8 "hot desks" available.

Question submitted by Councillor E. M. Shannon

Can the Leader confirm if she, or the Economic Development or Town Centre Portfolio Holders have met in person with the Worcestershire Farmers Market organisers and if so when will they be back in the High Street?

Councillor R. L. Dent responded that there had not been a meeting at present. The current position was that the Worcestershire Farmers Market couldn't continue to be held in the High Street during the recent works and had relocated to Webbs. Officers were investigating options for re-establishing the Market in the High Street and as Portfolio Holder she was ensuring every effort was made to achieve this as soon as possible.

Question submitted by Councillor B. Lewis

Please would the Portfolio Holder for the Town Centre give a summary of the structural and environmental integrity of George House?

Councillor R. L. Dent responded that she understood that the building appeared to be structurally sound although there were some issues including water ingress from the flat roof and the presence of asbestos. The building was empty and was part of one of the sites identified for regeneration so expenditure on maintenance had not been at the usual level. Councillor Dent stated that the future of the site was being investigated again by officers following the decision by Opus not to proceed with the purchase and a report including future options for George House would be considered by the Cabinet in December.

Question submitted by Councillor S. P. Shannon

Can the Leader confirm if any Cabinet Member has met in person with the Market Hall site potential food retailer or cinema developers since the deal

was pulled in September and the Cabinet Members reported that they were keen to talk to the relevant parties and try to “save the deal” and what can residents expect to happen next with the Market Hall.

The Leader responded that as mentioned previously, the current position was that officers had been working to explore all options for the site going forward. It was anticipated a report would be considered by Cabinet in December. All meetings were with agents and not direct with developers.

At this point the Chairman declared that the time allowed for questions and answers had elapsed. The final question received therefore stood unanswered.

57\14 **MOTION - NO CONFIDENCE**

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett :

“Council resolves that it has no confidence in the political leadership of Bromsgrove District Council”.

The motion was moved by Councillor Mallett and seconded by Councillor S. J. Baxter.

In proposing the motion Councillor Mallett referred to issues such as the Town Centre, the Council’s Finances including the unbudgeted surplus from 2013/14 and the decision to borrow to fund the Parkside Development and the new Dolphin Centre.

Councillor Baxter referred to planning issues, including lack of certainty with the Local Plan and the use of New Homes Bonus funds as part of the core budget.

During the ensuing debate, Members raised the Transformation programme and the Development Control service. Some Members expressed the view that it was regrettable that Councillors had not been able to work together for the benefit of the District.

The Leader and other Members responded to the issues raised and addressed the criticisms put forward. In addition the motion was felt to be purely party political and not beneficial to moving forward with issues which would benefit the residents of the District.

On being put to the vote the Chairman declared the motion to be lost.

58\14 **MOTION - NEW HOMES BONUS AND FUNDING OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor S. R. Colella:

“That this Council recognising the impact upon the District’s communities that are being affected by housing development, asks that Cabinet consider, as part of their discussions on any proposed allocation of New Homes Bonus from 2015/16, the inclusion of £500k of the additional revenue surplus that was generated in 2013/14. This surplus, together with any proposals on the New Homes Bonus funding should be distributed to Community projects under the guidance of the new Homes Bonus.”

The motion was moved by Councillor Colella and seconded by Councillor S. J. Baxter.

In proposing the motion Councillor Colella referred to the benefits of utilising additional funding from the New Homes Bonus Scheme within communities. The funding from unpopular developments could be utilised in order to promote areas such as health and recreation facilities which would help to mitigate the impacts on communities of the developments.

Councillor M. J. A. Webb stated that the cross party New Homes Bonus Working Group was currently looking at a number of options in respect of the use of New Homes Bonus funding. In his view it would be premature to take any decisions ahead of the anticipated report to the Cabinet in January. Councillor Webb stated that the Cabinet had to act in the best interests of all residents within the District and not just those who lived in areas in which there was development currently.

Councillor Baxter stated that the motion was specifically referring to the surplus funding from 2013/14 being allocated to Community projects as she was aware that discussions were still on going in respect of any further New Homes Bonus funding.

Having been put to the vote the Chairman declared the motion to be lost.

At this point the Chairman declared that the time allotted for consideration of Notices of Motion had elapsed. It was subsequently agreed by Council that the time be extended to enable one more Notice of Motion to be considered.

59\14

MOTION - FREE EVENING CAR PARKING TRIAL

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor R. J. Laight:

“I am aware that this Council has “led the way” in cost saving over recent years and unlike many Councils around the UK we do continue to have funds available to improve both services and support for our residents and local businesses.

I would like to put forward the Motion that Cabinet investigates further, as part of the on going budget process, the use of some of the saved funds from projects successfully delivered, such as the Shared management Team, to be used to support the town centre evening economy by running a trial on free car parking during the evening in our pay and display car parks for a 12 month period”.

The motion was moved by Councillor Laight and seconded by Councillor P. J. Whittaker.

In proposing the motion Councillor Laight referred to recent projects within the District such as improvements to the Railway Station, New Library and Health Centre and the regeneration of the Town Centre. Councillor Laight felt that on occasions, an inaccurate negative picture was given of Bromsgrove which could impact on the marketing of the Town Centre. Councillor Laight referred to the importance of the night time economy and felt that a trial involving free car parking in the evening would be of benefit.

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett stated that he welcomed the proposal but felt that it could go further and he regretted the delay in making this change.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor R. J. Shannon and seconded by Councillor E. J. Murray the following paragraph be added to the motion:

“That the Cabinet should alongside this consider the benefits of other additional parking schemes to improve our town centre economy and bring footfall into the town, including reduced price Sunday parking and a voucher scheme linking parking in the Recreation Road car park with High Street businesses”.

On being put to the vote the Chairman declared the amendment to be lost.

It was

RESOLVED that Cabinet be requested to investigate further, as part of the on going budget process, the use of some of the saved funds from projects successfully delivered, such as the Shared Management Team, to be used to support the town centre evening economy by running a trial on free car parking during the evening in pay and display car parks for a 12 month period.

The meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.

Chairman