

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**19TH JANUARY 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors J. M. L. A. Griffiths (Chairman), S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, D. W. P. Booth, J. M. Boswell, J. R. Boulter, J. S. Brogan, M. A. Bullivant, R. A. Clarke, S. R. Colella, R. L. Dent, K. A. Grant-Pearce, P. A. Harrison, H. J. Jones, R. J. Laight, P. Lammas, B. Lewis, L. C. R. Mallett, E. J. Murray, C. R. Scurrrell, 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

60\14 **MRS M. W. V. FIRMINGER AND MR B. A. TAYLOR**

The Chairman held a minutes silence in memory of the late Mrs M. W. V. Firminger who was a former Chairman of the Council and Mr B. A. Taylor a former Member of the Council. Members and officers stood in silence in tribute to their memories.

61\14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M. T. Buxton, B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, S. J. Dudley, R. Hollingworth, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, J. A. Ruck and E. M. Shannon.

62\14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

63\14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19th November 2014 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

64\14 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, THE CIVIC HEAD AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Deputy Civic Head drew Members' attention to the Holocaust Memorial Day event which would take place in the Council Chamber at 11.30am on Tuesday, 23rd January 2015. All Members were invited to attend the event.

65\14     **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

There were no announcements from the Leader on this occasion.

66\14     **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 3RD DECEMBER 2014**

(i)     **Finance Monitoring – Quarter 2 2014/15**

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

In proposing the recommendation Councillor Webb referred to the need to draw down from the Business Transformation Earmarked Reserve, the sum of £90,000 to meet the cost of works required to meet new guidelines in respect of the Public Service Network (PSN). All Councils were required to meet the new guidelines from Central Government.

During the debate Members raised a number of queries regarding the Council's expenditure to date to meet the requirements of the PSN, including the purchase of iPads and the necessary licences for the use of Members. A number of Members expressed the view that the iPads may not be providing value for money because of restrictions on their use and queried whether the decisions taken had achieved the best solutions.

Reference was made to the trial use of the iPads which had been undertaken by a number of Members and which had appeared to be satisfactory. However, the solution introduced because of the need for additional security in line with the PSN requirements, was less effective in the view of some Councillors. It was suggested that additional information was required before the Council agreed to the expenditure of £90,000.

Following discussion it was

**RESOLVED** that the sum of £90,000 be drawn down from a Business Transformation earmarked reserve to be utilised to help meet the capital costs of compliance with the Public Services Network Project.

(ii)     **Environmental Services Transformation and Shared Services Businesses Case**

The Chairman stated that this recommendation would be considered at the end of the meeting as it was likely reference would be made to confidential or exempt matters.

67\14

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 7TH  
JANUARY 2015**

**(i) New Homes Bonus**

It was proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant and

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the New Homes Bonus Allocation Scheme attached as an appendix to the report be approved; and
- (b) that consideration of an appropriate percentage/amount of New Homes Bonus to be allocated to the scheme be deferred until the next meeting of the Cabinet in order that it can be fully considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan process.

**(ii) Council Tax Support Scheme 2015/16**

The recommendations from the Cabinet were proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Webb referred to the background to this issue which had arisen from a reduction in funding for Council Tax Support from Central Government.

Since the new arrangements had come into force two years ago, this Council had introduced changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme which had avoided the need to cap entitlement to Council Tax Support. This was no longer a sustainable position and many other Authorities from across the Country had already introduced similar measures. Failure to take appropriate steps would result in a reduction in funding to Worcestershire County Council and there was a strong risk this would be clawed back by the County Council.

Councillor Webb also referred to the two extensive public consultations which had been undertaken, which had resulted in a disappointingly low response rate and to the Hardship Scheme which was proposed in order to alleviate some of the difficulties experienced.

During the debate the view was expressed that the Council should continue to protect the "working poor" by maintaining 100% Council Tax Support and by challenging the County Council on any proposals to claw back funding to this Council. It was also suggested that the changes would result in inequalities, lead to increased debt and would have a negative impact on the local economy.

Other Councillors expressed concern at the potential impact the changes would have but referred to the shortfall of £324,000 which could be clawed back by the other preceptors and the impact this would have on Bromsgrove residents.

Following discussion it was

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the Council Tax Support Scheme as amended be approved, namely
  - (i) that entitlement to Council Tax Support be capped at 80% of Council Tax liability;
  - (ii) that provision for a second adult rebate be removed; and
  - (iii) that the future “uprating “ of some of the figures to take account of other national changes in benefits and allowances be approved.
- (b) that the proposed Hardship Scheme as attached as an appendix to the report be approved; and
- (c) that no changes be made to the provisions relating to non-dependents income.

**(iii) Council Tax Base 2015/16**

It was proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant and

**RESOLVED** that the amount calculated by Bromsgrove District Council as the Council tax Base for the whole area be approved at 34,907.84 as detailed at appendix 1 to the report to include the individual parish elements.

**(iv) Medium Term Financial Plan Update – Parish Council Grant**

The recommendations from the Cabinet were proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor M. A. Bullivant

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Webb referred to the methods by which the Parish Council grant had been distributed in previous years. It was felt that the current proposal for distribution of the funding was an equitable system which would benefit both parished and non parished areas of the District.

During debate the main issues raised were:-

- that the entire sum of £38,000 should be distributed to the Parish Councils as other areas did not have a Council Tax base and so had no funding deficit to be met;

- that no evaluation had been undertaken of the operation of the Ward Members funding scheme which was currently in place. Some Members felt that the scheme had usefully enabled a number of small projects to be delivered within individual Wards and should be continued, especially in non-parished areas where no local precept was available..

Following discussion it was

**RESOLVED** that in relation to the Parish Council Grant receivable from Central Government for 2015/16, the estimated sum of £30,000 be allocated proportionately to the Parish Councils and the remaining £8,000 be shared with the non parished areas of the District.

(v) **Car Parking Charges – Evening Parking**

The recommendation from the Cabinet was proposed by Councillor M. A. Bullivant and seconded by Councillor R. J. Laight.

In proposing the recommendation Councillor Bullivant referred to the benefit which would accrue to the night time economy within the town of free parking within pay and display car parks after 7.00pm. There would be a need to meet the anticipated shortfall in car park income of approximately £60,000 from balances. It was intended that officers would seek to establish the benefits of the proposal to businesses following the twelve month trial period.

Councillor S. P. Shannon queried the timing of the Cabinet decision in view of the Overview and Scrutiny Board Short Sharp Review of car parking which would be likely to make a number of alternative recommendations to the Cabinet.

A number of Members made reference to other matters which it was felt should be considered such as free parking on Sundays; for the over 65's and for "Blue Badge" holders.

In response a number of Members welcomed the proposal and felt that there would be a benefit both to local businesses and to residents.

Following discussion it was

**RESOLVED** that the shortfall in projected income of £60,000 for the free car parking trial period be met from balances.

68\14 **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Council considered a report requesting the appointment of a representative and a substitute from the three North Worcestershire Districts to the Greater

Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership Local Transport Board.

The following appointments were proposed by Councillor M. A. Sherrey and seconded by Councillor C. B. Taylor

- (a) that Councillor J. P. Campion (Wyre Forest District Council) be appointed as this Council's representative on Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership with Councillor B. Hartnett (Redditch Borough Council) as a substitute representative;
- (b) that Councillor J. P. Campion be appointed as this Council's representative on the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership Local Transport Board with Councillor P. Mould (Redditch Borough Council) as a substitute representative.

It was proposed by Councillor Mallett and seconded by Councillor C. J. Bloore that Councillor M. J. A. Webb be appointed as this Council's representative on the two organisations.

Councillor Webb subsequently declined the nominations.

A number of Members expressed concern that there would not be a specific representative from Bromsgrove on these two organisations and that Bromsgrove's specific interests may be overlooked.

Councillor C. B. Taylor made reference to the current constitutions of the organisations, which required the election by all three North Worcestershire Councils of one representative (and one substitute member) for the three Councils. It was therefore not possible currently for the Leader to solely represent Bromsgrove District Council.

It was therefore

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that Councillor J. P. Campion (Wyre Forest District Council) be appointed as this Council's representative on Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership with Councillor B. Hartnett (Redditch Borough Council) as a substitute representative; and
- (b) that Councillor J. P. Campion be appointed as this Council's representative on the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership Local Transport Board with Councillor P. Mould (Redditch Borough Council) as a substitute representative.

69\14

**MOTION - MENTAL HEALTH PLEDGE**

Members considered the following motion submitted by Councillor M. A. Sherrey:

That this Council supports the Time to Change pledge as follows:

To reduce the stigma of mental illness and support staff who are experiencing, or who may experience, personal or family mental health issues”

The Time to Change Pledge is a public statement of aspiration that an organisation wants to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination

- Any organisation can pledge and there are no restrictions around the size of the organisation or sector.
- An organisational pledge helps break the stigma and silence around mental health.
- Whilst there is a requirement to evidence that any organisational pledge has meaning, it is not a quality mark accreditation or endorsement as such.
- As an organisation Bromsgrove District Council will own the pledge and action plan. As such the Council will take responsibility for completing any actions to which the Council commits.

The motion was moved by Councillor M. A. Sherrey and seconded by Councillor R. J. Shannon.

In proposing the motion the Leader referred to the importance of raising awareness of mental health issues and of providing support to staff within the organisation through a variety of methods including support days, training for staff and the “Phone a Friend” support network.

In seconding the motion, Councillor R. J. Shannon reminded Council of the prevalence of mental health issues within the population and of the importance of addressing these openly and reducing prejudice and fear. It was very important that the Council as an employer played its part in this.

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

70\14 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraphs of that part being as set out below, and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

<u>Minute No.</u>	<u>Paragraphs</u>
71/14	1 and 4

71\14 **RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CABINET 3RD DECEMBER 2014 - ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES TRANSFORMATION AND SHARED SERVICE RESTRUCTURE BUSINESS CASE**

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

In proposing the recommendation Councillor Bullivant referred to the detailed discussions and Member briefings which had taken place. There was also ongoing consultation with staff involved. Councillor Bullivant also referred to the proposed new staffing structure which he was confident would ensure the delivery of improved services and would result in reduced costs.

During the debate Members expressed support for locality based working but it was suggested that the majority of the savings projected related to not filling a vacant post. Councillor Mallett also raised the following issues:

- the split between centralised teams and “Place” teams and the impact on service delivery;
- arrangements to cover sickness absence or the need for additional resources, particularly in view of the move from centralised working to “Place” working;
- potential changes to terms and conditions for staff

Councillor Bullivant confirmed that the new way of working would allow greater flexibility for the workforce and enable the service to respond more quickly to any incidents and to provide services which were requested by residents and Members.

**RESOLVED** that the Business Case for the Transformation and Shared Service restructure of the Environmental and associated services attached as an appendix to the report be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.

Chairman