

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

13TH APRIL 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), R. J. Laight (Vice-Chairman),
C. J. Bloore, R. A. Clarke, B. T. Cooper, P. Lammas, C. R. Scurrall,
R. J. Shannon, S. P. Shannon and C. J. Spencer

Invitees: Councillor M. Bullivant

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms L. Jones, Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

131/14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Prior to receiving any apologies for absence Members observed a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor C. J. Tidmarsh, a long-term member of the Board, who had sadly passed away since the previous meeting.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors J. S. Brogan and S. R Colella.

132/14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

133/14 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday 16th March 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 16th March 2015 be approved as a correct record.

134/14 **CAR PARKING SHORT SHARP REVIEW - CABINET RESPONSE**

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Leisure Services, Councillor M. Bullivant, presented the Cabinet's response to the recommendations that had been made by the Car Parking Short, Sharp Review. He thanked Members for their work, however, he explained that the Cabinet had rejected the group's proposals due to a number of considerations. In particular the Cabinet had been concerned about changes in demand for parking and parking habits that could potentially occur following the completion of the development works in Bromsgrove town centre. Members had concluded that it would be best to

wait until these works were completed and to subsequently review parking arrangements.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The extent to which businesses had already been consulted regarding demand for parking in the town centre and the impact of parking on demand for business.
- The potential number of retailers that would open their shops on Sundays if free parking was provided on that day.
- The response that had been received from Cabinet to both this short sharp review and the previous Recreation Road South Car Park Task Group and the extent to which this demonstrated that scrutiny proposals were taken seriously by local decision makers.
- The benefits of undertaking a further scrutiny review of car parking in the town once the development works in the town centre had been completed.
- The value of the research that had been undertaken by the Car Parking Short, Sharp Review as the basis for any future scrutiny work into the subject.
- The method that would be used to monitor the impact of evening parking arrangements on the night time economy.
- The length of time required by customers when parking in the town.
- Peak demand for parking in the town.

Following subsequent discussions it was

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board in 2015/16 be asked to consider the following:

- (a) how the impact of evening parking measures will be monitored;
- (b) to identify any gaps in research into parking within the town centre; and
- (c) to launch a further short, sharp scrutiny review into car parking in approximately 18 months' time.

135/14 **MAKING EXPERIENCES COUNT - QUARTERS 2 & 3 REPORT**

The Customer Services Manager presented the Making Experiences Count report covering the period 1st July to 31st December 2014. Officers also tabled copies of the data highlights for quarters 1 and 4 which Officers were intending to provide to Members alongside the Members' newsletter in future years. During the presentation of this report she highlighted the following points for Members' consideration:

- 35 complaints had been received during the period.
- 26 compliments had also been received.
- 92 per cent of the complaints had been answered within 15 days or less.
- A number of actions had been taken to address key issues identified through customer complaints including customer care refresher training for

frontline staff and placing two areas of the district on a regular cleansing schedule.

- There had been a reduction in demand through telephone calls when compared to the same time the previous year.
- An upgrade to the Council's payment system had been completed in February 2015.
- There had been a 45 per cent increase in automated telephone payments, when compared to the same time the previous year.

Once the report had been presented the following points were discussed by Members in further detail:

- The extent to which 15 days was an appropriate time within which to aim to respond to a complaint.
- The Council's changing approach to responding to complaints, whereby relevant managers were encouraged to make an initial phone call to the customer rather than to rely on written correspondence only.
- The preference of many customers to pay for services by cash. Officers confirmed that there would continue to be a cash desk following the Council's move to Parkside.
- The small number of services for which payment by direct debit was not yet possible. Members were advised that short delays could occur in setting up direct debit payments for new services due to the need for time to be spent arranging the new payment process on the Council's finance system.
- The potential for the garden waste service to be paid for by cheque and the length of time that cheques took to clear through banking systems.
- The ways in which complaints and compliments reported by Councillors on behalf of local residents were recorded on the system. Members requested that in future editions of the report Officers clearly stipulated whether a case had been reported by a Councillor or a customer.
- The nature of the complaint relating to the Hunnington hole and the nature of the hole referred to in the report.
- The process for responding to complaints and the role of the Local Government Ombudsman in this process.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

136/14

ACTION LIST

Members' considered the latest version of the Board's Action List. Officers explained that a number of actions proposed at the previous meeting of the Board, particularly with regard to scrutiny of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, remained to be resolved. A further response would be requested for the following meeting of the Board. The Board was also advised that the application forms and guidance notes for the New Homes Bonus scheme had been circulated since the previous meeting.

137/14 **QUARTERLY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

Members considered the following updates in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Recommendation Tracker:

(a) **Artrix Outreach Provision Task Group**

Officers explained that a lot of action had already been taken by the Artrix to implement many of the group's proposals. A detailed update on progress with this work would be provided in the following municipal year.

(b) **Air Quality Task Group**

A written response had been provided by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Officers regarding the information that was issued to taxi drivers about leaving their engines running whilst in the taxi rank.

Members commented that whilst the Taxi Forum met regularly the Taxi Drivers Association met rarely. For this reason Officers were urged to concentrate on communicating this message to taxi drivers through the Taxi Forum.

(c) **Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group**

The Board was informed that the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee, the decision making body for WRS, had recently considered new proposals regarding the governance of the partnership. These proposals had incorporated many of the points raised by the Joint Task Group in the recommendations that had previously been rejected. The changes to the governance arrangements were currently out to consultation with partners, with a final decision due to be made in June 2015.

Members were advised that report had been submitted for consideration as part of the Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS) national good scrutiny awards process, which took place on an annual basis. Officers explained that Members would be notified if the report was shortlisted in these awards.

138/14 **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - SUMMARY OF WORK**

The Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. T. Cooper, presented a written update on the work of the Committee during the municipal year. Members were advised that the Committee had been due to consider access to GP services at their following meeting. However, this subject had been judged to be too political during purdah and a decision had been made to postpone consideration of this subject until after the local elections had taken place. Instead, Members would be considering quality accounts during the following meeting.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Cooper for his hard work representing the Council on the Committee and for the various updates he had provided for the Board's consideration during the year.

139/14 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

The Chairman presented the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2014 – 2015. He apologised for the short notice in providing his foreword for the report and explained that he had produced this after the agenda had been published. Members noted that the report would be presented for the consideration of Council in June 2015.

Members were advised that the Chairman intended to amend his foreword to recognise the service of Councillor Tidmarsh and to express the Board's condolences. Councillor Laight also explained he intended to establish a memorial dedicated to Councillor Tidmarsh and requested Members' support in this endeavour.

Members were asked to note that the following represented key achievements during the year:

- Successfully chairing and facilitating the Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group on behalf of partners.
- Developments in the town centre had been pre-scrutinised.
- A constructive contribution had been made to the debate about the new leisure centre.
- The planning process and development control, including developments in relation to Marlbrook tip, had been held to account.
- Members had completed a thorough review of car parking requirements in the town centre.

Members discussed the appropriate wording in relation to the Cabinet's response to the Car Parking Short, Sharp Review. Concerns were expressed that the wording could be interpreted as politically motivated and it was therefore agreed that the report should be amended to recognise the cross party nature of the review.

The Chairman thanked Members for their hard work and support during the year. He also thanked Amanda Scarce and Jess Bayley, Democratic Services Officers, for their support as well as the Executive Director for Finance and Corporate resources for consistently providing corporate support.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Annual Report be approved for the consideration of Council.

140/14 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - FUTURE TRAINING NEEDS**

Officers explained that in the following municipal year a new approach would be adopted to delivering Overview and Scrutiny training to elected Members.

In previous years a short briefing had been delivered in the hour before the first meeting of the Board had taken place, however, Officers felt that a more effective approach would be to provide a separate, bespoke training session. In the new approach to training Officers were proposing to deliver a mixture of presentations and interactive workshop sessions that would provide Members with an opportunity to start to consider potential scrutiny exercises linked to community concerns and the Council's strategic priorities. As in previous years an introduction pack would also be provided. Officers explained that further suggestions from Members, including after the meeting had taken place, would be welcomed.

The Board was also informed that Officers were aiming to provide more detailed information in financial monitoring reports in future years. Officers intended to consult with the Board about the most appropriate format to use to present this information in the new municipal year.

Members commented that the proposed approach to delivering Overview and Scrutiny training appeared likely to be constructive. It was suggested that Members would find an example of a completed scrutiny proposal form useful in their introduction packs. A brief guide to the terminology used in local government finance was also requested to enable Members to scrutinise the Council's budget effectively in future years.

141/14

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme. Officers explained that the content of the report, together with items proposed for inclusion on the Work Programme during the meeting, would roll over for the consideration of the Board in the new municipal year.

The meeting closed at 7.02 p.m.

Chairman