

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

2ND JUNE 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, C. Allen-Jones, M. Glass,
J. M. L. A. Griffiths, K.J. May (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), R. D. Smith,
P.L. Thomas, M. T. Buxton, H. J. Jones and M. Thompson

Invitees: Councillors R. L. Denttm,, M. A. Sherrey and C. B. Taylor

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mrs. S. Sellers, Mr M. Ashcroft, Ms. C. Lumley,
Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

1/15 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

A nomination for Chairman was received in respect of Councillor L. C. R. Mallett.

RESOLVED that Councillor L. C. R. Mallett be elected as Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

2/15 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

A nomination for Vice Chairman was received in respect of Councillor K. J. May.

RESOLVED that Councillor K. J. May be elected as Vice Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

3/15 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMES SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. J. Bloore, B. T. Cooper and L. C. R. Mallett with Councillors M. Thompson, H. J. Jones and M. Buxton attending as substitutes respectively.

4/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

5/15 **MINUTES**

As there were no Members present who had attended this meeting it was confirmed that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2015 would be deferred until the next meeting of the Board.

6/15

DISPOSAL OF COUNCIL ASSETS AT HANOVER STREET CAR PARK AND GEORGE HOUSE

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented a report on the subject of the Disposal of Council Assets at Hanover Street Car Park and George House. During the presentation of this report the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The focus of the report was on the outcome of the marketing exercise for the Hanover Street Car Park and George House site; the process that had been followed by the Council, the preferred bidder's identity and further information about the bid.
- The Council had a legal obligation to dispose of assets at best value. Best value did not necessarily mean the cheapest price as it could also involve assessing the contribution that might be made to the community.
- The District Valuer had been referred to as an independent adviser to ensure that the Council achieved best value for money.
- There had been 16 applicants to develop the site and 7 applicants had been shortlisted.
- The shortlisted applicants had been assessed in relation to a scoring matrix by elected Members, relevant Officers and a representative of GJS Dillon Property Consultants.
- The two highest scoring applicants had been invited to the Council to deliver presentations on the subject of their proposals.
- There had been key considerations when assessing each bid:
 - Deliverability and achievability.
 - The extent to which the bids corresponded with local policies including planning policies.
 - The potential for employment opportunities to be made available through the scheme.
 - The contribution that would be made to redevelopment and regeneration in the area.
 - The overall benefits that each scheme would bring to Bromsgrove.
- The car park had 121 spaces and an income of just under £119,000 per annum. This income would be lost from April 2016 if the preferred bidder's proposal was approved.
- The District Valuer had advised that the Council would not achieve value for money from a deal with the preferred bidder unless the car park was included in the final agreement.
- Higher offers than that which had been proposed by the preferred bidder had been received from other companies; however, the District Valuer had concluded that these proposals were not achievable.
- The preferred bid would release the Council from obligations of approximately £18,000 per annum for maintaining the building and business rates at George House.

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

- The timeframes for completion of the works, subject to the agreement of a preferred bidder by Cabinet.
- The approach that would be adopted by the Council to communicate the timetable for the development to the public.
- The scoring matrix and how this matrix was used to assess each development proposal.
- The questions asked as part of the scoring process and the amount of information that had been provided about this questioning process.
- The role of Overview and Scrutiny in assessing the process that had been followed by the Council to identify a preferred bidder. Members debated the extent to which they could assess whether the appropriate process had been followed based on the evidence that had been provided.
- The detail of the bids that had been submitted and how they compared in terms of the value that would be added to Bromsgrove district as a result of redevelopment.
- The role of the Legal department in enabling the Council to follow a robust process whilst securing best value.
- The potential role of lock in clauses and the extent to which these could realistically help the Council.
- The role of the external auditor in assessing the extent to which Bromsgrove District Council had achieved value for money when selecting a preferred bidder.
- The potential for an unsuccessful bidder to challenge the selection process.
- The differences with the previous bid that had fallen through in respect of the features in the proposed development and the extent to which the Council had secured greater value for money.
- The extent to which housing had been considered alongside retail development.
- The weighting attributed to the brook, which had been previously raised as a subject of concern by the Overview and Scrutiny Board when the subject was considered in December 2014.
- The extent to which the content of the Area Action Plan had been taken into account when assessing bids.
- The impact of any changes to the car park on parents of children attending St John's Middle School and the congregation at St John's Church.
- The potential impact of any changes to the car park on demand for parking spaces in other car parks situated in the town.
- The need for the preferred bidder to secure planning permission for the proposed development.
- The extent to which any environmental considerations relating to George House could impact on development and how all relevant information would be shared with the preferred bidder once a deal had been finalised.

At the end of detailed discussions it was

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to

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exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to financial and business affairs. However, there is nothing exempt in this record of the proceedings.)

The meeting closed at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman