

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

1ST JULY 2015 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors M. A. Sherrey (Leader), G. N. Denaro, R. L. Dent, R. J. Laight and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillors K. J. May and M. A. Glass

Officers: Mr K. Dicks, Ms. J. Pickering, Mr D. Piper Mrs S. Sellers, Mr S. Singleton and Ms. R. Cole

10/15 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C. B. Taylor.

11/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

12/15 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1st July 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1st July 2015 be approved as a correct record.

13/15 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 2nd June 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 2nd June 2015 be noted.

14/15 **WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES - FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR JOINT COMMITTEE AND WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES**

The Cabinet considered a report on the proposals for changes to the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Partnership Agreement. The changes were necessary in view of the need for the Authorities within the partnership to be protected as far as possible from financial pressures and for

services re-aligned to better meet the requirements of the partner authorities. This was in particular related to changes in respect of Worcestershire County Council, which would no longer be a partner but would receive services related to its Trading Standards services under a contractual arrangement.

The report also referred to associated changes required to the governance arrangements which were currently based on a WRS Joint Committee made up of Members of the participating Authorities and a WRS Management Board made up of the Head of Service, senior managers from WRS and officer representatives of partner authorities.

It was noted that the proposed changes had been considered at the meeting of the Joint Committee on 25th June 2015. The Joint Committee had received an updated report and at its meeting decided to make changes to Appendix 2 and updated recommendations were circulated at the Cabinet meeting. The recommendations from the Joint Committee were considered.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) that the Cabinet delegates those Executive functions in relation to the administration and operational activities of WRS to the new Joint Committee in place from 1st April 2016 in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 20 of the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) (Regulations) 2000 as amended.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the current Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership be dissolved by mutual agreement on 31st March 2016;
- (b) that a new Worcestershire Shared Services partnership comprising the six District Councils be created on 1st April 2016 in accordance with the terms set out in appendix 2 to the report (as amended); and that the composition of partner authority Member representatives on the Joint Committee be reviewed after a period of one year;
- (c) that the new Worcestershire Shared Services partnership enters into a service level agreement with Worcestershire County Council for the provision of Trading Standards services in accordance with terms to be agreed by the Acting Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services;
- (d) that all existing contracts and service level agreements between the existing Worcestershire Shared Services partnership and other Local Authorities be novated to the new Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership;
- (e) that the new management structure for Worcestershire Regulatory Services set out in appendix 4 be approved for consultation with staff and recognised trade unions;
- (f) that authority be delegated to the Acting head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services, having consulted with the Chair of the Joint Committee to finalise the future management structure and undertake

recruitment in accordance with the terms set out in the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement;

- (g) that an Appointment sub Committee be established comprising 3 Members of the Joint Committee; an Executive Member from the Host Authority and the Chairman and Vice Chairman supported by officers as detailed in the legal obligations contained within the report;
- (h) that the Councils functions in relation to Environmental Health and Licensing (other than those Licensing functions which cannot be delegated) be delegated to the new Joint Committee in place from 1st April 2016 in accordance with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 20 of the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) (regulations) 2000 as amended.

15/15

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME REVIEW

Members considered a report on the local Council Tax Support Scheme which the Authority was required to review annually.

It was noted that changes to the scheme had been introduced from April 2015 which had resulted in support being capped at 80% of Council Tax liability for all working age claimants. It was reported that as at 31st May 2015 the proportion of Council Tax collected was 0.03% higher than at the same time last year. Whilst there had been an increase in the number of reminders sent out during the first two months of operating the scheme, evidence suggested that the majority of residents who were now liable to pay some Council Tax had arrangements in place to pay.

Members were reminded that a Hardship Policy had been introduced to protect the most vulnerable and to provide transitional support. It was reported that so far officers had worked with 101 people through the Hardship Scheme and as at 31st May £3,449 of the funding had been allocated. In many cases help had been offered through identifying other financial support which could be provided and debt/money management support. This was fully detailed within the report.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that no changes be made to the Council tax Support Scheme for 2016/2017; and
- (b) that the contents of the report in relation to the take up of the Hardship Fund and other measures data be noted.

16/15

RISK BASED VERIFICATION FOR HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

Cabinet considered a report which proposed the introduction of a new Risk Based Verification Policy in respect of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Claims. The draft Policy as attached to the report was also considered.

It was noted that in 2011 the Department for Work had adopted a risk-based verification approach which had been set out in a Housing Benefit and Council tax Circular HB/CTBS11/2011. Since then a large proportion of Local Authorities had used this approach with great success. The percentage of fraud and error identified had increased and processing times had improved. Other public sector organisations such as Job Centre Plus and the pensions service also used this approach.

It was reported that the Council's internal and external auditors had been notified of the possible move to Risk Based Verification . Implementation of the policy would mean that resources could be focussed appropriately on the claims in the high risk category and reduce processing time for those in the low risk category. It was intended that resources would be freed up to deal with more complex customer needs.

Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that the Risk Based Verification Policy in respect of Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support as set out in appendix 1 to the report be approved.

17/15

ECONOMIC STRATEGY - PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS

Members considered a report on a new set of economic priorities and aspirations for Bromsgrove which contained the ambitions of the Authority and its key partners. It was noted that the economic priorities had been developed in close consultation with the Bromsgrove Economic Development Theme Group which was part of the Bromsgrove Partnership and included a number of business representatives and partner organisations.

The Action Plan which had been developed to support the delivery of the new economic priorities was also noted. Whilst it was proposed that a formal report setting out progress against delivery of the Action Plan be brought back to Cabinet on an annual basis, other means would be utilised to report on progress such as briefings when appropriate and the Portfolio Holder's report to Council.

It was recognised that the approval of the new economic priorities for the District together with the Action Plan was vital to reinforcing the Council's commitment to supporting the local economy and the regeneration programme. The economic priorities would drive the delivery of the Council's strategic purpose "help me run a successful business".

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the economic priorities for Bromsgrove District and the associated deliverables set out in appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- (b) that the management and monitoring of the Action Plan be delegated to the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration; and
- (c) that a report setting out progress against delivery of the priorities and Action Plan be submitted to Cabinet on an annual basis;

18/15

FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF BROMSGROVE MARKET

Cabinet considered a report in relation to the future operation and management of Bromsgrove Market. Members were reminded that at the Cabinet meeting on 1st April 2015 authority was given to North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) to invite informal expressions of interest from market operators for the future management of Bromsgrove Outdoor Market. This was to inform any future consideration as to whether to procure an external market operator.

It was reported that informal expressions of interest had been sought from existing market operators in a "soft market testing" exercise and comments had been sought on the draft specification. The comments were included within the report, in particular in relation to the current "single trade policy" which was felt to potentially restrict the future success of the market.

The existing Market Stallholders had been contacted twice during the process and a number of Traders had attended a briefing meeting in June.

It was noted that a further report would be submitted to Cabinet in early 2016.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that authority be given to undertake the procurement process in order to select an external provider in respect of the management of Bromsgrove Outdoor Market for an initial term of 5 years with an option to renew for a further term of between 2 and 5 years;
- (b) that the current "single trade policy" for Bromsgrove Outdoor Market be rescinded;
- (c) that the delegation in relation to the direct management of the market contained in the Collaboration Agreement relating to the provision of Economic Development and Regeneration Services , be amended to reflect the decision in (a) above;
- (d) that the conduct of the procurement and contracting process to select and appoint a contractor to manage Bromsgrove Outdoor market be delegated to Wyre Forest District Council in consultation with the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and the Town Centre; and
- (e) that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to amend the Collaboration Agreement referred to in (c) above.

19/15

FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2014/2015

Members considered a report on the Council's financial position on Revenue and Capital for the Financial Year 2014/15.

It was noted that at the end of the financial year there was a saving against budget of £403k. It was reported that this included interest of £283k due to the inclusion in the budget of costs associated with borrowing to support the Capital Programme during 2014/15. There had been slippage on some Capital schemes and therefore borrowing had not been required.

There was consideration of the position within each service area. It was noted that in Environmental Services the overspend within Refuse and Recycling related mainly to the deferral in income anticipated in relation to the sale of the Trade Waste List. Officers were considering alternative options available to support this service and therefore any sale had been delayed.

Members also considered the position on Financial Reserves Statement in detail. It was noted that the reserve of £581k within Financial Services included the Small Businesses Rate Relief Grant that would offset the costs 2014/15.

The Corporate Director Finance and Resources reported that the new reserve under the description "Leisure/Community Safety" also included funds set aside to support facilities management of the Council's buildings.

RESOLVED that the outturn financial position on Revenue and Capital for 2014/15 as set out in the report be noted together with the transfer to balances of £403k.

RECOMMENDED:

- (a) that the movements of £237k in existing reserves as included in appendix 1 to the report which reflects the approval required for April-March 2015 be approved; and
- (b) that approval of the addition of new reserves of £600k as included in appendix 1 to the report which reflects the approval required for April – March 2015.

20/15 **LEASEHOLD ISSUES AFFECTING SHERWOOD ROAD INDUSTRIAL UNITS**

Whilst a report had also been included on the public agenda for this meeting, in view of the nature of the item and to enable full consideration of relevant "exempt" information to take place, the issue was discussed fully following the exclusion of the public from the meeting.

21/15 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

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 items of business the subject of the following minutes on the grounds that they involve the disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, the relevant parts being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so.

<u>Minute No</u>	<u>Paragraphs</u>
22/15	3
23/15	3 and 5

22/15 **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES - 3RD JUNE 2015**

The confidential section of the Minutes of the Cabinet held on 3rd June 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the confidential section of the Minutes of the Cabinet held on 3rd June 2015 be approved as a correct record.

23/15 **LEASEHOLD ISSUES AFFECTING SHERWOOD ROAD INDUSTRIAL UNITS**

Members gave consideration to the report on this issue.

Following discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) that officers submit a further report to Cabinet in the Autumn to advise Members of the progress in relation to the legal steps.

The meeting closed at 6.50 p.m.

Chairman