

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

29TH FEBRUARY 2016 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), K.J. May (Vice-Chairman), C. Allen-Jones, C. J. Bloore, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, M. Glass and S. A. Webb

Observers: Councillor C. B. Taylor

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mrs. R. Bamford, Ms. D. Poole, Ms L Wood, Ms P. Smith, Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

104/15 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors S. J. Baxter, B. T. Cooper, R. D. Smith and P. L. Thomas. The Board was advised that Councillor S. Webb was attending as a substitute for Councillor Cooper.

105/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

106/15 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday 18th January 2016 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 18th January 2016 be approved as a correct record.

107/15 **STAFF SURVEY - UPDATE**

The Training and Development Advisor presented an update on the staff survey. During the delivery of this presentation the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- A new edition of the staff survey was due to be issued in April.
- The majority of the questions remained the same (with a small number being amended to allow easier interpretation of the data) as those which had featured in the previous survey to enable the Human Resources team to compare the data from the responses.

- Lessons had been learned from the previous survey and a separate survey focusing on mental health, about how to maximise the number of completed questionnaires received.
- There had been some problems experienced with the previous survey in terms of encouraging staff to complete paper copies. To address this personalised letters would be sent to those staff in receipt of a paper copy.
- Staff had been updated in respect of the actions that had been taken in response to various concerns raised in the survey.
- The responses provided to the new survey would enable the Human Resources team to assess the impact that various actions had had in terms of addressing staff concerns.
- It was anticipated that the data would be reviewed more quickly than previously and support would be provided by the Policy Team which had expertise in respect of recording and analysing data.
- Once the feedback had been analysed a communications plan would be devised to ensure that the outcomes were reported back to staff in an appropriate manner.

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

- The need for both qualitative and quantitative data to be analysed in completed surveys in a constructive manner.
- The reasons for the delays in issuing a second survey to staff. Members were advised that initially there had been an intention to include questions about mental health and equalities issues and, whilst these would not now be included in the final version, this had caused some delays.
- The Board sought assurance that the data arising from completed surveys would be shared with Members in a timely manner. Officers confirmed that it would be possible, but some detail would need to remain restricted in order not to compromise staff confidentiality.
- The action that would be taken to encourage more staff to complete the survey than the previous version. Members were advised that Human resources would be liaising directly with service managers in order to encourage staff to complete the surveys.
- It was noted that a one third response rate for a staff survey was good.
- The role of Human Resources in developing and administering the survey. Members were assured that external consultants would not be involved.
- The potential to make completion of a survey compulsory for staff. The Board was informed that ideally voluntary participation was preferable.
- The improvements that had been made in terms of communicating with staff over IT problems.
- The use of an IT dashboard to inform staff about the number of IT technicians available at any one time to resolve IT problems.

- The number of staff who regularly accessed and used the data recorded on the measures dashboard.
- The continuing development of the skills matrix and the likely timeframes in which use of the matrix would be extended across all teams. The Board was advised that the matrix was being piloted in Customer Access and Financial Support Services. In the long-term the aim would be to use the matrix to develop a training programme which addressed gaps in staff skills.
- The time taken to develop an induction process for new staff.
- The extent to which Human Resources worked with other local authorities to share ideas in terms of staff training. The Board was informed that the Council worked closely with other local authorities, particularly other Councils in the West Midlands.
- The progress that had been made in terms of enabling staff to report concerns about the working environment.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

108/15

PLANNING BACKLOG DATA

The Head of Planning and Regeneration presented a brief report updating the status with regard to the backlog of major planning applications covering the period 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2015. Members were advised that significant progress had been made as a result of a lot of hard work by Planning Officers. Consequently the Council's Planning Department was no longer under designation.

Following presentation of the report the following matters were discussed:

- The number of major applications anticipated in the foreseeable future and what impact this might have on the backlog.
- The likelihood that a planning application for 2,800 homes to be built in Foxlydiate (on the borders with Redditch) would be received shortly with the need to process this application in 6 weeks.
- The appropriate frequency for update reports on the planning application backlog data, following the removal of the Council's designation status.
- The amount of time required to produce the report. Members were advised that the data contained within the report had to be provided to the government on a quarterly basis so could be easily generated for Members' consideration.
- The value of officer time being allocated to presenting the report at meetings of the Board.
- The potential to continue to receive the reports on a quarterly basis with officers only invited to attend meetings where Members requested additional clarification.

RESOLVED that

- (a) The Planning Backlog Data report continue to be provided for the consideration of the Board on a quarterly basis; and
- (b) Officers only be invited to attend meetings of the Board to speak on these reports as and when Members identify that further information is required.

109/15

HOMELESSNESS IN BROMSGROVE - SHORT SHARP REVIEW

The Board considered a report outlining the proposed terms of reference for the Homelessness in Bromsgrove Short, Sharp Review. These terms of reference had been discussed and endorsed by the group at its first meeting. Members were advised that the group was aiming to complete their review within 3 months. As there was no scheduled meeting due to take place in May 2016 the final report would be presented for the consideration of the Board on 27th June.

RESOLVED that the terms of reference for the Homelessness in Bromsgrove Short Sharp Review be noted.

110/15

EVENING & WEEKEND CAR PARKING TASK GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE

Councillor K. J. May, Chairman of the Evening and Weekend Car Parking Task Group, provided a verbal update on the progress of the review. Members were advised that the group had conducted a survey which had involved consulting with 51 shops located on the High Street about car parking and the implications for the economic vitality of the town. Further interviews had been held with relevant Officers and the group had concluded their evidence gathering. An initial draft of the group's final report had been produced and this remained on track to be presented for the Board's consideration in March 2016. Councillor May expressed her thanks to the other members of the group, as well as the two Democratic Services Officers with lead responsibility for scrutiny, for their hard work on this review.

111/15

ACTION LIST

The Board was reminded that a number of updates relating to items detailed in the Actions List had been circulated for Members' consideration since publication of the agenda. Further information on a number of points had been received that day and would be circulated electronically for Members' consideration. It was confirmed that the update on the Dolphin Centre would be provided at the meeting of the Board in April.

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources explained that the High Street Refurbishment Phase 2 report, scheduled on the Cabinet Work Programme for consideration on 2nd March, had been postponed. A new date for consideration of this report by the Cabinet would be scheduled so as to involve the Board through the pre-scrutiny process.

112/15

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the content of the Cabinet Work Programme for the period 1st March to 30th June 2016. No additional items, beyond those matters identified at previous meetings, were proposed as being suitable for pre-scrutiny.

113/15

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The following matters were discussed during consideration of the Board's Work Programme:

a) Increasing Physical Activities in Worcestershire Task Group

Members were informed that it was unlikely that the group's final report would be available to view until June 2016 at the earliest. It was understood that no meetings of the group had taken place since December 2015 and therefore no updates could be provided on the progress of the review. However, following the previous meeting the Chairman of the Task Group, Councillor R. Udall, had confirmed he would be willing to attend a meeting of the Board to present the group's final report.

b) Reports to be Received Annually by the Board

Officers advised that there were 4 reports received annually by the Board which had not been considered by Members in 2015/16:

- Sickness Absence Performance.
- Making Experiences Count.
- Summary of Environmental Enforcement.
- Write Off of Debts.

Due to the length of time that had passed since the Board had previously received an update on sickness absence Members agreed that this report should be prioritised for consideration in April 2016. Members concurred that the other three items would be suitable to consider in June.

c) March 2016

The Chairman confirmed that he would not be present at the following meeting of the Board. He thanked the Vice Chairman, Councillor May, in advance for committing to chair in his absence.

The meeting closed at 6.44 p.m.

Chairman