

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**19<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), S. A. Webb (Vice-Chairman), C. Allen-Jones, S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, M. Glass, C. J. Spencer and P.L. Thomas (from Minute Item No. 31/16)

Observers: Councillor G. N. Denaro, Councillor S. P. Shannon, Hannah Phillips and Dorothy Wilson (The Artrix)

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. D. Poole, Mr J. Cochrane, Ms L Wood, Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

29/16 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor R. J. Laight.

30/16 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillors C. Allen-Jones, P. L. Thomas and S. P. Shannon declared pecuniary interests in respect of Minute item 34/16 in their capacity as landlords of properties in the private rented sector located in Bromsgrove district.

There were no declarations of any whipping arrangements.

31/16 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday 8th August 2016 were submitted.

The Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. T. Cooper, asked for it to be noted that his update on the work of the previous meeting of that Committee should have been recorded as having been based on the content of both the agenda and minutes from that meeting.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on Monday 8th August 2016 be approved as a correct record.

32/16 **ARTRIX ANNUAL REPORT**

The Board welcomed the Director and the Chairman of the Artrix to the meeting and invited them to deliver a presentation containing an

overview of engagement and activity at the Artrix in 2015/16 and plans for the following financial year. During the delivery of this presentation the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration, with a number of points discussed in detail:

- During the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 72,924 people had attended the Artrix, including 25,717 children, young people and families.
- There had been 431 performances during the period, including 37 performances promoted by Bromsgrove Arts Alive.
- A total of 496 workshop activities had taken place during the period at the Artrix.
- The Artrix's 10th Birthday Artistic Programme had been delivered in partnership with Walk the Plank and Motionhouse Dance Company. Over 300 children, young people and families had engaged with the programme.
- The programme had aimed to raise funding for The Artrix and had managed to raise over £13,000, which was £3,000 more than the target.
- Live screenings of performances delivered by the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Ballet Live had continued to be screened at the Artrix alongside a lot of successful comedy performances and contemporary theatre productions.
- The Artrix New Generation Festival had engaged with 27 out of 39 state schools in Bromsgrove district since 2014, providing performances, workshops and other activities suitable for children and young people.
- HOW College offered a BTEC National Diploma in performing arts at the Artrix.
- The Artrix had used Catalyst and ACE investment in dance to offer dance residences to local students, which had involved working with professional dance companies.
- The Artrix became an official Fun Place on 3rd October 2015, offering family friendly arts and events themed activities.
- The Out of the Box Youth Theatre had launched a new section for junior participants in September 2015.
- A number of specific community events had taken place at the Artrix including an Ageing Well Day, which had been attended by over 100 people, Over 55s Cinema on a Friday and a Family Fun Festival, which had attracted 680 audience members in July 2015 and over 1,000 in August.
- Specific community events had been held to mark Black History Month, which had engaged with an audience of 80 people and involved a screening of the film *The Colour Purple*, and LGBT History Month which had been attended by over 110 people and included a showing of the film *Pride*.
- Worcestershire County Council (WCC) had invested £30,000 in the Artrix which had been used to fund a new full-time Marketing and Fundraising Officer. This was a one off payment from WCC but it

was noted that the Fundraising and Marketing Officer's post to be sustainable and self-funding.

- A Fundraising Strategy and Audience Development Plan had been produced for the venue.
- Average attendance figures during the autumn season had been at their highest since records began in 2012. A total of 60 per cent of all tickets were now sold online and The Artrix had a mailing list of 17,000.
- Audience segmentation had been reviewed which had revealed that the majority of customers lived in Bromsgrove district.
- The Artrix had many volunteers who undertook a valuable role. A new Volunteer Co-ordinator had been employed to develop and refresh the Council's volunteering scheme.
- A total of 25 new volunteers had recently attended a session organised by the venue's Volunteer Co-ordinator and work was being undertaken to specifically attract younger volunteers.
- In April The Artrix won the What's On Award – Best Small Arts Centre in Worcestershire.
- There had been a change in governance arrangements for The Artrix with a new Director and the number of representatives on the board from HOW college and the Council reduced to 2 per organisation whilst 3 new community representatives had been recruited.
- Artrix the Next Decade had been launched on 28th April to promote the venue's new fundraising campaign and strategic priorities.
- The venue's Business Plan was in the process of being redrafted. Detailed within the new plan would be the new priorities for the Artrix for the next 3 years.
- Greater use would be made in future of digital technology to increase young people's engagement.
- There were plans to develop the existing programme at The Artrix to include more family and children's theatre productions and activities.
- In the future there were plans to deliver more challenging projects that would help to engage with hard to reach groups.
- The Artrix was aiming to produce their own work for young people with a company of emerging artists focusing on specific health and wellbeing problems.
- The Artrix was looking to diversify sources of funding and would be making applications to the Arts Council England, various Trusts and Foundations for grants. Business sponsorship would also be explored in future as a potential source of funding going forward.
- The Artrix was aiming to work in partnership with other organisations, including within the education and health sectors, with a view to deliver specifically funded projects. For example the involvement of arts bodies in social prescribing work within the community.
- The difficult budgetary situation for local authorities and the impact that this might have in the long-term on the availability of Council finances to support The Artrix.

- The potential to access funding and other forms of support from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Members were advised that this had been identified as a potential source of support and options for enhanced working were being explored by local arts partnerships.
- The maintenance costs of the building and the need for capital investment in the long-term. Members were advised that the roof had been repaired and renovation work would be undertaken on the doors and drains.

At the end of these discussions the Board

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

33/16

### **STAFF SURVEY 2016 - RESULTS AND ACTIONS**

The Head of Business Transformation and Human Resources and Development Officer presented a report detailing the feedback provided in the staff survey undertaken in April 2016. Whilst presenting the report the following matters were raised for Members' attention:

- The latest staff survey had followed the format of the previous survey in order to enable officers to compare and measure the results.
- There had been a decline in the proportion of staff completing the survey, from 33 per cent of staff in August 2013 when the survey was last conducted to 25 per cent in 2016.
- Efforts had been made to disseminate information about the survey and to encourage staff to respond, including provision of paper copies to staff who did not have access to a computer.
- When comparing the results it emerged that a number of improvements had been achieved since the previous survey including an increase in awareness of the Council's strategic purposes and underpinning operational purposes.
- The feedback was also encouraging in respect of staff confidence about reporting mental health and wellbeing difficulties. Officers suggested that the significant action taken in the past few years to address this, including the Time to Change initiative, had had a positive impact on this.
- However, some areas had been identified which were concerning including a reduction in staff reporting that they had the skills to do their job well, a decrease in staff reporting that they felt they could meet the needs of their customers and a fall in the number of employees reporting that they had a good working relationship with colleagues.
- A programme board, to be chaired by the Chief Executive, had been established to co-ordinate work to address these problems.
- There had also been 3 working groups established to address people management, meeting customer needs and organisational culture respectively.

- Heads of Service had been provided with data pertaining to staff within their teams, though all responses had remained confidential and had not identified individual respondents.
- The Heads of Service would be expected to identify 3 areas requiring improvement for their service areas and to devise action plans to address these.
- All action plans would need to be presented to the programme board for consideration.

Once the report had been presented Members discussed a number of areas in detail:

- The reasons why there had been a reduction in response rates and the extent to which this was concerning.
- The comparable level of response rates at other local authorities and within the private sector and the potential to obtain benchmarking data.
- The organisational culture at the Council and the impact that this might have on willingness amongst staff to complete the survey.
- The potential to offer incentives to encourage a greater proportion of staff to complete the survey in future.
- The approach that had been taken to comparing responses in 2013 to those in 2016 and the need to take into account the differences in the number of respondents when doing so.
- The inclusion of data from staff employed by both Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council in the completed responses. Members were advised that this survey had been conducted jointly as the majority of services were shared between the 2 Councils.
- The number of questions that had been included in the survey and the extent to which this might have discouraged some employees from taking part due to concerns about the time that would be required.
- The potential for different sections of the survey to be circulated on a quarterly basis in order to reduce the number of questions that staff needed to answer at any given time.
- The resource implications of undertaking staff surveys on a quarterly basis.
- The focus of the 3 working groups and whether these would address every area of concern in terms of the organisational structure at the Council.
- The provision of status meetings for staff, the frequency of team meetings and the extent to which this impacted on employees' willingness to take part in initiatives like a staff survey.
- The arrangements in place to ensure a consistent approach across the organisation to Personal Development Reviews.
- The implications of the staff survey results for overall performance at the Council.

- The possibility of using a traffic light system in future reports to help Members assess progress compared to previous staff survey results.
- The potential to set targets to address in respect of the survey feedback, which could be monitored in relation to future surveys.
- The option for the survey to be facilitated by an external independent body and the extent to which this might encourage more staff to complete those surveys.
- The cost implications of working with an external body and the need for any costs to be clarified before taking a decision about future facilitation arrangements for the survey.

During consideration of this item Members discussed the potential suitability of this subject for further scrutiny. Particular concerns were raised about the progress that had been achieved since the previous survey was circulated and the decrease in the number of responses and Members commented that a detailed investigation might help to address some of the underlying issues. The appropriate forum for this investigation was considered and whilst Members acknowledged that the Board could review the matter there was general consensus that a Task Group would be in a better position to review this subject in detail.

The specific focus of an investigation of this matter was also considered. As part of the investigation Members agreed that it would be useful to review the feedback contained in completed surveys. This would include considering the work of the programme board. It would also be useful to consider lessons that could be learned in order to influence future versions of the survey and to improve participation. In line with standard practice the terms of reference would need to be outlined in a topic proposal form.

The relevance of the subject to Redditch Borough Council, due to the shared nature of the survey, was also briefly considered. Members concurred that as this involved staff working for both authorities and a scrutiny investigation could have implications for both Councils the subject might be appropriate for consideration as a joint scrutiny Task Group. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Redditch was due to meet on 25th October and could be invited to consider the Board's suggested terms of reference and to decide whether to take part in this proposed joint exercise. In advance of this date the Chairman confirmed that he would contact the Chair of the Redditch Committee to discuss the matter further.

Following further discussions the Board

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) A Task Group review of the staff survey be established;
- (2) Councillor S. R. Colella, in consultation with the Democratic Services Officers, complete a Topic Proposal form detailing the proposed terms of reference for the review;

- (3) The proposed terms of reference be circulated electronically for the approval of Members of the Board in early October; and
- (4) Redditch Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approached about the possibility of undertaking this review as a Joint Scrutiny Task Group exercise.

34/16

### **PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT**

The Chairman of the Preventing Homelessness Task Group, Councillor C. J. Bloore, presented the findings of the group and its recommendations and a number of key points were highlighted:

- The review had been launched following the Board's consideration of proposals in respect of the future of Burcot Lodge.
- At the start of the review £15,000 had been set aside in case any issues were identified during the Task Group which might benefit from that funding.
- As part of the review changes to welfare had been explored as well as the implications for residents, Council services and partner organisations.
- Housing was increasingly challenging at both the national, regional and local level and innovative local solutions would help people who were struggling to secure accommodation.
- It was in the Council's interests to secure a range of housing solutions, particularly as temporary accommodation could be expensive.
- Evidence had been obtained from a range of sources, including interviews with Council Officers, representatives of VCS organisations and the relevant Portfolio Holders for Housing and finance respectively.
- The first recommendation, in respect of a local authority lettings agency, had been made following investigation of arrangements in place at other local authorities.
- There were various models of local authority lettings agency that could be introduced, including the potential to work in partnership with Redditch Borough Council.
- Officers were suggesting that time should be provided to enable them to investigate this matter in further detail to ensure that the most appropriate model of local authority lettings agency was introduced in the district.
- The second recommendation, in respect of the homelessness grant, had been proposed as Members were aware that in the past the grant had not always been allocated to addressing homelessness when the full budget had not been spent in a given year.
- In light of further forthcoming welfare changes, and as the grant was not ring-fenced, the group had considered it to be expedient to suggest that the Council restrict future spending of the grant to address homelessness only.

- The group's third recommendation detailed suggestions about which types of organisations and projects should be prioritised when the grant was distributed in future.
- Consideration had been given to proposing that that grant be allocated to specific organisations but following consultation with Officers it had been suggested that the group should advocate funding in line with specific themes.
- This recognised volatility within the VCS and the potential for partnership working arrangements to emerge over time.
- The final recommendation proposed that the £15,00 which had been set aside at the start of the review, should be allocated to the Essential Living Fund (ELF) to assist people in need.
- Councillor Bloore thanked the other Members of the group, Councillors S. J. Baxter, S. Shannon and R. Smith for their hard work and the Democratic Services Officers for their support.

Officers clarified the following key points which had been raised when the report was considered at a recent meeting of Leaders' Group:

- Councillor R. Smith had participated in the review but had stepped down when he had been appointed to the Cabinet and had not taken part in the meeting when the group's recommendations were agreed. This needed to be reflected in the group's final report.
- A request had been made for the group's fourth recommendation to remove the words "...which has been reserved for use at the discretion of the Group..."

There was general consensus among Board Members that the proposed amendments should be made to the report. In addition, a number of points were raised by Members during consideration of this item:

- The level of detail contained within the report and the importance of the investigation.
- The potential for further information to be added as an appendix to the report in respect of the numbers of homeless people in the district.
- The extent to which an appendix detailing the number of homeless people would contain accurate information, given the number of 'sofa surfers', particularly amongst young people, living in the district.
- The potential for the Board to receive updates in future concerning the number of homeless people in the district to enable Members to monitor progress.
- The valuable work of St Basil's and the Basement Project to support young people at risk of homelessness.
- The important work of Fry Housing Trust in supporting people who had been through the criminal justice system or who were at risk of offending.



- The proportion of affordable housing that needed to be provided in large developments in accordance with the Council's Planning policy.

The Chairman advised that Councillor Bloore would be standing down from the Board after this meeting. However, given his role in chairing the review Members agreed that Councillor Bloore should attend Cabinet on behalf of the Board to present the group's final report and recommendations.

**RECOMMENDED** that subject to the amendments detailed in the preamble above the four recommendations detailed in the group's final report should be submitted for the consideration of the Cabinet; and

**RESOLVED** that the board should receive updates on a biannual basis in relation to homelessness numbers within the district.

(At the start of this item there was a brief 5 minute adjournment whilst the IT equipment was activated to enable Councillor Bloore to deliver his presentation).

35/16

#### **FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE**

The Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group, Councillor L. C. R. Mallett, provided an update on the work of the group to date and presented the group's proposed terms of reference.

The Board was advised that 5 Members had originally been appointed to the Working Group; Councillors Mallett, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. Smith and P. L. Thomas. Following his appointment to the Cabinet Councillor Smith had stood down from the group creating a vacancy. Councillor S. J. Baxter volunteered to fill this vacant position.

The Chairman advised that at the first meeting of the group Members had considered the terms of reference for the group. Consideration had also been given to the contents of the Council's Efficiency Plan and the group had been particularly interested in the detail underpinning that overarching plan, including new ways of working and the extent to which risk would be taken into account. The proposed management review had been discussed and Members had noted potential options for the Council.

At the latest meeting of the group the Council's Capital Programme, borrowing costs, reserves and budget virement had all be discussed. In several areas Members had identified that additional information was required and it was anticipated that this would be considered at a meeting in October.

The group had already discussed and agreed a number of recommendations on various matters. These would be recorded in an interim report and presented for the consideration of the Board in

November with a view to referring proposals on to Cabinet the following month. In the meantime if any recommendations were agreed at meetings of the group which required urgent consideration these would be presented by the Chairman for the consideration of the Board as soon as possible.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) that the proposed terms of reference for the Finance and Budget Scrutiny Working Group be approved and adopted; and
- (2) Councillor S. J. Baxter be appointed to the Finance and Budget Scrutiny Working Group.

36/16

**MEASURES DASHBOARD WORKING GROUP - UPDATE**

The Chairman of the Measures Dashboard Working Group, Councillor S. A. Webb provided an update on Members' work to date and presented the proposed terms of reference for the group. The Board was advised that 4 Councillors had been appointed to the group; Councillors Webb, C. Allen-Jones, S. J. Baxter and C. J. Spencer. Members agreed that this should be revisited at the following meeting.

The Chairman advised that the group had held 2 meetings. At the first of these meeting the group had considered their terms of reference and had received an overview of the dashboard. The second meeting had been attended by members of the Policy Team who had provided a detailed presentation on the subject of the dashboard.

Members were hoping that they would be able to access the dashboard directly on their iPads by the date of the next meeting of the group. During this meeting further consideration would be given to an option that had already been identified for each member of the group to mirror the Portfolio Holders and to take a lead on addressing specific strategic purposes.

**RESOLVED** that the proposed terms of reference for the Measures Dashboard Working Group be approved and adopted.

37/16

**WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE**

The Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. T. Cooper, advised that there had been no further meetings of HOSC since the last meeting of the Board.

38/16

**CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The latest edition of the Cabinet Work Programme was tabled for Members' consideration. The Chairman noted that the Review of CCTV in the District was already scheduled to be pre-scrutinised by the Board

and that many of the financial items detailed on the work programme would be considered by the Finance and Budget Working Group.

Members questioned the timing for future reports on the subject of membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The Board was advised that no item was scheduled on the work programme in respect of this matter and that the Council was awaiting further clarification regarding the timeframes for a local authority to become a member of the WMCA.

39/16

### **SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL**

Councillor C. J. Bloore presented a topic proposal form containing proposed terms of reference for a Task Group review of the Council's use of social media. Members were advised that the subject had been raised at a meeting of the Preventing Homelessness Task Group, when the potential for social media to be used more effectively to promote the support available from the Council to vulnerable residents had been considered. The Council used social media, including Facebook and Twitter, but it was suggested that more creative use could be made of these and lessons could be learned from other organisations.

The Board was advised that the Council's Communications Team had been contacted about the proposed review and were very enthusiastic about the suggestion. Opportunities to make further use of social media had been identified and Officers were keen to discuss these with Members. Whilst it was noted that these could potentially be discussed with the Board, a Task Group activity would provide an opportunity to explore potential uses of social media for a range of services and to investigate how other organisations, in the public, private and Voluntary Sector, used social media to engage with customers. A review could also explore how social media could help the Council to engage more effectively with hard to reach groups.

As this would be the last meeting when Councillor Bloore would be a Member of the Board it was noted that he could not be the chairman of a Task Group, though it would be possible for him to serve on the review. Members agreed that the Chairman should be identified at the following meeting, though volunteers to serve on the Task Group could be identified prior to this date.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) The Review of the Council's Use of Social Media Task Group be launched;
- (2) Officers invite Members to express an interest in participating in the review; and
- (3) The Board consider and appoint a Chairman at its next meeting in October 2016.

40/16

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board considered the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. Reference was made to the Planning Backlog Data Monitoring Update report, which was received by the Board on a quarterly basis. Officers were asked to investigate the potential for the data covering the period up to 31st March 2017 to be made available for Members' consideration at the meeting of the Board in April.

The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

Chairman