Bromsgrove District Council Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services



Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

2016-2017



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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

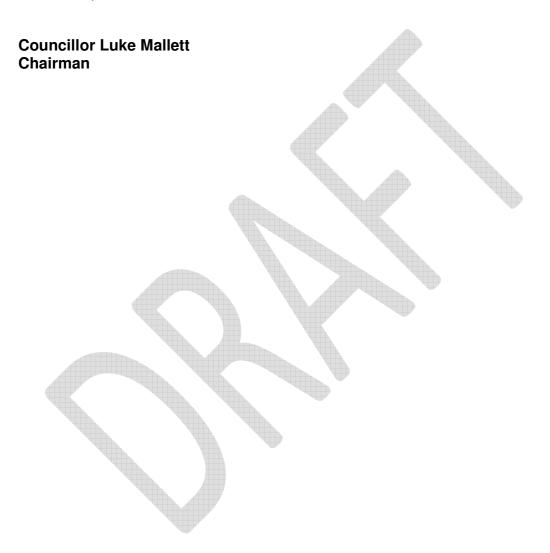
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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board's Annual Report for 2016-2017.



INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which outlines our work during 2016/17 and provides general information on the overview and scrutiny processes at Bromsgrove District Council.

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the democratic decision making process in local Councils, where elected Councillors outside of the Cabinet can contribute to shaping Council policy, community well-being and accountability. This is done by reviewing Council services and policies, community issues and key decisions and making recommendations for improvement.

The four key principles of Overview and Scrutiny, as defined by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), the lead charitable organisation supporting Overview and Scrutiny in the country, are:

- Provides a 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy makers and decision-makers.
- > Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard.
- Is carried out by 'independent minded Members' who lead and own the scrutiny role.
- Drives improvement in public services

The Members of the Board consider these principles when selecting topics to investigate whether it is holding the executive to account, reviewing policies, policy development or scrutiny of external bodies.

<u>MEMBERSHIP</u> (The Board is made up of 11 Members)



Cllr Luke Mallett – Chairman



Cllr Shirley Webb (Vice Chairman)



Cllr Sue Baxter (until 3rd March 2017)



Cllr Chris Allen-Jones



Cllr Chris Bloore (until September 2016)



Cllr Steve Colella





Cllr Malcolm Glass



Cllr June Griffiths (from Arch 2017)



Cllr Rod Laight (from September 2016)



Cllr Charles Hotham (from 6th March 23017)



Cllr Phil Thomas



Cllr Roger Smith (until August 2016)



Cllr Michael Thompson (from October 2016)

THE ROLE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the Council's political structure and it plays a vital role in improving the services that people of the District use, whether as a resident, employed here or just visiting. It does not just look at the way the Council does things, it can look at anything which affects the lives of people within the District and it allows citizens to have a greater say in Council matters.

Overview and Scrutiny allows Councillors to review and scrutinise decisions, look at existing practices and make recommendations to help ensure the residents of Bromsgrove District receive excellent services. The aim is to ensure Overview and Scrutiny adds value to the Council's decision-making process and makes a positive contribution towards policy development.

The detailed terms of reference and procedure rules for the Overview and Scrutiny Board can be found at Part 5 and Part 12 of the Council's Constitution. The Council's Constitution can be accessed by using the following link.

<u>http://svmoderngov:9072/ieListMeetings.aspx?Cld=329&Year=0</u> (Please click on the latest date to access the most reason version of the Council's constitution).

Number of Meetings

The Overview and Scrutiny Board try to meet on a monthly basis, during 2016-17 a total of 10 meetings were held.

REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD

The Board continues to receive regular updates in order to monitor the progress of recommendations it has made, through the Recommendation Tracker. This contains both recommendations put forward by Task Groups and accepted by the Cabinet, together with recommendations put forward by the Board itself. In respect of Task Groups the Board does, where necessary, receive an update report 12 months following acceptance of its recommendations.

During the course of the year the Board received a number of reports and made a number of recommendations. There has been continued support from the relevant Portfolio Holders this year, with regularly attendance from a number of them when a report which relates to their portfolio has been presented to the Board. This has given them an opportunity to hear first-hand the debate and ideas that the Board have put forward. On a number of occasions, whilst the Board has not made any recommendations in respect of an item it has endorsed and supported recommendations which would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting.

Staff Survey Update

The Board had previously received the results of the staff survey back in June 2014 and in light of the discussions at that meeting had placed an update report on its Work Programme as the Board was keen to ensure that the actions arising from the survey had been dealt with and received an update in February 2016. The update included details of a further survey which would be sent out in April 2016.

The results of that second survey were received at the Board's meeting held in September 2016 and from those results it was agreed that a Task Group would be formed and Redditch Borough Council would be invited to participate in a joint scrutiny exercise. This would be the first piece of joint scrutiny work carried out between the two Councils but it was felt as the majority of staff was part of a shared service that any recommendations made would potentially impact on both Councils. Further details of the work of this joint scrutiny task group can be found later in the report.

Dolphin Centre – Work with Displaced Groups

The Board has held a number of meetings where Leisure Services and in particular the replacement of the Dolphin Centre have been discussed at length. In more recent months the Board have been concerned that due to the lack of a Sports Hall facility in the new Leisure Centre (due to open in the Autumn of 2017) there may be a number of community sports groups who would not be able to continue. It was understood that the Council was in negotiations with BAM at the nearby High School to hire "on block" their sports hall facilities during the evenings and weekends. The purpose of this item was therefore to ensure that the Council's Sports Development Team was providing sufficient support to those groups to ensure that alternative accommodation was being provided or they were being sign posted to other facilities if they preferred. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services attended both the February and March meetings of the Board with a comprehensive update and confirmed that he would attend the meeting in September 2017, prior to the opening of the new Leisure facility to ensure that this work had been completed to everyone's satisfaction.

Planning – Delegations Briefing

This item had been raised as a Notice of Motion at full Council in September 2016 and it had been suggested that it was an area which the Board could investigate further. The Board chose to receive a briefing from the Head of Planning and Regeneration on the subject before deciding whether it was something which warranted a more in depth investigation. This was received at the December 2016 meeting and following lengthy discussions which covered the background to the Notice of Motion together with delegations and the potential to improve the process in relation to non-material amendments (concerns were expressed about the subjective nature of these). The Board were happy with the outcome of the discussions which led to the Portfolio Holder for Planning Services arranging to speak to the Chairman of the Planning Committee and Planning Officers about how this could be improved.

CCTV Briefing Paper

This item had been picked up from the Cabinet Work Programme in June 2016 and after a number of months it was in fact removed from the Work Programme. However, the Board agreed that it was something which they would like look into in more detail and understand why the proposed review had been withdrawn. The CCTV and Telecare Manager therefore attended the December 2016 Board meeting and provided an update on some of the work that had been carried out and proposals to improve the CCTV process. At the end of the discussions Members agreed that there was a need to provide greater clarify around the process for applying for new CCTV cameras and how the outcomes of the process were communicated to the applicants. Members therefore agreed that a short sharp review should be carried out – full details of this can be found later in this report.

Review of the Council's Economic Priorities

Members were interested in looking at this particular item as it followed on from some of the work that had been suggested in the previous year's car parking task group. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development (who had previously been a Member of the Board and chaired the task group) attended the February 2017 meeting and together with the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration for North Worcestershire delivered a comprehensive presentation on the changing economy in the district. It was clear from the update received that the Council faces a number of challenges which impacted on the local economy. The Board therefore chose to retain this item on its agenda and requested a further update from the Portfolio Holder in April 2017. This has since been put back to the June 2017 meeting as the Portfolio Holder felt that she would be able to provide a more detailed report if given a little bit more time.

Scrutiny of the North Worcestershire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

The Board has a statutory duty to hold at least one meeting a year which covers the scrutiny of the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction (CDRP) partnership. In the case of Bromsgrove District Council this is the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership.

At its March 2017 meeting the Board considered a report from the Community Safety Manager which provided a comprehensive update in respect of the work of the North Worcestershire Community Partnership, which covered funding and projects which were being undertaken.

As the Community Safety Partnership had been a shared one, covering Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest for a number of years, at the January 2017 meeting the Board considered a report and put forward a proposal for joint scrutiny. It heard that this had taken place in the South of Worcestershire and had been successful. Whilst Bromsgrove Members were in agreement to this proposal, those in Redditch, after consideration of a similar report chose not to take up the option and whilst an approach was made to Wyre Forest, to date the Board does not believe that Wyre Forest's Overview and Scrutiny function has given the matter consideration.

General - Standing Items

The Board has continued to receive annual updates in respect of Write Off of Debts, Sickness Absence Performance, Making Experiences Count and Environmental Enforcement.

It has also received updates in respect of the Planning Application Backlog data. This was originally being monitored on a quarterly basis, but since improvements have been seen this was reduced to six monthly (agreed at the board meeting held on 31st October 2016) and without the need for an Officer to attend, but with the option for an officer and the Portfolio Holder to attend future meetings if any significant changes are noted within the data.

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (HOSC)

The Council's representative on this Committee must be a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and is required to provide the Board with regular updates on the work being carried out.

Up until March 2017 Councillor Brian Cooper has continued as the Board's representative, providing regular updates on what has been discussed at these meetings. Where appropriate the minutes from a relevant meeting have been provided for Members' consideration.

As the appointment to HOSC is a Council one, at the time of writing a replace for Councillor Cooper had not been made.

During the year Councillor Cooper highlighted the following areas and responded to questions from Members:

- Acute Hospital Services this has been discussed on a number of occasions due to a significant number of changes, which were originally temporary now being included within a consultation to which the Council responded to.
- The quality of Acute Hospital Services following concerns raised by the CQC Inspection Report in December 2015.
- The local scrutiny approach to the consultation for Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust Services
- The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Sustainability and Transformation Plan.
- Adult Mental Health Services
- Paediatric Services
- E-Cigarettes briefing
- Proposals for change in respect of funding for public health.
- Dental Services in Worcestershire
- Pharmacy Services
- Fast Food Outlets
- Stroke Rehabilitation Units
- Re-organisation of Health Visitors
- West midlands Ambulance Services
- A Review of urgent winter plans.
- An update on Sexual Health Services
- CQC's Section 29A Notice for Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

WORKING GROUPS – UPDATE

Following the review of the work of the Board at the April 2016 meeting, a number of areas of improvement were discussed. One of these was its role in scrutinising the budget and the other the role of performance monitoring. It was agreed that for 2016/17 the Board would set up a Finance and Budget Working Group and a Measures Dashboard Working Group. This would enable a dedicated group of Members to consider these areas in both more detail and a more timely manner, which would in turn allow them to feed through any recommendations to Cabinet more promptly.

The terms of reference for each Working Group were agreed by the Board. As this was the first time such Groups had been set up, those terms of reference also included details of a quorum and stated that Members must be members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, together with how recommendations could be made and would be fed back into the main Board.

A review of how both these groups have worked will take place at the April meeting of the Board, when a decision will be made as to whether they have been successful in achieving the outcomes set out in the terms of reference and whether they should continue.

Finance & Budget Working Group

Membership: Councillors Luke Mallett (Chairman), Sue Baxter (until 3rd March 2017), Steve Colella, Brian Cooper (until 10th March 2017), Charles Hotham (from March 2017) and Phil Thomas

This Group have met on 10 occasions and were particularly active in the weeks leading up to the budget setting. The Portfolio Holder for Finance has attended the majority of the meetings, together with the Executive Director, Finance and Resources. On occasions Heads of Service have been invited in to provide information on a variety of reports covering their areas.

The Working Group provided a written report to the Board meeting on 28th November, which included 12 recommendations from its first 7 meetings. These covered a variety of areas which the Group had received reports on over those meetings. This included the Efficiency Plan, Earmarked Reserves, Borrowings and the Capital Programme, Virements and the Asset Register (in particular this brought about a separate report on Low Cost Housing). The Group also looked at the fees and charges report in detail and discussed those in respect of Community, Environmental and Leisure services with the relevant Heads of Service.

The recommendations were considered by Cabinet following the Board's approval of them and a written response was presented back to the Board at its December meeting. Ten of the twelve recommendations were approved and were scheduled to be implemented by the start of the new financial year. Further information in respect of the two outstanding recommendations was provided with one of them being referred back to the Working Group for further discussion.

A second written report was presented at the 13th February meeting which showed that the Group had held a further 3 meetings and made 5 recommendations. The areas covered by those meetings included Savings and Additional income, Unavoidable Pressures and Capital Bids, together with Cost Recovery Statements for a number of areas within Leisure Services. At its meeting on 30th January 2017 the Working Group also considered the Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 – 2020/21 in full, prior to its consideration at Cabinet the following day.

Being able to consider a number of reports in more detail than ever before and prior to their consideration by the Cabinet has allowed Members of the Board via the Working Group to play an integral part in the budget setting process.

Measures Dashboard Working Group

Membership: Councillors Shirley Webb (Chairman), Chris Allen-Jones, Sue Baxter (until December 2016), Rod Laight (from January 2017) and Caroline Spencer

After a slow start and issues with accessing the Council's Corporate Dashboard on their IPads Members have made the decision to look at the Dashboard at each of its meetings using the Officer's access via a sunray card. This has proved successful and the Group are beginning to look at the measures associated with each of the Council's strategic purposes in more detail, the aim being that in due course the officers responsible for the measures, together with the relevant Portfolio Holder will be asked to attend a meeting in order to discuss those measures and allowing the Group to put forward their ideas and/or recommendations to make improvements.

To date the Group have met on 6 occasions with its initial meeting concentrating on the terms of reference, followed by a meeting at which a detailed presentation of the Dashboard and its workings, which gave Members a good understanding of its purpose and background information. As the Members look at the Dashboard in more detail they are beginning to gain a much better understanding of how it works and how it could support the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in one of its key roles, that is of performance scrutiny.

TASK GROUP INVESTIGATIONS & SHORT, SHARP REVIEWS CARRIED OUT

The detailed final reports of all these investigations can be found on the Council's website within the Overview and Scrutiny section.

Preventing Homelessness in Bromsgrove Task Group

Membership: Councillors Chris Bloore (Chairman), Sue Baxter, Helen Jones, Sean Shannon and Roger Smith

Deadline: September 2016

At its meeting held on 18th January and following a number of presentations and update reports in respect of the Burcot Lodge Emergency Homeless Unit disposal, the Board agreed that a Short Sharp Review should be established to look further into the effects of both the disposal of this unit and the impending changes to the welfare system imposed by central Government.

The Review Group held its first meeting on 25th February and its terms of reference were considered by the Board at its meeting on 29th February 2016. Following the initial meetings, it soon became clear to the Group that this was a complex subject and in order to do it justice it was requested at the March 2016 meetings of the Board that the review be extended to a full Task Group exercise. It would then present its findings and any recommendations to the Board meeting to be held in September 2016.

It should be noted that Councillor Jones stood down from the Group following her appointment at Chairman of the Council and Councillor Smith stood down following his appointment to the Cabinet.

After an in depth investigation the Task Group brought forward four recommendations, which were agreed by the Board and endorsed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 5th October, with a formal response being presented to the Board at its meeting on 28th November 2016.

Social Media Task Group

Membership: Councillors Rod Laight (Chairman), Sean Shannon, Michael Thompson and Les Turner

Deadline: June 2017

At its meeting held on 19th September 2016 Members considered a topic proposal put forward by Councillor Chris Bloore in respect of the Council's use of social media. This was something which had been discussed at 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 discussed. The Council's Communications Team had been consulted and they too were keen for this to be considered. The Board therefore agreed that a Task Group be established.

The Group held its first meeting on 30th November 2016 and have held a further five meetings to date. They have looked at a number of areas, interviewed the Council's Communications Manager and a reporter from the local free newspaper. A brief questionnaire was also sent to all Members in order to establish how they used social media, which received an excellent return rate. The Group are on track to complete their investigations and produce a final report for consideration at the Board's June meeting.

Strategic Review of CCTV - Short, Sharp, Review

Membership: Councillors Steve Colella (Chairman), Brian Cooper (until 10/03/17) and Cllr Michael Thompson

Deadline: TBC

Following receipt of a briefing paper on a recent review of the CCTV process (at the December 2016 meeting) Members agreed that it was an issue which warranted further investigation. A topic proposal was put forward at the January 2017 meeting and the Board agreed that a short sharp review would be carried out. Members were keen to ensure that the work the review carried out did not repeat that previously done and set three main objectives, including understanding and validating the process and monitoring of CCTV cameras and its ongoing review.

Unfortunately, due to Cllr Cooper moving on to the Cabinet, the Review has been left with only 2 Members. Following advice from Officers it was agreed that work of the Review would be suspended until a third Member could be found to replace Councillor Cooper. It was hoped the investigation would restart in the new municipal year.

JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INVESTIGATIONS

Increasing Physical Activity Joint Scrutiny Task Group

Bromsgrove District Council representative: Councillor June Griffiths (until 13/12/15) Deadline: March 2016

The Worcestershire County Council's (WCC's) Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) at its meeting on 26th February 2015 discussed the Worcestershire Public Health Annual Report 2014, a theme of which was to increase opportunities for participation in physical activity. This highlighted that "physical activity rates decrease quite steeply after the age of 45"... (although) ... "when comparing with the region and England, Worcestershire participation rates are relatively high". It also noted that "there is fragmentation of responsibility between County, District and national (Sport England) levels."

The County Council was keen to ensure opportunities to access sport and physical activity were available to all, and were interested to find out what impact the 2012 Olympics had had on participation rates.

Following Councillor Griffiths standing down from the Board it was agreed that due to the Task Group's work coming to a conclusion a replacement would not be sought. However, it was requested that the Chairman of the Task Group attend the relevant Board meeting to present the findings of the Group. There had been some delay in the final report being produced, which originally was given as December 2015, and was finally received by the Board at its meeting held on 27th June 2016; unfortunately the chairman of the Task Group was unable to attend due to other commitments. Although there were a number of recommendations made, the Board agreed simply to note the report.

Staff Survey Joint Scrutiny Task Group

BDC Membership: Councillors Steve Colella (Chairman), Caroline Spencer and Shirley Webb.

RBC Membership: Councillors Jayne Potter (Vice Chairman), Tom Baker-Price and Jennifer Wheeler

Deadline: September 2017

For the first time, Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils have joined together to carry out a joint scrutiny task group. The Staff Survey was an area which Bromsgrove Members had considered on a number of occasions in previous years and following receipt of the results of the most recent survey at its meeting in September 2016 Members agreed it was something which needed further investigation and would be suitable for joint scrutiny as the majority of staff were now part of a shared service. A topic proposal and a brief joint scrutiny protocol were considered by the Board at its October 2016 meeting. Following the agreement of the Board the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Cllr Colella attended the Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting putting forward its proposals. The Redditch Committee supported the proposal and the joint Scrutiny Task Group was formed.

To date the Group have met on 5 occasions and have alternated these meetings between both Council sites. Similarly, Councillor Potter, the Chair of Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee was appointed as Vice Chairman. Part of the protocol which was agreed also stipulated that a Member of each Council should be present at any meeting and the membership be made up of equal number of Members from each Council. As this was the first joint scrutiny venture it was also agreed that the membership should be made up solely of Overview and Scrutiny Board/Committee Members.

It is anticipated that the Task Group will present its findings to the September meeting of both Overview and Scrutiny functions.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

At its final meeting on 24th April the Board discussed its key achievements over the year and the work of the task groups and working groups. The Chairman also took the opportunity to thank Members and Officers for their hard work in supporting the scrutiny process.

In line with best practice Members considered actions that could be taken to improve the scrutiny process in future years. The Board were aware that the intrdouction of the Working Groups has lightened the load of the main Board's Work Programme and allowed them the opportunity to look at just one or two substantive items at those meetings without feeling the pressure of time constraints for each item. However, pre-scrutiny of items within the Cabinet Work Programme has continued to be a challenge, particularly as in many cases insufficient time from an item being added to the Work Programme to its consideration at Cabinet, was allowed so the Board were unable to add it to their own Work Programme in a timely manner. Equally, those timescales were not always adhered to which made it difficult for all those concerned to plan efficiently. Hopefully this will be addressed in 2017/18 following a recommendation from the Board to Cabinet in respect of this.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Overview and Scrutiny Board Meetings

Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings are open to the public. To find out more visit our website at <u>http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/the-council/overview-and-</u><u>scrutiny.aspx</u> or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Democrtic Services Officer.

Public Involvement

If you would like to have your say on issues being considered by Overview and Scrutiny or to suggest a topic for consideration you can email <u>scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk</u> or complete the form on the Council's website at <u>http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/the-council/overview-and-scrutiny/public-participation.aspx</u>

Giving Evidence

Members of the public or organisations with a special interest or knowledge about a particular topic being considered by Overview and Scrutiny can put forward evidence to a Committe or appear as a witness to give evidence for an investigation. If you think you or your organisation might be able to participate in an issue currently under review, please contact us.

If you have a personal issue with a Council service you may find it more useful to contact your local ward Councillor who can help you decide the best way to take it forward.

Contact Overview and Scrutiny

If you would like to find out more about any aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny Board then you can email <u>scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk</u> or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Democratic Services Officer.

Overview and Scrutiny Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services Bromsgrove District Council Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove B61 8DA

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''ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿਚ ਮੱਦਦ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ?'' ਵੁਰਸੈਸਟਰਸ਼ਾਇਰ ਹੱਬ [HUB] ਨੂੰ ਬਰੋਮਸਗ੍ਰੋ [Bromsgrove] ਵਿਖੇ 01527 881288 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ

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Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

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