

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

27TH MARCH 2017 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), S. A. Webb (Vice-Chairman), C. Allen-Jones, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Laight (present from Minute No. 101/16 to Minute No. 105/16), C. J. Spencer, P.L. Thomas and M. Thompson

Observers: Councillor M. A. Sherrey

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. J. Godwin, Ms J. Willis, Ms. B. Houghton, Ms. A. Scarce and Ms. J. Bayley

101/16

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors S. R. Colella, M. Glass and J. M. L. A. Griffiths.

The Chairman explained that Councillors J. M. L. A. Griffiths and C. A. Hotham had replaced Councillors B. T. Cooper and S. Baxter respectively on the Board. On behalf of the Board the Chairman thanked Councillors Baxter and Cooper for their contributions to the scrutiny process. Councillor Cooper's work as the Council's representative of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) in recent years was also recognised by the Board. Members were advised that as the appointment to HOSC was made by Council a replacement would be confirmed in April.

102/16

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor C. A. Hotham declared an other disclosable interest in respect of Minute Item No. 105/16 in that his wife's GP Practice, the New Road Surgery in Bromsgrove, had a symbiotic relationship with the Ryland Centre for use of the organisations' respective parking facilities.

103/16

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 13th February 2017 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 13th February 2017 be approved as a correct record.

SCRUTINY OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER PARTNERSHIP

The Community Safety Manager presented a briefing note which updated the Board on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership in 2016/17. During the delivery of this presentation the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Since May 2013 there had been a single Community Safety Partnership for the whole of north Worcestershire, covering Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest districts.
- The Safer Bromsgrove Group took an operational lead on behalf of the partnership in respect of the district.
- The Bromsgrove Town Centres Management Group was a sub-committee of the Safer Bromsgrove Group which focused on a range of matters including community safety in the town centre and links to economic regeneration.
- There was a statutory duty for the partnership to produce a three year rolling plan outlining how partners would address key crime and community safety priorities during the period.
- The partnership had links to the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). Although he was not a statutory partner he had a duty to co-operate with the Community Safety Partnership and vice versa.
- The West Mercia PCC provided funding to the Community Safety Partnership. The funding process was due to be reviewed and it was anticipated that this would lead to a more robust, outcome-based framework in future.
- There was a typographical error in the total figure that had been quoted in Appendix 2 to the report in respect of funding requests by the partnership to the PCC for 2017/18; this should have been recorded as £199,950.
- The partnership had proposed a series of projects to be funded using grants from the PCC. These had been identified based on available data.
- A number of county wide initiatives were being delivered in Bromsgrove district including the Safe Place Scheme.
- Based on available data Appendix 3 had been developed to enable Members to assess the frequency of particular crime types in Bromsgrove. Data had been provided for previous years and for both Redditch and Wyre Forest for comparative purposes.

The Board subsequently discussed a number of points in detail:

- The trends in crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) identified from the available data.
- The increase in domestic burglaries within the district. The partnership had analysed available data and found that many of these crimes were committed in areas bordering Birmingham and often involved theft of car keys from a property.

- The increase in Police patrols to address the higher crime levels in border areas of the district.
- The increase in shoplifting in Bromsgrove and Redditch and the use of the online Facewatch platform to enable retailers to share information about shoplifting. Members were advised that the Police managed this system and used it to help support businesses.
- The increase in cases of violence without injury and the types of crimes covered by this category. Officers advised that violence without injury applied to cases where an assault did not result in any form of abrasions to the skin (e.g. a push).
- The inclusion of crime type figures for HMP Hewell in the data for Bromsgrove district and the potential for these figures to be viewed separately. The Board requested that Officers circulate this information for Members' consideration after the meeting.
- The responsibility of the partnership for crime and ASB within HMP Hewell. Members were advised that HMP Hewell was a member of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership though various organisations in the criminal justice system had statutory responsibilities in respect of the prison.
- The links between the Safer Bromsgrove Group and the Street Pastors and the funding provided by the partnership to enable the Street Pastors to operate effectively in the district.
- The work of the Community Safety and Private Sector Housing teams in respect of illegal traveller encampments.
- The action undertaken to secure Churchfields Car Park, which had included a review of the physical security arrangements. These works had helped to make the site less attractive for youths who had previously committed ASB whilst gathering there.
- The availability of literature informing residents about the Safe Place Scheme. Officers explained that leaflets were available and were promoted to various local advocacy groups to help raise awareness.
- The decline in vehicle crimes during the last 12 months. Members were informed that this had been accompanied by a rise in burglaries involving thefts of car keys.
- The impact of the night time economy on levels of violence with injury and violence without injury and action that could be taken to address this. The Board was informed that the Bromsgrove Town Centres Management Group was working to establish a new Local Watch initiative.
- The number of Crime Prevention Managers in West Mercia Police, which had reduced from 6 to 2 for the whole county in recent years.
- The training that had been provided, both to Police Officers and members of the Community Safety team, to enable them to help support crime prevention initiatives.
- The impact of reductions in resources within the public sector on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership.

- The need for partners to work in innovative and different ways in the future to meet the needs of residents using existing resources.
- The partnership's links to the PCC and West Mercia Police and Crime Panel which held the PCC to account. Members were advised that the Council's representative on the panel was Councillor Sherrey who could raise issues on behalf of the Council during these meetings.
- The number of business crimes recorded for the period, which were relatively low compared to other parts of the county, and the type of crimes within this category. Members were advised that the business crime category was relatively broad and took into account any crime where there was a connection to a business.
- The board requested a breakdown of the cases that had been recorded as business crimes for the period.
- The work of the Bromsgrove and Redditch Schools Respect programme in a range of First, Middle and High Schools.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

105/16

DOLPHIN CENTRE - UPDATE ON WORK WITH DISPLACED GROUPS

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services delivered a presentation which updated Members on the work undertaken by officers to support groups that would be displaced following the closure of the Dolphin Centre (Appendix 1). Members were asked to note that a number of assumptions had informed the content of this presentation including:

- Daytime users of the sports hall at the Dolphin Centre had been consulted as they would be directly affected by its closure.
- The potential to provide alternative accommodation to groups that met in the evening had been reviewed by officers as part of a desktop exercise. Groups that met in the evening had therefore not yet been consulted.
- Bookings might be rescheduled depending on the programme, due to different start times.
- An assumption had been made that the agreement with BAM would proceed.
- There had also been an assumption that football sessions would be available through SBHS on the 3G Pitch.
- There had been an assumption that there would be a need to offer pay and play badminton on a daily basis.
- Finally there had been an assumption that where it was not possible for groups to use the new leisure centre or BAM's facilities we would look to use the Ryland Centre as a first option. However, it was accepted that there would be some groups that would prefer to meet at an alternative venue.

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

- The operator that would manage the new Leisure Centre would need to submit a programme to the Council before they commence operating the site.
- The age profile of participants in various community activities and the extent to which this had been taken into account by the Sports Development team when assessing potential slots for evening sessions. Officers advised that every attempt had been made to take this into account, though there remained some flexibility where needed.
- Officers would review the information provided by BAM to ensure no groups had been missed by the relocation.
- There may be an option for soft play activities and children's parties to take place at the new Leisure Centre; this would be at the operator's discretion.
- The length of slots that community groups would be able to book in the future was confirmed at 55 minutes per session.
- The potential for community groups to meet transfer to other leisure centres outside of the district was discussed. The Board was advised that the preference of most groups would be to continue to meet within the catchment area for the Dolphin Centre.
- The extent to which groups that already meet at North Bromsgrove High School had been consulted about the changes was discussed and Officers confirmed that priority was being given to current Dolphin Centre users.
- Officers covered details of the proposed agreement with BAM.
 - The length of the contract with BAM - 21 years in line with BAM's remaining contract with Worcestershire County Council.
 - The annual cost of the contract with BAM of £50,000, which would be transferred from the Council to the operator of the new leisure centre once this had been confirmed.
 - The period covered by the contract with BAM of 48 weeks. This provided time for BAM to meet various maintenance obligations.
 - The availability of BAM facilities during term times and examination periods.
- The risk that community groups' bookings at the Ryland Centre might be cancelled if the number of participants declined. Officers explained that the Ryland Centre had indicated they were interested in accommodating the displaced groups where possible.

Members thanked the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services and his Team for the detailed work which had been undertaken to ensure the impact on the community groups was minimised.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(During consideration of this item the Chairman invited the public to participate in the debate).

106/16

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group, Councillor L. C. R. Mallett, advised that there had been no further meetings of the group since the last meeting of the Board. However, following the resignation of Councillor Baxter from the Board and Councillor Cooper's appointment to Cabinet 2 vacancies had arisen in the membership of this group. The Board agreed that Councillor C. A Hotham should be appointed as a replacement.

The roles of the Finance and Budget and Measures Dashboard Working Groups during the year were also discussed during consideration of this item. These groups had both made a significant contribution to the scrutiny process and the Chairman suggested that this should be reflected in the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Annual Report 2016/17. As the groups were undertaking a lot of scrutiny work Members were asked to note that there might be the potential to cancel some scheduled meetings of the Board in 2017/18.

RESOLVED that Councillor C. A. Hotham be appointed to serve on the Finance and Budget Working Group.

107/16

MEASURES DASHBOARD WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

Councillor S. A. Webb, Chairman of the Measures Dashboard Working Group, explained that the group had held 2 meetings over the last 6 weeks. During these meetings Members had agreed to work as a group rather than to take responsibility for monitoring the measures for specific strategic purposes as originally envisaged. The group had reviewed measures associated with 'help me run a successful business' at their latest meeting and had found that some of the data was incomplete. At future meetings the group aimed to invite relevant Heads of Service and Portfolio Holders to discuss specific measures.

The group had made more progress in recent weeks because a solution had been identified in relation to the limited access that Members had had to the dashboard. Unfortunately Members still had limited access the dashboard on their iPads. This was an ongoing issue which the ICT team were trying to address. In the meantime Members had been provided with sunray cards to enable them to access computers at Parkside which had been installed in the Members' Lounge.

108/16

TASK GROUP UPDATES

The Board received updates in respect of ongoing Task Groups and Short Sharp Reviews.

a) Staff Survey Joint Scrutiny Task Group

In the absence of the Chairman of the group, Councillor S. R. Colella, Officers advised that there had been 2 meetings of the group since the last meeting of the Board had taken place. Members had considered information about staff sickness absence levels to find out whether there was any correlation with the feedback provided in completed staff surveys. Some of the data provided in respect of sickness absence levels had been inconsistent and therefore relevant Officers had been invited to attend the second meeting of the group to discuss this in further detail. The following meeting of the group would take place on 27th April when Members would brainstorm future areas to address.

b) Social Media Task Group

In the absence of the Chairman of the Social Media Task Group, Councillor R. J. Laight, Councillor M. Thompson provided an update on the work of the group. The Board was informed that the group had held a number of meetings. At the first of these meetings responses received from other Councillors to the group's survey had been assessed and it had been interesting to learn about the different ways in which Members used social media both in their personal and professional lives. At the latest meeting of the group Members had interviewed a representative of the Bromsgrove Standard and had learned a lot about the various ways in which social media could be used to engage with the public. There was the possibility that some of these techniques could be utilised to enhance the Council's approach to communications and consultation in future.

c) CCTV Short Sharp Review

In the absence of the Chairman of the CCTV Short Sharp Review, Councillor S. R. Colella, Officers explained that the group had held a meeting to discuss their terms of reference. Meeting dates and expert witnesses had been identified. However, following the appointment of Councillor Cooper to the Cabinet the membership of the group had been reduced to 2 Councillors. Officers advised that it was good practice to have at least 3 Members appointed to scrutiny reviews and that any Member who was not on the Cabinet could be appointed. As there were no volunteers during the meeting the Board agreed that all eligible Members should be invited to express an interest in participating in the group. In the meantime until the membership of the group had increased to at least 3 Councillors the meetings of the group would be postponed.

RESOLVED that

- (1) all Members not serving on the Cabinet be invited to express an interest in taking part in the CCTV Short Sharp Review; and
- (2) meetings of the CCTV Short Sharp Review be postponed until further Members have been appointed to the group.

109/16

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered the content of the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme for the period 1st April to 31st July 2017.

A number of concerns were raised by Members during consideration of the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme:

- The majority of the items listed on the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme were scheduled for the consideration of Cabinet in April 2017.
- As many of these items appeared to have been added since the last meeting of the Board there had been limited notice provided to enable Members to identify items that might have been suitable for pre-decision scrutiny.
- Unfortunately some items on the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme had been postponed for consideration, sometimes multiple times, which made it difficult to determine when the Board might undertake pre-decision scrutiny.
- Questions were also as to whether the proposed timing for consideration of items was realistic in all cases. For example Members suggested that the Alvechurch Parish Neighbourhood Plan would probably not be ready for consideration by the Cabinet in April 2017.
- Members suggested that Heads of Service needed to take more responsibility for items on the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme and to improve forward planning arrangements.
- There was a risk that the Board might need to resort to calling in important items which had been added to the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme with limited notice, particularly key decisions.
- Such an outcome would not be ideal as it could delay the implementation of decisions. Members therefore suggested that updating the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme so as to enable more pre-decision scrutiny would be preferable.

Members noted that the Burcot Lane Site Future Development, which had originally been scheduled for the consideration of Cabinet in April, had been postponed. The item remained on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. However there was the possibility that an extra meeting of the Board would need to be scheduled to enable Members to pre-scrutinise the report.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet Members work with senior Officers and Heads of Service to ensure that items are placed on the Cabinet

Leader's Work Programme in a timely manner so that the Overview and Scrutiny Board has the opportunity to identify items for pre-scrutiny.

110/16

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2016/17 was scheduled for consideration at the following meeting of the Board on 24th April. In advance of this meeting Members were asked to notify the Democratic Services Officers of any subjects which they felt should be included within the report.

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

Chairman