B R O M S G R O V E D I S T R I C T C O U N C I L

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

20TH SEPTEMBER 2017, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones (Chairman), C. J. Spencer (Vice-Chairman), C. Allen-Jones, S. J. Baxter, C. J. Bloore, M. T. Buxton, S. R. Colella, B. T. Cooper, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, R. L. Dent, M. Glass, J. M. L. A. Griffiths, R. E. Jenkins, R. J. Laight, L. C. R. Mallett, K.J. May, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, S. R. Peters, S. P. Shannon, C. B. Taylor, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson, L. J. Turner, K. J. Plank, M. J. A. Webb, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

41\17 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. A. Hotham and M. A. Sherrey.

42\17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

43\17 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19th July 2017 were submitted.

In relation to Minute No. 30/17 it was noted that the Vice Chairman and not the Chairman had made the announcement in respect of the Certificates of Achievement presented at Bromsgrove Sporting Football Club.

In relation to Minute No. 36/17 it was noted that Members had requested that any additional information presented at meetings, in respect of the Portfolio Holders' reports, should be provided to all Members prior to the Council meeting.

RESOLVED that subject to the preamble above the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19th July 2017 be approved.

44\17 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Chairman referred to the following:

- The Italian Night event being held on 11th October, in aid of her designated charity – there were still a number of places available.

- The Civic Service would be held on 8th October, all were welcome to attend.

- The Remembrance Day Service would be held on 13th November and further details would be sent out to Members in due course.

45\17 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader had no announcements.

46\17 **TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no public comments, questions or petitions on this occasion.

47\17 **AUDIT FINDINGS AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2016/17**

The recommendations from the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, in respect of the Audit Findings and Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 were proposed by Councillor M. J. A. Webb and seconded by Councillor B. T. Cooper.

Councillor Webb, as Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, presented the report and Minutes of the Committee held on 14th September, when this report had been considered. Members were reminded that they had all been invited to attend that meeting. This was the second year that the Audit Findings and Statement of Accounts had been considered by this Committee and the Chairman expressed his disappointment that only Members of the Committee had been in attendance at that meeting.

During presentation of the Audit Findings and Statement of Accounts Councillor Webb highlighted that the accounts had been submitted a month early in preparation for the revised deadline for local authority accounts which would be brought forward in 2018/19. The accounts were unqualified, and Grant Thornton, the external auditors, had recognised that improvements had been made from the previous year although there was still work to be done. The areas which were highlighted for further improvement were already being addressed through the senior management team and it was confirmed that a new Financial Services Manager had been employed and would take up his post shortly and that arrangements had been made for a secondment from Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council to cover the forthcoming maternity leave of the Chief Accountant.

A qualified value for money conclusion would be issued by the external auditor. Again improvements had been made but these were not sufficient to enable an unqualified conclusion to be given. This was

being addressed by the Executive Director, Finance and Resources in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling and regular reports would be received by the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee to monitor progress made.

During the following debate Members commented on a number of areas including:

- The seriousness of the position the Council was in and the areas which had been highlighted as needing further work. Particular attention was drawn to the poor quality of business plans.
- The budgeting issues which had been raised, including calculation of savings and the need for these to be improved to ensure that this did not happen in the future.
- The ongoing cost of Burcot Lane and the delay in its demolition.
- Whilst Members recognised that improvements were being made these were not fast enough in light of the seriousness of the situation.

Councillor Cooper, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling, responded to a number of the points raised and reminded Members that there had been positive feedback from Grant Thornton at the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meeting and that improvements had been made, although not sufficient. The problems had been acknowledged in July and actions taken to address these were already underway. Arrangements were being made for Heads of Services to meet with the Chief Executive, his Deputy and the Executive Director, Finance and Resources in order for every line of their budgets to be scrutinised. A new business plan template had been created to ensure uniformity and had been discussed with the external auditors.

The Leader also assured Members that the matter was being taken seriously and reiterated that the areas of concern were being addressed. He took the opportunity to thank the Finance and Budget Working Group for their support over the last 12 months and hoped that this would continue in order to meet some of the requirements in the report.

RESOLVED:

a) that the draft letter of representation be approved; and
b) that the Statement of Accounts 2016/17, including the Accounting Policies, be approved.

48\17 **RECOMMENDATION FROM THE LICENSING COMMITTEE**

The recommendations from the Licensing Committee in respect of the Street Trading - Designation of Streets were proposed by Councillor P. J. Whittaker and seconded by Councillor R. L. Dent.

Councillor Whittaker, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Cultural Services, Environmental Services and Regulatory Services, presented this report

and explained that the recommendations had arisen following consideration of a report at the recent Licensing Committee which proposed to designate all streets in the District as consent streets for the purposes of controlling street trading. Due process had been followed as detailed in the supporting report, which had included a public consultation. It was noted that no responses had been received in respect of this.

Councillor C. M. McDonald proposed an amendment that the recommendations be deferred and this was seconded by Councillor P. M. McDonald.

In proposing the deferral Councillor C. M. McDonald requested that there be a time to reflect and for more detailed information to be provided before a decision was made, and to look at the historical reasons why the current areas were designated.

Councillor K. J. May, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships, responded that the rescinding of the designated streets was in order to have more flexibility on days when the current market was not held.

Councillor C. M. McDonald commented that as there had been no responses to the consultation, then it would appear unnecessary to rescind the current designations. She also questioned the legal status of the street market and requested clarification on this point. It was believed that the street market was covered by the Market Charter and therefore did not fall within the remit of the designation. Clarification on this point was requested from the Legal Team.

The Chairman agreed to a short adjournment to allow for legal clarification to be sought.

Following the adjournment it was confirmed that the current street market was covered by the Market Charter and as such was exempt from the legislation referred to in the report and supporting recommendations.

On putting the amendment to the vote the amendment was defeated.

Following a brief further debate it was

RESOLVED:

a) that the Council passes the following resolution “Bromsgrove District Council resolves to rescind all existing designations of streets under Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and designates all streets in the District (as existing at the time of the making of the resolution and in the future) as consent streets with effect from 1st December 2017”; and

b) that officers be authorised to advertise the passing of the resolution in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 4 of the Local government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982.

49\17 **BUSINESS RATES POOLING PILOT**

The recommendations in respect of the 100% Business Rate Pilot Pool were proposed by Councillor G. N. Denaro and seconded by Councillor K. J. May.

The Leader presented the report, which provided detail in respect of the potential opportunities to participate in a 100% Business Rate Pool Pilot. It was explained that the timescales for this were very short and that a decision needed to be made by 27th October 2017. The proposal was for a Worcestershire Wide Pilot Pool, whereby 100% of business rates would be retained. The Council had the option to remain a member of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP's)Pool or to participate in the pilot. The pilot was dependant on all authorities in Worcestershire participating. Currently, Malvern, Redditch and Bromsgrove were not part of the Worcestershire pool, but had indicated that they were willing to join the pilot pool. The benefits of the new pool were highlighted within the report. The Leader advised that he had held discussions with the other Group Leaders and was grateful for their initial support in this matter and he acknowledged that if a joint decision could not be reached then a Special Council meeting would be convened to bring the matter back to Council.

Councillor S. J. Baxter thanked the Leader for being pro-active in discussing this matter in order to make the proceedings easier. She agreed that it was a complex subject and had appreciated the opportunity to discuss the potential implications in the final decision. The Section 151 Officer was given the opportunity to clarify that the Council also needed to decide by 27th October whether they wished to remain in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Pool, should the Worcestershire bid be unsuccessful. There was no other decision point within the process.

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett also thanked the Leader for the opportunity to discuss this matter prior to Council and advised that if the Council were able to improve on the current return for business rates then it was of benefit, but he also stressed that this was a complex issue which needed careful consideration and as such should be a decision made in consultation with all Group Leaders and not an officer decision. He was therefore in support of the recommendation and the option to hold a Special Council if necessary.

RESOLVED that the Council consider the information received to date on the potential opportunities to participate in a 100% Business Rate Pool Pilot covering Worcestershire and delegates the decision on the 2018/19 Business Rate Pool arrangements to the Executive Director Finance and Resources in agreement with the Group Leaders. In the

event that a decision cannot be reached the matter will be reported to a Special Full Council in October 2017.

50\17 **TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett, as the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, presented this report and in so doing highlighted that it had been a busy year for the Board. Particular input this year had been given from the two Working Groups. The Finance and Budget Working Group had fed its investigations into a number of areas and, following some early technical challenges the Measures Dashboard Working Group, chaired by Councillor S.A Webb, were now finally beginning to make some headway in looking at the various measures and overall performance of the Council and providing constructive feedback to the relevant officers. The creation of these working groups had allowed for a small number of Members of the Board to be able to look at areas in much more detail than had happened before and it was hoped that this work would continue.

Councillor Mallett also made reference to the task group work that had been carried out including completion of the Preventing Homelessness Task Group and work commencing on investigations of CCTV and the use of Social Media. The Board had also, for the first time carried out a piece of joint working with Redditch Borough Council, when Members from both Councils investigated the results of the staff survey.

Reference was also made to the sad passing of a former Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor Pete Lammas. He had been a well-respected Member who had contributed to Overview and Scrutiny for a number of years and would be missed.

Finally, Councillor Mallett thanked the Vice Chairman, all those Members who had served on the Board throughout the year and Senior Democratic Services Officers for their hard work.

The Leader also took the opportunity to give his thanks to the Overview and Scrutiny Board, as he had previously stated the work of the Finance and Budget Working Group in particular had been most useful and showed how scrutiny could work in a positive way.

51\17 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET**

Acquisition and Investment Strategy

The recommendations from Cabinet in respect of the Acquisition and Investment Strategy were proposed by Councillor K. J. May and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

Councillor May, as Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships, presented this report and in so

doing highlighted that within the Council Plan economic development was a key driver for the regeneration of the District as a whole and for the Council to work towards achieving financial stability and income generation. This Strategy would provide a resource to promote economic development and a framework to ensure the resources were allocated prudently. It was confirmed that any acquisitions would be within Bromsgrove District's boundaries to ensure that all benefits remained local.

Councillor Mallett proposed an amendment to recommendation (c) in that all business cases should be initially brought before a cross party panel of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for pre-scrutiny purposes before being referred on to Cabinet for a decision. On speaking to his amendment Councillor Mallett supported the proposal, which was a positive move for the Council but, highlighted the importance of any acquisitions being within the District and requested that if there should be any changes to the Strategy these should be brought back to the Chamber for further debate.

Councillor Baxter also spoke in support of the proposals and welcomed the innovative ways of helping our communities.

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the Acquisition and Investment Strategy be approved;
(b) That the Executive Director of Finance and Resources together with the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration (North Worcestershire) be responsible for identifying suitable opportunities and developing the viability appraisal and business case for the Council; and
(c) that all business case be brought before a panel of the Overview and Scrutiny Board before being referred to Cabinet for a decision.

Consultation responses to Wyre Forest District Council's preferred option plan and the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy

The recommendations from Cabinet in respect of the consultation responses to Wyre Forest District Council's preferred option plan and the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy were proposed by Councillor C. B. Taylor and seconded by Councillor K. J. May.

Councillor Taylor, as Portfolio Holder for Planning and Strategic Housing, introduced the report and explained that draft responses had been prepared due to the time constraints of the consultations.

In respect of the Wyre Forest District Council Plan he highlighted a number of areas of concern including the lack of detail in respect of Option A, where the sites referred to were positioned on main roads and the impact this would have on a number of areas in the District. It would

appear, from the consultation that no consideration had been given to the impact of the sites outside of Wyre Forest District.

Councillor Taylor went on to highlight a number of areas within the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy, which whilst welcomed, were believed to be very ambitious. In particular reference was made to the need for more car parking spaces, but not to where these would be located. It was hoped that all Members would take the opportunity to respond to both these consultations where they impacted on individual Wards.

During the following debate a number of issues were highlighted:

- The current levels of congestion on the roads which would be affected by the suggested sites of developments in the Wyre Forest District Council Preferred Option Plan.
- Concern over the extent to which Worcestershire County Council was addressing the impact growth had on the already busy roads in the District. There had been a larger than expected increase over recent years which would only increase further with these developments.
- The benefits of having both a western and eastern ring road if these plans were to come to fruition.
- The lack of Ward Councillor involvement in any issues around the impact of developments on surrounding areas and the need for investment in the infrastructure to accommodate further growth.
- How the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy appeared to be aspirational and the need for Worcestershire County Council to continue to invest in the rail network.
- The need for more south bound trains to stop at the Bromsgrove Train Station.
- The need for the BRUG and the Campaign for Rail to continue to be involved in rail developments in the District.

Councillor Taylor thanked Members for their input and assured them that their comments would be included within the responses where appropriate.

RESOLVED:

(1) the draft officer response to Wyre Forest Local Plan Review Preferred Option (as detailed in Appendix A to the report) be approved by Council, and submitted to Wyre Forest District Council as the formal consultation response; and

(2) the draft officer response to Worcestershire Draft Rail investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix B to the report) be approved by Council and submitted to Worcestershire County Council as the formal consultation response.

Provision by Bromsgrove District Council of a Garden Waste Service on behalf of Redditch Borough Council

The recommendations from Cabinet in respect of the provision by Bromsgrove District Council of a Garden Waste service on behalf of Redditch Borough Council were proposed by Councillor P. J. Whittaker and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

Councillor Whittaker, as Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Cultural Services, Environmental Services and Regulatory Services, presented this report which proposed that Bromsgrove District Council should operate a garden waste service on behalf of Redditch Borough Council, under a service level agreement.

During the following debate a number of areas were discussed in detail, including:

- Concerns in respect of how the report would be perceived, as it would appear the Council were providing the service to Redditch at "cost" yet the charge made to residents brought the Council a profit.
- The potential for Redditch Borough Council to make a profit from the service and the extent to which this was provided by this Council.
- The current investigation into shared services and the need for this work to be completed before any further shared service work be undertaken.

Following further discussion the item was deferred.

Treasury Management – updated borrowing limits 2017/18 to 2020/21

The recommendations from Cabinet in respect of Treasury Management, update borrowing limits 2017/18 to 2020/21, were proposed by Councillor B. T. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

Councillor Cooper, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling, introduced this report and reminded Members that the current borrowing limits had been authorised and operational since March 2017. There were two factors to take into consideration in respect of the current request; the benefits of paying the pension costs in a lump sum rather than on a monthly basis and the ability to make funds available in line with the Acquisition and Investment Strategy, both of which was approved.

A number of areas were discussed during the debate:

- Clarification around the pension borrowings and discounted payments.

- Some concerns were raise in respect of the size of the Council's borrowing and the financial position of the authority in general terms.
- Members were advised that these figures were not actual, but limits which were available to access if needed.
- It was highlighted that the figure in respect of the Acquisitions and Finance Strategy would also hopefully in time provide revenue which could be offset against the Council's borrowing.
- The ongoing management of investments and revenue – the Leader suggested that appropriate measures would be put in place when the need arose to ensure this was done.

Councillor Cooper advised that the Finance and Budget Working Group had taken time to scrutinise the pension payments which had been helpful and it may be that this avenue was used for the monitoring of investments and revenue in the future.

RESOLVED:

(a) that the Operational Limit for borrowing be increased as follows:-

	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m
Operational Limit brought forward	12.0	20.0	23.0	26.0
Add Pension Advance Payment	6.0	-2.0	-2.0	4.0
Add Acquisitions and Investment Strategy	2.0	5.0	5.0	8.0
Revised Operational Limit for approval	20.0	23.0	26.0	38.0

(b) that the Authorised Limit for borrowing be increased as follows:-

	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m
Authorised Limit brought forward	15.0	23.0	26.0	29.0
Add Pension Advance Payment	6.0	-2.0	-2.0	4.0
Add Acquisitions and Investment Strategy	2.0	5.0	5.0	8.0
Revised Authorised Limit for approval	23.0	26.0	29.0	41.0

Finance Monitoring 2017/18 Quarter 1

The recommendations from Cabinet in respect of the Finance Monitoring 2017/18 Quarter 1 were proposed by Councillor B. T. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

Councillor Cooper, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling explained that the Capital Programme be increased to show Section 106 Projects which had been detailed within the report. The inclusion of these within the Capital Programme had been discussed at a recent Finance and Budget Working Group meeting that he had attended.

RESOLVED that the 2017/18 Capital Programme be increased by £414k to include S106 Projects as included in Appendix 2 of the report.

52\17 **TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 6TH SEPTEMBER 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 6th September were received for information. The Leader suggested, and Council accepted, that the confidential minute detailed at item 18 of the agenda be included within these, as although the reports referred to were considered at both Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings in confidential session, there was nothing within this minute which warranted the need for restriction.

53\17 **TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER A REPORT FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE AND ENABLING**

As Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services, Councillor B. T Cooper, who had been in the position for only 6 months, presented his annual report and in so doing highlighted a number of key areas:

- The work of the Finance Team - there were 27 members of the team with an overall split 37% to Bromsgrove and 63% to Redditch. This was due largely to the housing stock held by Redditch.
- The accounts had been submitted early this year and reviewed by Grant Thornton.
- It was acknowledged that budgeting needed to improve and steps were being taken to address this.
- The work of the Finance and Budget Working Group had been a great success and Councillor Cooper was grateful to the Chairman and its Members for their support.
- There had been difficulties in recruiting to a vacancy in ICT and this had been addressed through outsourcing to an external supplier.
- Pressures on the Elections team following the calling of a General Election.
- The Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services Team's re-structure which had now been in place since 4th September and the introduction of a Commercialisation resource exclusively for Bromsgrove District Council.
- The Deputy Chief Executive was thanked for her briefing in respect of the Emergency Plan, which was currently being reviewed.

Councillor Cooper responded to a number of questions raised by Members during the debate which followed his presentation, which included:

- The introduction of Universal Credit and the potential problems which this may bring. Councillor Cooper had held discussions with the relevant Head of Service, but would ask for further assurances that the necessary resources were in place to deal with the changes expected.
- The audit of the Council's accounts for 2016/17 and the areas of concern which had been raised by the external auditors. Councillor Cooper reiterated his earlier statement that it was acknowledged that there were areas which needed improvement and that these were being addressed.
- In respect of the recent Elections, it was commented that there had been an issue with the signage at the Burcot Lane Polling Station and in respect of a Poll Clerk who had been a member of a campaign for a political group. Councillor Cooper was unaware of these issues and agreed to provide a response outside of the meeting.
- The Council's ability to pay its creditors in a timely manner.
- In respect of the Emergency Plan it was suggested that schools should be fitted with sprinklers – Councillor Cooper responded that this was the responsibility of the County Council, rather than the District.

Councillor Cooper took the opportunity to thank all staff for their help and support since his appointment to the Portfolio.

54\17 **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Question submitted by Councillor M. Thompson

"The cuts to the police imposed by the Conservative government have been felt acutely throughout the country. The crime on estates in my ward, Rock Hill, has been well publicised. Fly-tipping, burglary, drug abuse, drug dealing and prostitution have all been reported over the past year. Indeed, the local papers recently reported the arrest of a man wielding a hammer smashing a resident's door in. I raised awareness of such crimes over a year ago, which were subsequently referred to Safer Bromsgrove. The only outcome of a report by Safer Bromsgrove resulted in a hedge being trimmed by one foot. Does the leader agree with me that such action is an insult to those suffering such crimes and, does he agree with me, that, with such a response, Safer Bromsgrove is not addressing real crime issues in Bromsgrove?"

The Leader responded that Safer Bromsgrove was a sub-group of the statutory Community Safety Partnership and Bromsgrove District Council was a responsible authority member. The Council had a duty to work with other partners to reduce crime, disorder and all associated

issues to improve community safety for local residents. Safer Bromsgrove facilitated the local delivery of this partnership duty, bringing together all responsible authority agencies, groups and partners to look at community safety issues in the district.

Safer Bromsgrove received a referral to look at crime and community safety issues in the Rock Hill area following Councillor Thompson's original request for CCTV in the Ward. Safer Bromsgrove's Community Safety assessment focused on the areas specified by Councillor Thompson, namely Rock Hill main road, the alleyway through to Morris Walk opposite the Greyhound pub and the alleyway through to Austin Road lock-up garages.

Crime and anti-social behaviour data analysis and face-to-face consultation with residents was carried out at these locations to identify any community safety issues that partners could resolve. As a result of the Community Safety assessment of the area the following actions had been taken by Safer Bromsgrove partners.

- In consultation with residents, the hedge opposite Albert Road bordering the highway from Housman Close was trimmed by BDHT to increase natural surveillance of this alleyway. Residents stated that they wanted the hedge to remain as it provided a noise and sight barrier from the traffic on the highway. Following engagement with a particular resident whose property adjoined the alleyway to Morris Walk, the hedge at this point was reduced by 18 inches by BDHT along a distance corresponding with the frontage of the resident's property. The resident supervised this reduction so that it met his requirements as a screen whilst allowing BDHT to open up the area to natural surveillance.
- The same resident, in collaboration with his neighbour on the other side of the alleyway, removed or trimmed vegetation from their respective gardens to again open up surveillance of the alleyway. This included cutting down a large tree and hedgerow which had substantially improved lighting and natural surveillance.
- In relation to this alleyway and the alleyway from Austin Road to Rock Hill, the Council's Place Team confirmed that they were litter picking and emptied bins on a regular basis in the area and did not find it to represent a location with significant problems.
- BDHT repainted an unsightly garage door at the Austin Road site and their Community Environmental Manager continued to regularly monitor the area for fly-tipping and graffiti. The mount that was providing access to the garage roofs was removed and anti-climb paint would be applied to key points on the garages as an additional deterrent. The area was visited as recently as Friday 15th September and there was no evidence of any fly-tipping and the area was reasonably clear.
- BDHT had also commissioned the Council's Place Team to conduct a clean-up of the garage area and removed the earth

banking at the side of the garages at the top of the alleyway, which was also being used to access the roofs. These works were financed by BDHT.

- The car park at the rear of the former Greyhound pub and the pub itself accounted for a significant proportion of crime reported in the area when it was open. The pub had since closed and had been boarded up, with the perimeter secured by fencing.
- It was suggested that the railings at Morris Walk could be removed but this would cause problems for elderly and disabled residents who would have to use the footpath with no supporting hand rail. In consultation with residents it was agreed that the rails were an essential requirement for access which outweighed the occasional instances where young people used them to sit on. The area was being regularly monitored and the group was not aware of any reports of anti-social behaviour relating to the railings.

It was worth noting that the Community Safety Project Officer was solely funded by the Safer Bromsgrove group to work specifically on community safety issues in Bromsgrove District. Without this external resource, the level of co-ordination, consultation and liaison would not have been possible and the officer had over 30 years' experience of working in the field of crime reduction. Alongside the environmental improvements and partnership co-ordination, West Mercia Police carried out a number of actions to reduce criminal activity in the area which at the time was limited to a small number of offenders, some of whom were identified as coming from the West Midlands area.

Safer Bromsgrove was working as a partnership addressing a number of crime and anti-social behaviour issues across the town, including crime linked to the night time economy, alcohol-related disorder, Hate Crime and youth anti-social behaviour. Safer Bromsgrove used crime, data and partner information to allocate limited resources to the areas where they would have the greatest effect. This is a long established and nationally recognised method of problem solving called the SARA process and had led to Safer Bromsgrove having one of the most well attended and best supported partnerships in Worcestershire. They were working together to address real issues of crime across the District; with officers responding quickly and appropriately to a wide variety of concerns from multiple locations. Effective solutions to crime problems could be found by working together with residents, community members and staff on the ground to devise interventions and improvements that were sustainable, prevented crimes taking place and kept people safe and feeling safe. Finally, it should be noted that the crime figure for this area during July 2017 was zero.

Question submitted by Councillor M. T. Buxton

"The colossal costs of protecting the former Council House, Burcot Lane gives concerns to all members of this Council. While recognising recent moves to dispose of the building, has the Leader considered the

excellent example of "Protection by Occupation" introduced by Worcestershire County Council as a temporary measure at former Finstall First School Aston Fields, where homeless persons take on role of guardians (not tenants) of the building on a short term agreement thus reducing vandalism, security costs and putting a much needed roof over heads of unfortunate Bromsgrove residents?"

The Leader responded that he had not considered this and confirmed that a written report would be prepared and provided to all Members.

55\17 **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

New Homes Bonus

Members considered the following notice of motion submitted by Councillor P. M. McDonald:

"This Council immediately ceases the practice of double accounting, by charging £2,000 administration for the transfer of New Homes Bonus Grant of £27,000 from last year to this year's account thus reducing the amount of monies available to the public. The Council is guilty of sharp practice which has no place in local government."

The motion was proposed by Councillor P. M. McDonald and seconded by Councillor C. M. McDonald.

Councillor P. M. McDonald referred to the Cabinet minutes of 6th September when it was highlighted that £2,000 had been deducted from the New Homes Bonus Grants Scheme to cover the cost of administration and carrying forward funds from the previous year's scheme.

Councillor S. A. Baxter, as Chairman of the NHB Community Grants Panel, responded that this was not sharp practice as had been indicated but that the officer had prepared a detailed schedule of time spent on administrating the scheme as a whole and this had been included in the earlier report which had reviewed the scheme and been considered by Cabinet earlier in the year. However, it was acknowledged that it might have been more appropriate to have deducted the charge from the overall New Homes Bonus funds as opposed to that for the Grant Scheme and this would be suggested for any future years.

The Leader agreed that with hindsight the administration cost should have been deducted from the overall grant funding and this would be the case in future. A brief further debate then took place.

On being put to the vote the Chairman declared the motion to be defeated.

Too Many Cars in Bromsgrove

Members considered the following notice of motion submitted by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett:

"Council notes that even Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) potentially flawed highways survey data from 2017 shows large uplifts in traffic volume over the past few years over historic levels.

Council further notes that on some roads especially on the west of town the actual observed growth is much higher than the previous projections from Worcestershire highways' now discredited models.

Council resolves to commission an urgent independent review of all WCC input into current development strategy and any local highways strategy, including the analysis and report around the need for a Western distributor road for Bromsgrove."

The motion was proposed by Councillor L. C. R. Mallett and seconded by Councillor M. Thompson.

During presentation of his Notice of Motion Councillor Mallett highlighted the vast number of traffic surveys which had taken place and the impact of roadworks on these. He provided data on a number of areas, including:

- Dependence on car ownership across the District was very high (Bromsgrove is ranked sixteenth out of 326 English districts in the 2011 census for the availability of cars and vans for household use and tenth for the proportion of workers who chose to travel to their place of work by car).
- In the thirty years between 1981 and 2011 the number of households in the District increased by 27%, with the average number of cars owned by each household increasing by 43% and the total number of cars and vans owned by residents increasing by 82%.
- The only major road investment in the west of Bromsgrove in that time was the roundabout on Stourbridge Road towards Barnsley Hall and the short length of road there that was planned as the first part of a potential link between Stourbridge Road and Birmingham Road.
- Worcestershire County Council (WCC) had forecast that between September 2014 and May 2017 traffic in Bromsgrove would decline by 0.25%. The May 2017 traffic surveys showed that traffic in Bromsgrove had in fact increased by 7.5%.
- Between 2012 and May 2017 Whitford Road southbound traffic increased by 16% and northbound by 15%. Between 2013 and May 2017 for the Kidderminster Road west of the Whitford Road junction, westbound traffic increased by 16% and eastbound traffic increased by 28%.

- Based on WCC's background and development growth assumptions up to 2022 the IDP improvements proposed by WCC at the Waitrose junction would result in traffic flows across the junction being 28% greater than the operational capacity of the junction.

Councillor Mallett also highlighted a number of key points in respect of a western distributor road in that the Adopted Bromsgrove District Plan covered the years 2011 to 2030 but the IDP only identified the infrastructure that WCC deemed necessary to meet the initial growth up to 2023, WCC had not undertaken any design or modelling work to demonstrate that the IDP improvements could be delivered and would mitigate the impact of major developments. It was also highlighted that the WCC distributor road feasibility study and the IDP did not consider the impact of development traffic generated by a number of other areas such as the regeneration of the town centre and development of the eastern side of Kidderminster.

In responding to the Notice of Motion, Councillor C. B. Taylor, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Services, gave agreement to a number of the areas which had been raised, however he advised that there was a great deal of data available and that the Council had engaged Mott McDonald to analyse this together with officers and that this would take some time and the opportunity should be provided to consider this before deciding on what, if any, action needed to be taken. There was a meeting of the Strategic Planning Review Group, to which all Members had been invited, on 26th September, where it was suggested it would be more appropriate for this matter to be discussed in detail.

During the following debate a number of areas were discussed in more detail:

- The need to talk to and listen to residents who would be affected by developments in the future.
- Mistakes which had been made in the past and the impact of these, together with the need to ensure that this did not happen again.
- Allow Mott McDonald to analyse the data available before deciding what further action the Council should take.
- The impact of the roadworks on the data which was gathered in May 2017.

The Leader suggested that a report be prepared and presented to the November Council meeting which would give both officers and Mott McDonald the time needed to carefully consider the data which was available.

Following further debate and assurances from the Leader in respect of a report being presented to Council in November, Councillor Mallett agreed to the motion being withdrawn.

NJC Pay Claim

Members considered the following notice of motion from Councillor M. Thompson:

"NJC basic pay has fallen by 21% since 2010 in real terms NJC workers had a three-year pay freeze from 2010-2012. Local terms and conditions of many NJC employees have also been cut, impacting on their overall earnings. There are growing equal and fair pay risks resulting from this situation

The council therefore supports the NJC pay claim for 2018, submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council workers and calls for immediate end of public sector pay restraint. NJC pay cannot be allowed to fall further behind other parts of the public sector.

This council also notes the drastic ongoing cuts to local government funding and calls on the government to provide additional funding to fund a decent pay rise for NJC employees and the pay spine review.

This council therefore resolves to call immediately on the LGA to make urgent representations to government to fund the NJC claim and the spine review and notify us of their action in this regard write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor supporting the NJC pay claim and seeking additional funding to fund a decent pay rise and the pay spine review meet with the NJC union representatives to convey the support for the pay claim and the pay spine review."

The motion was proposed by Councillor M. Thompson and seconded by Councillor P. M. McDonald.

In presenting the Motion Councillor Thompson took the opportunity to express the Council's gratitude to those officers who he felt were under-valued and over worked following the cuts and pay restrictions that they had faced in recent years.

During the following debate reference was made to the public sector's lack of a pay increase since 2010 and the impact this had had on some of the lowest paid workers, who were also faced with increased workloads due to the cuts made by central government. This had put them under immense pressure and the time had come to show support for those valued workers by lifting the restrictions on pay increases and allowing them to freely negotiate a reasonable salary in the future.

The Leader understood the challenges faced and supported the Council's employees. He explained that the appropriate avenues would be explored to ensure that a satisfactory outcome would be reached. The Council would continue to work with the LGA to ensure this was the case and the Leader felt it was not necessary to support this particular motion.

Councillor Cooper, as Portfolio Holder for Finance, ICT and Enabling Services, also responded that all Council staff were at least receiving the living wage or more and an increase of 1% had been factored into the forthcoming budget at a cost of £107k. He highlighted the cost to the Council of any additional pay increase and the impact to the Council's finances, which were already under pressure. He suggested it was therefore more appropriate to leave the negotiations to the NJC.

On being put to the vote the Chairman declared the motion to be defeated.

Affordable Housing

Members considered the following notice of motion from Councillor C. J. Bloore:

"Council notes the shortage of affordable homes in the Bromsgrove District.

Council notes the challenges facing Bromsgrove District Council in attracting and retaining young people in the local area due to local above average housing prices.

Council notes the challenging local private renting situation in the Bromsgrove District area.

Council believes it should be an integral part of the Councils economic strategy to best ensure a housing market that meets our economic needs.

Council resolves to ensure that on developments of over fifteen dwellings or more a minimum of 40% of units should be affordable."

The motion was proposed by Councillor C. J. Bloore and seconded by Councillor P. M. McDonald.

In presenting the Motion Councillor Bloore made reference to the recent Green Paper on the quality and number of social houses being built, in particular the need for 1,560 affordable homes in the District. Members were reminded of a recent Task Group report and recommendations in respect of this and his disappointment in the slow progress which had been made since the review concluded. Reference was made to the record of the Council for building affordable homes on new developments and the numbers to be increased. Consideration had previously been given to this being 40% per development, however this had been amended within the Local Plan and was now stated as "up to 40%". If the Council wished to move forward with its current plans to regenerate the town centre and support residents then it needed to ensure that there were sufficient affordable homes available for young people in order to allow them to live and work here.

Councillor Bloore requested an amendment be made to the motion in that it should refer to 10 houses and not 5 as stated. The amendment was accepted.

During the following debate a number of points were highlighted in detail:

- The number of developments which had taken place in the District with a limited number of affordable homes included within them.
- The missed opportunities which would have addressed the need for affordable homes.
- The impact on those residents who were born and bred in Bromsgrove.
- The limited availability of private rental accommodation and its cost.
- The potential impact of the introduction of Universal Credit on those on low incomes within the District.

Councillor S. A. Baxter proposed an amendment to the Motion; in that in order to give this matter full consideration it should be referred to the Strategic Planning Review Group which was due to meet shortly. This would allow a more detailed discussion to be held with all relevant information being made available to Members and any conclusion from that Group being brought back to full Council in due course. It was noted that the Strategic Planning Review Group was made up of a core Membership but all Members had been invited to attend. Members were also encouraged to bring forward sites which they believed to be suitable for development and these would be given consideration, as it was acknowledged that this was an area which needed to be addressed in the future in order to meet the needs of those living in the District.

Councillor Bloore indicated that he would be happy for the amendment to be made.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared to be carried.

The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

Chairman