

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**21ST FEBRUARY 2018, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors 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, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Laight, L. C. R. Mallett, K.J. May, C. M. McDonald, P. M. McDonald, S. R. Peters, S. P. Shannon, M. A. Sherrey, C. B. Taylor, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson, L. J. Turner, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

83\17 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies from Councillors J. M. L. A. Griffiths, H. Jones, R. Jenkins, K. J. Van der Plank and M. J. A. Webb.

84\17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Monitoring Officer advised members that guidance from the DCLG stated that Members did not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the setting of the Council Tax. However members would need to consider whether they wished to declare any interests in the context of the budget setting and that the need to declare was a matter for their own consideration.

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett declared an interest in respect of his position as a Trustee for the Basement Project, who received funds through the Council's budget process. Councillor M. A. Sherrey also confirmed that she was a Trustee of the Basement Project. Councillor R. J. Laight declared an interest due to also being a Trustee of the Basement Project and also the Chairman of the Bromsgrove Scouts Association who were also to receive funds through the budget process.

The Monitoring Officer went on to refer Members to item 11 on the agenda and in particular Councillor Bloore's notice of motion in respect of pension rights. It was suggested that Members may wish to consider granting a dispensation to all Members in order to vote and debate this matter and it was likely that many Members would be affected by this.

**RESOLVED** that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Section 33, a dispensation be allowed to Members who have a disclosable pecuniary Interest to be able to vote or debate on the matter put forward by Councillor Bloore.

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## **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018 were submitted. A number of areas of clarification were sought in respect of the following:

- Minute No. 73/17 Councillor Taylor, as Portfolio Holder for Planning and Strategic Housing had advised that he would provide further information in respect of the applicants who had not met the relevant criteria. This had not been provided and Councillor Taylor apologised as there appeared to have been some misunderstanding with the Senior Democratic Services Officer in respect of who would provide this. Councillor Taylor gave a brief overview of the information requested and confirmed that it would be forwarded to Councillor C. McDonald as soon as possible.
- Minute No. 72/17 it was confirmed that this would be addressed within the Leader's Announcements.
- Minute No. 76/17 Councillor C. J. Bloore asked if the Leader was aware of classes being cancelled at the new Leisure Centre. The Leader advised that he was not and that he would look into the matter.
- Minute No 76/17 Councillor M. Thompson questioned whether the options appraisal previously referred to and expected to be received by mid-February was available. The Leader confirmed that it was not currently available but that when it was it would be provided as detailed in the minutes.
- Minute No. 82/17 Councillor L. C. R. Mallett asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Strategic Housing whether he would like to comment in light of the recently released report in respect of the Birmingham overspill. Councillor Taylor said he was not able to comment as the document had only just been released and was over 200 pages long. He confirmed that Members would be briefed at the Strategic Planning Steering Group meeting which was due to take place on 26<sup>th</sup> February to which all Members were invited, with Parish Councils being invited to a briefing on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018 be approved as a correct record.

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## **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Vice Chairman, on behalf of the Chairman highlighted the following forthcoming events which would be held in aid of the Chairman's chosen charity, Newstarts:

- 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018 Skittles night to be held at the Fountain Inn, Clent commencing at 7.30 pm. Details of this had already been circulated.

- 20<sup>th</sup> April 2018 Civic Dinner to take place at the Kings Norton Golf Club details of which would be sent out shortly.

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**TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader made the following announcements:

- Cabinet changes – it was confirmed that Councillor M. A. Sherrey's portfolio had been amended to Health and Well Being and Environmental Services, whilst Councillor P. J. Whittaker's portfolio had been amended to Leisure and Cultural Services, Regulatory Services and Community Safety.
- At the recent Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting Councillor C. J. Bloore had been appointed as the District's representative of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Mallett reminded the Leader of a previous question in respect of Councillor Sherrey's disclosable Pecuniary Interest and whether she had taken any part in the discussions in respect of the merger of the Police and Crime Commissioners office with the Fire Authority, in light of the Council's own view that this should not take place. The Leader confirmed that Councillor Sherrey had abstained and Councillor Sherrey also confirmed that she had taken no part in any such discussions.

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

There were no comments, questions or petitions from members of the public on this occasion.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET**

**Fees and Charges**

The recommendations from the Cabinet in relation to the Fees and Charges report were proposed by Councillor B. T. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Cooper, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, advised Members that the Medium Term Financial Plan had been prepared on the basis that additional income would be generated from fees and charges. He also reminded Members that the report had been deferred at the previous meeting to allow for answers to the questions raised to be given. Members were also given the opportunity to submit further questions and invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February, at which all Heads of Services were present, to ask further questions. The fees and charges were unchanged from those previously presented.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed the following areas in more detail:

- The increase in charges for the Parkside Suite despite the level of hire being less than at the previous site, despite the Council's aim to be more commercial. Councillor P. Whittaker, Portfolio Holder Leisure and Cultural Services reminded Members that the reason for this had been well documented and reminded them that at the previous site the Spadesbourne Suite had been independent to the Council Chamber and was therefore more readily available for hire. It was hoped, that following changes to the rooms available this would free up the suite in future.
- The formulation of some sort of strategy which would allow for an operational review of each area rather than looking at the fees and charges as a whole, particularly as in some areas there was the opportunity to be competitive. It was difficult to look at the fees and charges as a whole without having a view of the wider picture.
- The increase in charges for Lifeline and the impact of this on the most vulnerable residents. Councillor Sherrey, Portfolio Holder for Health and Well Being responded advised that this charge had been benched marked and was lower than most. It was appreciated that it impacted on the most vulnerable and each application was considered on its merits and where necessary concessions were granted.
- Cemetery charges for children – concerns were raised in respect of a charge being made for exclusive rights of burial for a child grave space. It was understood that there may need to be a charge for this, but it was suggested that a nominal charge of perhaps £1 would be more appropriate. Councillor Cooper agreed to look into this outside of the meeting.
- Whether an appropriate mechanism could be put in place to ensure that charges were considered individually and that in some cases the Council had the monopoly on the service and therefore residents had no option but to pay.

Councillor Cooper thanked Members for their input.

**RESOLVED** that all fees and charges that are included within Appendix 1 of the report and which have a proposed increase/decrease for 2018/19 of over/under the current agreed budget assumption of 2.8% be approved.

### **Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19 – 2021/22**

The recommendation from the Cabinet in relation to the Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19 – 2021/22 were proposed by Councillor B. T. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Cooper, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources advised Members that the Council was required to approve a Treasury Management Strategy each year. It had adopted the Treasury Management Framework and Policy

recommended by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) and it incorporated the investment strategy required under the Department of Communities and Local Government Investment Guidance.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas in more detail, this included:

- The amount of borrowing the Council will have committed to by 2020 in comparison to the Council's financial position a number of years ago.
- The impact on residents, often the most vulnerable, of increased charges and the provision of few services. The outsourcing of the Leisure Centre was given as an example.
- The interest rate forecast and the potential for the Council to have to pay financing charges of in excess of £1m by 21/22 if the borrowing was at the level suggested.

Councillor Cooper acknowledged the comments made by Members and would respond, where necessary, outside of the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) that the Strategy and Prudential Indicators at Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and
- (2) that the Treasury Management Policy at Appendix 2 to the report be approved.

**Pay Policy Statement**

The recommendation from the Cabinet in relation to the Pay Policy Statement was proposed by Councillor B. T. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Cooper reminded Members that this was a statutory document which the Council was required to produce each year. Councillor Cooper confirmed that the levels of remuneration were nationally determined by the National Joint Council (NJC). Salary points above grade 11 were determined locally using an external assessor, West Midlands Employers, which was an organisation co-owned by 32 West Midlands Councils. It was noted that no employee in a substantive post had a salary below the living wage and the ratio of lowest paid employee's pay to the Chief Executive was 1:8.3 which was well below the recommended maximum ration of 1:20. It was highlighted that the report could not address concerns in respect of the management structure, which would be addressed starting with the Corporate Peer Review whose interim report was being discussed later in the week.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas in more detail, including:

- That the amount paid to chief officers was a matter of public interest and that between Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils the cost of the senior management team (11 people) was almost £1m.
- Concerns as to whether there was a need for such a large senior management team and the need for a formal management review.
- The need to review the proportion of officer time split to establish whether the current level of 50/50 was still valid.
- The size of the payroll in comparison to the budget and whether this was sustainable in light of the budget constraints that had and would continue to be imposed on the Council by Central Government.

Councillor Cooper noted the points made by Members and confirmed that both the structure and split would be addressed in the coming year and reaffirmed that this was not directed at particular officers, who continued to be a good job in difficult circumstances.

**RESOLVED** that the Pay Policy as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

### **Medium Term Financial Plan**

The recommendation from the Cabinet in relation to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 – 2021/22 and Council Tax setting were proposed by Councillor B. T. Cooper and seconded by Councillor G. N. Denaro.

In proposing the recommendations Councillor Cooper, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources reminded Members that they were considering the Council's revenue position and its capital programme for the years 2018/19 to 2021/22 and that the Council was required to produce a four year financial plan. He went on to highlight that the financial environment in which the plan had been drawn up was extremely challenging and difficult, with a number of pressures, including the loss of revenue support grant for 2018/19 – it was noted that the Council had received a transitional grant of £114k in the current year. However, it was noted that in 2019/20 a tariff adjustment (negative grant) of £740k per annum would be payable to the Government and this was projected to be payable for the following three years. It was understood that the issue of the tariff adjustment was to be reviewed in the spring and it was hoped that this would lead to a reduction in the payment to Central Government.

Other areas of uncertainty and potential further reductions were New Homes Bonus Grant and the impact of the Localisation of Business Rates which had now been deferred until 2020/21. The impact of the fair funding review was also due to be implemented in 2020/21. There had also been a number of unexpected pressures including the

withdrawal of £25k by Worcestershire County Council in respect of customer access services.

The Local Government settlement allowed District Councils to raise Council Tax by up to 3% without referendum and the Cabinet had agreed, with reluctance, to suggest raising it by 2.99% subject to approval at this meeting. This would allow for the need for only £9k to be drawn down from balances and would allow for services to be maintained.

Due to so many unknowns and variables Councillor Cooper reiterated to Members that it was difficult to plan for the three years following 2019/20 to 2021/22. Cllr Cooper explained that the increase in Council Tax was regrettable however, it was important to note that the Council's services would be maintained. Members were reminded that they had all had the opportunity to ask questions of officers around the detail of the Medium Term Financial Plan at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 12<sup>th</sup> February and again at the Cabinet meetings on 8<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> February.

Councillor Cooper took the opportunity, on behalf of all Members, to thank officers of the Council for their input to the Medium Term Financial Plan and paid particular tribute to the Executive Director, Finance and Resources and her team for their efforts in producing the plan and supporting him in his role as Portfolio Holder.

Councillor L. C. R. Mallett reiterated the comments made by Councillor Peter McDonald earlier in the meeting and raised concerns around the sustainability of the Plan after the first year and the inability to provide accurate figures for a number of reasons, which had been highlighted, in particular:

- The shortfall over the 4 year period.
- The borrowing of £40m and the interest that this would mean the Council had to repay.
- The long term impact of the negative grant – £750k being given back to Central Government. It was understood that Bromsgrove was one of the top 15 authorities which was in this position.
- The potential to put pressure on the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to address this.
- Pressures – the funding needed to cover the work which was being carried out by Mott McDonald and whether this could be claimed back from Worcestershire County Council.
- It was also highlighted that even more work would be needed to be carried out by Mott McDonald and the potential for legal proceedings to be instigated.
- The use of an outside provider to run the new Leisure Centre, whilst it was likely at its most profitable.
- The additional cost of a Sports Hall facility, which had not been included within the Plan and the cost of this would be covered.

- The potential to withdraw from/re-negotiate the Shared Service agreement with Redditch Borough Council.

Councillor S. J Baxter responded that her Group were not putting forward an alternative budget but raised a number of concerns, which had previously been highlighted. Financial and Budget Working Group had carried out detailed investigations into the finances of the Council and had received some useful information particularly in respect of cost recovery for particular areas of the Council. From the papers provided at this evening's meeting it was clear that whilst the 2018/19 figures were attainable, as had previously been stated; the following years were simply "guestimates". The following points were made:

- Savings and pressures – a review of budget efficiencies in respect of what was important to residents.
- Avoidable pressures – Business rates at Parkside for example, was the result of a decision made by the Council, which could have been handled better, similarly the potential now for a Sports Hall to be built and the cost in comparison to what it would have been had it been included in the original plans.
- The way in which the percentages in respect of the precepts was highlighted within the report. The way in which that from parish councils was shown, gave the impression that this was much larger than it actually was.

Members went on to debate the report further covering a number of areas in more detail, including:

- Where the funds would come from to cover the cost of a sports hall.
- That it appeared Members were being "drip fed" with information in respect of the budget and the changes which had been made over a number of weeks.
- The £20m borrowing in respect of the Investments and Acquisitions Strategy and the limited income anticipated from any investments.
- The Council having to pay back £750k under the tariff adjustment.
- New Homes Bonus (NHB) – this had been put in place to support those communities which had been affected by growth, yet the Council had only recently chosen to give any of these funds back to those communities.
- Those residents who would suffer most from the impact of the increase in Council Tax.
- The loss of funds from Worcestershire County Council in a number of areas and the NHB grant which they received in comparison to that at District level.
- How in previous years savings had been found above those expected which, potentially could have been reflected in any Council Tax increase.



- The potential to use S106 monies for a sports hall to be built, not necessarily on the current site.

The Leader responded to comments from Members and made particular reference to the tariff adjustment (negative grant). It was hoped that following a review which would take place in due course that this would be reduced, if not removed. It was important that the frontline services continued to be protected, without draining balances. It was acknowledged that there were a number of serious challenges ahead for the Council. The Finance and Budget Working Group had continued to play an active role in scrutinising the finances of the Council and the budget and it was further hoped that its role would be expanded as the commercialisation agenda progressed.

Councillor Cooper briefly summed up and thanked Members for their comments and acknowledged the challenges that the Council faced.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 – 2021/22.

For the recommendations: Councillors Allen-Jones, Cooper, Deeming, Denaro, Dent, Glass, Laight, May, Sherrey, Taylor, Thomas, S. Webb and Whittaker (13).

Against the recommendations: Councillors Baxter, Bloore, Buxton, Hotham, Mallett, P. McDonald, C McDonald, Peters, Shannon, Thompson and Turner (11).

Abstentions: Councillor Colella (1)

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) that the additional income / efficiencies as attached at Appendix 1 be approved:

2018/19 £ 580k

2020/21 £ 53k

2021/22 £272k

- (2) that the unavoidable pressures as attached at Appendix 3 be approved:

2018/19 £ 540k

2019/20 £ 346k

2020/21 £200k

2021/22 £200k

- (3) that the Revenue bids as attached at Appendix 2 be approved:

2018/19 £165k

2019/20 £15k

2020/21 £15k

2021/22 £15k

- (4) that the Capital Programme bids (to exclude the energy efficiency programme) as attached at Appendix 4 be approved:  
2018/19 £1.293m  
2019/20 £999k  
2020/21 £1.940m  
2021/22 £1.245m
- (5) that the unavoidable Capital Bids in relation to the energy efficiency programme be approved:  
2018/19 £110k  
2019/20 £110k
- (6) that the funding from balances be approved :  
2018/19 £ 9k
- (7) that the Increase of Council Tax by 2.99% (£6.29 pa) per Band D equivalent for 2018/19 be approved.
- (8) that the budget savings and pressures for 2018/19-2021/22 are subject to change due to the potential impact of changes to service delivery and the localisation of Business Rates together with any future changes to New Homes Bonus be approved.
- (9) that following the decision at Council on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the sum of £80k is made available from balances to fund potential Hardship cases in relation to Council Tax Support in 2018/19 be approved.
- (10) that the Council Tax resolutions for 2018/19 as attached at Appendix 5 to the report be approved.

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**TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 7TH FEBRUARY 2018**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2018 were received for information.

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**TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER A REPORT FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Councillors Thompson and Mallett asked the Monitoring Officer whether it was appropriate for this report to be considered in light of it being deferred at previous meetings. It was noted that the inclusion of Community Safety within the portfolio had been removed.

As the report had been included within the additional papers, the Vice Chairman agreed to a five minute adjournment to allow Members time to familiarise themselves with the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing, Councillor M. A. Sherrey, presented her annual report and in so doing, highlighted a number of areas:

- A new call handling platform had been installed for Lifeline
- Over 250 new customers had signed up to the Lifeline service.
- The Bromsgrove Partnership in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for the district. It brings together organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.
- The Partnership operates a Strategic Board with a number of Theme and Sub Groups underneath it and made up from representatives from a number of organisations.
- Community Wellbeing Theme Group – covers Health and Wellbeing, Children and Young People and Ageing Well.
- Connecting Families – this approach, which the Partnership was leading on, was now starting to be rolled-out in Bromsgrove. The initial focus being on falls for the elderly which were the largest cause of emergency hospital admissions in the district.
- Safeguarding – as a Ward Councillor or representative of the Council everyone had a duty to act if they had concerns. Training had been provided for all Members in respect of this and it was noted that there had been limited attendance at the sessions provided.
- Early Help – this had been renamed as Parenting and Family Support. The contracts with Worcestershire County Council had been in place since December 2016. Leaflets in respect of the service had been placed in the Members' Room.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas in more detail, these included:

- The commercialisation of the Lifeline Service referred to and where any income raised was spent. It was confirmed that any surplus was re-invested back in the service.
- Members were urged to get involved in the Safeguarding aspect.
- Looked After Children – particular concerns were raised in respect of the number who became homeless and those with disabilities, over 18 years of age.
- The reduction in fostering grants and the changes to the contracts which now meant foster carers were classed as self-employed. Councillor Sherrey was not aware of these changes and agreed to look into the matter further outside of the meeting.
- The work of the Partnership and particularly the Connection Families Group and the partnership working that was taking place, with Parish Council involvement. Working in partnership was highlighted as an important way to ensure that services continued and Members were urged to promote and encourage such partnerships.
- It was highlighted that support in respect of Council Tax for looked after children but the support was not guaranteed when

those children were moved outside of the County boundaries and the need to address this with Worcestershire County Council. Councillor Sherrey confirmed that she would ensure that her views on this matter were heard at County.

Councillor Sherrey responded to a question in respect of whether any actions had been taken as part of 'Time to Change Day 2018' to help challenge the stigma of mental illness. She advised Members that the Council's UNISON representative had run a successful event at Parkside to which everyone had been invited, and which a number of organisations from both the public and private sector had attended, including Age UK, Act of Energy and the Priory Clinic. Councillor Christine McDonald raised concerns in respect of NVQ training, which was no longer necessary for taxi drivers following a recommendation taken by the Licensing Committee within a report from Worcestershire Regulatory Services. Concerns were raised that by the training no longer been deemed necessary, that the taxi drivers would not be in a position to help particular customers. It was understood that this had been due to the cost implications of providing the training, although some Members believed that this was not the case. Councillor Sherrey suggested that this was a matter for the Licensing Committee to consider.

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### **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

#### **Question submitted by Councillor S Peters**

“In the light of the recent closure of care homes in Worcestershire including a number in Bromsgrove district, what steps are being taken by the controlling group to encourage and support the provision of additional elderly care places including the development of homes for the elderly in continuing care retirement communities in accessible and sustainable locations in pursuance of policy BDP10 in the Bromsgrove District Plan?”

The Leader responded that care for our elderly was one of the priorities of the Council and through services such as Lifeline, New Horizons and community exercise sessions, we are doing our best to ensure that the elderly in Bromsgrove are cared for, secure and encouraged to lead full and active lives.

The Leader highlighted that not far from the Council building; new elderly living facilities had recently opened on Recreation Road. This was in response to the needs identified and planned for in the district plan. Also, in accordance with the district plan, it was envisaged that an extra care type facility would also be provided on the Perryfields Road site. Furthermore in discussions with developers, officers highlight elderly accommodation needs and encourage developers to provide suitable accommodation for more elderly residents, such as bungalows.

**Question submitted by Councillor M. Thompson**

"Did the council release the bank details of existing leisure centre customers, without their permission, to the new provider, Everyone Active, and, in doing so, violate the laws that protect this sensitive data?"

The Leader responded that the information that related to direct debit members of the Dolphin Centre was now owned by the Council as it was the property of the operator at the time. In line with industry best practice, during the change of operator on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017 a bulk transfer of memberships would have been undertaken, in line with BACS regulations, so that current members were able to continue to use the services at the centre. When the data was transferred all members were written to and notified of the change of party in this matter.

The Leader confirmed that as far as he was aware the process happened in line with industry best practice.

Councillor Mallett raised concerns that there had been a breach of data protection and it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer look into the matter further.

**Question submitted by Councillor S. Shannon**

"With news that Worcestershire is to offer shelter and protection for 50 Syrian refugees under the Governments Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. Noting that Bromsgrove did not accommodate any of the 50 refugees that arrived in Worcestershire during 2016/17.

Can the Leader confirm that Bromsgrove will step up to the plate on this occasion and offer a safe refuge to some of these vulnerable and often desperate people?"

The Leader responded that Members were lucky to live where they did, in a safe, first world country without the threat of civil conflict. He welcomed the good news that Worcestershire had agreed to host up to 50 more Syrian refugees across the county in 2018-19. He assured Council that, following the latest announcement, every effort would be made once again to try and locate suitable properties in Bromsgrove. He advised that efforts had been made in the past to secure private sector accommodation in the District for Syrian households. Unfortunately despite this activity none of these properties subsequently became available for the first cohort of Syrians arriving in Worcestershire.

He reassured Council that, following the latest announcement, every effort would be made once again to try and locate suitable properties in Bromsgrove. To achieve this, the Council would be working in partnership with the various agencies engaged in this agenda as they would have a significant role to play in paving the way for families to

arrive in the District. The Council needed to do this in the right way as it was dealing with people who had left horrific situations. It was a vitally important issue and he was sure this topic was one which would be raised again in the future and would ensure that Council was kept up to date of any progress made.

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## **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **Single Use Plastics and Recycling**

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

"That this Council joins others in the battle against single-use plastics by agreeing to stop providing plastic cups, bottles, cutlery and straws at all its buildings, cafes and public events by the end of the year.

In addition this Council agrees to explore ways in which it can positively promote and/or influence alternatives to single-use plastics at events within the District and positively encourage the use of recyclable alternatives."

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

In proposing the motion Councillor McDonald agreed to amend the timescale given within it, to within 18 months. Councillor Glass commented that what was being requested could be achieved within a relatively short period of time and that a target of 18 months gave a better opportunity for the Council to be able to achieve this.

In proposing the motion Councillor McDonald made particular reference to the damage done to sea and sea life through the disposal of plastics and the amount of time taken for plastics to biodegrade.

Councillor Glass highlighted the need to raise awareness with residents and to encourage them to recycle wherever possible. The introduction of waste collection points within the Bromsgrove main centre and for the Council to encourage further investment from Worcestershire County Council was paramount to the Council being able to make a difference.

Following presentation of the motions, Members discussed a number of areas in more detail, including:

- A previous motion which had been raised in respect of the Council only using environmentally friendly products and an update in respect whether this had been progressed.
- Councillor Shannon highlighted a scheme used at a local university where students were able to purchase a reusable cup and it was suggested that this type of scheme could be instigated through the Council and have the Council logo on the cups.

- It was confirmed that the motions, which had initially been individual, had been combined.
- The potential for non-recyclable plastics to be banned within the District/County.
- The cost of recycling plastics – it was understood that most were recyclable, but that the cost of this process was prohibitive.

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

## **WASPI**

Members considered the following notice of motion submitted by Councillor C. Bloore:

### **Council notes:**

- Hundreds of thousands of women had significant pension changes imposed on them by the Pensions Acts of 1995 and 2011 with little/no/personal notification of the changes. Some women had only two years notice of a six-year increase to their state pension age.
- Many women born in the 1950's are living in hardship. Retirement plans have been shattered with devastating consequences. Many of these women are already out of the labour market, caring for elderly relatives, providing childcare for grandchildren, or suffer discrimination in the workplace so struggle to find employment.
- Women born in this decade are suffering financially. These women have worked hard, raised families and paid their tax and national insurance with the expectation that they would be financially secure when reaching 60.

### **Council believes:**

- It is not the pension age itself that is in dispute - it is widely accepted that women and men should retire at the same time. The issue is that the rise in the women's state pension age has been too rapid and has happened without sufficient notice being given to the women affected, leaving women with no time to make alternative arrangements.

### **Council resolves:**

- The Council calls upon the leader of the Council to write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor to urge them to reconsider transitional arrangements for women born on or after 6th April 1950, so that women do not live in hardship due to pension changes they were not told about until it was too late to make alternative arrangements.

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

Councillor Bloore thanked Members for the opportunity to put forward this motion and explained that the County Council had not been able to

accept it. He explained that it impacted on all women in their 50s and it was important that the Council made a stand and supported them. Councillor Bloore provided examples of women who had been affected by these changes and the impact on their lives and that the changes had not been communicated to those affected in a timely and appropriate manner. From residents he had spoken to it was clear that there was a real problem in both Bromsgrove and Worcestershire as a whole. It affected many women who did not have a significant work pension and had taken time off from work to raise their families. His motion simply requested that the Council write to the Prime Minister and Chancellor to urge them to reconsider the transitional arrangements currently in place.

Following presentation of the motion Members discussed a number of areas in more detail and whilst accepting the need for equality the manner in which this had been implemented had been disappointing and the information available to those it had affected that been limited. It was also noted that over 200 MPs had signed a motion in respect of this matter.

In support the motion Councillor Christine McDonald made specific reference to those women who had been affected with little or no notice, which gave them little or no time to make alternative arrangements and meant that they had no alternative but to draw down from savings to pay bills or were forced to claim benefits.

Councillor Baxter, whilst supporting the need for a common retirement age, supported the motion as the Council had a duty to its residents to ensure they were treated fairly. It was unacceptable to change the retirement age at such short notice without the opportunity to plan. There was also the potential for this to impact on the Council in supporting those residents who found themselves in need.

The Leader thanked Councillor Bloore for bringing the proposal forward and highlighting the plight of those that would be affected.

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

### **Planning**

Councillor Thompson confirmed the withdrawal of the item, which he understood would now be discussed by the Group Leaders at the next meeting of the Constitution Working Group.

**TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, EQUALITIES AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.**



The Chairman confirmed that in line with the constitutional rules, Councillor M. Thompson had submitted an item of urgent business, which had been accepted for consideration at the meeting.

Councillor M. Thompson spoke of his concern at the withdrawal of CJ Events from operating the market and the need for all options to be considered to ensure that the Council's strategic purposes were met, with particular regard to Bromsgrove being a good place to live. This was an opportunity for the Council to lead by example and give the local businesses and customers the opportunity to succeed by operating the market directly.

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

Councillor K. May, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development responded by advising that there would be a tender process put in place for the procurement of the this service, which it was anticipated would commence in March/April, with all options being considered including that of a co-operative.

Members went on to discuss the following areas in more detail:

- The potential to consider the market being run in house and for this to be included within the report considered by Cabinet.
- The need to ensure that the best interests of the market traders were considered throughout the process.
- If a tender process was being put in place, whether other options would in fact be included.
- The excellent market and events which had been held over recent months.
- Whether a bid from the market traders as a co-operative, but as a not for profit scheme, would be considered as a better option as part of the procurement process.
- Support to be provided to the market traders in respect of any such process if the Council did not wish to run the market itself.
- Whether the tendering process should be delayed until all options had been considered.
- What legal obligations, if any the Council had in respect of the options available. It was confirmed that it was up to Cabinet to determine as it had a duty to ensure best value was achieved and that it this was not necessarily always financial but that it should take all aspect of a matter into consideration.

**RESOLVED** that an additional Cabinet meeting be arranged to enable consideration of all the options in respect of the Market.

Council  
21st February 2018

The meeting closed at 9.28 p.m.

Chairman