

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

11TH FEBRUARY 2019, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors L. C. R. Mallett (Chairman), S. A. Webb (Vice-Chairman), C. Allen-Jones, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Laight and P.L. Thomas

Observers: Councillor B. T. Cooper and Councillor M. A. Sherrey

Officers: Mr M. Austin, Ms F. Mughal, Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. G. Revans and Ms. A. Scarce

96/18

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

The Chairman advised the Board that he had agreed not to put Members name plates out for this meeting as a Member had requested a return to coloured name plates as used at other committee meetings.

Members were reminded that in June 2015 the Board had agreed to use white names plates and sit in alphabetical order at future meetings and this had also been noted in the Board's Annual Report to full Council. The Chairman stated that it was the Board's responsibility to determine their own administrative arrangements.

It was suggested that, for clarity, the Board consider these arrangements again, in order for current Members to put forward their views. The Chairman suggested the following options for the Board to consider:

1. To continue to use white nameplates, with Members seated in alphabetical order;
2. To be a matter for individual Member choice as to whether each Member wished to have a coloured or white name plate; or
3. To adopt the same arrangements as Full Council, so for all Members to have coloured nameplates.

Members discussed whether the use of white or coloured name plates would be appropriate for the Overview and Scrutiny Board. Members felt that as the Overview and Scrutiny Board should be seen as not being party political, it was proposed that the Board continued to display white name plates with Members seated in alphabetical order.

The Chairman and the Senior Democratic Services Officer (Bromsgrove) advised that if Members chose not to adhere to these arrangements, then the matter would be referred to the relevant Group Leader.

The proposal was put to the vote and Members unanimously agreed to continue using white names plates and in alphabetical seating order for all future meetings of the Board. Members were in agreement that this approach had worked well at previous meetings and there was no reason why it should not continue.

RESOLVED that the use of white names plates and an alphabetical seating order be adopted at future meetings of the Board.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor M. Glass and M. Thompson.

97/18 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.

98/18 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2019**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 14th January, 2019 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 14th January, 2019 be approved as an accurate record.

99/18 **COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME REVIEW**

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources provided a verbal update in relation to the Council Tax Support Scheme Review. Members were reminded that in September, 2018, the Board had received a report that outlined the new scheme and proposed a formal consultation with the major preceptors and the public. The elements for consultation were the increase of support to 85% and 100% discount for care leavers.

Members were informed that the number of responses received to the consultation had been very low and the Executive Director, Finance and Resources had therefore asked for a further consultation to take place over a two week period. This had commenced and a targeted approach had been used where text messages had been sent to both residents and those in receipt of this particular benefit. Over 100 responses had already been received, which was significantly higher than the original consultation. The findings of the consultation and supporting report would need to be brought to Council and a special Cabinet meeting on 27th February 2019.

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources was keen for the Board to consider this report prior to those meetings, but unfortunately due to timescales it would be difficult to schedule in an additional meeting of the Board. It was suggested that the Finance and Budget Working Group could meet to carry out this work. It was further suggested that as a high response had already been received to the consultation that the closing date be brought forward to Friday 15th February, which would allow for the report to be included in the agenda papers within the appropriate timescales rather than it be marked to follow.

The Board was in agreement for this approach to be taken and as the Finance and Budget Working Group were meeting directly after this meeting, they would make arrangements to hold a meeting prior to Council on 27th February in order to consider the matter and if appropriate make recommendations to be considered at that meeting.

100/18

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES - THREE BUSINESS CASES

The Environmental Services Manager and Head of Environmental Services presented a report in respect of the Environmental Business Cases in relation to the Domestic Waste Collection, Commercial Services and Place Team Resources.

The proposed Business Cases had been produced to show the current pressures on Environmental Services across Bromsgrove District, and to consider a number of options to secure the service areas for the future. The Board was reminded that the report had been prepared following significant disruption to waste collection services in September, 2018.

It was reported that the Domestic Waste Collection Service and Place Team had seen an increase in demand on their services generated by increased housing growth and limited capacity to provide the service in full and to cover sickness and annual leave.

The summary of the proposals and recommendations were detailed in the report:

- The Domestic Waste Collection Business Case and the allocation of £156,646 revenue funding to Environmental Services to fund three members of staff, vehicle maintenance costs, and running costs to support the service.
- The additional revenue funding for the Domestic Waste Service and the approval of Capital Investment of £137,000 for one new Collection Vehicle, which would also incur annual borrowing costs of £21,823 from 2020/21 on the corporate financing revenue account.
- The Commercial Waste Business Case and the allocation of £184,558 additional revenue funding to Environmental Services to

fund six additional members of staff, vehicle maintenance and running costs to support the service and the generation of additional income for the Council.

- The additional revenue funding for the Commercial Waste Service and the Capital Investment of £340,000 for 2 new Collection Vehicles, which would also incur annual borrowing costs of £54,162 from 2020/21 on the corporate financing revenue account.
- The Future Delivery of Place Team Working Business Case and £166,697 additional revenue funding to Environmental Services to fund six additional members of staff to support the service on a phased implementation over the next three years.

Each Business Case required additional vehicles to achieve the benefits of the extra staffing and to ensure the services were fit for purpose.

In response to Members questions, the following points were highlighted:

- Members noted the expenses and forecast income associated with the three Business Cases, which showed the Net Revenue impact on the Council. The combined revenue impact was £30,923 for 2019/20, £81,480 for 2020/21 and £57,371 for 2021/22.
- The investment in recruiting additional permanent staff would reduce the risk of ongoing overspend on agency and temporary staff. Although this was not identified as a saving it would prevent an overspend on the Environmental Services budget in respect of agency staff going forward.
- Whether Council Tax Income covered the cost of the service provided. It was confirmed that it was not considered in the proposed business cases, which were based on the forecast of the number of new houses expected to be built in the district, as detailed in the Local Plan.
- The Council did not have the responsibility to collect plastic from farms. It was explained that this was a specialist area and could potentially increase the operational costs as some of these types of plastic may contain chemicals and therefore be more costly to dispose of.
- Members alluded to the disruption of the waste collection as being a one off occasion with no previous issues and therefore questioned why it was felt there was a need for a proposed business case for the Waste Collection Services.
- Members noted the agency staffing cost to cover annual leave and sick leave and the impact on the budget position.
- Approximately 20,000 households were affected by the disruption. The problems had occurred due to staff leave and

exceptionally high sickness absence. It was noted that this was on top of an already overstretched work force.

- The recommended option would provide the resources required to reflect requirements of the service over the next two years.
- The proposed plan was prepared for short/medium term with the option to consider a model that would be best for services in the long term. A model to look at what was suitable for the long term would be dependent on the outcome of the proposed National Waste Strategy that the Government was introducing. This included the introduction of food waste collection and that the garden waste collection service should be free. This would have an impact on the Council's financial position as it received a significant income currently from this service.

RESOLVED that the Environmental Business Cases in relation to the Domestic Waste Collection, Commercial Services and Place Team Resources be noted.

101/18

PAY POLICY STATEMENT - PRE- SCRUTINY

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources introduced the Pay Policy which would be included as an appendix to the Medium Term Financial Plan report to be considered by Cabinet on 13th February 2019. It was explained that under the Localism Act it was a requirement that local authorities produced a Pay Statement, which needed to be approved by full Council. The introduction of the proposed national pay model, which had previously been discussed by the Board would be implemented by the 1st April, 2019 and was, as Members were aware, subject to consultation. Members were informed that the Trades Unions supported the revised scheme.

An explanation was provided in respect of the Council's pay and grading structure as agreed by the National Joint Council for 2019.

All Council posts were allocated to a grade within this pay structure, based on the application of a Job Evaluation process. Posts at Managers and above were evaluated by an external assessor using the Hay Job Evaluation scheme. This scheme identified the salary for these posts based on a percentage of Chief Executive's Salary. It was noted that previously the Hay Grade post would have received an increase and that the Chief Executive post had not.

With regards to the cost of the senior management team, 50% of the overall cost was in line with the Shared Service agreement with Redditch Borough Council. This was something which it had been suggested needed to be reviewed and the Board were keen for this review to be carried out.

In response to a Member question, whether the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support was a fair split cost between the two authorities, as it was believed that Redditch maintained more housing stock compared to Bromsgrove. The Executive Director of Finance and Resources stated that the Housing Revenue in Redditch had their own reception who would deal with any issues related to Redditch.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement be noted.

102/18 **INVESTMENT AND ACQUISITION STRATEGY REPORT UPDATE - PRE-SCRUTINY**

Members were informed that the Investment and Acquisition Strategy Report was deferred to the next meeting on 4th March, 2019 or to the Finance and Budget Working Group for Members consideration and would go to the Cabinet meeting on 6th March 2019.

103/18 **FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE**

Councillor Mallett provided a verbal update and advised the Board that the Finance and Budget Working Group had met on 11th February, 2019 and had discussed the Medium Term Financial Plan for the next four years. A main concern had been the uncertainty around a number of areas but in particular, in respect of the New Homes Bonus Grant.

The Group had requested further information in respect of a number of areas, including more detail in order to understand the savings made and the use of balances in future years to produce a balanced budget.

104/18 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - VERBAL UPDATE**

Councillor Webb informed the Board that at the meeting held on 7th February, 2019, the Group considered the performance report in respect of 'Help me find somewhere to live in my locality'. Members asked for further clarification in relation to a number of areas within the report. Members were further advised that the next meeting had been arranged to take place in March, 2019.

105/18 **TASK GROUP - VERBAL UPDATES**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Bromsgrove) provided the following updates:

- Bromsgrove Sporting Football Club Task Group – first meeting to be arranged and an update to be provided at the next meeting of the Board;
- Business Rates Relief Short Sharp Review – as previously advised, the Group had held two meetings and its third would be held in early March and an update would be provided at the next meeting of the Board.

106/18

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme from the 1st March to 30th June, 2019. The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Bromsgrove) provided the following update:

- Finance System Report to be presented to the Finance and Budget Working Group for Members' consideration;
- Corporate Performance Report to be presented to the Corporate Performance Working Group;
- Bromsgrove Enterprise Park – Build out to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in March 2019.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme from 1st March to 30th June, 2019 be noted.

107/18

TOPIC PROPOSAL REPORT - EFFECTS OF THE WCC LTP4 ON BROMSGROVE DISTRICT (COUNCILLOR S. COLELLA)

The Board considered a proposal that had been received from Councillor S. Colella for a scrutiny review in respect of an investigation into the effect of WCC LTP4 on the District of Bromsgrove. Members were asked to consider whether this would be a suitable topic for further scrutiny.

Councillor S. Colella informed the Board that the main issues were in relation to the Transport Infrastructure System in Bromsgrove and problems with congestion, the lack of investment and the impact on air quality. He provided examples of this and the issues which had been discussed at Council in respect of the Wyre Forest District Plan and the Council's response.

The Board were reminded that it was anticipated that the Transport Review Report that it had requested from the Strategic Planning Manager would come before the Board at its March meeting, which may be an opportunity to discuss some of the areas raised in this topic proposal in more detail before the Board reached a decision on this matter.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Bromsgrove) also informed Members that the Head of Planning and Regeneration had been invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in March and that this subject matter could be discussed at that meeting.

Members agreed that it would be helpful to receive further information on the subject before making a decision on what further action, if any to take. It was, therefore, agreed that the Head of Planning and Regeneration be invited to discuss the matter further at the meeting held in March.

RESOLVED that the Head of Planning and Regeneration be invited to attend the Board's March meeting to discuss the subject matter as detailed in the preamble above.

108/18

SUGGESTED AREA FOR SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION - CUSTOMER SERVICE RESPONSE PROTOCOL

The Board considered a verbal proposal that had been brought forward by Councillor S. Colella for a scrutiny review in respect of the Customer Services Response Protocol. In particular, reference was made to the process for customers logging an issue (and the response timescales) and for the Council to look at the potential introduction of an electronic system. Members were asked to consider whether this would be a suitable topic for further scrutiny.

It was suggested that Members may wish to consider inviting the relevant officer to discuss the process of customer services. Councillor Webb informed the Board that the Corporate Performance Working Group had reviewed the customer services and that information was available on the Corporate Measures Dashboard.

It was concluded that the Customer Support Manager be invited to attend a future meeting of the Board to discuss the matter further. It was also suggested that some examples of where Members felt the service had not responded adequately or in a timely manner would be useful in order for the Customer Support Manager to be able to understand the areas of concern.

RESOLVED that the Customer Support Manager be invited to attend a future meeting of the Board to discuss the process in respect of Customer Services.

109/18

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Bromsgrove) provided the following update:

- Investment and Acquisition Strategy Report to be considered in March, 2019;
- Bromsgrove Market update to be considered in April, 2019;
- Customer Services update to be provided in April, 2019;
- Staff Survey – Councillor S. Colella raised the issue of the Staff Survey, which had been the subject of a Joint Scrutiny Task Group with Redditch. He had been appointed as the Staff Champion for Bromsgrove and it had been agreed that he and/or the Board would be involved in any future staff surveys. It was understood that a survey was due to be circulated to staff in the

near future and it was agreed that the Executive Director, Finance and Resources would look into this further and report back to the Board.

RESOLVED

- a) that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted; and
- b) that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be amended subject to the pre-amble above.

110/18

TO CONSIDER, AND IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, TO PASS THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS CONTAINING EXEMPT INFORMATION:-

RESOLVED that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item–of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, as amended.

111/18

EXEMPT INFORMATION IN RESPECT OF ITEM 5 ABOVE - ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES BUSINESS CASES

Members were provided with full details in respect of the costs associated with the Commercial Waste Business Case. Officers then responded to a number of questions from Members, which covered the following areas:

- The surplus costs for 2018/19 and those estimated for 2020/21 and 2021/22 were noted.
- The Council would potentially look at having permanent vehicles in the longer term which they could hire out to other authorities. A business case in respect of viability vehicle would need to be prepared.
- The government was proposing to introduce harmonisation in vehicles which may be a significant cost to the authority.
- The Council does operate its Commercial Waste Services outside the Council's District boundaries.

(During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to financial or business affairs matters. However, there was nothing exempt in this record of the proceedings.)

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.
Chairman