

MBROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

31ST OCTOBER 2018, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors G. N. Denaro (Leader), K.J. May (Deputy Leader),
B. T. Cooper, M. A. Sherrey, C. B. Taylor and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillors C. Bloore, S. Colella and L. Mallett

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. M. Bough,
Mrs. C. Felton, Ms. C. Flanagan, Ms. A. Scarce, Ms J. Willis and
Mr C. Forrester

29/18 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence on this occasion.

30/18 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

31/18 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet held on 5th September 2018 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 5th
September 2018 be approved as a correct record.

32/18 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
BOARD HELD ON 3RD SEPTEMBER AND 1ST OCTOBER 2018**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 3rd
September 2018 were noted. It was noted that the recommendations
from this meeting had been tabled at the Cabinet meeting held on 5th
September 2018. It was noted that within the Overview and Scrutiny
Board minutes, at Minute No. 32/18 references was made to Councillors
Mallett and Hotham not taking part in the debate due to an other
disclosable interest, this was not factually correct and would be
amended accordingly.

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 1st
October were also noted. It was highlighted that the recommendations
within those minutes would be picked up within the items of the Cabinet
agenda.

The Leader welcomed Councillor L. Mallett, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny board to the meeting and invited him to present the draft minute extract from the meeting held on 29th October 2018 which had been tabled and contained recommendations from that meeting. In presenting the recommendations it was noted that the majority of these would be considered within the items of the Cabinet agenda, later in the meeting.

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

Councillor Mallett explained that this recommendation referred in particular to quality and standard of the political debate at full Council and the re-introduction of supplementary questions in order to aid this. Members had felt that there was an area of difficulty and frustration when questions were asked and there was not the opportunity to expand further or to respond if it was felt the question had not been understood correctly.

The recommendation was that the Constitution Review Working Group carry out a wider review of Council procedures to aid the debating process, with particular focus on supplementary questions.

The Leader indicated that he was happy for this to be referred to the Constitution Review Working Group for further discussion.

Transport Planning Review

Councillor Mallett provided background information to this item, which was something that the Board had considered in much detail, culminating in a small sub group of the main Board meeting with officers from Worcestershire County Council Highways team to try and resolve a number of issues. He invited Councillor S. Colella to present the recommendation as he had proposed it at the Board meeting.

The recommendation was that the Issues and Options consultation process be suspended pending receipt of further information from Worcestershire County Council in respect of the future plans for the infrastructure for Bromsgrove District.

Councillor Colella explained that he had made the recommendation as following the meeting with WCC Officers he had been concerned that although they had listened to what was being said he did not truly believe that they understood the problems and complexities of highways issues within the District. He believed that this could have a long term effect on future plans and it would be difficult for them to comment on the Issues and Options consultation when there was no detail around Highways issues for them to comment on or future plans for the infrastructure of the District. He believed that the current position could leave the Council open to challenge in the future.

Councillor Taylor, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Strategic Housing commented that he understood and sympathised with the views that had been put forward at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting, but he did not believe that suspending the current consultation process was the right way forward. However, he assured Members that this was only the start of the process and he believed that as it progressed and pressure was placed on WCC then the Highways issues would be addressed. He reassured Members he was doing all he could to ensure that the matter was taken seriously by WCC officers.

Councillor K May, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development reiterated that pressure was being asserted at the County Council and she would also continue to highlight the matter until it was satisfactorily resolved.

The Leader confirmed that he was also concerned about the issues discussed and that he was meeting with both the Leader and the Head of Highways at WCC to put further pressure on them to ensure that a robust highways model was in place for the District.

RESOLVED that the recommendation be rejected.

Development of Burcot Lane Site

Councillor Mallett explained that the final recommendations from the Board were in respect of the Burcot Lane report. There had been lengthy discussion around the housing company and the distinction between specific plans and means of investment and the choice of option and future plans. As a result the Board had put forward two recommendations to be considered in respect of how the housing company would operate, which he hoped would be considered in context of the debate later in the meeting on this item.

33/18

CCTV SHORT SHARP REVIEW

Councillor S. Colella as Chairman of the CCTV Short sharp Review was invited to present the report and supporting recommendations. In so doing he highlighted a number of areas and the work of the Group, who had considered the current system and recognised the need for this to be brought up to date in order to provide both best value for residents and improve its effectiveness. He provided detail around the improvements which could be made from upgrading to a digital and wireless system and the benefits of providing a number of re-deployable cameras.

He thanked Officers and Members who had been involved in the review and also the Police and Crime Commissioner and Community Safety Team for making funds available to progress the improvements. It was important that the service was brought up to date and would be of benefit to the whole district.

Before moving the recommendations Members discussed the following:

- The Police's approach to using the data available to them. It was clarified that the Police used the data, but that it was difficult to get feedback from them to show that it had been specifically used in securing a conviction.
- The quality of the report and the areas which had been covered.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Overview and Scrutiny Board CCTV Short Sharp Review report be noted; and
- b) that the recommendations detailed within the report be agreed.

34/18

ROAD SAFETY AROUND SCHOOLS TASK GROUP REPORT

Councillor C. Bloore, the Chairman of the Road Safety Around Schools Task Group, presented the report and in so doing provided a brief overview of the work of the Task Group and its recommendations.

Councillor P. Whittaker, Portfolio Holder for Community Services asked whether the Task Group had been aware of the legal agreement with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and the Service Level Agreement with Wychavon District Council to carry out enforcement work on behalf of the Council. It was confirmed that the Task Group had been aware of these when putting forward its recommendations.

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

- The need to work in partnership with other agencies to ensure a joined up approach was achieved.
- Recommendation 4 – it was clarified that any contact details provided would only be those generic numbers for public use.
- Councillor K. May, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development was keen for this to be included within a wider review of car parking and enforcement within the district.
- The need for a review of the service level agreement with Wychavon and any impact this might have on the recommendations, in particular recommendation 7.
- The different issues faced by the schools in the mornings as compared to the afternoons.
- Whether the matter had been discussed at WCC and it was confirmed that a number of Members in their role as County Councillors had discussed it.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Overview and Scrutiny Board Road Safety Around Schools Task Group Report be noted;
- b) That the recommendations as detailed within the report be agreed.

35/18

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN

The Chief Executive introduced the report and provided background information, highlighting that it was not an inspection but an opportunity for a variety of colleagues from other councils to provide a critical friend review. The visits had taken place in January/February 2018 but, due to elections and the change of administration in Redditch there had been a delay in progressing the action plan following the issue of the report.

The report contained a number of recommendations, some of which would be addressed through the introduction of the Enterprise system. However, attention was drawn to page 80 of the agenda pack and the recommendation to establish a single workforce in order to reduce duplication and time spent navigating two structures and systems of governance. After consideration, the Corporate Management Team did not feel that this was necessary at the present time and that the areas referred to were being addressed, as detailed in the action plan.

Members noted the report with interest and that there were a number of underlying issues which needed to be addressed and made particular reference to the differing cultures between the two councils, and considered ways in which improvements could be made. Members also considered the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Board which had been present at Minute No. 32/18.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the letter and action plan following the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge be noted; and
- b) that the Constitution Review Working Group carry out a wider review of the Council procedures to aid the debating process, with particular focus on supplementary questions.

36/18

PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources introduced the report, which concentrated on the strategic purpose, 'provide me with good things to see, do and visit'. It was explained that the new format of the report had tried to focus on more positive aspects of the work being carried out and reported a number of 'good news' stories.

A number of areas were highlighted including:

- Bromsgrove Sports and Leisure Centre – in particular the success of the climbing wall and the fitness membership and further development of work in the community, including working in partnership with the NHS and GPs.
- Age Well sessions and the specialised health programs.
- The next phase of the work to be carried out at Sanders Park.

- The Bromsgrove Arts and Culture Consortium – this was made up of Avoncroft Museum, the Artrix, Bromsgrove Festival, Bromsgrove Arts Alive, Severn Arts and Bromsgrove international Music Competition. It was noted that funding had been successfully sourced for a number of places, together with a contribution of £49k from Arts Council England towards a 12 month action research project.

Particular reference was made to Bromsgrove Town Centre Market, which had recently been brought back in house. This was progressing well with 79% occupancy and the appointment of a new Markets Manager, Jonathan Smith. There had been a themed market recently which had been very successful, which was good news for the town centre.

Councillor K. May, as Portfolio Holder for Economic Development took the opportunity to thank the officers for their hard work and support in bringing the market in house and also took the opportunity to welcome the new manager.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Performance Report and associated appendices be noted.

37/18

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources reminded Members that this was the revised report, in respect of the consultation for the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20. The revised scheme would increase support to 85% from 80% at an estimated cost to the Council of £100k. It would also incorporate care leavers, who currently receive support through the hardship scheme. Initial information in respect of the cost of this element, provided by Worcestershire County Council, was approximately £11k.

Details of those to be consulted were included within the report, together with how it could be accessed. Councillor B. Cooper, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources reminded Members that originally it had been planned for a more ambitious scheme to align it with the introduction of Universal Credit, which had proved more complicated and therefore a more full review would, it was hoped, take place next year.

RESOLVED that a formal consultation with the major preceptors and the public on the proposed design of a revised scheme take place for 8 weeks from 1st November 2018.

38/18

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK - PRESENTATION

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources gave a presentation (attached) which covered the following areas:

- The current position – including level of savings.
- Actions including a review of the budget allocations.
- It had confirmed that Central Government had confirmed that full details of the budget would be received on 8th December 2018.
- The tariff adjustment was expected to be removed but the concern was what other changes, that the Council was currently unaware of would be made, for example there had been no feedback in respect of New Homes Bonus.
- The knock on impact in the reduction in the income from planning fees, for example Council Tax and New Homes Bonus.
- The new format for fees and charges – it was explained that this had been trialled at the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Finance and Budget Working Group meeting.
- Key areas for consideration including being more commercial and self-sufficient.

Councillor B. Cooper, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources thanked the Executive Director, Finance and Resources and her team for their continued work and commented that there had been an improvement in the process from the previous year, whilst acknowledged that there was still room for improvement. He echoed the concerns around other changes which may balance out the removal of the negative tariff.

39/18

DEVELOPMENT OF THE BURCOT LANE SITE

The Deputy Chief Executive gave a summary of the report and reminded Members that this had initially been reported back in September 2017. This report provided an update on the position regarding the funding available together with a detailed options table. The Cabinet was informed that a positive bid had been made to Homes England, which had been successful with a figure to be agreed, but which was likely to be around £1m.

The funding would be spent in preparing the site for housing development and it was imperative that this was carried out as soon as possible. The suggested plan was for 61 units using modern building methods with a Council owned housing company being set up to manage the site. The proposal included 6 units to be sold on the open market, 18 affordable units for purchase by a housing association and 37 market rent units to be retained and managed by the housing company.

It was confirmed that the Funding Agreement would contain a number of conditions which needed to be satisfied before the funding from Homes England could be released. Details of the financial modelling were provided within the report, together with details of the financial projections and implications. It was acknowledged that whilst this was a small site it was still important for the local community and would bring the opportunity to build and develop in the future.

The recommendations within the report would allow Cabinet to build the momentum and be clear about the way forward and the outcome of the of the bid, which would lead to a full business case in respect of the housing company being brought back to Cabinet for consideration in due course.

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

- It was a positive starting point and would help to support the needs of residents in the future, whilst providing some much needed income for the Council.
- Councillor L. Mallett, as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, reiterated the concerns which had been raised at its meeting in respect of future opportunities and whether any had been identified. He suggested that a much longer term plan needed to be in place before a decision could be made.
- It was difficult for Members to be able to judge whether it was the right thing to do in the long term, without more detailed information.
- Whether other sites had been identified
- Whether this development could realistically have an impact on the housing needs of the district.
- Councillor K, Taylor, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Strategic Housing advised that this was in fact the beginning of a journey and it was hoped that it would provide an opportunity to provide accommodation at a “fair” rent for local residents.
- The business case for the housing company would provide more detail, together with long term future plans.
- In respect of the suggested preferred model, Members were assured that following discussions with Homes England they were comfortable with this.
- It was questioned whether the funding from Homes England was dependent on a “pipeline” of sites as opposed to a single site, which the Council appeared to have at the moment. It was confirmed that this was not the case.
- The financial pressures faced by the Council and whether the addition of a housing company would simple increase those pressures.
- Whether any other sites which would be considered in the future could impact on plans in respect of highways and how this might be addressed. It was suggested that any such sites may need to be included within the current review of planning policies.
- Members were reassured that no other sites had as yet been considered.
- The reintroduction of a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which had previously been rejected.
- The need for transparency for residents to be able to understand the rationale behind the decision.

- Officers confirmed that legislatively the Council was required to set up the housing company before taking the next steps in the project and therefore it was important to agree the model before being able to move forward to the next stage.

Cabinet considered the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 29th October 2018 and following further discussion it was

RESOLVED:

- a) that the indicative plans and projected financial outcomes for the development project be approved and that provided the minimum financial projections are maintained, authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer to agree the final details when these have been signed off by external advisors when appointed, and after consultation with the Group Leaders;
- b) that agreement in principle is given to establishing a Housing Company to manage retained housing stock subject to the business case for the company being brought to Cabinet for approval;
- c) that Officers proceed to implement the pre-development steps on the site, to include planning and building control applications, demolition of the existing building and the appointment of a Project Development Manager;
- d) that further work be carried out to explore the options available to the housing company to allow it to act as a letting agent; and
- e) that the housing company's overarching principle be to provide rental accommodation that is affordable for local people.

The meeting closed at 7.50 p.m.

Chairman