

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

ANNUAL REPORT

2018 – 2019



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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Foreword

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Introduction

This report outlines the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Board of Bromsgrove District Council during 2018 – 2019.

It should be noted that in June 2015 Members of the Board agreed that, as Overview and Scrutiny should be seen as not being party political, they would use white name plates, which did not reference a political group and sit in alphabetical order. This has continued to be the case in this municipal year and at the meeting held on 11th February 2019 Members debated this matter again and considered a number of options going forward. The outcome of that debate was to continue with the white name plates and the seating arrangements, as Members were in agreement that this approach had worked well at previous meetings and there was no reason why it should not continue.

The Role of Overview and Scrutiny

The role of overview and scrutiny is an important one in the Council's governance structure; it provides a vital role in challenging and driving improvement. It is a key part of the democratic decision making process in local Councils, where elected Councillors outside of the Cabinet can contribute to shaping Council policy, community well-being and accountability. It is often referred to as the "critical friend" of the Council and can hold a magnifying glass over any area which is causing concern or issues for local residents.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has a number of roles within the Council. These include:

- Holding the Cabinet to account by thoroughly scrutinising their decisions to ensure that the Council continues to provide the best services possible for Bromsgrove District residents.
- Acting as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet by reviewing Council policies and strategy, making recommendations where appropriate.
- Performance and financial monitoring, to ensure the Council services provide value for money, are sustainable and to the highest possible standard.
- Pre-scrutiny of items prior to the consideration by the Cabinet.

All of these can be achieved in a number of ways, either through presentation of a report at the Overview and Scrutiny Board or if a more in depth investigation is needed then the Board can set up a Task Group to focus on specific areas and recommend ways to improve existing practices within the Council. A template of the topic proposal can be found in Appendix A.

The detailed terms of reference and procedure rules for the Overview and Scrutiny Board can be found at Part 5 and Part 12 of the Council's Constitution. The Council's Constitution can be accessed by using the following link.

<http://svmoderngov:9072/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=329&Year=0> (Please click on the latest date to access the most recent version of the Council's constitution).

Who attended the Overview and Scrutiny Board Meetings?

The Overview and Scrutiny Board met ten times in 2018/19, the meetings were attended by Elected Members, a range of representatives from partner organisations, the Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and Officers.

There has been continued support from the relevant Portfolio Holders this year, with regularly attendance from a number of them when a report which relates to their portfolio has been presented to the Board. This has given them an opportunity to hear first-hand the debate and ideas that the Board have put forward. On a number of occasions, whilst the Board has not made any recommendations in respect of an item it has endorsed and supported recommendations which would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting.

If you would like further information on the role of Overview and Scrutiny at the Council you can find full details of all meetings and copies of Task Group reports on the Council's website.

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Membership

Membership of the Board for 2018/2019 is as follows:



Cllr Luke Mallett (Chairman)



Cllr Shirley Webb (Vice Chairman)



Cllr Chris Allen-Jones



Cllr Chris Bloore
(May to Nov 2018)



Cllr Steve Colella



Cllr Richard Deeming



Cllr Malcolm Glass



Cllr Charlie Hotham



Cllr Rod Laight



Cllr Peter McDonald
(Appointed Nov 2018)



Cllr Philip Thomas



Cllr Michael Thompson

Activities and Outcomes during 2018/19

The Board continues to receive regular updates in order to monitor the progress of recommendations it has made, through the Recommendation Tracker. This contains both recommendations put forward by Task Groups and accepted by the Cabinet, together with recommendations put forward by the Board itself. In respect of Task Groups the Board does, where necessary, receive an update report 12 months following acceptance of its recommendations.

Detailed below are some of the key areas and reports that the Board has considered in this municipal year.

SPORTS HALL OPTIONS APPRAISAL - PRE SCRUTINY

The Sport Hall and former Dolphin Centre are areas which the Board has considered on a number of occasions over recent years. This year the Board considered a report in respect of an Options Appraisal for a Sports Hall, as it had been agreed at Full Council to further consider the provision of a sports hall. Members had requested a report which included number of options. The report detailed the journey that the Council had been on to date, potential timescales for the various options put forward, and the financial, service/operational and legal implications. Members appreciated that this was a matter of great interest to residents and on this occasion the Chairman invited residents in the public gallery to participate in the meeting.

Following lengthy discussions the Board agreed to note the content of the report as it was felt that the decision should be made at full Council.

TRANSPORT PLANNING REVIEW

This was an area which had been well documented and discussed at various meetings over a number of years. It had first been brought to the Board in September 2017, following discussion at a number of Council meetings.

A number of updates were given to the Board throughout the year, in respect of the Transport Planning Review., which looked at the infrastructure issues within the district and the impact of large developments on it. Officers and the relevant portfolio holder from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) attended a number of meetings to respond to questions which had raised and to address Members concerns in respect of the lack of confidence in the work of the Highways Team. A Sub Group was set up to meet key officers from WCC in order to discuss those issues in more detail.

At one of those meetings, Board recommended that the Issues and Options consultation process be suspended pending receipt of further information from WCC in respect of the future plans of the infrastructure for Bromsgrove District. The recommendation was unfortunately, rejected by Cabinet.

The Board finally, considered its draft report on this subject at its April meeting with a number of recommendations being put forward.

AQMA REVOCATION AT HAGLEY (INCLUDING COSTS FOR ADDITIONAL MONITORING AND DATA)

Air Quality Management Areas and Air Quality in general are something which the Board has shown a keen interest over the years. They had carried out task groups in 2007 and again in 2013, so when this report appeared on the Cabinet Work Programme the Board was keen to pre-scrutinise it. This work was carried out in April 2018, and additional information in respect of the types of monitoring and data for the Hagley area was presented to the Board later in the municipal year, with a number of recommendations being put forward at the initial meeting.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014 (IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVISIONS)

The Board pre-scrutinised a report in relation to the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, which outlined the implementation of provisions. The report also proposed a series of amendments to the Council's Scheme of Delegations to enable the Council to best utilise and implement the ASB tools and powers under the Act.

It was reported that the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provided the tools and powers, outlined in the report, which were relevant to the Council and supported the Strategic Purpose 'Keep My Place Safe and Looking Good'.

The Board that the Council's Scheme of Delegations be amended to include "in consultation with the Ward Councillor". This recommendation was accepted by Cabinet.

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME REVIEW – PRE SCRUTINY

The Board pre-scrutinised a report in respect of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS). The report recommended that approval be sought for the Council to undertake a formal consultation with the major preceptors and the proposed revised scheme. Following discussion Members recommended that consideration of the scheme be deferred pending further information. This was largely due to it not being clear in the report who would or would not benefit from the scheme.

The recommendation was agreed by Cabinet and further work on the report was carried out. Members received a further update later in the year in respect of the consultation but unfortunately due to timescale it was difficult for the Board to consider the report in full. It was therefore agreed that on this occasion the Finance and Budget Working Group would carry out the final pre-scrutiny work.

The Finance and Budget Working Group reported back to the main Board that the revised scheme had taken into account all the areas that that Board had discussed and therefore they had been happy to note the report.

WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE

Following a number of issues with waste collection the Board had requested an update on what had led to the problems which had occurred. The Board was informed of the current measures and actions that had been put in place to alleviate any issues in the future. Members were also advised that a number of business cases would be brought forward which would address the areas of concern and the pressure on the service, in the long term.

The Board subsequently pre-scrutinise the business cases in respect of Domestic Waste Collection, Commercial Services and Place Team Resources. These had been produced to show the current pressure on the Environmental Services Team and to consider a number of options to secure the service areas for the future. The Board were encouraged to see that the concerns which had been raised earlier in the year had been addressed through these business cases.

The Board noted the report in respect of these business cases.

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN

The Board was keen to pre-scrutinise a report which outlined the outcomes and next steps resulting from the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) visits which had taken place in January and February 2018. This had been followed up with a written report summarising a number of recommendations to meet the Council needs. These recommendations were designed to complement and add value to the Council's performance and improvement plans.

The Action Plan set out responses to those recommendations together with relevant timescales for completion. The Board recommended that the Constitution Review Working Group carry out a wider review of Council procedures to aid the debating process.

Members received an update at a later meeting and considered the progress made in delivering the recommendations within the Peer Challenge Action Plan. The peer challenge had been an excellent learning opportunity for the Council, providing an external health check of the Council's position.

IN HOUSE MANAGEMENT OF BROMSGROVE MARKET

Following the return of Bromsgrove Market to being managed in house, the Board received a number of updates throughout the year to ensure that this was carried out successfully.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships provided an update in respect of the Bromsgrove market and were advised of the special events which had taken place in recent weeks and future plans.

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services advised Members that positive feedback had been received from market traders. It was further advised that a business plan

would be devised to review the current market provision as the Council was committed to investing in the Town Centre market. A further update would be provided in the next municipal year.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE BURCOT LANE SITE

The Chief Executive presented the report which provided Members with an update of the current position regarding the site redevelopment and the funding application submitted to Homes England.

The report proposed three options with the preferred option being to establish a housing company to manage the retained housing stock. The proposed plans were discussed at length and the Board recommended 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 that the housing company's overarching principle be to provide "affordable" rental accommodation for local people.

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SCRUTINY OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER PARTNERSHIP

The Board has a statutory duty to hold at least one meeting a year which covers the scrutiny of the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction (CDRP) partnership. In the case of Bromsgrove District Council this is the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership.

At its June 2018 meeting the Board was provided with an update on the progress of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP) during 2017/18. A number of key points were highlighted including that:

- Local authorities had a statutory duty to scrutinise the work of the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) under Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006.
- The NWCSP had a statutory duty to produce a Partnership Plan outlining how it would address key crime and community safety priorities.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had a duty to co-operate with the CSP to reduce crime and disorder and there was a reciprocal duty on the CSP to collaborate with the PCC.
- A new Community Guardians project had been proposed which would create a team of officers to patrol areas of concern in terms of anti-social behaviour.
- The Respect Programme continued to be delivered in schools.

A Youth and Community Hub was being set up in the basement of the Baptist Church in New Road and a project manager appointed. The Hub was official launched in July 2018.

TASK GROUPS AND SHORT SHARP REVIEW

Task Groups are established by the Board to conduct an in-depth review of any service, policy or issues that affects the District. The Chairman of a Task Group must be a Member of the Board, with the wider membership being any Members who were not Members of the Cabinet. Some of this year's Task Groups have concluded and some remain ongoing. The work carried out by the Task Groups are summarised below. The full outcome of the reviews would be detailed in its final reports.

For those Task Groups which had been completed the final reports are available on the Council's website.

ROAD SAFETY AROUND SCHOOLS

Following a Notice of Motion at Full Council proposed by Councillor P. M. McDonald, this subject was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board. Members received an update from the Environmental Services Manager and after a lengthy discussion it was agreed that it was a subject of such important that a Task Group should be established.

The Task Group met on six occasions from February to September 2018, to discuss the matter in more detail. During the course of the investigation, interviews were undertaken with representatives from Parking Services, County Highways, West Mercia Police, the Environmental Services Manager, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships and Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Cultural Services, Community Safety and Regulatory Services.

The Group reported its conclusions and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in September 2018 and resolved to submit the Group's findings to the Cabinet in September, 2018. Cabinet agreed that all of the Group's findings should be considered as part of the Road Safety Review to ensure that the Council provided an efficient and effective Service which was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board and was sent to external agencies, including those who had helped with the report.

The Board received its formal response to the recommendation at its January, 2019 meeting.

CCTV SHORT, SHARP REVIEW

Following an update to the Board in December, 2016 in respect of the CCTV, a number of concerns were raised by Members in respect of the allocation of CCTV cameras and the allocation of them. The Board suggested that further investigation on this matter was needed to ensure that the service met the needs of residents, that it was fit for purpose and provided value for money. Subsequently, a Short Sharp Review Group was set up to consider the issue in more detail. This Group met on seven occasions from March 2017 to September 2018 to examine CCTV provision in Bromsgrove District in more detail.

The Board was presented with the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny Investigation undertaken by the CCTV Short Sharp Review which made a number of recommendations and received its formal response to the recommendation at its January, 2019 meeting.

HOSPITAL CAR PARKING BOARD INVESTIGATION

Following a Notice of Motion at Full Council proposed by Councillor P. M. McDonald, this subject was referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Board set up a small group of Members to look at this matter, this group held two meetings and a number of issues were discussed with a representative from Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

The findings and recommendations of the investigation was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and it was proposed that Full Council write to the Secretary of State to suggest that NHS Trust owned hospital car parks should be made free of charge. This was agreed at Full Council and the dialogue with the Secretary of State is currently ongoing.

BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SHORT SHARP REVIEW

The Business Rates Relief Short Sharp Review has met twice and Members have agreed a work programme going forward, having identified a number of key witnesses to interview.

BROMSGROVE SPORTING TASK GROUP

Members agreed to launch a Task Group to review the work of Bromsgrove Sporting Football Club and Membership of that Task Group has been confirmed. To date however, an initial meeting has not been arranged.

WORKING GROUPS

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP

This Group has met on nine occasions this year and were particularly active in the weeks leading up to the budget setting. The Portfolio Holder for Finance has attended the majority of meetings, together with the Executive director, Finance and Resources. On occasions Heads of Service have been invited in to provide information on a variety of reports covering their areas. For the first time this year a meeting was set aside in respect of Fees and Charges to which all Heads of Service and relevant Portfolio Holders were invited.

For the first time this year the Working Group have been able to pre-scrutinise many reports at a very early stage, so rather than put forward recommendations, in some cases the Portfolio Holder took on board the views of the Working Group and these were fed directly into the final reports which were published.

To give an idea of the work that has been carried out, the list below contains some of the reports which the Working Group has considered:

- Medium Term Financial Plan and Quarterly Monitoring Reports
- Year End Financial Outturn – Capital and Revenue, and Reserves
- Overarching Budget Framework (this included Cost Recovery and Outturn –v- Budget)
- Capital and Revenue Programmes
- Treasury Management and Capital Strategy
- Investment and Acquisition Strategy
- Finance System

Once again by being able to consider a number of reports in more detail and prior to their consideration at Cabinet has allowed Members of the Board via the Working Group to play an integral part in the budget setting process.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP (formerly Measures Dashboard Working Group)

This Group has met on six occasions this year, with a major changing taking place at the beginning of the new municipal year, when it was decided that the name of the Working Group would change and the terms of reference would be updated to reflect the work which was being carried out. This showed that the Working Group had made good progress from its initial slow start and had progressed from simply checking the data on the Corporate Dashboard to taking a more strategic approach and questioning the relevant Heads of Services and looking at particular areas in more detail. This was highlighted from the work carried out in respect of the Domestic Waste Service when the Working Group met with the Head of Environmental Services and the Environmental Service Manager following issues with waste collection during September 2018.

The Group have dedicated each meeting to looking at the relevant measures for each of the Council's strategic purposes and where necessary have suggested changes or amendments to the ways in which delivery of that service is being measured. As with the Finance and Budget Working Group, this shows a direct link with Officers and Portfolio Holders has been established in supporting the work carried out and helping to ensure that the performance of services is measured in a useful and constructive manner.

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EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODY

Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

The Board receives regular updates from Councillor Bloore, the Council's representative on Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The updates provide the Committee with information on any strategic health issues and the Board are able to feedback to HOSC through Councillor Bloore any concerns they have about particular areas.

Some of the issues highlighted during the year included:

- Winter pressures on hospitals and patient flow in and out of hospital.
- Ambulance divert pilot.
- The role of HOSC, its effectiveness and its terms of reference

Further details are available at the Worcestershire County Council website.

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Future Plans 2019/20

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL

This form can be used for either a Task Group or a Short Sharp Review topic proposal.

Completed forms should be returned to scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk – Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council.

Name of Proposer:	
Tel No:	Email
Date:	

Title of Proposed Topic (including specific subject areas to be investigate)			
Background to the Proposal (Including reasons why this topic should be investigated and evidence to support the need for the investigation.)			
Links to national, regional and local priorities (including the Council's strategic purposes)			
Possible Key Objectives (these should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely)			
Anticipated Timescale for completion of the work			
Would it be appropriate to hold a Short Sharp Inquiry or a Task Group? (please tick relevant box)	Task Group		Short Sharp Inquiry

OFFICE USE ONLY - TO BE COMPLETED WHEN THE TOPIC PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED

Evidence	
Key documents, data, reports	
Possible Site Visits	
Is a general press release required asking for general comments/suggestions from the public?	
Is a period of public consultation required?	
Witnesses	
Officers	
Councillors (including Portfolio Holder)	
Any External Witnesses	

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The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Board express his thanks to all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, recognising in particular the valuable contribution made by Members through Task Group investigations and Short Sharp Reviews.

For any background information on the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Bromsgrove, please visit <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/the-council.aspx>

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