

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

4TH SEPTEMBER 2019, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), G. N. Denaro (Deputy Leader), A. D. Kent, M. A. Sherrey, P.L. Thomas and S. A. Webb

Observers: Councillor M. Thompson

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. D. Poole, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mr. D. Allen, Mr. M. Dunphy, Mrs. R. Green and Ms. A. Scarce

22/19 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

23/19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

24/19 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10th July 2019 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10th July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

25/19 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 8TH JULY 2019**

The Leader thanked Councillor M. Thompson for attending to present both these minutes and the minute extract from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 2nd September, which had been tabled at the meeting (attached as an appendix to these minutes) and which contained a number of recommendations in respect of the wording in the Council Plan, Minute No 31/19.

Councillor Thompson reminded Members of the background to the Short Sharp Review which the Overview and Scrutiny Board had carried out in respect of Business Rates Relief. Following discussions, over a number of meetings, with the Executive Director, Finance and Resources an alternative method of calculating those who were eligible for this relief had been found. This would enable the Council to take advantage of the

full amount of funds available to them, to the benefit of businesses in the District. The Leader also commented that a large proportion of business had had a reduction in business rates following a review.

In respect of the Council Plan recommendations, Councillor Thompson talked through each of the recommendations and provided some context as to why the changes were being made. Particular reference was made to ii) and the inclusion of those with reduced mobility as there had been concern that there may not be sufficient data to support this.

The Leader thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Board for its input into the Council Plan and was happy for the recommendations to be incorporated in to the final version.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 8th July 2019 be noted;
- b) that the Section 151 Officer uses her delegated powers to use the 2018/19 balance from the business rates scheme and reflect this in the allocation for subsequent years be approved; and
- c) that the following amendments to the wording in the Council Plan be agreed:
 - i) Work and financial independence – Ensure people get the benefits they need – amend the measure to read:
“Number of emergency Essential Living Fund payments”.
“Number of emergency Discretionary Housing payments”.
 - ii) Live independent, active & healthy lives – Why? – amend to read:
“Increasing numbers of people living with reduced mobility, dementia and diabetes are a particular issue for the District”.
 - iii) Affordable & sustainable homes – Priority: A balanced housing market – include this priority within the “We will” and “How we will measure progress” section.
 - iv) An effective & sustainable Council – amend “Sustainability – We Will” to read:
“Focus more on commercialisation of services, and where appropriate, maximising every opportunity to generate income”.

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD - MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27TH JUNE 2019

Councillor A. Kent, as Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services, introduced this item and explained that it was a recommendation from the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board in respect of the Enforcement Policy for 2019.

RECOMMENDED that, the Council for each Member Authority adopts the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Enforcement Policy 2019, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

27/19

NHB COMMUNITY GRANTS PANEL - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

Councillor G. Denaro was invited to introduce this report, as he, together with Councillor S. Webb had sat on the Panel. Councillor Denaro confirmed he was happy to support the allocation of funds as detailed in the appendix to the report and thanked all those concerned for their work in bringing this year's Grants Panel to a satisfactory conclusion. He commented that the scheme would benefit from a full review, as recommended, should there be funds available in future years.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the NHB Grants Panel recommendations attached at appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and
- b) that should the scheme continue into 2020/21 a full review of the process be carried out prior to the commencement of the grants allocation for that year, be approved.

28/19

BROMSGROVE PLAN REVIEW UPDATE

Councillor A. Kent, as Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services presented this report and explained that a great deal of work had gone into it, with the responses from the earlier consultation being detailed at appendix 1. This, together with appendix 3, was over 600 pages and had therefore been published as a supplementary agenda, which was available on the Council's website.

The Leader thanked officers for their work to date and advised that this matter had been discussed in detail at a recent meeting and Cabinet was working towards the long term sustainability of the District as a whole and all options would therefore be considered. Councillor Kent reiterated that currently evidence was being collected and that no formal decisions would be made until all that evidence was available.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) that Council notes the response to the Issues and Options Consultation (Appendix 1);
- b) that Council notes and publishes for consultation, the Plan Update and Further Consultation document (Appendix 2), for a period of 6 weeks from 30th September to the 11th November 2019;
- c) that Council notes the contents of the Stage 1 Green Belt Purposes Assessment (Appendix 3).

- d) that Council opens the Call for Sites process for a period of 6 weeks between 30th September to the 11th November 2019; and
- e) that delegated authority is given to the Head of Planning and Regeneration Services in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services, to make any minor technical corrections and editorial changes deemed necessary to aid the understanding of the documentation prior to final publishing.

29/19

RESPONSE TO WCC PASSENGER TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Councillor A. Kent, as Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services, advised Members that Cabinet were asked to endorse the detailed response to the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Transport Strategy which had been out to consultation for some time. It was important to note that the Council was committed to working alongside WCC to improve the infrastructure across North Worcestershire and within the Bromsgrove District.

The Leader thanked officers for the in depth response and reiterated Councillor Kent's comments.

RECOMMENDED that the response at Appendix A to the Worcestershire County Council Passenger Transport Strategy be endorsed.

30/19

WORCESTERSHIRE HOMELESS STRATEGY

Councillor S. Webb as Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being introduced the report and in so doing provided background information and explained that the Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness contained within the report expanded on the High Level Partnership Plan which had been produced by the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership in 2017. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 had meant that the Strategic Direction document needed to be updated to take account of the legislative changes. Councillor Webb went on to invite Members to take part in a physical count of homeless people in the District, which would take place in November, with officers and partners. The Leader confirmed her interest in joining this count.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Worcestershire Strategic Direction for Tackling Homelessness be noted;
- b) that Cabinet note that this document expands on previously agreed high level actions within the Housing Partnership Plan that relate to tackling homelessness be noted; and

- c) that Cabinet note this document will need to be updated and renamed within the next 12 months to ensure compliance with the new national Rough Sleeping Strategy with amendments being made at officer level.

31/19

BROMSGROVE COUNCIL PLAN

The Head of Transformation and Organisational Development introduced the report and explained that following feedback from a Cabinet Away Day in July, the Council Plan had been refreshed to incorporate the areas discussed.

A revised copy of the Plan, containing the more detailed graphics and incorporating the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Board was circulated for Members and it was confirmed that any further comments from this meeting would be included in the final version which would be considered by Council at its meeting on 25th September.

The Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager went through the Council Plan in more detail with Members and highlighted the following areas:

- The strategic purposes together with the Council's priorities and how these were supported.
- The inclusion of the "green thread" throughout which acknowledged the Council's commitment to environmental issues.
- How the Plan would be delivered.
- An explanation around the headings under each section (the sections were broken down into the Council's Strategic Purposes).
- How progress would be measured in implementing the Plan.

The Leader thanked officers for pulling together all the ideas and discussions which had taken place at the away day and invited Members to comment on any particular areas.

Reference was made to the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Board in respect of data supporting the inclusion of reduced mobility and it was confirmed that Officers had checked and there was sufficient data available to include this.

Councillor Denaro, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling commented that, in view of the announcements in today's statement from the Chancellor, there may be a number of changes that needed to be made in respect of the Council's financial position. The Executive Director, Finance and Resources, confirmed that whilst there would be a number of small changes, as the Council would not receive its settlement figure until December, the current position would remain as stated.

The Leader commented that the Plan gave a clear vision for the Council to work towards in order to ensure that residents could see that all those in need would receive the support and help required over the next four years.

RECOMMENDED that the Council Plan attached at Appendix 1 be approved.

32/19

BUDGET FRAMEWORK - PRESENTATION

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources, gave a short presentation (attached as an appendix to these minutes) in respect of this item, including a number of points which had been picked up from the Chancellor's statement made earlier in the day. It was clarified that detail around some of this information was still awaited. The presentation covered the following areas:

- The challenges facing this Council in the coming years.
- The possibility of the Council Tax threshold being reduced to 2%, if this proved to be correct it could have an impact of around £50-60k in the budget
- No mention of the rollover of the Business Rates Pilot Scheme, which would be disappointing if not continued.
- The Negative Revenue Support Grant – it appears that this will be funded by the Government in 2020/21.
- The ongoing issues around Universal Credit and the demand these have on our services – the Council was working with the Citizens' Advice Bureau and other organisations to assist residents with managing debt. It was further explained that this referred to those with a private landlord as the rental payment was made direct to the individual as opposed to the landlord.
- Actions which had been put in place to mitigate overspends and how these would be monitored.
- The need to protect the level of balances.
- The predicted financial position over the next four years and the amount of the shortfall for each period.
- How those gaps will be filled.
- The need to reduce the enabling costs down to between 8-10%.
- The Capital Programme and the need to make improvements in how this was managed and making any business cases much more robust.
- The External Auditors were comfortable with the Council's current financial position and had no immediate concerns.
- The role of the Finance and Budget Working Group in assisting with the process.
- Actions to develop savings, including detailed review of the 2018/19 actual budgets against current allocated budgets for 2019/20.

- The Council Plan being able to help to engage with the public in order for them to understand the need for a sustainable budget and how monies were spent.

Councillor G. Denaro, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling, commented that there remained a lot of work to be done and challenges to face going forward, but the Council was in a good position overall.

RESOLVED that the budget framework presentation be noted.

33/19

FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 REPORT

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources presented the report and in so doing highlighted the following:

- The first quarter always contained a number of costs and income from the year end, such as invoices which needed to be paid from the previous year.
- A small underspend was already showing which was good news and helped to protect the Council's balances.
- The increase in income from the Core Waste Services.
- Enabling services and funds from vacant posts. In the case of the Finance Team the vacant posts would be offset against the new Enterprise Resource System and to protect current posts.
- Savings and the monitoring of them.
- Capital budgets – Portfolio Holders were encouraged to work with the relevant Heads of Service to ensure they were up to speed with this and that any projects included in it were current and if not, whether it was possible to give up the Capital budget in some cases. A more detailed breakdown was provided in appendix 1 of the report.
- Background information supporting the increase in the Capital Programme for the replacement CCTV cameras, which was included in the recommendation to Council.

Following presentation of the report Members raised a number of questions, including the saving made from the pension payment adjustment. Councillor Denaro, as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling confirming that each department was within the 10% guideline set down, but this would be monitored closely to ensure that no area was above or below it in future months.

The Leader reiterated the Executive Director, Finance and Resources request for Portfolio Holders to work with Heads of Service in going through the budgets line by line to ensure that any savings available have been realised.

RESOLVED that Cabinet notes the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the period April – June 2019 as detailed in the report.

RECOMMENDED that an increase in the 2019-20 Capital Programme of £80K (as detailed at 6.1 of the report) for CCTV Cameras funded by releasing funds allocated in 2020-21 £40k and 2021-22 £40k to increase the existing budget already approved in 2019-20 be approved.

The meeting closed at 6.42 p.m.

Chairman