

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

4TH DECEMBER 2019, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor M. Thompson

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr. M. Bough and Ms. A. Scarce

42/19 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

43/19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

44/19 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 23rd October 2019 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 23rd October 2019 be approved as a correct record.

45/19 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 21ST OCTOBER AND 13TH NOVEMBER 2019**

Councillor M. Thompson as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board attended the meeting to present the minutes. It was noted that there was a recommendation in the Minutes for the meeting held on 21st October, for consideration by Cabinet.

Councillor Thompson also drew Members attention to the tabled document, which included a number of recommendations from the Finance and Budget Working Group, in respect of Fees and Charges. Councillor Thompson briefly summarised the recommendations and the Board's reasoning for them.

In respect of the recommendation regarding the interment in a grave of children aged under 1 year and children aged 1 year to 17 years – both non resident. The Working Group had felt it was not appropriate to

make this charge and further information had been provided which showed that the cost to the Council of removing this charge was minimal.

The increase in respect of Primary Sports Projects, which was suggested at 20% and the Working Group, recommended that this would be better as an incremental increase of say 5 to 6% initially. The Working Group had requested information as to why such a large increase had been proposed and had been advised that an increase had not been made for some years, which was not felt to be an adequate answer to justify a 20% increase. The Working Group believed that any large increase or decrease should be made over a number of years rather than in one go, particularly in cases like this when the Council was keen to encourage its residents to improve their health and wellbeing.

In respect of Outdoor Fitness Sessions it was suggested that an increase of 2% should be included as this was organisations using the Council's facilities and an appropriate charge should be made to cover the overheads and often those organisations were making a significant profit from the events they organised.

The Leader confirmed that these would be considered in detail during the relevant item on the Cabinet meeting agenda, but she did not see that there was a problem with any of them. She also took the opportunity to thank Councillor Thompson and the Board for its work.

RESOLVED that

- a) the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings held on 21st October and 13th November 2019 be noted; and
- b) Cabinet consider a business case in respect of the Council Tax Support Scheme be brought forward for 2021/22 to include 100% Council Tax support.

46/19

ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE - THE VICTORIA GROUND

Members considered a report in respect of the listing of the Victoria Ground as an Asset of Community Value. Councillor A. Kent as Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services explained that this was merely a renewal of a nomination that was already in place and he saw no reason for it not to be renewed.

Through the Chairman, Councillor M. Thompson explained that he was currently chairing an Overview and Scrutiny Board Task Group in respect of Bromsgrove Sporting and questioned whether this would impact on the work of that Group. The Executive Director, Finance and Resources confirmed that this would not. The length of the current lease for the Ground was noted and it was confirmed that this was one area that the Task Group were considering.

RESOLVED that Cabinet, as a consultee, support the listing of the Victoria Ground as an Asset of Community Value.

47/19

WORCESTERSHIRE MINERAL PLAN - STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND

Members received a report in respect of the Statement of Common Ground for the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan. Councillor A. Kent, as Portfolio Holder for Planning presented the report and in so doing highlighted the Council's involvement in the Mineral Local Plan and that it should be noted that the Plan did not continue any new mineral site allocations. It was noted that the issues raised at previous stages of the process had now been addressed where necessary. The policies in the Plan did not hamper the ability of the Council to progress with its District Plan review and it presented a robust set of policies for use by Worcestershire County Council in order to determine mineral applications.

Whilst the Plan did not need to go to Council, it was suggested that it did, for transparency, as both Councillor Kent and the Leader were County Councillors.

The Leader questioned the statement made at paragraph 3.7 of the report as it appeared to be in conflict with the recommendation and whilst this did not impact on the actual Plan, it was agreed that Councillor Kent would seek clarification on this matter.

RECOMMENDED that Council agrees to the statement of common ground with regards to the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan and delegates authority to the Leader of the Council to sign and send the agreement to Worcestershire County Council on behalf of the Council.

48/19

HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY - OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

Members considered the Home Choice Plus Allocations Policy Permission to Consult report, which was presented by Councillor S. Webb, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Wellbeing and the Housing Development and Enabling Manager.

In debating the proposed changes Members highlighted the following:

- Reference in paragraph 3.7 of the report to qualification criteria. On checking this, the wording appeared to be unclear it what was required. Officers agreed to amend this.
- It was confirmed that paragraph 3.10 of the report, in respect of terminal illness or domestic violence, was in line with statutory guidance.
- Section 106 payments – it was explained that this was to meet the needs of rural communities and did not impact on other areas,
- Legislation in respect of pregnancy terminations and it was confirmed that the data in the policy followed current legislation.

RESOLVED that the consultation responses be noted and the changes to the Allocation Policy be agreed and the Policy (attached to the report at Appendix 1) be adopted.

49/19

FEES AND CHARGES REPORT

Councillor g. Denaro, portfolio holder for Finance and Enabling introduced the report and highlighted to Members the following:

- Page 159 of the report – street numbering. There had been a significant increase the previous year, following a recommendation from the Finance and Budget Working Group and therefore this year no increase was proposed.
- Page 173 – Other fees, major land sales showed 100% and this should in fact be 1.7%.
- There were a number of other areas where 100% had been included, this was an error and these should be zero.

Councillor Denaro spoke to the tabled recommendations from the Finance and Budget Working Group and confirmed that he was happy for these to be included.

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources confirmed to Members that where increases had been applied officers had been mindful of those that would be affected by any increase, but also conscious of the need to create income streams for the Council and to ensure cost recovery wherever possible. This was particularly relevant in respect of the recommendations from the Finance and Budget Working Group, where they had suggested an incremental increase for the Primary Ports Project and no charge for the interment of children.

Members also discussed the Finance and Budget Working Group's recommendation in respect of Primary Sports Projects, as Councillor Thomas, portfolio Holder for Leisure was keen to ensure that this did not impact on the cost of the service too significantly. It was explained that Members were concerned that these activities were very often aimed at some of the most vulnerable in residents and it was felt important that they were not discouraged from attending these activities due to the cost. Similarly in respect of the suggested increase for Outdoor Events Hire, the Finance and Budget Working Group were keen for the Council to be able to benefit from those activities, where it was clear that the organisers profited from the use of the Council's facilities.

During the debate that followed, Members discussed a number of areas in more detail:

- Figures were rounded up to the nearest 10p, so the percentage increase would differ slightly.
- The overall cost of the Sports Development projects, including staffing and equipment costs. This was estimated at £200k.

- Regulatory Services fees and charges were not able to generate income, but must merely cover the costs of providing the service.
- The rationale for those fees and charges which had not been increased.
- Page 177 of the report – a new pricing structure had been increased to reflect the actual requirement needed and in line with the current market for Football pitches.
- Fairs and circuses – there was one free day for the setting up and taking down of such activities.

RESOLVED that

- a) the recommendations from the Finance and Budget Working Group as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board, tabled at this meeting and attached to these minutes, be included in the Fees and Charges update report, to be presented to Council on 22nd January 2020;
- b) discretion on Leisure Services fees and charges throughout the financial year of 20% for increase or decrease be approved; and
- c) all fees and charges that are included in Appendix 1 of the report be charged commencing 1st February 2020.

RECOMMENDED:

- c) that Council approve all fees and charges that are included within Appendix 1 of the report; and
- d) that Council approve the recommendations from the Finance and Budget Working Group, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the minutes.

50/19

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - PRESENTATION

The Executive Director Finance and Resources gave a presentation (attached at appendix 2 to these minutes) which covered the following areas:

- Changes to the budget gap for 2020/21 and how these were made up. This included the pay increase being originally estimated at 1% but now was expected to be 2%. Utility inflation had been estimated at 4% but was more likely to be between 6-7%. However, there was a reduction in the pension deficit and back funding, which was good news.
- It was noted that it would not be possible to increase Council Tax by more than 2% without a referendum. However, it had been confirmed that there would be a payment in respect of New Home Bonus which had not been expected.
- Pressures – there were four main areas, which were included in the presentation, New Homes Bonus – in relation to grants to the community, the Plan Review costs (including costs for independent Highways advice, development costs for Parks and Green Space and Land Charges project which was to be transferred to Central Government.

- Savings – there had been a review of the insurance contract, which had resulted in a significant saving and service reviews in enabling services was also expected to produce a saving. Income from the garden waste service was also included.
- The Quarter 2 Finance Monitoring report would be presented at the January meeting of Cabinet and it was expected to show a number of savings that had already been achieved.
- It was highlighted that whilst a balanced budget for 2020/21 was showed, there was still a significant gap to be met in the following three years, which were detailed on the final slide of the presentation.
- Whilst the Council had significant funds in balances to cover the gap, it still needed to make significant savings.
- Heads of Service would continue to be asked to make savings and to review their services and any reserves which had not been used would be returned to balances and not carried over unless absolutely necessary.

The Leader thanked the Executive Director, Finance and Enabling and her team for their hard work.

RESOLVED that the Medium Term Financial Plan update 2020/21 to 2023/24 be noted.

51/19

FEES AND CHARGES REPORT

RESOLVED that the Fees and Charges confidential Appendix 1, as detailed on page 199 of the main agenda pack, be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.55 p.m.

Chairman